

**A COMPREHENSIVE READING OF JOHN 9: A SOCIO-RHETORICAL
PERSPECTIVE OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

By

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I declare that

A COMPREHENSIVE READING OF JOHN 9: A SOCIO-RHETORICAL
PERSPECTIVE OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been
indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference.

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B.V. MUDERHWA

ABSTRACT

Chapter 9, interpreted in terms of its macro-micro structure, fits into the overall literary and theological framework of the Book of Signs. The controversy between Jesus and the Jewish leaders depicted in chapters 7-10 is taken up by Chapter 9 in a particular manner.

This study employs the socio-rhetorical perspective to critically investigate the notion of discipleship. It differs from previous studies as they were undertaken from the historical, socio-scientific and narrative perspectives, and Robbins' socio-rhetorical methodology is applied to the Chapter 9 in order to dissect the notion of discipleship as a theological problem. In Chapter 9, the blind man emerges as the paradigm of the disciple as he exemplifies the principle of John 8.12.

The 'Jews', concerned with their need both for self-definition and the survival of Judaism, attempt to contain the growth of Christianity. The conflict is conceived as a 'conflict between darkness and light' and the healed man emerges as a hero of the community. His triumph over darkness contrasts him with the Pharisees who misguidedly follow the way of darkness and reject God's self-revelation. To summarize, by applying for the first time a multidimensional and comprehensive approach to John 9, three important characteristics of discipleship in the Fourth Gospel emerge: (1) it is not just simple enthusiasm and zeal, but rather a firm commitment, and strong and courageous determination to bear witness based upon an experience of the divine. Disciples are required to maintain their readiness for struggles, even death, for the sake of their faith; (2) discipleship is conceived as redefining the believer's covenant relationship with God which takes place through Jesus' identity and work. Therefore, the notion of 'disciples of Moses' is no longer defensible; (3) discipleship is nothing less than a 'discipleship into light' since it implies a duty to plead everywhere and always the cause of the Light in the sphere of darkness and in the world dominated by many kinds of ideologies (religious, cultural, political, etc.). The disciple must be prepared to be marginalized, not only by the dominant society, but also by his/her own family and familiar world.

KEYWORDS

Disciple, discipleship, light, blind man, Johannine community, 'Jews', Pharisees, synagogue, expulsion, texture, ideology, client, broker, honour, shame, anti-language, philosophic schools, Gnosticism, Graeco-Roman world, Jewish world, unbelieving world, narrative, socio-scientific, historical perspectives.

PREFACE

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1 Explanation or meaning of the title

This study aims to show how the issue of discipleship can be comprehensively understood from the perspective of socio-rhetorical criticism. Initially this method will be applied to John 9 in order to determine the extent to which the blind man is a paradigmatic figure of the disciple throughout the FG and how he is a 'prominent' figure in the other Gospels.

2 Problem statement of the research (purpose)

2.1 Objective

In this research I would like to embark upon the issue of discipleship within the first division of the Gospel of John (Chapters 1-12). One of the main themes in this section is Jesus' descent, while John 13-21 goes on to deal with the ascent of Jesus. Thus, discipleship, according to Chapter 9, will and should be interpreted and understood from the perspective of Jesus' descent. I have chosen to concentrate on John 9 as it is situated between two limits (the beginning and the end of the book of Signs) consciously posited by the writer. Many important issues arise from this text, characterized by its richness of meaning, for example the issue of discipleship and the relationship between 'sign' and 'faith', 'seeing' and 'hearing', and 'disciples of Moses' and 'disciples of Jesus', all of which are investigated in order to reach the experience of the Johannine community as an experience of devotion to Jesus. From a socio-rhetorical perspective, I would like to critically investigate the notion of discipleship in the Johannine community as depicted in John 9. Therefore the objective of this study will be:

- 1) to critically investigate the Johannine Community's understanding of discipleship viewed from the perspective of Jesus' descent;
- 2) to critically investigate the community's experience of devotion to Christ as pointed out in the setting of Chapters 5-10 and as is evident from the

formative debate that developed between the Judaism and Christianity of the First Century;

- 3) to critically compare the character of discipleship in the Johannine community with discipleship in the OT, the Synoptic tradition, the Graeco-Roman world and finally,
- 4) to text-critically examine John 9:35 and 38 in order to settle an argument on John's discipleship as related to the Johannine Community's devotion towards the end of the first century.

2.2 Research problem

This section delineates the intriguing problems that underlie the present study and are indeed worthy of research. The problems listed below form part of the investigation that will be assessed against the historical survey in the second chapter.

- **Textual problem:** No research has yet been conducted on discipleship in the Fourth Gospel from the perspective of John 9. The issue of discipleship is explicitly addressed in this chapter, in which discipleship of Jesus is compared with discipleship of Moses. This occurs in the context of reference to the expulsion of Christian Jews from the synagogue (9.22 par. to 12.42 and 16.2-3). It should be noted that socio-religious circumstances play a major role in this comparison of Christian discipleship with Mosaic discipleship.
- **Methodological problem:** Earlier publications on discipleship in the FG were conducted from theological, linguistic, socio-scientific and historical perspectives. This research will be done from the fresh perspective of socio-rhetorical criticism.
- **Theological problem:** According to my knowledge of Johannine studies, discipleship in John has never been critically compared with Mosaic discipleship from the perspective of the Johannine community's understanding of Jesus' descent.
- **Text-critical problem:** John 9 raises two important problems relating to textual criticism:
 - 1) In v.35: it has been proposed that the reading ἀνθρώπου be replaced by the reading θεοῦ. While the reader is well informed about the Son of man, with

13 references in John (1.51; 3.13-14; 5.27; 6.27, 53, 62; 12.23, 34, 62; 13.31-32), throughout the Gospel, John 9.35 is the only passage in the NT where someone is asked to believe in the Son of man. One understands why the tendency has been to replace the name 'Son of man' with the name 'Son of God'. Although scholars generally give preference to either one of these designations¹ (see Metzger 1994:194). It is probable that this choice was influenced by the exceptional usage of 'Son of man' here. It is almost universally accepted that 'the Son of man' should be regarded as the correct translation of the original since, according to Davies (1992:193), this is supported by earlier and more diverse manuscripts which, owing to the fact that they were more difficult to read, gave rise to the use of the variant in later manuscripts. The reading 'Son of man' emulates that of 'Son of God' insofar as it is the *lectio difficilior*.

- 2) Verses 38 and 39 present problematic reading as several Greek witnesses entirely lack either of these verses, or some part of this reading (ὁ δὲ ἔφη πιστεύω κύριε· καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ ὁ δὲ ἔφη πιστεύω κύριε· καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ). The verb προσκυνέω is not used with reference to the worship of Jesus anywhere in the FG. It does, however, occur nine times

¹ Lindars' understanding (1972:350) is motivated by the fact that John is probably saving up 'Son of God' for the climax in John 10.38, where Jesus reveals himself: 'can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'?' On the other hand, as the two last verses deal with the judgment, the Son of man is an appropriate title to use with the idea of doing the Father's works in anticipation of future glory. Hoskyns (1947:359) points out that the manuscript evidence suggests that the reading 'Son of man' represents the original text since it is found in the Greek codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Bezae, and in the Synaitic Syriac and Egyptian Sahidic versions (see also Moloney 1976:149). In Hoskyns' opinion, the replacement of Son of man by Son of God was motivated by Christ's supernatural or divine nature as opposed to his human nature. Moloney (1995:439) maintains that "Son of man" is only connected with believing in John 9.35 but 'the Son of God' is used in connection with confessions of faith (1.34, 49; 3.18; 11.27; 20.31). The attestation of ἀνθρώπου is superior even if the writer moves from the thought of eschatological judgment, to which 'Son of man' is connected (5.27) in Jesus, and Son of man as present bringer of life. Whether 'the Son of man' is more appropriate than 'the Son of God' is a matter for reflection. It is not improbable that the latter may have been changed into the former. John does not use 'πιστεύειν' with 'Son of man' anywhere else. There is, however, a close parallel to this passage in 12.34ff (see Barrett 1978:364), where the question regarding the lifting up of the Son of man becomes acute and Jesus replies in terms of the light that is in the world for a little so while that men may believe, and goes on to quote the passage from Isaiah 6, which is alluded to in vv. 39-41. In these verses, Jesus appears as judge; hence perhaps the otherwise surprising title Son of man.

in John 4.20-4, which constitutes a theological concentration of the word as, in all those instances, the Jewish idea that God must be worshipped in Jerusalem is reinforced. Meanwhile, the people standing on the periphery of the Jewish religious world, such as the Samaritan woman, represent the thought that God should be worshipped on Mount Gerizim. The grammatical construct of the verb προσκυνέω is not fortuitous for, besides the absolute use (vv.20a and 24b), the verb, along with the dative (v.21, 23a), is used in connection with the worship of the Father, as well as with the accusative (vv.23b and 24a). One should bear in mind that its usage with the dative or the accusative does not imply any theological problem. Despite the fact that the issue of worship, which occurs within the debate between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, is concerned exclusively with the Father, and the outcome of the discussion is that God the Father seeks those who worship him in spirit and truth. What does this mean? Barrett points out (1978:237-8) that:

The 'true' worshippers are those who do in truth worship God, whose worship realizes all that was foreshadowed but not fulfilled in the worship of the Jews at Jerusalem and of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim, not because a higher level of worship has been reached in the course of man's religious development, in which the material aids of holy places can be dispensed with, but because Jesus is himself the 'truth', the faithful fulfilment of God's purposes and thus the anticipation of the future vision of God.

Despite its importance, this contention does not solve the problem of textual criticism that is present in v. 35, where worship seems to have been transferred to the Son of man. The gesture of the blind man raises a twofold problem: firstly, the man worships not in the Temple, but where Jesus meets him and, secondly, the question may be asked whether the worship in John 4 relates to God the Father, or whether the worship of Jesus implies that he is worshipped as a second God? If Jesus were not to be taken as a second God, how did this mutation operate in early Christianity?

In spite of the fact that προσκυνέω does not occur in connection with Jesus anywhere else in John, and despite Brown's suggestion that the use of the verb could be 'an addition stemming from the association of John 9 with the baptismal liturgy and catechesis' (1966:375), the exegetical analysis of John 9 will strive to bring out the 'divine agency' of the Jewish religious and the Graeco-Roman world in order to

understand how this transferral must have operated, since dealing with discipleship in the FG is concerned more with Early Christian devotion.

2.3 Academic contribution

The contribution this study endeavours to make in the exegetical field of the FG is that no doctoral thesis has yet been conducted on discipleship from the perspective of either John 9 or from the perspective of socio-rhetorical criticism. Until 1995, all previous studies on discipleship in the FG had been done from literary or theological perspectives (for details, see Van der Merwe 1995:9-43). While all the previous studies up to now have followed the same perspective, there are no studies conducted from the perspective of discipleship. To my knowledge, based on the literature review, a socio-rhetorical research approach has not been applied to John 9. The application of this approach to Chapter 9 is particularly helpful, since it generates multiple strategies for reading and rereading the text and setting it in an environment where words interact with one another in a particular text, while at the same time interacting with phenomena outside the FG. Using this approach, our main task will be to enter the world to which the text refers by its evocation of the historical, social, cultural and ideological contexts of religious belief as they appear in the text or surround the text. The socio-rhetorical method, as a programmatic and interdisciplinary approach, challenges the interpreter ‘to develop a conscious strategy of reading and rereading a text from different angles ... one of the goals of a socio-rhetorical approach is to set specialized areas of analysis in conversation with one another’ (Robbins 1996b:3). In order to attain rich and reliable results, the language of the text must be approached as a social, cultural and ideological phenomenon.

In order to make words interact with other words in Chapter 9, we will not employ the columns strategy of Robbins’ ‘inner-texture’, as this will be replaced by discourse analysis. By means of discourse analysis, we shall look at how words and phrases, when repeated, relate and make different sections cohere. The repetition of words² in John 9 does not necessarily indicate cohesiveness. The repetition in itself is

² In John 9, some words occur as follows: ‘the man’ (12 references), ‘blind’ (13 occurrences), ‘parents’ (7 references), the verb λέγω is used more than other words or verbs throughout the chapter, occurring 24 times, with its main contender being the term the ‘Pharisees’

a code that must be decoded by resorting to semantic relations. Discourse analysis strives to understand the relationships between language, discourse and situational context in human communication.

This approach was chosen to point out the rhetorical exhortation encapsulated in the different semantic relations in the text.

I will refer to the Synoptic tradition, where some sections deal with discipleship, as well as to other instances of the first part of the FG, in order to pinpoint the blind man as one of ‘the most attractive figures of the Gospels,’ following Brown’s allusion (1978:377) without any demonstration. The blind man, as a socially marginalised man in the Jewish religious context that was dominated by its exclusive monotheism, with enlightened vision, grows to the point where he can identify Jesus as the Son of man. In the context dominated by the conflict, the man demonstrates his loyalty to Jesus. True to the period during which the gospel was written, the FE ingenuously makes use of literary construct of the ‘disciples of Moses,’ which he places in opposition to the ‘disciples of Jesus.’ Since in the Johannine community the unique way to survive was to join the group and not only believe in Jesus as the Son of man, but also worship him. The devotion to the Son sent by the Father as it has been thought does not undermine the Jewish exclusive monotheism, since Jesus and the Father are united with regard to privilege through the agency motif. One may discover how the Christological titles mentioned in Chapter 9 culminate in divine agency and devotion to Jesus as the One sent by the Father.

cumulated with ‘the Jews’. with 23 references, the conjugated verb ἠρωτησαν (they asked) occurs three times, the verb ἀποκρινομαι three times, οἶδα six times from v. 24 to v. 31, the verb ‘to see’ 8 times, and the substantive ‘sight’ three times. There are eight references to the substantives ἁμαρτία and ἁμαρτωλος and their correspondent verb ἥμαρτεν, and eight implicit and explicit references to ‘Jesus’ occur in the whole chapter. Moreover, the term ‘μαθητής,’ either in singular or in plural form, occurs four times, etc.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

This section deals with the historical survey on the issue of discipleship in John 9. From the numerous commentaries on John,³ those selected to assist this study were chosen because of their representative nature and their standardized interpretations on the theological plane. The monographs, essays and doctoral theses, to name but a few, to which this study refers, will be assessed in order to look at the current debates regarding discipleship and to contrast them with our own perspective. The methodologies applied in the past will enable us to evaluate their weaknesses and limitations in relation to the socio-rhetorical approach. In the subsequent subsections, an attempt will be made to group different scholars according to their approaches to the reading of Chapter 9.

2 The Johannine Community and discipleship: Brown, Martyn, Schnackenburg, Moody-Smith and Köstenberger

In this approach to reading, the text is used as a window that aids us to reconstruct the realities against which they were constructed. The questions to be asked are: When was the text written? Who wrote the text? Who are the addressees? What were the circumstances that surrounded the writing? and what was the nature of the social system within which the text originated? The answers to all these questions are significant to the interpretation of the text. In this section, we will discuss Brown, Martyn, Schnackenburg, Moody Smith and Köstenberger.

³ CH Dodd (1953), *Interpretation of the FG*; RE Brown (1966-70), *The Gospel of John*; CK Barrett (1978), *The Gospel According to St. John*; R Schnackenburg (1980), *The Gospel According to St. John*, 3 volumes; DA Carson (1991), *The Gospel According to John*; CH Talbert (1992), *A Literary and Theological Commentary on the FG and the Johannine Epistles*; FJ Moloney (1993), *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4*; J Painter (1993), *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature and Theology of the Johannine Community*; Ben Witherington (1995), *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the FG*; FJ Moloney, (1996), *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12*; Id. (1998), *Glory not Dishonour: Reading John 13-21*; G Beasley-Murray (1999), *John*; CS Keener (2003); AT Köstenberger (2004), *John*; AT Lincoln (2005), *The Gospel According to Saint John*.

Brown's (1978) penetrating reconstruction of the history of an independent Johannine community traces four stages, three of which are the following: (1) At the first stage, *before the writing of the Gospel*, the BD, as an ex-disciple of John the Baptist in light of 1.35-41, and a follower of Jesus from the start of his ministry, was designated by a group of scholars as a leading figure of the Gospel, even the 'father' of the community. The original group to which he belonged maintained a 'low Christology.' (2) *At the time when the FG was written*, the inclusion of the Samaritans and other anti-Temple groups led the group to confess a 'higher' Christology (Jesus viewed as the 'Man from Heaven'). Since traditional Israelite monotheists found this to be intolerable, conflict arose within the synagogue. (3) *When the letters were written*, the community, having taken a closed stance against those outside their ranks (it seems that they migrated from Palestine to the region of Ephesus or some other city, like Syria) and confessed a higher Christology, the movement began to suffer, and its members were expelled from the synagogue.

In his important multi-volume commentary *The Gospel according to John*, Raymond E. Brown (1966) offers a detailed introduction. The weakness of Brown's study is that it fails to offer a thorough interpretation of John 9 in connection with discipleship. The issue is alluded to in vv. 24-41, conceived as 'the most cleverly written dialogues in the New Testament' (1966:377). He does not comment on the first four verses (24-27), but concentrates on the ensuing verses. The expression 'disciples of Moses' is tackled as extra-biblical data as Brown claims that it does not occur regularly (1966:374; also see Barrett 1978:300), and had been employed with regard to the Pharisees in a *baraitah in Yoma 4a* and in the *Midrash Rabbah* 8.6 in Deuteronomy, where the Jews are warned that there is only one Law, which is the law Moses revealed. Unfortunately Brown overlooks the need to compare this expression with the expression 'disciples of Jesus', to which it must have been opposed.

Interestingly, Brown does discern that the blind man in John emerges as one of the foremost figures of the Gospels (1978:377), but he fails to demonstrate this sufficiently in connection with the struggles that the Christian Church was experiencing. Brown also fails to compare this figure with the disciples as nameless characters mentioned in all the Gospels.

Unlike his predecessors, Martyn, in his publication *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1979), regarded the tension and hostility between ‘the Jews’ and Jesus as the key to the historical life setting and purpose of John. The combination of exegetical and historical analysis brings him to the conclusion that many of the Gospel’s dialogues and narratives must be understood as a two-level drama, which speaks simultaneously about the time of Jesus and about the Risen Lord, redemptively active in the struggles and failures of the present Johannine community. The main focus of Martyn’s approach (1979:18) is to deal, as specifically as possible, with the circumstances surrounding the writing of the FG.

Dealing with the reconstruction of the history of the Johannine community, Martyn (1978:90-121; see also 2003:145-67) delineates three important periods: the early, middle and late periods. *The early period* is characterized by the conception of Jesus as the promised Messiah. *During the middle period*, the confession of Jesus as Messiah was perceived as a threat to monotheism. From being a messianic group within the synagogue, the group became a separate community outside its social and theological setting. *During the late period*, the group moved toward firm social and theological configurations that must be understood from three expressions: (i) the disciples of Moses (9.28); (ii) the Jews who had believed in him (8.31) and (iii) the other sheep (10.16). During that period, the authorities laid down a new dictum: either a person was a loyal disciple of Moses and remained true to the ancient Jewish community, or one had become a disciple of Jesus, and thereby ceased to be a disciple of Moses.

Schnackenburg, a Catholic professor at Wurzburg, produced a magisterial commentary on John in 1980. For many commentators, the description of the behaviour of the leaders, who oppress a man prepared to believe, who exercise pressure and terror upon their people (v. 22), who refuse to consider plausible arguments in favour of Jesus’ divine origin (v. 30-34), forms the background to the pastoral discourse in Chapter 10, as will be demonstrated below. Schnackenburg (1980b:238-9) contends that:

Chapter 9 shows the evangelist’s skill in using a loose ‘historical’ framework to deal with his theological themes and simultaneously to conduct a controversy with contemporary Judaism. The transparency with which the narrative reveals the underlying situation of the evangelist and his community is particularly great in Jn 9. The question of the Messiah is at the centre of the

debate between Judaism and Christianity (v. 2). Official Pharisaic Judaism not only argues vigorously against Jesus' Messiahship and divine origin, but also fights the followers of Jesus Christ with external measures. Defectors are excluded from the Jewish religious community, and so become subject to social sanctions too (v. 34).

Schnackenburg rightly contends that John 9 is 'a masterpiece of narrative which combines theological and historical strands with dramatic skill' (1980b:239). The relevance of this point of view rests upon the fact that John, by recounting the story of the blind man, demonstrates his ability to deal with the historical situation of (the evangelist and) his community, which is experiencing the central debate between Judaism and Christianity about the messiahship of Jesus. In other words, the evangelist endeavours to use a 'loose historical framework' to deal with theology and to conduct the controversy with contemporary Judaism (Schnackenburg 1980b:238).

Schnackenburg's study is of great value since he is the only one among the commentators who strives to offer a brief survey of the presence of the disciples (cf. excursus 1982:203-17). He contends that the greater frequency of the word μαθητής (78 occurrences) is not a result of pure chance for, in the evangelist's thought and his own presentation of Jesus' event, discipleship and the circle of the disciples are very important (1982:205). One may assume that the Johannine interest in Christology was kindled by Jesus' words and signs, his self-revelation and his confrontation with the unbelieving world. Schnackenburg aptly lists different instances where the disciples as a group make at least one appearance in the narrative (see 1982:205-6). According to him, the disciples are deliberately mentioned in the first part of the gospel to participate with Jesus in the activity in question and are actively involved in the event (cf. John 2.2, 11, 12, 17, 22, 6.5f.; 9.2; 11.54; 12.16, 20-22; 1982:206 Note 4). He presents John 4.27-38; 9.2-5 and 11.7-16 as sections that belong to the evangelist, who inserted them at such a striking place, and concludes that the circle of the disciples had a definite theological meaning in Jesus' work and activity on earth (1982:206). The disciples are definitely included in three ways: (i) they represent the believers during Jesus' lifetime, who became disciples through his word and his signs; (ii) they represent the later community, opposed by the unbelieving world; and (iii) they represent the later believers challenged and tempted in their faith.

Even though Schnackenburg conceives the man healed of blindness as being in sharp contrast to the Pharisees who play the part of 'disciples of Moses' (9.27f), he fails to demonstrate the important role played in this Jesus event by the disciples mentioned at the outset of the Chapter 9. He contends that the nameless disciples, surprisingly, have definite meaning in Jesus' work and activity; he contrasts these disciples who have no real role, but are mentioned in the narrative, with the believers of inadequate faith who are represented in the story by the blind man's parents in this story, and by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea elsewhere in the gospel, and by the unbelieving world in general. Chapter 9, as a rhetorical piece of work, puts forward all three representations of the disciples. It could be viewed as a *triple drama* in connection with discipleship.

In his discussion of the discipleship as witnessed in the Johannine community, Moody Smith (1999) argues that the conversation with the parents (vv. 18-23) is probably 'the single most important bit of evidence for the circumstances of the Gospel's origin' (1999:194). The attribution of the Twelfth of the Eighteen Benedictions to the sage Samuel the Small, according to Martyn and Davies' proposal regarding the mid-80s of the First Century, demonstrates that in the post-resurrection time, the claims regarding the true identity of Jesus were sharply rejected and confessors were punished by 'the Jews'. Even though the dating of the version of the Twelfth Benediction remains a matter of some uncertainty, John 9.22 points to a real and not imaginary situation (1999:196). According to Moody Smith, 'whatever the historical circumstances behind this scene, it is important to John that one must not only believe in Jesus but confess him as the Messiah and bear the cost of that confession' (1999:196).

Even under pressure from the Jews, the blind man is not prepared to deny his experience and is, in a real sense, driven to decide and confess who Jesus is. He is unique in that, after the miracle was performed, and despite his ignorance, he carries on a discussion with Jesus' opponents and refuses to deny the truth that he has discovered (also see Morris 1971:477-92). His belief is based on a 'firsthand experience that speaks louder than any theological assertions based on tradition received at second hand' (1999:201). The historical, theological significance of this episode was brought to the centre of attention by Martyn (1979). The blind man who

boldly confesses not to doctrine about Jesus, but to what Jesus has done for him, is contrasted with his parents who answer the Jews cautiously. The evangelist does not commend their behaviour (attitude) for he wants believers to become confessors even at the expense of exclusion (12.42: cf. 16.2; 20.19).

Moody Smith points out that the Johannine Community, as a community of Jesus' disciples and their heirs, was based upon a brave and incautious confession, for the blind man is a paradigm. He unfortunately fails to demonstrate how Christology faith played a major role in the conflict that opposed Judaism and Christianity, and how the confession of Jesus as the Messiah must be related to the devotion to Jesus as plenary manifestation of God.

Andreas J Köstenberger (2004) asserts that the progression in the man's estimate of Jesus (cf. Keener 2003:775) renders the blind man a 'paradigm of growing discipleship': from the 'man called Jesus' (v.11) to 'a prophet' (v.17), to one who might be followed by disciples (v.27), to 'from God' (v.33), to 'Lord' to be worshipped (v.38) (cf. Carson 1996:368). The expulsion from the synagogue, frequently considered as anachronistic (Martyn 1977; 1979; Brown 1979), revolves around the liturgical Eighteen Benedictions recited by all pious Jews three times a day (Schurer, as quoted by Köstenberger 2004:288). According to him, the agreement mentioned in 9.22 need not reflect an official decision, and more likely points to an informal one. The reference is therefore most likely to 'an incidental measure adopted ... with a view to a specific concrete situation'⁴. Köstenberger agrees with others with regard to the assertion that the same group that arrested and killed Jesus sought to intimidate his followers by threatening them with expulsion from the synagogue. However, the problem with that insertion is that it does not recognise the Jews of the time of the writing of the Gospel as the spiritual paradigm of the 'Jews' of Jesus' time.

Köstenberger portrays the blind man as the model believer, through whom the readers are instructed that a person of committed faith ought to bear personal witness (see Carson 1991:373). Köstenberger's understanding of the disciple is interesting for his concept of the 'paradigm of growing discipleship.' The concept is

⁴ Cf. Köstenberger 2004:289; cf. Ridderbos 1997:343; Morris 1995:434, Note 36; contra Barrett 1978:361; Brown 1966:380; Schnackenburg 1990:2, 250; Bultmann 1971:335.

linked to the ‘hermeneutics of progress’ (or ‘herméneutique étagée’/ ‘herméneutique à degrés’; for details, cf. Theissen 2002:297-302; Zumstein 1991:249; *Id.* 1993:60-62). Elementary belief, before it becomes authentic, has to grow, or mature, in order to reach the decisive identity of Christ. It is this route which the blind man follows. Nevertheless, the commentary on Chapter 9 does not include a detailed discussion of the conflict between Judaism and Christianity, the agency motif, and the relationship between seeing and hearing, all of which relate to discipleship. Köstenberger fails to demonstrate how the conflict goes beyond a simple witnessing about Jesus as the Messiah to a threat to exclusive monotheism, and does not discuss the social, cultural and theological implications of expulsion from the synagogue.

3 Theological readings related to discipleship: Schneiders and Lincoln

Sandra M Schneiders’ (2003) exegesis of Chapter 9 takes the form of a perspective of a synthesis of the theology and spirituality of discipleship. According to her, the original *Sitz im Leben* of the story must have been the sacramental initiation of believers in the Johannine community (2003:190) – a hypothesis that she shares with Martyn, whose historical setting of the Gospel is the struggle that resulted in the final separation of emerging Christianity from the post-AD 70 synagogue (Martyn 1979:24-62). Even though Chapter 9 has synoptic parallels, it differs notably from synoptic accounts (see 2003:190-1). In addition, John 9, more than any other narrative in the gospel, fuses three horizons (2003:192-3). Firstly, *the horizon of the pre-Easter Jesus* who condemns the Pharisees who claim to see, but refuse to believe. Secondly, *the horizon of the Johannine community*, in light of vv. 35-41 in which Jesus brings the man to full Johannine faith in him as the Son of man. And thirdly, *the horizon of the readers*, where Jesus is identified as the point of decision for all those who, through the coming ages, will come to believe or refuse to believe. The blind man who, like other characters in John’s narrative, is anonymous, is an ‘empty set’ into whom the reader inserts the story to become a participant and not an observer. Schneiders argues that, like that man, ‘we must be washed in the Sent One to experience the illumination, the opening of our eyes, that enables us to see who Jesus is, know him as the Son of man who reveals and mediates God to us, and confess and worship him’ (2003:193). Although she does not boldly claim that

the blind man was a paradigm disciple, this is implicitly asserted since, in her viewpoint, discipleship has to do with where Jesus comes from and who Jesus is. That is why what is at the stake in the trial of John 9 is not healing, but profession of faith in Jesus as the Christ, and embarking on the path of discipleship (2003:191).

In his theological exegesis of John 9, Andrew T Lincoln (2005) focuses on light and darkness. In the story, Jesus is the light, which is the symbol of revelation, and represents judgment with its effects of enlightenment and exposure. Jesus' positive role stems from his salvific mission (God's life-giving work), which is to rescue the world from its plight in darkness and blindness. A second possible consequence is that when light exposes darkness, it can be blinding. Although light and darkness are universal symbols, light has more specific connotations in Judaism, through its associations with the Torah (cf. Ps 119.105).

The claim about Jesus as the light of the world contains an implicit claim about his relationship with the Torah. The debate between Jewish Christians and other Jews colours this episode by placing Moses in opposition to Jesus. For the FE, it seems that 'Jesus is now the light, the light of Torah has to be seen in the light of the Light. To operate the other way around – to use Torah to judge Jesus as a sinner – is, for the evangelist, to make Torah an instrument of darkness rather than light' (Lincoln 2005:289).

This story reveals different judgments about Jesus as the bringer of light that provide the movement and irony of the narrative (Lincoln 2005:289-90). The judgement of the man born blind may be perceived from his progressive knowledge and bold confession of who Jesus is and demonstrates his increasingly clarity of sight. He judges Jesus on the basis of his experience of receiving sight (Jesus as a man in v.11, and as a prophet in v.17), then confesses in v.27 that he is Jesus' disciple, that Jesus is from God (v.33), and that he is Lord and the Son of man (v.38). The Pharisees judge him on the basis of their interpretation of the law (vv.16, 29) and are unable to see that if they believed Moses, they would believe Jesus (5.46). This contrasting judgement of the religious authorities develops into deeper blindness. Despite his strong focus on light, Lincoln fails to deal with the issue of discipleship in relating it to light.

Owing to the methodology employed, the subsequent work of Keener is discussed separately from other commentaries.

4 Socio-historical reading of discipleship: Keener

Craig S Keener's commentary in two volumes (2003) is a recent and thorough investigation that makes a great contribution in the area of socio-historical context. As Keener contends, his aim had been to supply specific social data from the ancient Mediterranean world (2003:xxv-xxvi) that have not yet been brought to bear on the Gospel before.

Like many of his predecessors, Keener shows an interest in the issue of blindness associated with sin in vv.1-5, but he fails to deal with the disciples of Jesus whose emergence and disappearance cannot be fortuitous in the narrative's construct. Keener deals with the disciples of Moses (2003:790-1) in vv.26-8, where the repeated question of the Pharisees reflect traditional Jewish procedures for cross-examining witnesses (e.g. *Sus* 48-62; *m. 'Abot* 1:9; cf. *Mark* 14:56). The healed man hoped that the Pharisees would be impressed by his new experience, but this hope was shattered when they reviled him. The emphatic 'you are' and 'we are' emphasize the contrast between the Jewish authorities and the blind man. According to him, their claim that they are disciples of Moses is an echo of genuine Pharisaic tradition (see Schnackenburg 1980b:251). The later rabbis spoke of themselves as having received tradition from Moses on Sinai. Moses was considered as 'father of the prophets', their teacher and master (cf. *Abot R. Nat.* 1A; see also *T.Mos.* 11:16), or the one who taught all the prophets (cf. *Pesiq.Rab.* 31:3) and the master who had Joshua as his first disciple. Even Solomon was one of the pupils of Moses (*Prelim. Studies* 177). The figure of Moses is of such paramount importance that Philo claims that he was initiated into the mysteries of Moses and became a disciple of Jeremiah (*Cherubim* 49).

The strength of Keener's argument lies in its twofold aspect (2003:791): firstly, on the literary plane, he compares the Pharisaic claim that they are 'disciples of Moses' (v.28) with *John* 5.45-7, where there is an ironic refutation that undermines the claim. On the historical plane, the dominant Pharisaic tradition during the period when the Gospels were written, was Hillelite, which emphasized

drawing seekers near rather than thrusting them aside (see *m.Abot* 1:12; *Abot R.Nat.* 15A; 29, para. 61B; *b.Sabb.*31a; cf. Keener 2003:791).

Even though Keener offers a detailed analysis of Chapter 9, his commentary is limited and does not aid our understanding of the issue of discipleship. No mention is made of the blind man as a paradigmatic figure, contrasting not only with the disciples who appear at the outset of the story (as well as elsewhere in John's narrative), but also with those who claim to be 'disciples of Moses'. The methodological choice limits both assumptions and results.

Most of the commentaries mentioned attempt to reconstruct historical, literary and theological settings. These dimensions, Lincoln notes (2005:1), relate to the world described as 'the world in or of the text, the world behind the text, and the world in front of the text'. This approach, in its literary dimension, endeavours to feature the entire Gospel by subdividing it into two parts (Chapters 1.19-12.50; 13.1-20.31, framed on the one hand by the Prologue (1.1-18) and on the other hand by the Epilogue (Chapter 21). Theological dimensions are diversely touched by various commentators, but the portrait of Jesus as God's envoy through whom revelation takes place, as well as the fulfilment of OT symbolism and institutions is one of the crucial motifs of the first part of the Gospel on which this study is grounded.

All of these commentaries are limited, for they allude to but fail to reconstruct the community to which the issue of discipleship relates. These authors seek the roots of the Gospel and its traditions in the conflict between Jesus' followers and opponents within Judaism. In their struggles, they are encouraged and strengthened by Jesus' continuing presence that gives significance to the harsh situation of rejection by the *alma mater*, the synagogue. The issues of the relationship between 'faith and sign', 'seeing and believing', and the agency motif that plays a major role in the understanding of discipleship have not been addressed.

5 Discipleship in the light of the narrative [theory of] reading: Culpepper, Brodie and Beck

The narrative perspective of reading does not focus on the world *behind* the texts from which the texts have arisen, but rather on the worlds *created* by the texts

in their engagement with their readers. Biblical texts create worlds of meaning and invite readers to enter them to be confronted with theological claims.

Culpepper (1998) describes Chapter 9 as a delightful story in itself, but points out its links to the rest of the gospel. The central idea of the chapter, according to Culpepper (1998:174), is ‘the meaning of sin’. He prefers to approach the chapter as a sequence of seven scenes, marked not only by a change of characters but by the principle of duality. By structuring the whole chapter, he discovers two characters in each section. The interest, he thinks, is not directed at how the healing happened, but at the issue of sin and faith as it relates to each character in the story (1998:176). In the scene where other scholars discuss the issue of disciples of Moses (vv. 24-34), Culpepper points out that the narrator, with delightful subtlety, shows the man’s insight and exposes the Pharisees’ blindness by continuing to search for proof of violation of the Sabbath. When asked whether they would like to become disciples of Jesus, the authorities react by drawing a line between the two groups that are conceived as mutually exclusive. Like other commentators, Culpepper alludes to the disciples who enter the gospel story again for the first time since John 9, serving merely to get the action started. He does not establish a link between them and the blind man whom they introduce. His discussion of the characters in Chapter 9 does not adequately emphasise the importance of the healed man as a prominent figure in the narrative.

Brodie subdivides Chapter 9 into six scenes (1993:343-54) and contends that the entire chapter is shadowed by sin. Jesus’ disciples take it for granted that the blind man or his parents have sinned (v.2), but Jesus rejects this idea. However, as the story unfolds, Jesus too is judged a sinner (vv.16 and 24) and it is said that the blind man was born in utter sin (v.34). While the Jewish authorities live in a world in which sin is overpowering, the implied author constructs his story differently: He sees ‘sin not where the Pharisees see it, in those who suffer affliction and who, like Jesus, relieve it, but in the authorities’ refusal to move from their cramped view of reality’ (9.41) (1993:357).

In *The Discipleship Paradigm. Readers and Anonymous characters in the Fourth Gospel*, a doctoral thesis published in 1997, David R. Beck, includes the man born blind as one of the characters listed. The episode is initiated by the

disciples of Jesus seeking to ascertain the cause of the man's blindness to which Jesus appropriately and ironically responds that it is not the blind man but 'the Pharisees whose obtuseness unwittingly reveals the true origin of 'blindness'' (1997:92). This nameless blind man's narrative is extended and dramatised inasmuch as he responds to Jesus' command to wash and is healed; then his faith response continues after Jesus' departure, for Jesus is absent for the most of the episode from vv.8-34. The climax is achieved when Jesus returns and the grateful man responds by bowing down before Jesus in faith to worship him in light (v.38). This occurrence is unique in the Gospel. Holleran, quoted by Beck, asserts that the man born blind 'stands out as a paradigm of what it is to be a disciple of Jesus' (1997:92). In analysing the blind man's characterisation as a believer, Beck (1997:94) takes into account his growing understanding of Jesus' identity, expressed through a naming progression ('man called Jesus' in v.9, 'prophet' in v.17, 'man from God' in v.33, 'Lord' in v.38) and the fact that the man himself undergoes his own naming progression ('beggar' in v.8, 'the man who had formerly been blind' in v.13, 'the blind man' in v.17, 'our son' in v.20, and 'the man who had been blind' in v.24).

Beck reaches the same findings as other commentators when he identifies the blind man as a disciple, progressively revealed through his actions of witnessing, namely about Jesus' sign and about Jesus' identity, and his courage when, through his witnessing, he risks being cast out of the synagogue. Nevertheless, he put a finger on something new by dealing with the blind man as an anonymous character that differs from the *τις ἄνθρωπος* of John 5.5 and *τις βασιλικὸς* of 4.46, but simply *ἄνθρωπος* characterising his humanity and universality. This may facilitate the reader's identification with this formerly blind anonymous man (1997:95-96). He concludes: 'For readers who are able to identify with the man and enter into his circumstances, his characterization is 'social legitimization of their past and present history''. The sense of identification would increase for readers who have found that following Jesus 'exact a price' (1997:96). The weakness of Beck's analysis is that though he mentions that the scene reaches a climax when Jesus returns to the story and the healed man bows down before Jesus to worship him (v.38), he does not tackle the issue of Jesus' devotion of Jewish believers, which became intolerable in

the synagogue and gave profound meaning to discipleship in the context of possible persecution.

Following the historical survey relating to Chapter 9, we will categorize the different methodologies that have been applied to the reading of John's Gospel.

6. Conclusion

This survey was necessary in order to determine how Chapter 9 is read by scholars from different fields of research. Johannine scholarship oscillates between two tendencies: to focus on the worlds *behind the texts*, and on the *worlds created by the texts*. In the first group we find those scholars who tackle the issue of discipleship in the light of the Johannine community (Brown, Martyn, Schnackenburg, Moody Smith and Köstenberger). Some of them (Brown and Martyn) emphasise the stages of the development of its history going back to the original messianic group, the disciples of John the Baptist. The integration of other groups (Samaritans and Hellenists) was a catalyst event that contributed to the evolution of the Christology from the lower to the higher level. Since the confession of higher Christology could not be tolerated by traditional Israelite monotheists, the Christian movement began to suffer prosecution before it developed into a separate community outside its social and theological setting.

Schnackenburg sees John 9 as 'a masterpiece' that combines theological and historical strands to the extent that the FE, by means of the story of the blind man, shows his ability to deal with the historical situation of the evangelist and his community debating with the representatives of Judaism about Jesus' messiahship. While Schnackenburg is the only commentator that made a survey of the presence of the disciples in John's narrative, he mistakenly concluded that the disciples had a definite theological meaning in Jesus' work and activity on earth – an opinion that is not easily defended. Moody Smith bases his explanation of the conflict that arose from John 9.22 on his conviction that the blind man's brave confession was the paradigm that provided the basis for the community of Jesus' and their heirs. His belief is grounded on first-hand experience, which speaks louder than any theological assertions based on tradition and received as second-hand information. He unfortunately fails to explain how Christology played a major role in the conflict and

to relate discipleship to the devotion to Jesus acknowledged by Early Christian Church as plenary manifestation of God. Köstenberger is one of the scholars who relate the expulsion from the synagogue to the Twelfth of the Eighteen Benedictions. He convincingly argues that the agreement, rather than reflecting an official decision, is an incidental measure adopted by the synagogue. He manages to portray the blind man as the model believer but he focuses only on the confession and does not hint at the conflict from which the blind man emerges as a paradigm.

The theological readings align Schneiders and Lincoln. According to Schneiders, John 9, more than another narrative in the Gospel, fuses three horizons (that of the pre-Easter Jesus, that of the Johannine community and that of the readers). She perceives the blind man as an 'empty set' into whom the reader inserts into the story to become a participant and not an observer. Although she does not pinpoint the blind man as the paradigmatic figure in the discipleship, her assertion may be implicit. Lincoln uses lightness and darkness for his theological exegesis of John 9. The conflict between Judaism and Christianity must be understood in the light of this pair. Jesus the Light disparages the light of the Torah by which the Pharisees judge him as the sinner, thus making the Torah an instrument of darkness. That is why the judgment of the religious authorities develops into deeper blindness. Here one may also cite Keener who, in a thorough commentary, uses the socio-historical approach to supply specific social data from the ancient Mediterranean world. Dealing with discipleship, he goes further than his predecessors by emphasising the literary and historical aspect of the expression 'disciples of Moses', but the blind man is not depicted as paradigmatic figure anywhere.

The last group of scholars do not focus on the world behind the texts from which the texts have arisen, but rather on the worlds created by the texts (narrative approach). Culpepper exegetes John 9 as a delightful story dealing with the meaning of sin as the central idea. Like many other commentators, Culpepper fails to draw a link between the disciples who enter the gospel story and the blind man in John 9, whose prominence is not underscored.

One might conclude that the interpretative framework of the twentieth century was dominated on one side by the historical-critical method and, on the other side, by literary criticism. The weakness of the former method was its neglect of the

text itself in the belief that the historical, social and cultural dimensions of the text were enough to explain everything, making the approach very reductionist. Narrative critics, on the other hand, do not take the historical issues into account, since they do not venture beyond and outside the text. The limitations of these approaches called for the use of a more comprehensive and multidimensional approach.

The thesis that this study attempts to develop by using a socio-rhetorical approach can be stated as follows:

- Being a disciple of Jesus is not only a matter of confession of faith; it requires that you remain and keep on following Jesus.
- Being a disciple of Jesus in the world dominated by many kinds of ideologies (religious, cultural, political, etc.) and crumbling ethical values, the would-be disciple should be ready to be marginalized, not only by the dominant society but also by his or her own family.
- Discipleship implies readiness for struggles, even to death, and even in one's familiar environment.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGIES APPLIED IN THE STUDY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

1 Introduction

This chapter tries to sketch different methodologies applied to the reading of the FG. As it is not easy to undertake the whole history of interpretation, the discussion will be limited to four main ways of reading the Gospel as embodied in the historical critical method (encompassing socio-historical criticism), and socio-scientific criticism, reader-response criticism and narrative criticism. The starting-point is historical criticism.

2 ‘Window readings’: From Dodd to Brown and Martyn’s Shift

The FG has been interpreted as a ‘window’ (for the expression, see Petersen 1978:19) on a world that lies ‘behind’ the text (Culpepper 1983:3-4) within which we catch ‘glimpses’ of the history of the Johannine community, its particular place in history and its circumstances (Martyn 1978:90-1). The meaning of the text is assumed to lie on the other side of the window. Source and redaction-critical approaches were accused of having fragmented and stratified the Gospel, and of having dissected and differentiated the elements within it (cf. De Boer 1995:96-7) to the extent that the interpretive efforts terminate in hypothetical literary strata. The focus, it seems, was on the process of the text’s composition. Dodd, advocating for respect for the final shape of the Gospel (1953:290), must be situated at the transitional period. In the same vein of thought, Brown (1966:110-1) contends:

Even though I think there was both an evangelist and a redactor, the duty of the commentator is not to decide what was composed by whom, or in what order it originally stood, nor whether these composers drew on a written source or an oral tradition. One should deal with the Gospel of John as it now stands, for that is the only form that we are certain has ever existed.

By stressing the need to examine the Gospel in its canonical form, the door to another approach to its reading is opened. While in his first publication,

Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, Dodd (1953) finds direct influence in the development of Johannine thought from Rabbinic Judaism, Gnostic and Mandaean thought and the Hermetic literature, his second work shows a movement away from the history of ideas and breaks with the written sources behind the Gospel. In *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, Brown emphasises the role of the community that shaped the Gospel (see O' Day 1997:181-2). The community from which the gospel originated, whose role had been hitherto overlooked, comes to the fore.

Both Brown and Martyn stand at a turning point in FG research. Brown was a pioneer who covered more aspects of the Johannine story than can be discussed here. After 30 years his commentary is still the most balanced work of its kind. The revolution he wrought lies in the fact that the analysis no longer concentrates on the history of ideas but the history of the believing, struggling Christian community that shaped and consolidated the Gospel traditions. The shift was to move away from establishing the history of the text to the analysis of the formation of the text as part of the history of the community (O' Day 1997:182).

Martyn's conception of John's narrative as a two-level drama impacted significantly upon current Johannine scholarship. One can see now the first 'readers' or 'hearers' of the narrative of Jesus' origins and identity identified with, and were able to enter into the narrative in order to encounter Jesus and to experience Jesus' powerful presence in their own experiences (cf. Martyn 1979:30), as is demonstrated in this reading of John 9.

One should note that, in order to produce a comprehensive interpretative analysis of the Gospel of John, a favourite approach has been one that involves the drawing a boundary between the text as such and what lies behind the text. Behind the text we have the 'spatial outside,' which concerns the text's ability to refer to other texts and this phenomenon is called 'intra-textuality.' It could relate to the 'temporal outside' in dealing with the discourse preceding the text, that is, the tradition with which the text enters into dialogue, as well as the effects and traces left by the discourse of the text through our intellectual history. The most standard commentaries mentioned above make recourse to the historical mode of explaining

the text. The text is taken at face value and used as a window offering a view of the historical situation.

Following O' Day, the 'the paradigmatic shift brought about by Brown and Martyn can also be described as a shift away from the world *behind* the text (see Bultmann) and toward the world *contemporaneous with* the text' (1997:1983). While the text was treated as a historical artifact since 'meaning is always historically shaped by the text's origin' (Kysar 2005:7), it comes to be viewed as a witness to the life, struggles and crises of the community (O' Day 1997:183). It seems that Martyn's methodology is to focus on the tension between the Jewish authorities (represented by the Pharisees in the story) and Jesus (including the church that the healed man represents), which leads to an evident incapacity to get a holistic understanding of the disciple at the time during which this gospel was written insofar as it does not take into account the rhetorical nature of the text and its ideological aspect. Other scholars in the field of historical criticism placed their emphasis on another 'window', namely the window of socio-scientific criticism.

2.1 Socio-scientific readings: Meeks, and Malina and Rohrbaugh

The exegetical work of the last third of the Twentieth Century has been marked by an increased consciousness of the need to analyse and articulate in a more refined way the social and cultural contexts of the texts and traditions to which historic-critical scholars refer as *Sitz im Leben* (Lacocque 2005:145). Socio-scientific criticism is a deliberate explanation of biblical texts that borrows the approach of the social sciences, particularly sociology and cultural anthropology. This method analyses the social and cultural dimensions of the text and its environmental context by using perspectives, theory, models and social sciences research.

During the three last decades, biblical scholars have rigorously engaged with the social sciences and incorporated their theoretical and methodological foundations in ways that assist the interdisciplinary analysis of the Bible and uncover the nuances of its social contexts. Gowler groups these studies into six loose categories (cf. Gowler 2000:13 at [http:// userwww. service.emory. edu/~dgowler/ REarticle. htm](http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~dgowler/REarticle.htm)):

1. In order to illustrate some aspect (s) of ancient society, scholars describe, but do not attempt to analyse, synthesise, or explain these social facts in any social-scientific fashion;
2. other scholars go a step farther and integrate social, economic, and political aspects in order to construct a social history of a particular period or group;
3. others include social theory and models, in order to investigate, for instance, the social forces leading to the emergence of early Christianity and the formation of its institutions;
4. those scholars interested in the social and cultural environment, especially in cultural anthropology, have focused attention on the social and cultural codes that influence, guide, and constrain social interactions;
5. some scholars, John H. Elliott for instance, interpret biblical texts through the explicit use of the research, theory, and models of the social sciences;
6. recent years have seen scholars begin to combine the insights of social-scientific criticism and other disciplines, such as literary criticism.

Working in connection with the historical-critical method, socio-scientific criticism examines biblical texts as significant configurations of the language destined for the communication between authors and addressees (Elliott 1993:7; cf Lacocque 2005:141). We will start with Meeks, one of the influential scholars of the 1970s.

Wayne A. Meeks's book (1967) entitled *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, begins by criticizing Hoskyns' work, which limited the influences underwent by John with regard to Christianity and Judaism. While he supports Bultmann's findings that the Christology of John holds extra-biblical background, he goes further and argues that a large part of the Johannine tradition was 'shaped by a fluid situation of missionary and polemical interaction with a strong Jewish community' (1967:294). This explains Meeks' interest in the figure of Moses (with 11 references in the gospel) to which the Pharisees in Chapter 9 cling so determinedly. He points out that 'Moses was regarded as a king as well as a prophet', was exalted at the centre of Jewish religious traditions and formed an intermediary between them and God (1967:286).

In *'The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism'* (1986), Meeks examines the origin and function of the Johannine language of myth. Bultmann tends to reduce that language to theological categories. Bultmann argues that the symbolic picture of the man who descended and ascended, the revealer from the heavenly world, is not easy to explain. According to him, the revealer revealed his identity, but did not communicate what he had 'seen and heard' in the heavenly world; such a promise was never fulfilled in the Gospel (cf. Meeks 1986:171-2). To sort out the enigma around the descent and ascent motif, Meeks (1986:174) redirects the attention to the gospel itself (literary structure of the gospel) and its social environment (structure of the Johannine community).

Firstly, examining the motif from the text itself, he contends that the descent and ascent are not described in John, but is conceived as a *fait accompli*. The lack of description of the motif in the gospel is due to the fact that 'the motif belongs exclusively to discourse, not to narrative' (1986:174). In a narrative form, descent or ascent identifies the actor as hero by describing the dangers he overcomes. In John, however, the motif describes Jesus not as a hero but as 'the Stranger *par excellence*' (1986:174). In order to emphasize Jesus' strangeness, Meeks analyses some of the passages where the pair ἀναβαίνειν/καταβαίνειν appears alongside the title of Son of man (1.51; 3.13), the term ἄνωθεν in the final portion of Chapter 3 (vv.31-6), and the 'midrash' in Chapter 6 on the 'bread from heaven'.

While Bultmann asserts that Jesus states that he is the revealer, Meeks demonstrates that Jesus is an enigma. Jesus is a Son of Man figure whose story 'is all played out on earth, despite the frequent indications that he really belongs elsewhere'. The pattern of descent-ascent explains the strangeness of his origin and his superiority to Moses and John the Baptist. The pattern used along with the title Son of man underlines his unique self-knowledge, the knowledge of his own origin and destiny and his unique relationship to the Father. That is why, Meeks concludes (1986:184), it is the key to Jesus' identity and his identification as the primary content of the esoteric knowledge that distinguishes him from human beings of this 'world'.

Secondly, Meeks strives to explain the Johannine pattern language as having found its effect from the community that produced the gospel, and its self-

understanding in relation to the larger society. While the group is distinguished from the sect of John the Baptist, it is more passionately opposed to a strong Jewish community (1986:173). Having depicted Jesus as the man 'who comes down from heaven', the narrator describes Jesus' story as that of a community progressively alienated from the Jews (1986:193). The group regards itself as alien or detached from the world, and consequently detached from Judaism. The community holds a strong awareness of itself as being 'unique, alien from its world, under attack, misunderstood, but living in unity with Christ and through him with God' (1986:193). One understands that for the Johannine community, 'coming to faith in Jesus' is a change in social location. Mere belief without joining the Johannine community, without making the decisive break with 'the world', particularly the world of Judaism, is a diabolic "lie" (1986:193). In this sense, the gospel is written from an ideological perspective to reinforce its social identity and to provide a symbolic universe that grants religious legitimacy (1986:193-4). Reflecting on the 'sociology of knowledge' in the form proposed by Berger and Luckmann, the tendency, according to Meeks, was to understand how a figure like the Johannine Jesus, through the medium of a book, could change the world. Faith in him means removal from 'the world' and transfer to a community with totalistic and exclusive claims. The believer is, so to speak, removed from the ordinary world of social reality (see 1986:194).

Meeks disputes the idea according to which Johannine literature suggests only the reflection or projection of the group's social situation. Instead, the explanation is dialectical: firstly, the group's Christological claims originated from their feelings of alienation at being expelled from the synagogue; and this alienation led to the further development of the Christological motifs that drove the group into further isolation (1986:194). Meeks' perception of the Johannine community as a sect is disputable, as we will try to demonstrate later on. His interesting study ends with the contention that the community has indeed become alienated on account of their Christological claims, but he fails to demonstrate this. Meeks was probably limited by the approach he used; therefore a more comprehensive one should be adopted.

The last work to be mentioned is the co-authored commentary on the Gospel using the socio-scientific approach which aims ‘to present a historically sensitive, cross-cultural, comparative set of lenses with which to hear (or read) the Gospel of John’ (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:ix) in a way that would be fair to its original author and audience. According to Malina, the communication does not take place in a vacuum since ‘language is essentially a form of social interaction. People direct language at each other in order to mean some social context (..) all ancient texts, that is, all ancient wordings, once did realise meanings from a social system’ (1994:167, 168). The method employed by these scholars was designed to bring reader and writer to share the same social system, and the same experience in order to attain adequate communication (1998:19). In that sense, the reading process becomes a social act as it provides the reader with access to the social system available to the original author.

Malina’s work is not as such an ordinary commentary; he does not undertake a thorough analysis of the text and is hard to follow. The only way to understand him is to discover how the concepts of anti-language and anti-society are introduced in Johannine studies in order to understand social protests from the margins of a dominant social order. The introduction of the concepts of shame and honour influenced scholars with regard to their understanding of the context into which early Christianity was integrated, namely the ancient Mediterranean culture (see Kealy 1997:852).

The fact that Malina and Rohrbaugh do not tackle the sacred texture, means that the usefulness of their research to an understanding of discipleship runs the risk of leading to inadequate results. In order to explain the text’s mythical language, Meeks develops his argument in two directions, the text itself, in the passages where the pattern descent-ascent along with the title Son of Man appears, and the community from which the language originates, demonstrates to what extent the socio-scientific approach lacks coherency. The way socio-scientific scholars ascribe absolute power to the social systems that inform the original writer fail to take into account the literary aspect of the text, and the rhetorical construct of the story predisposes one to misreading the text. Let us now look at how reader response works.

3 'Mirror-window' readings: M W G Stibbe

Reader-response criticism is a way of reading the whole Gospel as a story recounted by a skilful author. The hero of the story is Jesus, a man of both divine and human nature, who had come from heaven, was often misunderstood and persecuted, and who was compelled to play a game of hide-and-seek (cf Stibbe 1994:6). Stibbe depicts Jesus as John's hero and as the hidden Messiah.

This method was pioneered by Iser in his book *The Implied Reader*, which studies the actions involved in responding to the text and to the way a literary text is realized (cf. Iser, as quoted by Stibbe 1994:7). The approach is not concerned with the artistic elements of a text, but rather with the aesthetic elements and the responses engendered by the text in the reading process.

The author's creativity is such that, observes Iser (1974:275), he never tells the whole story, in which everything is laid out cut and dried before us. The text is written so that what is left unsaid stimulates the reader's imagination into creative activity. The author is regarded as a remarkable storyteller.

The application of Iser's theory to John's portrayal of Jesus as the hero is not easy to assimilate since, according to Stibbe (1994:9), the narrator tells very little about Jesus' thoughts, motives and attitudes.⁵ The reading process calls the reader to fill the gaps left by the author. As the author is imaginative in the creation of the story, likewise the reader must be imaginative to fill in the system of gaps.

In the study of the FG, Stibbe strives to group the chapters. He does not analyse John 9 separately, but takes it from the setting of Chapters 5-10 (1994:19-24). He contends that Jesus' elusiveness is suggested by his movements and the language he uses. As can be expected from a story in the ancient Hebrew tradition, the elusive personality of Jesus is indicated by action and speech (1994:23). Stibbe's approach reveals itself as being inappropriate to John when he says that Jesus cannot be taken as a hidden Messiah. Throughout the first part of the Gospel, Jesus reveals himself, and his revelation is greeted with unbelief and belief at the same time. The portrayal of Jesus as the Messiah does not follow Jewish expectation, for he is the

⁵ Only in these passages (2.24; 5.6; 6.6, 15, 61; 7.1, 39; 11.5, 33, 38; 12.33; 13.1, 3, 11, 21; 16.19; 18.4; 19.28; 21.19) are we given occasional, fragmented and laconic glimpses.

Son of man. This method, in its psychological view, shows itself inappropriate to the evangelist's understanding of Christology.

The last approach that will be discussed is that of narrative criticism.

4 Narrative readings: Culpepper and Zumstein

In Johannine studies, the emphasis upon the Gospel as literature, as 'story' or 'narrative,' is widely associated with R Alan Culpepper (1983) *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*. He moves from the perspective of investigating the world that created the text to the world the text itself creates (see O' Day 1997:184). He does so by means of an analysis of the use of symbolism and irony, and of John's imagery in order to discern the distinctive voice of the FG and to bring renewed vitality to exegetical work (O' Day 1986:11-32; Stibbe 1994:17-18; see also Culpepper (1983) & Duke (1985). The text is taken as a literary document that deals with language usage, the structure of the text, narrative structure, voices in the text, implied authors and readers etc. (see Botha 1998:53).

Focusing on the story-world created by the text (see Wilder quoted by O' Day 1997:184), the words powerfully invoke and summon a new reality and invite the reader to a new way of seeing the world. The text is seen as a medium of communication whose poetic features (textual) or affective (audience) must be analyzed in their own right (Segovia 1997:215). Through the text, the implied author leads the implied reader to understand what the Gospel is and how it achieves its effects. The implied author and the implied reader are of paramount importance in narrative reading as persuasive communication takes place between them (Tolmie 1995:181). The former is not the real author, but the picture of the author created by the story, while the latter is a construct of the text (De Boer 1995:98; cf. Culpepper 1983:6-7).

Culpepper's approach to reading the FG is guided by the idea that the plot is arranged with attention to conflicts, and to progression, climax and resolution (Segovia 1997:189). The plot interprets events by placing them in a certain sequence, in a context, and in a narrative world which defines their meaning. The interpretation of the gospel as a plot compels one to discover the role of Jesus as the central

character and the basic conflicts that propel the narrative. The gospel takes a very serious view of Jesus' awareness of the need to reveal the Father who sent him.

While the Prologue announces the coming of the Revealer in episode after episode, the narrator replays and develops the story of the Revealer, underlining various responses of belief and unbelief. In short, 'the plot of the gospel is propelled by conflict between belief and unbelief as responses to Jesus' (Segovia 1997:189). Dealing with the development of the plot throughout the gospel (see Culpepper 1983:86-98), he touches on another way to approach the Gospel, but unfortunately he does not apply this methodology to a text. One may notice how John writes down a *highly episodic* intrigue, as Culpepper (1990:106) explains:

L'intrigue de l'évangile développe le conflit entre la révélation et le rejet de la révélation, ou plus précisément le conflit entre la foi et l'incrédulité en tant que réponses face à Jésus. Scène après scène, on voit Jésus mettre les hommes au défi de comprendre la révélation et d'y répondre par la foi. Dans chaque scène, le lecteur est amené à passer en revue les diverses réponses possibles face à Jésus et les raisons qui motivent chacune de ces réponses. A chaque fois, le lecteur a l'occasion de répéter la vraie réponse, celle de foi.

In his essay *Crise du savoir et conflit des interprétations selon Jean 9: un exemple du travail Johannique*, Zumstein, as a representative of francophone scholarship, applies Culpepper's approach to reach the same results. He argues that the author shows his ability to use a traditional story in order to bring out the conflict of interpretation raised by the healing of the man born blind. Reading John 9 leads one to take into account three important points: first and foremost, the *intrigue* that structures the Johannine story should not be viewed as dramatic, but rather as thematic, since the implicit author does not focus on the logical sequence of situations lived by Jesus, the hero, to the extent that he could be transformed in order to reach his enquiry (2003:168). For Zumstein, the fundamental theme that underlies the narrative is 'to believe' that Jesus, the incarnated Logos, has come to reveal God the Father and yet, in the depth of John's narrative, the conflict between '*le croire*' and *le 'non-croire'* is present (Zumstein 1991:240).

It should be borne in mind that the evangelist reworks the traditional story of healing to underline the possible responses implied by Jesus' act of healing the man born blind. The episode recounted in Chapter 9 shows the effect of Christological

revelation. The blind man is depicted as following the way from obscurity to the light that leads to faith, while his parents and the Pharisees follow the way from light to the obscurity (of unbelief).

In interpreting Chapter 9, the second point to consider, in Zumstein's view, is the *symbolic language* of John which articulates a second meaning over and above the first meaning (2003:169). The symbolism of the language lies in expressions with a double meaning, so that the literal (first or immediate) meaning has to be put aside to attain the real meaning of the first reference. The last point to take into account is the structure of the chapter. The methodology that Zumstein employs helps him to pinpoint the conflict of interpretations created by the symbolic act of healing.

The method applied to the FG focuses on the text, to which is attributed the power to bridge the gap between the contemporaneous world and the world of the first addressees. However, by overlooking the historical and social context of the text, which did not arise in a vacuum, this process of reading loses its value and its contribution is limited as, unfortunately, it fails to be holistic. The dynamic between the narrative and the reader that takes place in the reading approach applied by Culpepper and Zumstein to John, without the reconstruction of the text's world, does not lead to the expected overall understanding of Chapter 9 that would be achieved through a socio-rhetorical reading.

5 Methodological overview: Conclusion

This outline enables one to conclude that the methodologies commonly selected in the interpretation of the FG fall into four categories, historical-critical methodology, which integrates the socio-historical approach, socio-scientific criticism, reader-response criticism and narrative (narratological) criticism.

The last decades of twentieth-century biblical criticism have been dominated by innumerable methodologies and approaches aimed at reading and understanding the text a little better (Botha 1998:51). Prior to the 1970s, the history of the composition of the text was indebted to source and redaction-critical reconstructions that, by fragmenting the text, lead to hypothetical results.

The work of Brown and Martyn must be seen as the turning point in Gospel research. Rather than fragment the Gospels, Brown offers a complex and long history

of their composition and at the same time comments on the text in its final canonical form. The shift operated by Brown and Martyn was to move from the history of the formation of the text (the reality behind the text) to the history of the community that shaped the writing of the gospel (toward the world *contemporaneous with* the text). The text comes to be viewed as a ‘window’ of the life, struggles and crises of the community. The conception of John’s narrative as a two-level drama has greatly influenced scholarly readings of the gospel and divides scholars into two different groups.

The historical-critical method is characterized by a strong sense of the ‘otherness’ of the text, which presupposes, reflects, and addresses a specific historical situation that can be scientifically reconstructed (see Segovia 1997:214). This hypothesis is scarcely held since, as Moloney puts it: ‘(...) what must be admitted is that all such reconstructions lie outside our scientific control, and suggests that we need to focus more intensely upon that which can be found within the text’ (2005b:127).

The sense of other-ness brings to the fore socio-scientific criticism, which is marked by the need to refine the social and cultural contexts of the texts and traditions to which historico-critical scholars refer as *Sitz im Leben*. Malina’s socio-scientific criticism, as a subdiscipline, brings historical criticism to its fullest expression, and Elliott interprets the method as an expansion or completion of historical criticism (cf. Robbins 1995:275) that deals with (1) social aspects of form and the content of the texts, (2) the correlation of linguistical, literary, theological (ideological) et social dimensions of the texts, (3) the manner textual communication has been the reflection of a specific social and cultural context and the reaction to the context. In other words, how it has been conceived to serve as an efficient vehicle for social interaction and an instrument to social, literary and theological fallouts (Lacocque 2005:141 citing Elliott 1993:7; for the definition, emergence and development of the method as well as its characteristics, cf. Lacocque 2005:141-150). It also deals with the correlation of linguistic, literary, theological (ideological) and social dimensions of texts, and the way textual communication is a reflection of its specific social and cultural context and its reaction to that context. The next step taken by socio-scientific critics, within the historical-critical method, is to lead

readers to read 'on the basis of social and cultural scenarios they are able to construct in their minds' (Malina 1991:3-23), that is, to read texts from the perspective of the First Century Mediterranean context in which the texts were written. Focus has been placed on language as a form of social interaction between people (Malina 1994:167). This insight is of important benefit to a more integrated reading of texts, for many literary and linguistic approaches have neglected this aspect by treating texts as 'language without social context' (Malina 1994:168; cf. Botha 1998:53). Malina discourages the readers' and even historians' attempts to construct scenarios on the basis of their own modern social and cultural experiences.

The historical-critical method and socio-scientific criticism concentrate on reading the text as window to historical, social and cultural reality. Malina, who still remains the key figure in socio-scientific scholarship, made a great contribution, but, by absolutising the social system (the gap between the text and the reader), his commentary on John failed to take into account its literary aspect and to address the ideological and sacred issues that are indivisible from the Gospel. Socio-scientific critics are interested primarily in verbal signs in texts that evoke things related to actual 'persons' and the 'social world' outside the texts (Robbins 1995:283).

In the ongoing work of historical research, those who advocated for a focus on the text itself, placed the historical-critical method into perspective and propose the literary analysis (context immanent) of the text as more helpful to understanding its meaning and the history to which it refers that lie in it (and not behind it). The text comes to function as a medium of communication between the implied author and the implied reader. To use a favourite term of the literary critics, the FG, in its final form, functions as a 'mirror', which means that the meaning of the text lies between text (mirror) and reader (observer) [see Culpepper 1983:4].

Both reader-response and narratological criticisms are 'mirror-like' ways of reading the text. The difference in their approaches is that narrative criticism explores the ways in which an implied author determines, through the medium of the text, an implied reader's response rather than on ways in which the (actual) reader determines the actual author's meaning (cf. De Boer 1995:98-9; Powell 1990:18). The weakness of reader-response criticism is that both Stribbe and Harris work with aspects of narrative-critical theory and, in essence, they remain on the level of the

text's 'saying', with little or no integration of historical questions such as historical 'distortions,' or any references to the rhetoric of the text (cf. Van den Heever 2002:301). Nowadays, it is well known that by focusing on the text as a powerful medium of communication, narrative criticism has the sole purpose of examining how the implied author persuades the implied reader. Yet Culpepper comes to the conclusion that historical and literary approaches need not be mutually exclusive, and calls for a 'dialogue' between the narrative and historical approaches (cf. Culpepper 1989:203-28; Id. 1990:97-120; Id. 1983:5; Stibbe 1992:97-120).

The twentieth century inherited the results of historical and linguistic research. Scholarship oscillated between two poles: those who favoured a literary reading of biblical texts, which focuses on the text itself rather than on the context from which the text came into being, and those interested in the context from which texts were produced. These narrative critics devote their interpretative efforts to the Gospel's 'literary design,' the portrayal of its characters, and focus on the narrative as a plot, the use of literary strategies like symbolism, irony and misunderstanding (De Boer 1995:98). The weakness of the approach is that it does not allow its practitioners to go beyond and outside the text. Meanwhile the weakness of historical-critical methods, as they developed, was to reduce NT texts to their historical nature as the 'document' in the world outside the text.' Reduced also to their theological nature, the interpreter concentrates on the beliefs that 'arise out of the historical world in which people produced these texts' (Robbins 1996a:15). Henceforth, a multi-dimensional approach was going to achieve the richest results.

The challenge is to develop 'strategies of analysis and interpretation that exhibit the multiple networks of meanings and meaning effects that the words in our texts represent, engage, evoke and invite' (Robbins 1996a:9). Only by bringing the socio-rhetorical method, which encompasses several fields of investigation (historical, social, cultural, ideological and psychological phenomena), into the project of theological reflection and construction could one reach a more holistic interpretation (Robbins 1996a:15). The socio-rhetorical approach is more useful than previous traditions of interpretation since it generates multiple strategies for reading and rereading texts in an environment and in a spirit of integration (1996a:9), by investigating how words interact with words in a particular text and at the same time

interact with phenomena outside the texts. Such an interdisciplinary approach is helpful to attain rich and unsuspected results. The method applied to John 9 is most helpful in uncovering the meaning and implication of being a disciple of Jesus.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH IN THIS STUDY

1 Introduction

The exegetical work will be started by situating John 9 in the narrative setting of the entire Fourth Gospel, so we shall see, through thematic links identified in the chapter, how from the micro-context of John 5 to 10, John 9 occupies a central position in the Christological debate. It is the climax that leads to divine agency (Jesus recognized as Son of Man) and devotion to Jesus (by the gesture of worship of him), and the completion of Christological agency (apparent in the growth of the healed man's knowledge of Jesus' identity in the story of John 9). It goes without saying that a good exegetical analysis has to start from the micro- and macro-context in which the text is grounded.

In this chapter an attempt will be made to demonstrate how discourse analysis and rhetorical criticism are concomitant with socio-rhetorical criticism. While the first step (of discourse analysis) seeks to determine the structure, rhetoric and semantic relations, and contours and focus area of the text and the theoretical account of argumentation in the whole chapter, the second (of rhetorical analysis) attempts to understand how the components of argumentation are arranged in the text in order to persuade the audience. The last step is an application of Robbins' socio-rhetorical criticism, done in such a way as to reach a comprehensive understanding of the issue of discipleship as depicted in Chapter 9. Let us provide a brief overview of rhetorical criticism before tackling the discourse analysis as part of the first stage of our chosen methodology, the inner texture.

2 Rhetorical criticism

Rhetorical criticism is an integral part of socio-rhetorical criticism, since its task is to understand how the components of argumentation are arranged in the text in order to persuade the audience. Rhetorical criticism has interested NT scholarship (see Porter & Olbrich 1993:29-513), and has led to endeavours to deal with 'how

people convince and persuade one another, how they influence each other, and the effect people have on one another' (Malina 1996:85). Tolmie notes that most scholars opt either for ancient or modern rhetorical approaches, with the obvious advantage that 'there usually exists a subtle interaction between the chosen model and its application to the text, in the sense that one tends to apply the specific rhetorical model in such a way as to justify the choice of that specific model' (2004:34; cf. also Anderson 1999:129ff.). This happens because there is no specific approach that can explain everything in the text. This study does not follow Cicero, or any modern scholar of rhetoric, but endeavours to reconstruct John's rhetorical strategy (the way the FE argues) from the Chapter. In the case of the Gospel of John, whose narrative is complex and has a notoriously dense text (Van den Heever 1999:344), the application of rhetorical criticism is no easier, for its rhetoric lies in the interplay of the various arenas of textures (inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture).

As the socio-rhetorical approach is rooted in a specific theory of religion, rhetorical criticism is a theory that demonstrates how powerful religious texts are. In the sacred texts, there is a unique mixture of 'theological, ethical, psychological, and other cultural material'. Through that approach, the interpreter may account for the power of religious texts (Aichele ... *et al.* 1995:170). The persuasive power of the text can be perceived from the way the Pharisees, on the one side, use arguments based upon their own knowledge while the blind man, on the other side, uses arguments based on his own experience. The irony that traverses the whole chapter is that the Pharisees are blinded, whereas the blind man becomes an open-minded disciple. Let us take a look at how the socio-rhetorical approach has to be applied to the Chapter.

3 Application of socio-rhetorical approach to John 9⁶

In order to arrive at a comprehensive reading of an ancient text such as the FG, it is important to take into account ‘the literary nature of texts, their rhetorical nature, the fact that they form part of a whole tradition of texts, literary artifacts, traditions and so on’ (Botha 1998:53-4). In these conditions, Robbins’

⁶ To define the term ‘socio-rhetorical criticism’, Gowler breaks it down into its constituent parts (see Robbins 1993:4-6). The term ‘socio’ in socio-rhetorical criticism presupposes interaction among people. Such a social analysis examines how people interact with one another; interactions that involve linguistic signs and codes that bond certain people together into groups and may establish identifiable boundaries between them and others. The term ‘rhetorical’ in socio-rhetorical ‘refers to communication in contexts of interaction among similar and different individuals and groups’. The rhetorical analysis seeks to understand how repetition, progression and convention produce patterns of communication (figures, concepts, and actions) that indicate people deliberating together, evaluating one another and establishing common values, attitudes and goals through commendation and censure. Finally, ‘criticism’ is nothing other than critical interpretation that demand that the interpreter make judgments, clarify through rigorous evaluation, and critically assess statements against other statements. In sum, socio-rhetorical analysis, as a new way of evaluating old boundaries without disrupting them by sustaining dialogue with them (for details, cf. Robbins 1993:1-36), ‘emphasises the wide range of strategies, both overt and covert, that constitute persuasive communication’ (Robbins 1984:6). The choice of the method is not fortuitous since socio-rhetorical hermeneutics plays a two-fold role as Robbins puts it this way ‘(...) with one eye and ear I seek all the features of a text that give it potential rhetorical power and effect, and with the other eye and ear I seek the features of a text that exhibit its social, cultural, ideological and religious functions’ (Robbins 1998:103). It is in that perspective that Robbins endeavours to apply the socio-rhetorical approach to biblical texts (see for instance Robbins 2004b:247-264; 2003:327-339; 2002:27-65; 1999:95-121; 1998b:191-214; 1996:341-351; 1994:59-81; 1992a:91-105; 1992b:1161-1183, etc). In order to demonstrate, for instance, at what extent the mixture of Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts is real in the Gospel of Mark, he uses this approach to uncover new boundaries as found in old territory (see Robbins 1993:37-242). In that sense, the use of the concept ‘texture’ applied to five types in the process of understanding of any text shows the ability of an interpretive analytics to reinvent the terminology that helps to describe the multiple dimensions of discourse within the texts. Therefore, rhetorical criticism, as it stands, should have invented a new vocabulary in order to refer comprehensively to dimensions of rhetoricity in texts by the incorporation of Twentieth-Century practices of interpretation into it. The term ‘texture’, it seems, is new and is used to reconfigure our approach to the rhetoricity of texts (see Robbins 1997:30-32). The socio-rhetorical approach is to be seen as an excellent example of promoting dialogue between and among biblical scholars inasmuch as it provides a programmatically-oriented approach helpful to explore a text from different angles, multiple textures of meanings, convictions, values, emotions, and actions (cf. Gowler 2000:12 <http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~dgowler/REarticle.htm>). Although, the importance of Robbins’ socio-rhetorical analysis is that ‘it is a comprehensive attempt to provide a programmatic model to establish and facilitate necessary dialogues among the very diverse scholars currently found within the guild of biblical studies’ (Gowler 2000:12). Although, Robbins never did apply his socio-rhetorical approach to the FG, this study endeavours to do so, for the first time, in its exegetical study of John 9.

comprehensive approach is more useful than previous traditions of interpretation. This method generates multiple strategies for reading and rereading texts in an environment and a spirit of integration (1996a:9), by making words interact with words, in John 9 in particular, and at the same time interacting with phenomena outside Chapter 9.

The very act of interpretation to which the approach invites us is to enter a world where ‘body and mind interacts with one another, create and evoke highly complex patterns and configurations of meanings in historical, social, cultural and ideological contexts of religious belief’ (Robbins 1996a:14).

The socio-rhetorical method integrates within it some aspects of the socio-scientific method (whose overall task is to interpret the NT texts in the context of the First Century Mediterranean world from which they come) and of discourse analysis (an interdisciplinary approach to language and human communication, seeking to understand the relationships between language, discourse, and situational context in human communication). The socio-rhetorical approach is a complex network of textures that guide the reader in the following ways: (1) inner texture; (2) intertexture; (3) social and cultural texture; (4) ideological texture, and (5) sacred texture. It is a ‘multidimensional activity’ that creates meaning and touches on many aspects of the biblical text as will be demonstrated when the approach is applied to Chapter 9.

3.1 The first stage: investigate the inner texture

Inner-texture concerns the interaction between the author, the text and the reader. As words are perceived as tools of communication that occur between the reader and the text, our task will not be to see how words are repeated, like Robbins recommends, but to discover how they relate to one another. The structure, with some recourse to discourse analysis, is applied to the chapter, segmented into seven scenes help to determine the subsections of the verses and the Evangelist’s argument, and to see how these sections phrases and words relate semantically to one another.

Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach to language and human communication. It seeks to understand the relationships between language, discourse, and situational context in human communication. Reed contends that (1997:190-4)

four tenets are found useful in the exegesis of the NT texts. However, our first task will be to look at the actual language of the discourse in taking into account words, phrases and sentences through which the writer strives to communicate his message to recipients or readers. The language of discourse reveals how participants are involved and how they respond to the message (see Reed 1997:190).

As ‘words or sentences are rarely used in isolation, but typically as part of an extended discourse of sequenced sentences’ (1997:191), the next step is to find out how the language of a discourse is used to create cohesive and coherent communication. The focus is on the role that specific languages or linguistic codes play, not only in the construction of the discourse, but especially in the production of the message that the semantic relations bring out.

Discourse analysis, as it stands, is an appraisal of the language of the text as a whole. The interpreter has to keep in perspective both the language of the text as a system and the individual message of the text.

The application of the discourse analysis to the whole of Chapter 9 endeavours to determine the subsections of the verses, the Evangelist’s argument and how these sections relate to one another. Before outlining the way the socio-rhetorical approach will be applied, a few words should be said about rhetorical criticism.

We have to bear in mind that discourse analysis,⁷ when applied to John 9, within the socio-rhetorical approach, seeks to determine the structure, rhetoric and focus area of the text and the theoretical account of argumentation at the beginning of this chapter. Discourse analysis helps us to look closely at words and phrases that create ‘linguistic cohesiveness’. The analysis of the semantic content of John’s language in Chapter 9 is a way of understanding how segmented units demonstrate

⁷ I have consciously avoided the use of inner textural analysis as proposed by Robbins which reveals how, by focusing on words as tools for communication, one can ‘remove all meanings’ from the words and simply look at and listen to ‘the words themselves’ in order to perform an analysis (1996b:7). This kind of analysis shows how repeated words identify the theme running through the text and how the text composition guides us to the central thought. It is thus helpful in facilitating the identification of four kinds of inner-texture (repetitive, progressive, opening-middle-closing and sensory-aesthetic texture) from which is drawn the discourse analysis. This way of working ‘innertexturally’ will help to structure the text in order to see how words interact one another, creating, so to speak, a meaningful view of interpretation.

the argumentative construct of the evangelist.

3.2 The second stage: intertexture

Intertexture is a text's reference to the phenomena that lie in the 'world' outside the text. The interaction between the language of the text and its external reality may be with physical objects, or historical events (historical intertexture), texts themselves (oral-scribal intertexture), customs, values, roles, institutions and systems (social intertexture) (see Robbins 1996b:40; see also 1997:31; see how Robbins applies the intertexture (2002:12-44) upon the Apocalyptic discourse in the Gospel of Mark). According to Van den Heever and Van Heerden (2001:113), the major benefit of intertextual analysis, is 'to determine the extent to which the changes made to these references help to create meaning in the text'. The text's meaningfulness lies in a rich configuration of texts, cultures and social and historical phenomena.

Some terms and/or concepts are selected from this chapter whose meaning must be sought not only within, but outside the chapter. The starting point of the interpretative task is to explain how the term *μαθητής*, which occurs at the beginning of the chapter, cannot be understood without looking outside the gospel itself (OT, philosophical schools, synoptic tradition), even outside the chapter, that is, throughout the Book of Signs (Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 11, 12). The term 'light', metaphorically employed for Jesus, needs to be properly understood in terms of OT usage, Qumran literature, Gnosticism and the rest of the NT. The miracle of making the man born blind recover his sight provokes division in the synagogue. The understanding of the term 'miracle' in John as 'sign' suggests the reconstruction of the term from the background of miracle-workers or Graeco-Roman healers, the conception of miracle in the OT and the Synoptic Gospels. The cultural and social intertexture shows interpreters how texts refer to and evoke the world in which they communicate.

3.3 The third stage: Social and cultural texture

Social and cultural texture relates to the social and cultural nature of *the text as a text*. Investigation of the social and cultural texture of a text includes exploring the social and cultural ‘location’ of the language and the type of social and cultural world the language evokes and creates. At this stage, the endeavour is to ascertain how Chapter 9 *constructs* a social and cultural world and then exhibits it to us. This is reflected *firstly* from specific social topics where, obviously, the Jewish world is dominated by two sets of characters, the Pharisees and the ‘Jews’, prominent in the Synagogue, committed to a power struggle with the Christians, represented by the blind man. From John 9, one notes how the FE attempts to reconstruct the entire social world according to given and divine principles adopted by both groups seeking a way to survive. It is from that perspective that we should understand the phenomenon of expulsion from the synagogue, and the expression must be taken as John’s *hapax legomena* as it occurs only in John 9.22; 12.42 and 16.3.

Secondly, common social and cultural topics dialectically expressed with honour and shame (see Robbins 1997:31). Patron and client will be described in accordance with the social and cultural world in which the text functions, thus we can discover how people in those days, in a world very different from ours, thought and acted.

Thirdly, cultural categories related to discipleship are tackled by referring to the evangelist’s language, which socio-scientific critics conceive as ‘anti-language’. In Chapter 9, concepts like sin, Jews, Pharisees, synagogue, and the titles given to Jesus demonstrate the extent to which the community of the disciples that produced the gospel, aware of its particular status and mission in the world, buy into the well-known language to set itself apart and in ideological opposition to the ‘Jews’.

3.4 The fourth stage: ideological texture

Unlike the inner texture, which deals with the words, phrases, and clauses of the text itself, the ideological texture investigates the discourse of people (relation to groups), the author (ideological voice of the implied author), previous interpreters (modes of intellectual discourse), biases, opinions, preferences and stereotypes

(ideological texture of the researcher). Robbins asserts that ‘in the arena of ideological texture, there are ideological dimensions in biblical texts, in authoritative commentary, in individuals and groups and in intellectual discourse’ (1997:31). The very first step is to make my own assessment of how the Bible was approached four decades ago, and in my present life after many years of theological training. The second will deal with the people’s relationship with other groups⁸, particularly the Jewish synagogue and the Christian group, which were both corporate and competitive. The focus is not on them as simple people, but on their discourse, in order to discuss whether the Johannine Community was really a sectarian group. The third step is an attempt to demonstrate how historical-critical, socio-scientific, literary commentators (modes of intellectual discourse) cannot manage to bring out the kind of ideology that Chapter 9 compels us to reconstruct. In John 9, an ideology⁹ is construed around religious issues such as the Sabbath, sin and Moses as an exceptional figure within Jewish religious imagery related to the issue of revelation. However, John is concerned to show Jesus as the legitimate replacement for Moses,

⁸ For more detail, one may use the following taxonomies in accordance with Van den Heever and Van Heerden (2001:128-9; Robbins 1996:100-1), namely, clique (temporary coalition or cooperation agreement between members who meet regularly on a basis of shared interests), gang (a temporary alliance or large clique with a view to specific limited objective; it is clearly grouped around a single leader), action set (it is a group of persons who meet, as a coalition pursuing a specific objective, in order to coordinate their actions, a group which has a goal to achieve), faction (a coalition of persons recruited by or acting on behalf of a person who is in conflict with another person; it exists as a competitive group within a larger social unit such as a town, association or other coalition), corporate group (it is a group with a certain permanence, organised with some principles, having mutual rights and obligations as academic and professional societies), historical tradition (it may be defined as a ‘culture of interpretation’ to which one belongs, an acceptable and typical way of doing things, for example Roman Catholic, Protestant Evangelical, or Pentecostal biblical interpretation), multiple historical traditions (this refers to an approach that consciously relates the interpretation of the Bible to the interpretation of other religious scriptures associated with, for example, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism or traditional religions).

⁹ For an understanding of ideology, see Van den Heever and Van Heerden 2001:125-7. Davies, quoted by Robbins (1996b:96), defines ideology as ‘an integrated system of beliefs, assumptions, and values’ that reflects ‘the needs and interests of a group or class at a particular time in history’. John H. Elliot, quoted by Robbins (1996b:96), pursuing that explanation, argues that ‘this integrated system proceeds from the need to understand, to interpret to self and others, to justify, and to control one’s place in the world. Ideologies are shaped by specific views of reality shared by groups – specific perspectives on the world, society and man, and on the limitations and potentialities of human existence’. There are four steps in the process of ideological texture: individual locations, relation to groups, modes of intellectual discourse and spheres of ideology.

for he has ‘a position almost of equality with God’, for John’s answer is that it is not ‘Moses, but Jesus [who] is the equal of God and the supreme revelation’.

3.5 The fifth stage: sacred (sacral) texture

Sacral texture has to do with the relationship between human life and the divine or transcendent. An analysis of the sacred texture is designated to describe how the text speaks of God or the gods, or about the domain of religious life (Van den Heever and Van Heerden 2001:132).

Robbins distinguishes eight faces of sacral texture (deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community and ethics). This study will deal with six of those eight. The first step will be to describe how Chapter 9 deals with God and Jesus, his envoy, whose legitimacy is demonstrated by his works and the words given to him by the Father. Jesus’ identity relied on the titles Rabbi, prophet, [man] from God, Son of man, Light of the world, along with ‘I am saying’ in order to show how John conceives the Christology. Then the next step is to deal with the holy person (how Jesus is accepted as the Messiah and as a holy man, while the FE relies on him as Son so as not to violate Jewish monotheism; those who follow him understand him that way and those who reject him do not). This divine history narrated in Chapter 9 seems to be that of God coming into the world, but not being acknowledged. Jesus as the Son of man brings about a messianic mission of judgment because of unbelief.

Human redemption is tackled through ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’, two important ways leading to faith in Jesus as the Son of man. Ultimately, human commitment (the sacred texture of a text), regularly includes a portrayal of humans who are faithful followers and supporters of figures like Moses and Jesus, and who play a special role in revealing the ways of God to humans. Christian texts like John 9 refer to this phenomenon as ‘discipleship’. The commitment to either holds ethical implications since they think and act in special ways. They include guidelines on how to express commitment to God.

Subsequently we will examine how two opposed groups, the ‘disciples of Moses’ and the ‘disciples of Jesus,’ teach us much about the issue of discipleship in John 9. All these aspects of a text, including sacred texture, are embedded deeply in

the inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture and ideological texture of a text. For this reason, a major way to gain a fuller understanding of the meanings and meaning-effects of sacred texture is through an analysis and interpretation of other textures in the context of an understanding of the sacred texture of Chapter 9.

Before we attempt to carefully scrutinise the text itself, it is important to deal with things ‘outside’ the text, in other words, the issues that relate to dating, location and authorship, as well as the history of the community from which the blind man emerges as another paradigm besides the BD.

4 Special features

The conventions that are followed in the process of writing this dissertation are:

4.1 Main sources

The main sources used are:

- **For the English text of the Bible:**

7. Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version: Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal and Deuterocanonical Books. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers.

- **For the Greek Text of the New Testament:**

8. Aland B *et al.* eds 1993. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

9. Aland B *et al.* eds 2005. *Greek-English New Testament*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

4.2 Footnotes and references

In this dissertation, references with quotations and footnotes are used. Footnotes serve to give different points of view and to substantiate arguments. Since they are not incorporated into the body of the text, the footnotes are indicated by an arabic numeral placed slightly above the line directly after punctuation marks. All the numbers follow a consecutive numeric sequence number throughout the entire

dissertation. Footnotes that refer to the number in the text usually appear at the bottom of the page. Some of the footnotes are not incorporated in the bibliography. Those that are, are mentioned in manner that orientates the reader towards more details (cf. (see p.7 note 3, p.54 note 14, p.58 note 18, p.70 note 28, p.94 note 37, p.186 note 157, p.198 note 171, p.205 note 181, p. 210 note 187, p.223 note 195, p.252 note 226, p.271 note 259, p.271 note 259).

Following the Harvard reference system, I at the same time used the references with quotations: when quotations run into the text, the source is given into parentheses at the end of the quotation ; for instance (Botha 1998:23); when the author's name is part of the sentence, the reference is given directly after his name (for instance Robbins 1996:45).

4.3 Abbreviations

In the dissertation, some references are written in full whereas the abbreviations of biblical books (even some titles of journals) used are indicated in alphabetic order.

1 En: 1 Enoch
 1 Jn: 1 John
 1 Macc: 1 Maccabees
 1 Pet: 1 Peter
 1 QM: War Scroll
 1 QS: The Rule of the Community
 1 Thess: 1 Thessalonians
 2 Apoc.Bar: 2 Apocalypse of Baruch
 2 Jn: 2 John
 2 Kings: 2 Kings
 3 En: 3 Enoch
 3 Jn: 3 John
 'Abot R.Nat.: 'Abot de Rabbi Nathan
 ANRW: Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt
 Ant.: Antiquity (Antiquities)
 ATJ: African Theological Journal
 BD: Beloved Disciple
 BECNT : Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
 BTB: Biblical Theology Bulletin
 CBQ: The Catholic Biblical Quarterly
 D. Th.: Doctorate in Theology
 Dan: Daniel

Deut: Deuteronomy
 Ed: editor
 Eds: editors
 Eph: Ephesians
 Epid.Inscr.: Epidauros inscription
 Et al.: and others
 Ethio. Enoch: Ethiopic Enoch
 Ex: Exodus
 ExpT: Expository Times
 Ezek: Ezekiel
 FE : Fourth Evangelist
 FG : Fourth Gospel
 Gal: Galatians
 Gen: Genesis
 Hab: Habakkuk
 Heb: Hebrews
 Hos: Hosea
 HTS: Hervarmde Theologiese Studies
 Isa: Isaiah
 Jas: James
 JBL : Journal of Biblical Literature
 JETS: Journal of Evangelical Theological Society
 Jn: John
 Joh com: Johannine Community
 Jer: Jeremiah
 JSNT: Journal for the Study of the New Testament
 JSNTS: Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement
 JSOTS: Journal of the Study of the Old Testament Supplements
 JSP: Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
 Lk: Luke
 LXX: Septuagint
 Mk: Mark
 Mt: Matthew
 Neot: Neotestamentica
 NovT: Novum Testamentum
 NovTSup: Novum Testamentum Supplement
 NT: New Testament
 NTS: New Testament Studies
 Num: Numbers
 OT: Old Testament
 Pesiq.Rab: Pesiqta Rabbati
 Phil: Philippians
 Prelim. studies: Preliminary studies
 Prov: Proverbs
 Ps: Psalms
 Rev: Revelation
 Rom: Romans
 T.Moses: Testament of Moses

Test. of Dan: Testament of Daniel
Test. of Jud: Testament of Judah
Test. of Levi: Testament of Levi

Chapter 5

HISTORICAL QUESTIONS: DATING, LOCATION AND AUTHORSHIP

1 Introduction

This chapter aims to reconstruct the historical background to which the FG refers. In order to construct the meaning of the FG, the first tasks are to locate its origin, to reconstruct the date of its writing and to examine the arguments regarding the Gospel's authorship. Any careful reading leads the interpreter to focus on the relationship between the FG as a biblical text and the world of which it was a part and to which it refers. Its message can be understood when the gospel, viewed as a text, is seen as an act of communication in a specific context. Why? Because (in the words of Smith), in order to construct 'meaning,' it is necessary to see 'all texts as "texts in context, specific acts of communication between specified individuals, at specific points in time and space, about specifiable subjects"' (Smith quoted by Van den Heever 1999:346). Religious texts are concerned with human life – worlds, human contexts, and human social-contexts, somewhere and at some point in time.

This study that focuses upon discipleship in Chapter 9 compels us to enter the ancient world projected by the text, since the text is very much a window upon the historical situation and the social environment in which the disciples were recruited. Although the FG does not deal with historical questions, the way it rhetorically constructs the events must be dealt with in order to understand the issue of discipleship that the text evokes. Knowledge of the date, the location and the author of the Gospel are useful in the perspective of reconstructing the community that produced the text and to which the disciples pertained. Before reconstructing the Johannine community, let us start by the issues surrounding its existence.

2 Date of the Written Gospel

The dating of the FG oscillates between two important tendencies, the *terminus ante quem*, which favours the later plausible date (100-110), and the other,

terminus post quem, which favours the earlier plausible date (40-60) [see Brown 2003:207-10]. This section will consider the most probable date of the writing of the Gospel. Those who prefer the later plausible date opt for the early first century or the second century:

- The classic argument to support this very late date for John was the development of the theology of the text. Comfortable with the so-called Hegelian ‘thesis-antithesis-synthesis’, Baur surprisingly put the Synoptic Gospels, Paul’s Epistles and John into this framework of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Such a view misreads the Pauline writings as antedating the Synoptic Gospels. All the same, most scholars think of the FG as the latest of the four gospels, but the theory of theological development cannot support this. This lack of support stems from two examples. The first is that the Johannine sacramentalism, as evident in 6:51-58, is too well developed to have been formulated in the first century; the origin of that sacramental thought had to come from the Church. The second supporting argument is the disputable claim of the common authorship of the Gospel itself and the epistles of John. That is why Brown points out that ‘there is nothing in the theology of John that would clearly rule out final composition in the first century’ (2003:207).
- The second argument used to support dating John in the late second century, is the fact that there is no evidence of the use of John before 150 CE. Against this argument, Braun asserted that Ignatius of Antioch (110 CE) must have known the Johannine tradition in spite of not knowing the Gospel in the final form of the composition. It is not possible to establish whether Clement of Rome, (96 CE) used the FG.
- The third argument is the evident affection for this Gospel in second-century Gnostic circles. The holders of that opinion consider Gnosticism to be dependent on the FG;
- The fourth argument, according to which the Gospel was circulated in the later period (140-200 CE), has received little support since the papyrus P⁵² containing John 18.31,33,37s. was dated at around 150 and located in Egypt.

The second important reason is that the Gospel is known by Polycarp of Smyrna (around 110).

Those who argue in favour of the early date for the FG maintain that the traditions that underlie the synoptic Gospels are to be situated in the period of 40-60 CE; these very traditions are behind the FG. Henceforth, the Synoptic gospels were written in the period 75-85 CE and the Gospel of John was written at more or less the same time.

The strong argument for John's late dating is supported by the tradition, certainly known and present in the FG, which took shape before the destruction of the temple in 70, or at least shortly after 70 CE. References to the expulsion from the synagogue (9:22; 12:42; 16:2) should be taken as internal evidence from the narrative itself that the gospel could not have been written before 70 CE. Such references, as Lincoln (2005:18) notes, are the arguments with the greatest weight, since, firstly, if these passages refer to the decision of a local synagogue, this is not likely to have occurred much earlier than 80 CE. The fact that the FG shows knowledge not only of the Synoptic tradition but also on some occasion of material of the editorial work of the synoptic evangelists, would strongly suggest an early date of around 85 CE. Lincoln comes to this decision by observing that 'these refer to the decision of a local synagogue, this is not likely to have occurred much earlier than 80 CE' (2005:18). It is obvious that Lincoln probably influenced by Martyn (1979) grounds on historical external data.

However, Köstenberger (see 2005:213-28), confident with internal data, invalidates the emphasis upon the so-called *Birkat ha-minim* as the major historical datum underlying the Gospel's composition, and lists four reasons that postulate rather in favour of the event of the destruction of the Temple: (1) a recent comparable rise in treatments of the temple in relation to Johannine theology; (2) the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE presented as a secure, indisputable historical datum, and one that is clearly recent from the vantage point of a composition of the FG in the 80s or early 90s CE; (3) the destruction of the Temple, as recent Johannine scholars strive to demonstrate, has significant impact on all Jews in Palestine and the Diaspora inasmuch as the Temple is a national religious symbol,

and (4) the loss of previous sanctuaries by God's people led to the messianic expectations centred on God's presence manifested more fully in the person of the Messiah.

The dating of the gospel writing to after 80 CE divides scholarship into two important groups: those who militate for the period between 85-95 CE,¹⁰ and those who argue in favour of 90 CE and 110 CE.¹¹ It should be argued that the Gospel composition cannot be pushed much beyond 100 CE, but the best estimate of most scholars, then, is that the Gospel, in its final form, was completed and began to be circulated some time between 90 and 110 CE.

The argument may be grounded on the internal evidence when one looks at John's Christological formulation. The evangelist attempts to positively interpret the religious vacuum left by the event of the destruction of the second Temple in pinpointing Jesus as a permanent alternative to the Temple. He is viewed as the fulfilment of Jewish religious symbolism, for instance religious institutions such as the tabernacle or the temple (see 1.14, 51; 2.14-22; 4.19-24) and various religious festivals (7.1-8, 59; 10.22-39). Jesus is also perceived as a replacement for the temple in the religious experience of God's people (see Köstenberger 2005:215, 228). That perception is obvious in Chapter 9, where the community of the disciples,

¹⁰ Amongst these Lindars (1972:42) must be listed. In dealing with the Christian and Jewish background, he envisages 85-95 CE as the most probable date of composition. The second is Carson, who takes up four basic reasons for defending a date toward the end of the 1st century (85-95 CE): (1) a very strong agreement amongst theologians according to which the Gospel was written under the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96 CE); (2) a strong contingent of scholars whose dominant personality is Martyn subscribe to the concept and the term 'to be put out of the synagogue' that occurs in 9.22; 12.42 and 16.2, testifying to a period after the decision of the Council of Jamnia to ban Christians from the synagogue; (3) the fact that the gospel is silent on the Sadducees, who contributed much to the religious life of Jerusalem and Judea before AD 70, and on the scribes whose influence increased after 70 CE and the priests whose influence diminishes after 70 CE. All of these details are evidence of a late date for the gospel, and, finally (4) many scholars who strive to reconstruct the development of Christian doctrine think that the theology reflected in the FG could not have developed much before the end of the first century (1991:83-4).

¹¹ Scholarship strives to demonstrate that John's Gospel must have been written after the death of the Emperor Domitian, after 98 CE. According to Irenaeus, the Johannine corpus must have been edited not much earlier than shortly after 100 CE (Hengel 1990:25). In the year of 100 CE, the apostle would have been about a hundred years old (Beasley-Murray 1989:6), which suggests that the writing cannot be attributed to him. Lincoln (2005:18) recently pointed out that the best guess of most scholars – unfortunately without citing them – is that the Gospel, in its final form, was completed and began to be circulated at some time between 90 and 110 CE.

represented by the man born blind, not only confess Jesus as the Son of Man, but also worship him (9.38; see also 20.28) as the true recipient of Christian adoration that takes place outside the temple. The community from which the Gospel originated was aware of the depiction of Jesus as the one fulfilling the messianic expectations and envisioned him as the one inaugurating ‘a more permanent form of God’s presence with his people’ (Köstenberger 2005:228).

3 Location of the Gospel

It is not easy to locate the FG. From external and internal evidence, Jerusalem (Palestine), Alexandria (Egypt),¹²Syria¹³ and Ephesus (Asia Minor) have

¹² The conclusion recently drawn by Waetjen (2005:39) with reference to Sanders (1943) is that ‘the only plausible context for this Gospel, at least its first edition of chapters 1-20, would be Alexandria, and the only likely readership would be the Jewish people of Alexandria.’ (cf. Martyn 1979:76 note 100; 1979:162-3). Dealing with *internal evidence*, Waetjen lists 15 features which determine the original location of the gospel in Alexandria, namely the use of Nathanael as ‘the true Israelite’ who ‘sees,’ the emphasis on signs as a distinctive Jewish orientation, Jesus’ supersession of Moses in the light of 1.17, 3.14 and 6.32, the frequent use of the divine self-disclosure *ego eimi* etc. (cf. Waetjen 2005:32-45). Two others that have to be taken as determinative by this study according to which Alexandria as location where the Gospel was written is firstly the fact that after the catastrophic event of the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, many Jews in Alexandria could have been influenced by Philo’s philosophical synthesis of Judaism and Middle Platonism to the extent that the Torah was acknowledged to be pre-existent, identified with Wisdom and the Agent of the creation. This is in accordance with the following declaration by Rabbi Eliezer ben Jose of Galilee (c.150CE): ‘Before the world was made, the Torah was written and lay in the bosom of God, and with the ministering angels uttered a song.’ (also see *Abot R. Natan* 47, 130 B and *Siphre Deut* 307.4.2 quoted by Waetjen 2005:31. It seems that the FG by its summary account confronted the Alexandrian Jews with Jesus as another and decisive alternative, the Logos as the agent of creation, communication and interpretation. Another incident within the FG is the witness to the expulsion from the synagogue on the charge of being guilty of confessing Jesus as the Messiah (9.22; 12.42 and 16.2) that is related to the *birkat ha-minim* formulated in the years following the destruction of Jerusalem, probably in the early 80s. It seems that Samuel the Little formulated the so-called *birkat ha-minim* as the twelfth petition of the *Shemoeh Esreh*, a prayer of eighteen benedictions. The FG seemingly alludes to and contests the pharisaic ideology of separation put into practice by excommunicating Christian Jews from the Jewish community in Palestine and in cities of the Hellenistic world, such as Antioch and Alexandria (Waetjen 2005:32-4). Dealing with external evidence, he pursues the idea that the plausibility of Alexandria is reinforced by more persuasive bits and pieces of evidence such as Rylands Papyrus 457 generally referred to as P⁵² and acknowledged as a preserved fragment of John 18.31-3 and 37-8. This papyrus found in Egypt and dated 125-150 CE militates for the origin of the gospel in Alexandria. On a historical plane, a NT apocryphal writing, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, contemporaneous with the *Apocryphon* of James stands as another witness to the Alexandrian origin of the FG (see Waetjen 2005:46-9).

been proposed.¹⁴

Ephesus remains the primary contender. The majority of scholars (including Brown 1966 [1971]:ciii-civ; Lindars 1972:43,¹⁵ Schnackenburg 1980a:85-91, Cassidy 1992:3-4; Achtemeier 2001:204; Duling 2003:407; Köstenberger 2004:7-8; Lincoln 2005:89 etc.) point to Ephesus as the plausible location of the Gospel. Another historical stand is that the church tradition pleads for Ephesus (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv.Haer.* III 1,1; II 22,5; III 3,4). However, this study will not visit the debate around the location of the Gospel that divides scholarship, but will assume with the majority of scholars that the Fourth Gospel was written in Syria, even if it was perhaps drawn up in *Ephesus*.

4 Authorship

The quest for the identity of the author of the FG was long ago regarded as the most fascinating and important problem of NT criticism, to the extent that no other question, throughout the NT, held such significance (cf. Hengel 1990:2). The identity of the author raises a strong and provocative debate. The reconstruction of the identity of the author is grounded on evidence taken up by Brown (1966: lxxxviii-xcviii) and passed on to recent scholars.

¹³ According to Zumstein (2004:361-362), Syria has been chosen because it was the locus (1) of proximity to a strong pharisaic synagogue, a synagogue brave enough to separate from troublesome brothers plunging them into distress (Zumstein 1993:34); (2) where Baptist circles honoured their deceased master; (3) where heterodox Judaism was flourishing ; (4) where the pre-Gnostic trends were to develop; (5) where the Greek language was used (excluding the probability of Palestine as the locus since the Hebraic names were translated into Greek); and (6) where the figures like Peter and Thomas played an authoritative role. Long ago, Bultmann (1971:12), confronted with the semitic style of the author and the relationship of the Gospel to the Gnostic revelation discourses, the letters of Ignatius of Antioch and the Odes of Solomon, came to the conclusion that all of these support the assumption that the Gospel originated in the area of Syria. Kümmel (1973:246-247) makes very much the same arguments to propose Syria as the likeliest location of the Gospel.

¹⁴ For the discussion, see Keener 2003a:142-149.

¹⁵ Lindars lists four factors militating for such a location: (1) a connection between the book of Revelation and John, even though they were not been written by the same author. And yet, Rev 1.9, 11 and 2.1 point to Ephesus; (2) Ignatius and Polycarpe point to Asia Minor as echoing the FG's style and language; (3) Hellenistic sects flourished in Asia, for instance, a Baptist group to which the FE refers in Ac, 19.1-7; (4) Ephesus had a large and important Jewish community (cf. Ac. 18.19, 24-8; 19.8-20). The anti-synagogue motif in the Gospel makes sense in the Ephesus region, for Revelation 2.9 and 3.9 attest anti-synagogue polemics in this area of Asia Minor.

The external evidence points to the tradition according to which John, the son of Zebedee, was the author of the FG (for the discussion, cf. Brown 1966: lxxxviii-xcii; Schnackenburg 1980a:77-91; Carson 1991:68-76; Charlesworth 1995:197-213; Bultmann 1971:10-11 and Lincoln 2005:19). The great difficulty presented by the enigma of the authorship has led scholars to turn to the internal evidence of the FG (cf. Schnackenburg 1980a:94; Lincoln 2002:6; Brown 1966: xciv; Kysar 1975:96-101), pinpointing the mysterious Beloved Disciple as the author of the gospel.¹⁶ Two

¹⁶ For more details on the Beloved Disciple as a character in the FG, consult KS O'Brien (2005). Written that you may believe: John 20 and narrative rhetoric. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 67 (2), 284-302; A Marjaneen(2005). Mary Magdalene. A Beloved Disciple. *Mariam, the Magdalen, and The Mother*, 49-61; BD Johnson (2005). Thomas and Marturia. John 20.24-31. *Proceedings – Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies*, 169-178; R Burnet (2002). Pierre, apôtre entre Judas et le disciple bien-aimé. *Etudes théologiques et religieuses* 77 (1), 105-11; BS Davis (2002). The Identity of the Disciple Whom Jesus Loved. *Expository Times* 113 (7), 230-31; I Dunberberg (2002). The Beloved Disciple in John. Ideal Figure in an Early Christian Controversy. *Fair Play*, 243-69; Jennings, TW (2001). Jesus and The Man he Loved. *Chicago Theological Seminary Register* 91 (3), 5-16; Y Bekker (2001). The Beloved Disciple in John 13.23. *Unless Some One Guide Me ...Festschrift for Karel A Deurloo*, 309-14; H Garcia (1999). Lazare, du mort vivant au disciple bien-aimé: le cycle et la trajectoire narrative de Lazare dans le quatrième évangile. *Revue des sciences religieuses* 73 (3), 259-92; M Ebner (1998). Wer liebt mehr? Die liebende Jüngerin und der geliebte Jünger nach Joh 20, 1-18, *Biblische Zeitschrift* 42 (1), 39-55; BJ Capper (1998). 'With the Oldest Monks...'. Light from Essene History on the Career of the Beloved Disciple. *Journal for Theological Studies* 49, 1-55; SM Schneiders (1998). Because of the Woman's Testimony ... Reexamining the Issue of Authorship in the Fourth Gospel. *New Testament Studies* 44 (0), 513-35; D Wenham (1998). A Historical View of John's Gospel. *Themelios* 23, 5-21; I Dunderberg (1998). Thomas and the Beloved Disciple. *Thomas at The Crossroads*, 65-88; DR Catchpole (1998). The Beloved Disciple and Nathanael. *Understanding, Studying and Reading*, 69-92; GT Eddy (1997). That Other Disciple. *Expository Times* 108, 147-8; P Widdicombe (1997). Knowing God: Origen and the Example of the Beloved Disciple. *Studia Patristica* 31, 554-8; JC O'Neill (1997). A Vision for the Church: John's Gospel. *Vision for the Church*, 79-93; M Theobald (1996). Der Jünger, den Jesus Liebt. Beobachtungen Zum Narrativen Konzept der Johanneischen Redaktion. *Geschichte-Tradition-Reflexion. Testschriften für Martin Hengel zum 70 Geburtstag*, 219-55; DF Tolmie (1996). John 21.24-5. a Case of Failed Attestation? *Skirf en Kerk* 17 (2), 420-6; F Neirynek (1995). Short Note on John 19.26-7. *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 71 (4), 431-4; A Vincent Cernuda (1994). El desvaído Lázaro y el deslumbrador discípulo amado. *Estudios bíblicos* 52 (4), 453-516; A Méttayer (1994). Se faire objet pour sauver sa dignité de sujet: une lecture psychanalytique de l'expression johannique le disciple que Jésus aimait. *Religiologiques* 9, 121-37; U Busse (1994). The Beloved Disciple. *Skirf en Kerk* 15 (2), 219-27; R Bauckham (1993). The Beloved Disciple as Ideal Author. *Journal For the Study of the New Testament* 49, 21-44; MD Goulder (1992). An Old Friend Incognito. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45 (4), 487-513; R Bauckham (1993). The Beloved Disciple as Ideal Author. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 49, 21-44; MD Goulder (1992). An Old Friend Incognito. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45 (4), 487-513; E Biser (1991). Was ist mit Diesem? Eine theologische Improvisation über das Thema des von Jesus geliebten Jüngers. *Anfänge der Christologie*, 323-36; AT Kraabel (1991). The

important passages on which scholars have focused (John 19.35 and 21.24) should help to underscore the identity of the BD and the nature of his role as mentor in the gospel's authorship. The crucial questions that are still vigorously debated are: (1) Which of the many candidates who have been suggested offers any clues to aid with the identification of the BD to whom the FE refers? (2) As a mysterious figure, is he a historical character, or an ideal or idealized figure in accord with the literary construct of the evangelist?

4.1 Identity of the Beloved Disciple

The effort to investigate the identity of the BD has compelled scholars to formulate elaborate theories that can be reduced to three possibilities: the BD was (1) a historical figure; (2) an ideal character for the Johannine community; and (3) an eyewitness viewed as an idealized figure. He is conceived as a literary device of the author or the representative of the community itself (for more details, see Crosby 2000:206-11). In order to examine the likelihood of the BD being either one of these figures, the Gospel's witness has to be taken at face value.

4.1.1 The Beloved Disciple as a historical character

The theory according to which the BD must be a historical character stems from the void or the silence created by the Gospel itself. The BD is not only one of Jesus' disciples and an eyewitness, but is identified as the author of the Gospel

God-fearers meet the Beloved Disciple. *Future of early Christianity*, 276-84; S Brown (1990). The Beloved Disciple: A Jungian View. *Conversation Continues*, 366-77; P Nepper-Christensen (1990). *Hvem var den disciple, som Jesus elskede. Dansk teologisk tidsskrift* 53 (2), 81-105; D Munoz León (1990). Juan el presbítero y el discípulo amado. Consideraciones críticas sobre la opinión de M Hengel en su libro « La cuestión Joánica ». *Estudios bíblicos* 48 (4), 543-63 ; MW Meyer (1990). The Youth in Secret Mark and the Beloved Disciple in John. *Gospel origins & Christian Beginnings*, 94-105; GM Napole (1990). Pedro y el discípulo amado en Juan 21, 1-25; ML Rigato (1990). L'apostolo ed evangelista Giovanni, 'sacerdote' levitico. *Revista Biblica* 38, 451-83; WS Kurz (1989). The Beloved Disciple and Implied Readers. *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 19, 100-7; JK Thornecroft (1987). The Redactor and the 'Beloved' in John. *Expository Times* 98 (5) 135-9; NE Johnson. Beloved Disciple and the Fourth Gospel. *Church Quarterly Review* 167, 278-91; SL Johnson (1966). Who was the Beloved Disciple? *Expository Times* 77, 157-8; AB Hulen (1948). The Call of the Four Disciples in John 1. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 67 (2), 153-7; JHS Burleigh (1946). The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved. *Evangelical Quarterly* 18 (2), 81-3:

(21.24). However, that important character is very elusive (1.35-40; 19.25; 20.8-9; 21.24). Charlesworth aptly observes that ‘the fact that he is left anonymous in John has led to a plethora of possible interpretations’ (1995:127-224).¹⁷ Many figures have been cited, but the most notable is John, the son of Zebedee.¹⁸ While Schnackenburg regards John the Apostle as the founder of the tradition written down in the Gospel by the apostle’s disciples (see 1980a:101-4), he rejects the candidature of John the son of Zebedee. According to Lincoln (see 2002:20), besides two other reasons, the Twelve played a minor role in John’s narrative (they are mentioned only twice in 6.70-1; 20.24). It seems that the BD would have been a Jerusalemite disciple, but not one of the Twelve (cf. Hengel 1989:124-6, 109-11; Cullmann 1976:63-85; Beasley-Murray 1987: lxx-lxxv). The *second candidate* is Lazarus. (For the discussion, see Mastin 1968:29-32; Stibbe 1993:215; Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998; Waetjen 2005:58, and more specifically Charlesworth 2005:288-92, who depicts Lazarus as the BD who fulfils the function of witness.) The inclusion of Lazarus as possibly being the BD stems from the internal evidence in passages, such as 13.23, 19.27 and 21.23,

¹⁷ The BD is viewed as ‘an ideal, fictitious, or symbolical figure’ (the scholars that take this stand are mentioned below), a symbol of the Apostolic Prophet (cf. Charlesworth 1995:139), a ‘symbol of the Church,’ (139-41), ‘a real human whose identity is lost’ (1995:141-54). This scholar goes too far in mentioning characters, some of whom do not appear in the FG, like Matthias (Titus), Apollos, Paul or a Paulinist, Benjamin (Minear), the rich young ruler, John Mark, Judas or Jesus’ brother, John the Elder, Philip. Except Judas Iscariot, Andrew or Simon Peter’s brother, Nathanael, Lazarus, John the Apostle whose name does not appear, one of the two anonymous disciples mentioned in 21.2 (1995:154-223).

¹⁸ Two of the twentieth century’s most important Johannine scholars, namely Schnackenburg (1980a). *The Gospel according to St John*, 97-104 and Brown (1998:6-7), when they began their career they were convinced of the simple identification of John that the Apostle, evangelist and BD should be one and the same person. In time, they changed their mind, coming to the conclusion that the BD could not be John the Evangelist, much less John the son of Zebedee. Hengel is convinced that the figure of the BD is deliberately enigmatic and ambiguous, and curiously introduces John the son of Zebedee into the gospel while he was impressed both by the absence of the sons of Zebedee from the gospel apart from 21.2 and by their presence in 21.2 (cf. Bauckham 1993:24). The single appearance of the sons of Zebedee in the FG (21.2) is very significant insofar as it should warn one to identify John son of Zebedee as the the BD. Those who argue that in 21.2 there are four unnamed disciples (three sons of Zebedee and the ‘disciple whom Jesus loved’ included) have no secure foundation since the BD is anonymous is well enough established throughout the gospel meanwhile the names of the sons of Zebedee are well-known. That is why 21.2 excludes the possibility that the BD is John the son of Zebedee (see Bauckham 1993:25-6). Parker 1992:35-42 lists 21 reasons why John the Apostle could not have been John the Evangelist and therefore the Beloved Disciple. Also see A Grassi, 1992. *The Secret Identity of the Beloved Disciple*, 5-10.

which are misinterpreted. Lazarus is never called disciple and he says and does nothing that is recounted.

The *third candidate* is Nathanael, who is mentioned at the beginning of John's narrative (1.43-51), but does not appear until 21.2 (Keener 2003a:84). Since he is identified at the outset and the evangelist does not make any link between him and the BD, and also does not identify him in the rest of the narrative (Lincoln 2005:21) he can reasonably be excluded from possibly being the BD.

The *fourth candidate* is Thomas (see Charlesworth 1995:115-26, 225-87). However, his stance is merely a literary reading that ignores the context. Charlesworth is criticised for having relied too heavily on a blank in the Johannine narrative between 19.35-6 and 20.21 (Dundeberg 2002:244-5, referring to Uro 1998:65-88 & 73-5). The internal argument that excludes Thomas from being the BD is in 20.25, although he believes and confesses Jesus as 'My Lord and my God', and so reaches the climax of a secure Christian faith, his doubt required empirical proof. Thomas contrasts with the BD of 20.8-9, who saw in the empty tomb a sign that enabled him to understand the scriptures, and believed (v.9). In addition, Thomas' name is known, unlike that of the other disciple of 21.2. It makes no sense to try to identify him with a disciple whose faith is remarkable and who does not express any doubt.

The last candidate is Mary Magdalene. Schneiders construes the argument upon the expression 'the other disciple' of 20.8, which in all likelihood is considered as the evangelist's creation of an 'empty set' (1998:519-20). By means of a feminist approach, she strives to overthrow the andocentric interpretation¹⁹ of John 20, and goes so far as to identify the 'other disciple' with Mary who, in having discovered the empty tomb, becomes the recipient of the Easter protophany and of one of the only individual apostolic commissions of the risen Jesus. She is an eyewitness (20.17-8) source behind the FG, but there is no indication of her faith and witness. It

¹⁹ In 'the Postmodern Bible' (1995), in an article entitled 'Feminist and Womanist Criticism', Schüssler Fiorenza is quoted as proposing the hermeneutics of suspicion, set in contrast to feminist hermeneutics of recuperation, that does not presuppose the feminist authority and truth of the Bible whose starting point is the assumption that biblical texts and their interpretations are andocentric and serve patriarchal functions (1995:248). It should be noted that this feminist scholar strives to promote a critical feminist rhetoric of liberation, challenging the biblical text that is an ideological construct that puts the male at the centre and the female at the margin.

seems that Mary's faith is not so different from that of Thomas, who needed proof of Jesus' resurrection, whereas the 'other disciple' of 20.8 is convinced by the sign of the discarded grave clothes at the empty tomb (Brendan 1985:93-4; Brown 1978:84). Obviously the understanding of the scripture stems from the signs of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

It seems that the disciple, in John's expectation, is one *who shows his capacity to believe by seeing Jesus and hearing his word*. The 'other disciple', identified as likely being the BD, is neither John the son of Zebedee, nor Lazarus, nor Nathanael, nor Mary Magdalene, but a mysterious character who remains unknown until the second question is answered. Read together, all these references bring out a consistent and attractive character, independent from the others mentioned above. Does the gospel help to identify the BD as an ideal figure?

4.1.2 The Beloved Disciple as an ideal character

In his monograph, Charlesworth undertakes a historical investigation of a group of scholars (for an extensive study, see 1995:134-8, 141-54; Neiryk 1990:335; Cullmann 1976:74-8), dealing with the issue of the BD as an ideal figure constructed by the author of the Gospel. Many other scholars have also offered theories regarding the identity of the BD,²⁰ but it seems as if the BD, whether one of

²⁰ NE Johnson (1966). The Beloved Disciple and the Fourth Gospel. *CQR* 167, 278-91; Lorenzon (1971). Der Lieblingsjünger im Johannesevangelium. Eine Redaktionsgeschichtlicher Studie. *SBS* (55), Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk ; PS Minear (1977). The Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John. Some Clues and Conjectures. *NT* (19), 105-23 ; M De Jonge (1979). The Beloved Disciple and the Date of the Gospel of John. E Best and R Mcl Wilson (eds), *Text and Interpretation. Studies in the New Testament Presented to Matthew Black*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 99-114 ; JJ Gunther (1981). Early Identifications of Authorship of the Johannine Writings. *JEH* (31), 407-27 ; V Eller (1987). *The Beloved Disciple*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans ; B Bonsack (1988). Der Presbyteros des Dritten Briefs un der Geliebte Jünger des Evangeliums nach Johannes. *ZNW* (79), 45-62 ; J Kügler (1988). Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte. Literarische, theologische und historische und historische Untersuchungen zu einer Schlüsselgestalt johanneischer Theologie und Geschichte. *SBB* (13). Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk ; E Ruckstuhl (1988). Jesus im Horizont der Evangelien (Stuttgarter Biblische Aufsatzbände 3). Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk:355-95 ; K Quast (1989). Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Figures for a Community in Crisis. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (32). Sheffield: JSOT Press ; M Davies (1992). Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement* (69). Sheffield: JSOT Press, 340f. ; MD Goulder (1992). An Old Friend Incognito. *SJTh* (45), 487-513 ; R Bauckham (1993). The Beloved Disciple

the Twelve or not, is nothing other than a creation of the author. In Lindars' mind (1990:22), the FE created him in order to give expression to his own views.

It is apparent from the above that many scholars suggest that the BD is an ideal figure. However, what exactly is 'ideal'? For Bacon, as quoted by Dunderberg (2002:246), the BD is 'a purely ideal figure', in other words, this character is 'no disciple of flesh and blood'. The popular perception of the BD as the ideal disciple has been used by Quast, who combines this idea with the view that the BD represents the Johannine community (1989:16). Beck depicts him as the representative of the ideal of discipleship (cf. 1997:44), and Bauckham (1993:33) disputes that the exclusive privilege granted to the BD in 13.23-6, his presence at the cross as the only faithful male disciple (19.26-7) and his visit to the empty tomb (20.1-12) puts him forward as an ideal figure or an 'exemplary' for other disciples. Whereas, on the one hand, Bauckham asserts that the representativeness of the BD cannot replace his unique and particular privilege (1993:33), on the other hand, both Bauckham and Dundeberg emphasize the contrast made between the BD and Peter²¹ and the fact the

as Ideal Author. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (49), 21-44; R Culpepper (1994). *John, the Son of Zebedee. The Life of a Legend*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press (cf. Chapter 3).

²¹ The BD is supposed to have escorted Jesus to the courtyard where Peter eventually denied Jesus (John 18.15-8). In 19.25-7, we read that the BD is the only disciple present at the cross, and he is the one assigned by Jesus to take care of his mother. The inference of rivalry based on their from their running race to the empty tomb (20.3-4) has no foundation, though the assertion of the BD's faith in John 20.8 seems to make him superior to Peter, whose faith is not mentioned (see Dundeberg 2002:254). Cf. also Brown 1966/70:1004-7; Quast 1989:117-9. For other details in connection with Peter's and the BD's relationship in terms of rivalry between early Christian groups, consult Smith 1985:146-8.

Quast (1989:165-6) lists five points that convey a particular understanding of their relationship as follows: (1) Peter and the BD are highlighted in the Johannine narratives and are thus significant characters; (2) they are to be interpreted in relationship to one another; (3) the relationship between them is subservient to the Christological thrust of each narrative; (4) Peter and the BD have separate functions, which vary from narrative to narrative; (5) the representation of Peter develops from one section of the gospel to another. Without any attempt to discuss each of these conclusions, one must note that the functions of these two disciples are indeed separated, not really 'from narrative to narrative', as Quast notes, but only from John 21, which deals not with Christological, but with ecclesiological issues. Bauckham (1993:38) contends, from a close reading of John 21, that Peter's leading role in the church as a whole is acknowledged by the FE, while the role claimed for the BD is that of the witness of the truth of Jesus and it is equally significant for the church as a whole. From John 21, one may conclude that Peter is viewed as the representative of the so-called 'Great Church' and the BD as a representative of the Johannine churches. If that is the case, the figure of the BD in the FG is basically a device intended to correct a growing reverence for Peter.

BD is made a distinguished follower of Jesus to the extent that a similar name is never applied to any other disciple in John.

Looking at these arguments, it becomes debatable whether the BD can be seen to represent the other disciples at all. Rather, he is ‘represented as the disciple who was related to Jesus and the events of Jesus’ story that he can bear witness to the readers/hearers of the Gospel’ (Bauckham 1993:38). That is to say an ‘ideal author’ (1993:39-41) in connection with 19.35 and the redactor’s comment couched in 21.24, and the provision of the eyewitness testimony for later Christians who will believe without seeing. The reliability of his testimony, notes Dundeborg (2002:256), derives from his status as an eyewitness and as the author in the light of both these passages. Is such a status indeed defensible?

4.1.3 Is the BD an eyewitness or an idealized character?

Three recent contributors mentioned by Lincoln (2002:4-6), namely Maccini, Tovey and Vanhoozer, have entered the debate on the reconstruction of the identity of the BD. All of them (see Maccini 1996:366-87; Tovey 1997:147 and Vanhoozer 1995:366-87) focus on John 21.24 treating the BD as an eyewitness, an issue very crucial to the interpretation of the FG. The majority of recognized scripture scholars are in agreement that the BD represents a historical figure.²² It seems that John 21.24 hints at ‘these things’ about which the BD is depicted as the eyewitness.

According to this, should the BD be viewed as an eyewitness? Even though he could not be viewed as an eyewitness able to report on each of the events and speeches in the narrative, the way in which the BD is rendered a key witness to significant events (the Last Supper in 13.23-5, the trial in 18.15 and Jesus’ death in 19.26f. and resurrection in 20.2-8) that Zumstein designates the ‘*hauts lieux*’ of

²² Bultmann who, long ago, argued that the author must be an eyewitness of Jesus’ life who is to identify with the enigmatic figure of the Beloved Disciple mentioned in John 13.23; 19.26f; 20.2-10 and in the redactional appendix in John 21.20-23 (1971:11). Beasley-Murray (1989:4) makes two observations about John 21.24: (1) The name of the disciple is not stated, nor is it given anywhere else in the Gospel; (2) The natural inference from the assertion is that the writer is speaking of ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ as someone other than himself, exactly as in John 19.35 it is said: ‘The man who saw this has borne witness to it – and his witness is authentic, and he knows that he tells the truth – that you, too, may believe.’ In light of both passages, the disciple is cited as an independent witness whose testimony is authentic.

Christian kerugma (1994:226), gives great importance to this figure.²³ The whole context, in which the BD is presented, shows him closer to Jesus again. That is why the anonymous witness in 19.35 is not only the BD, but also the only and best candidate for authorship. It is not surprising to find the truth of the FG's witness endorsed in the persona of the BD. Lincoln (2002:13-4) points out that John 19.35 is the only other place where the readers are directly addressed with the words 'so that you may believe' (as it is in 20.31). While Casey's strong argument²⁴ is based on John 19.35 and 21.24, he does not acknowledge the historicity of the BD.

Due to this it can be concluded that a claim that the author of the FG was an eyewitness, based on 19.35 and 21.24, is disputable. Some Johannine scholars rather favoured the anonymity (cf. Kysar 1975:101; Bruce 1983:3; Schnackenburg 1980a:93-4). The portrayal of the BD as present at the key points in John's story is much more idealized than that of the other disciples (13.21-8; 19.34-5; 21.24), even

²³ Bauckham, corollary to Lincoln, affirms that the BD is present at key points in the story of Jesus. He strives to interpret the blood and water in 19.34 as fulfilling of John the Baptist's testimony to Jesus as the 'Lamb of God' (1.29). That is why he thinks, the narrator makes the BD a trustworthy witness (cf. 19.35). To this could be added the fact that the BD's presence at Jesus' trial (18.15-6); all of this makes him the only male disciple to testify on the key salvific event of the whole Gospel story. A second element added to the above-mentioned lies in 1.35-40 where the anonymous disciple, though in first acquaintance, could not be called 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' is in special intimacy with Jesus. The curious specification of the hour of the day in v.35 (at it occurs in v.29 and 43 in this chapter) intends to give a hint of eyewitness testimony. Although the anonymous disciple disappears from the beginning until Chapter 13, the 'disciple whom Jesus loved' of 13.23-24, in a position of intimacy and alone able to ask Jesus a delicate question, this helps to retrospectively identify him as the anonymous disciple in 1.35-40. Unfortunately, this scholar forgot to indicate another important element highlighting the early intimacy of the two disciples (the BD included) with Jesus, which is perceptible in 1.39. When Jesus said to them 'come and see', 'they came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day'. Jesus' simple response, Carson (1991:155) notes, constitutes the beginning of their intimate relationship with him. (3) The BD is portrayed as a *perceptive* witness, with spiritual insight into the meaning of the events of the Gospel story as it is told in 20.8-9. Though Peter is shown as having priority as a witness to the evidence, the BD, however, gains superiority in perceiving the significance of the event.

²⁴ Casey 1996:159. He acknowledges the importance of the blood and water tradition for the community and suggests that the identification of the witness with the BD runs the risk of presupposing the literary truth of the Johannine narrative. According to him, the event is not recorded in any of the synoptic Gospels, the witness holds importance for faith rather than verifiable evidence. It seems that, in order to stress the significance of water and blood in connection with baptism and the eucharist, people believed that the well-known tradition went back ultimately to someone who was there at the time the event occurred. According to him, the BD is not recognizable in the synoptic Gospels, he is hardly mentioned during Jesus' ministry and hardly identifiable (anonymous character).

Peter (18.15; 20.1-9). Crosby (2000:209) observes that ‘the scene represents an effort on the part of the evangelist to introduce and highlight the role of the BD, especially in contrast to Peter’. From that perspective, in my view, the presence of the BD at the key events, as it stands in the narrative, privileges him as the author of the gospel whose perception should be taken not as physical, but as his spiritual understanding of the events selected and encountered. That is why another group of scholars confidently conceive of the BD as an idealized character created by the FE (cf. Crosby 2000:209).²⁵ The problems encountered by those who try to identify the BD stem from the fact he cannot be a historical character within the well-known world of the narrative, much less an ideal disciple, representing another, whom Bauckham chooses to call the ‘ideal author’.

The analysis of all the references leads one to the narrator’s claim that the BD is the source of the narrative that shapes and pervades the identity of Jesus. The editor, at the end of the narrative, underlines the role played by the BD in the gospel writing. The responsibility entrusted to him for the writing of the testimony allows him to be viewed as an *ideal witness*.

The question that still remains is: Was the BD a literary device, or was he an idealized historical character? The hypothesis related to the Gospel as the work of an eyewitness is disparaged by Zumstein. *The first argument* is that the identification occurs in the epilogue. However, the fact that the Gospel hints at the rivalry between Peter and the BD, and the death of the latter, which seemed to have caused a problem to the Johannine circles, demonstrate how unlikely it is that he was no more than a symbolic figure without historical substance (see 2004:362). The *second argument* is that, instead of the BD, it is advisable to talk about the redactor of the second or third generation who writes on the BD’s behalf. More significantly, the BD is portrayed as ‘merely the source or guarantor of the tradition which the Gospel incorporates’. In Schneiders’ mind (1998:514; see also Bauckham 1993:29), he is ‘the authoritative source of the content of the Gospel’. Although he employed a secretary he is still the

²⁵ The contemporary scholars hold that the BD is more a literary convention than a historical person includes Lindars (1990:22), who says: ‘To me the Beloved Disciple is a creation of the evangelist in order to serve a specific function. He is one of the Twelve, who at crucial moments finds expression to the evangelist’s own views. He represents true discipleship, understanding the necessity of the death of Jesus when all others fail. He is ... a foil to Peter.’ see also Crosby 2000:248 note 16; Zumstein 2004:361 & 362.

author designated as such in John 21.24. Both Bauckham (1993:28-9) and Lincoln (2002:11) pinpoint the school/community to which the end of the Gospel refers to.

The BD was therefore a historical figure who was well known in Johannine circles,²⁶ and more precisely was the founder of the Johannine tradition and school²⁷ who has been probably idealized. This is helpful in identifying the author of the Gospel.

4.2 The author of the FG

The stance that views the BD as a literary device does not undermine his historicity, but helps to shed light on the events to which the gospel refers. One of the first scholars who investigated John's Gospel from a literary-narrative perspective is Culpepper. Beyond the debate that divides scholarship in connection with the BD as a historical or ideal figure, he states that the BD probably represents the idealization of a historical person who played a significant role in the life of the Johannine

²⁶ De Jonge (1979:105, 109) states that, though the identity of the BD remains unknown, he was well known to the members of Johannine community. His anonymous nature for actual readers do not make sense since the original readers knew him and revered as an 'apostolic eyewitness' [cf. pp.105 & 109]. Zumstein (1987:47-58) has already underscored that the BD, as central figure acknowledged as such within Johannine milieu, remains anonymous in order to give witness to the truth of the gospel and to guarantee and legitimate its claims. Thyen (1977) quoted by CH Charlesworth (1995:148-9) focuses on John 21, a work of the redactor different from Chapters 1-20 written by an author. He expressed the opinion that the unknown person whose death caused a trauma in the Johannine community, was yet well known to the members of the Johannine community. Though unfortunately he identified him with the Presbyter who wrote 1 and 2 John, he must be the BD serving the needs of the community. E Ruckstuhl (1988), quoted by JH Charlesworth (1995), argues that though the name of the BD is not discernible from the gospel he was certainly known by many Johannine Christians. See also Culpepper 1975:146-7; Cullmann 1976:74-8; DM Smith, Beloved Disciple. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, stating that: 'Probably he was a historical figure, even though the gospel accounts of him may be largely legendary. Certainly 19:35 and 21:24 presume his actual existence. If this historicity is denied, such passages must be construed as the product either of ignorance or of intentional fabrication, and neither of these alternatives is satisfactory.' (See p.95). cf. Quast 1989: 16-21.

²⁷ Culpepper (1975:265), convinced that the Johannine community was a school, argued that the FG comes from it. He argues that the honour of founding the school should be given to the BD: 'The actual founder of the Johannine community is more likely to be found in the figure of the Beloved Disciple.' Byrne 1985:83-97, opts for the BD as a literary symbol, consideration helpful to later generations of disciples to avoid envy of the first disciples. However, in the Anchor Bible Dictionary (1992), Byrne, certainly under Culpepper influences, acknowledges that the BD was 'the head of the Johannine School in its formative period'. But 'was not widely known or recognized outside his own moment'. (cf. 1.658-61; esp.660-61; Charlesworth (1995), op.cit., p.150).

community, but who had died shortly before (21.23-4). Regarded as the ideal disciple, he comes to take the status of true mediator and interpreter of Jesus' teachings (see Culpepper 1975:265).

The second argument is that the presence of the BD at the events mentioned above cannot be viewed as pure invention by the FE. It should be borne in mind, as Cullmann (1975:74) puts it, that throughout the Gospel, persons and events are never invented for allegorical purposes. All hold a 'typical' significance to Jesus' life as simultaneous pointers to the situation in the church. In that sense, a good understanding of the events of the FG compels one to draw a close connection between history and theological value for the church. The historical character of events recounted in the Gospel is a quite indispensable and fundamental element.

In a commentary recently published, Zumstein (2007:259) argues that the narrator's intrusion in 19.35 seeks to guarantee the truthfulness of the testimony. According to him, the perfects ἐωρακώς and μεμαρτύρηκεν do not stress the witness but rather the testimony that determines the faith of the present life of the community's faith. Nevertheless, the context of 19.26-7 intimates that the decisive witness is none other than the BD, whose testimony gives birth to the gospel (21.24).

The enigmatic position of the disciple whom Jesus loved 'ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς' of 13.23 has a counterpart in the Prologue 'μονογενῆς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο' of 1.18. The later expression, 'in the bosom of the Father', implies to be 'in closest intimacy with the Father', which credit him, as the only God's Son, to make the Father known or to act as the authoritative exegete of Jesus' teachings who is able to guide the community's interpretation of those teachings (see Beasley-Murray 1989:4; Culpepper 1975:266-7). The verb ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο means to reveal, explain or interpret the Father. Given that John 1.18 functions in the FG as a bridge between the Prologue and the outset of John's narrative, it makes Jesus' divinity clear and sets him up as exegete (interpreter) of the Father.

There is a mysterious similarity between Jesus' closeness to the Father (1.18) and the BD's closeness to Jesus (13.23). As the Son is the Father's privileged interpreter among men, notes Zumstein (2007:38), the BD is the Son's appointed exegete among the disciples.

The last question aims to ascertain if only one individual, or several, intervened in the writing of the FG. It is widely agreed that the author of the FG must have been a well-educated man. The content of the Gospel emanates from a Jewish circle belonging to a non-conformist Judaism that differed from mainstream Judaism because of the influence of Hellenism (Cullmann 1975:66-7, 73-4).

To postulate a lone genius who wrote the Gospel does not make sense (see Meeks quoted by Fuglseth 2005:67f; also Moody-Smith 1974-75:231). We support Kysar's argument that the Gospel reflects a highly organised group (1992:918). The gospel originates from a long process of writing (for details, see Schnackenburg 1980a:100-4) that brings out three individual characters who contributed to the writing of the Gospel, namely the BD as the founder of a distinct tradition, the evangelist who summarized the whole tradition in the gospel writing, and the redactor (Culpepper 1998:40-1) who completed the work of the FE. The BD, who functions as the authority behind the Johannine tradition and who must have been disciple of John the Baptist, should have had another disciple of like mind, similarly illuminated by the Spirit, who wrote down the Gospel (Beasley-Murray 1989:7) for all subsequent generations.

The testimony made in John 19.34b-35 refers to the BD as the authority behind the writing, but not the direct writer. By the original conclusion of 20.30-31,²⁸

²⁸ Most Johannine commentators agree that John 20.30-31 is the conclusion of the FE's work. Brown (1970:1057; 2003:180) puts it: 'Of all the Gospels John is the most articulate about its purpose in the statement of John 20.30-31 (...) The air of finality in these two verses justifies their being called a conclusion despite the fact that in the present form of the Gospel a whole chapter follows.' Bultmann (1971:697) asserts that '20.30f is a clear conclusion to the Gospel, in which the selective character of the narrative is stressed and its purpose declared'. Barrett (1978:575) contends: 'Both the purpose of the Gospel and the author's theology are summed up in this verse.' Newman & Nida (1980:620) state: 'It is the consensus of New Testament scholars that these two verses form the original conclusion to the Gospel.' Schnackenburg (1980:335) says: 'There remains no doubt that this is the original end of the work and Chapter 21 is a postscript from whoever its content might come (...) The conclusion in John 20.30-31 is intended, above all, to point out clearly the purpose of the writing.' Witherington III (1995), *John's Wisdom*, notes: 'Quite naturally, the discussion of purpose in regard to the Fourth Gospel always begins with, and frequently gets no farther than, the discussion of John 20.31.' Culpepper (1998) states: 'The last two verses of John 20 appear to provide a suitable ending for the Gospel.' More recently Waetjen (2005) asserts: 'John 20.30-31 is the original conclusion of the first edition of the Gospel.' John 20.31, according to Zumstein (2007:297), *firstly* assumes 'pragmatic function,' inasmuch as, for the very first time, the FE clearly sketches the main purpose of his work 'ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται,' (these things have been written, cf. Lincoln 2002:11), to arouse the

the FE ingeniously not only grasps what he heard and saw, but also strives to pass on to the potential readers his community's understanding of Jesus. His selective work leads to belief, faith and life in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. As was the case with the Prologue, the original end of the FG assumes 'interaction function' by saying, 'these are written so that you may come to believe...' (20.31a).

While the original conclusion determines the purpose of the writing, John 21.24-5 resolves the enigmatic issue of the FG's authorship. Firstly the 'I' of v.25 is the editor's appropriation of the final touch of the gospel. Similarly by using 'we' (v.24) he aligns himself with the community of faith that he represents.²⁹ Note Fuglseth's (2005:71) pointed remarks in this regard:

Jn 19:35b refers, however, to one other person only, while 21:24b states that there were several persons verifying the testimony of that single author. The sudden change of tense and aspect in 21:24b, οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθῆς αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν i.e. from aorist singularis of γραφῶν (punctual meaning) to the present pluralis of οἶδα (continuous meaning) strengthens the impression given by the author that the original text is the work of one person while the persons behind the plural subject of the last part of the verse are verifying what the first one had originally written.

John 21 makes it clear that the FG is the product of a school. The plural οἶδαμεν is no longer a statement by one author, but is made by his pupils (or by one of these pupils) as a plurality of witnesses who guarantee the truth of the work attributed to the BD (Hengel 1989:84). The substantiated conclusion stemming from the use of the plural οἶδαμεν (v.24b) and the singular οἶμαι (v.25) helps to sort out

believers' faith – what seems contradictory – to build up or structure their faith (cf L'Eplattenier 1993:390-1). *Secondly*, v.31 underlies Christological thesis; that is to say, the narrator invites to discern the Christ, the Son of God in Jesus. That formulation underlines the incarnation's scandal. The title Christ, contends Zumstein (2007:297), belongs to the Jewish traditional 'titulature'. The title not only sets Jesus at the horizon of Jewish OT tradition, but also at the centre of the debate with the synagogue. Meanwhile the title Son of God, widespread in early Christianity, is to connect to John's 'high Christology' language. *Thirdly*, the Christological thesis is to articulate with the soteriological one since to confess Jesus as Son of God brings life. The conclusion underlines soteriological dimension of Jesus' persona. Faith and life – eternal life – are interwoven. Whoever believes has life in his name.

²⁹ Cf. Lincoln 2002:10-1; Bauckham 1993:28-9. Hägerland (2003:320-1), undertaking to analyse the use of 'we' in John 1.14, 16; 21.24 and 1 John 1.1-4, concludes that: 'this 'we' is to be construed as the author's theological school, the community for which he writes, or 'any and every Christian community' to which his Gospel would reach out.' It is clear that the sudden change from the third singular (οὗτος ἐστίν ὁ μαθητῆς...) to the first plural person (καὶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθῆς αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν) in v.24a has to be understood by the implied reader as a result of the identification of the BD as the real author.

the enigma of authorship on three different levels, as Fuglseth (2005:71) notes, (1) the work of the disciple who composed/wrote the Gospel in the first place (21:24a), (2) several persons who intervened in the testimony of the disciple (21:24b) and (3) the clarification of the work of the final editor in light of 21.25. The enigma solved thus is that the author does not write on his own behalf, but to the community and for the sake of the same community. The FE's writing is subject to the approval of the members of the school he represents. So can we attempt the comparison between the BD and the blind man?

4.3 Conclusion-authorship: Attempt to compare the BD and the blind man of John 9

The FG is a well-elaborated text. John 20.30-31 speaks of the written narrative of Chapters 2-20 as the story of Jesus' signs which the author had written down so that his readers/hearers may believe that Jesus is the Christ (Bauckham 1993:39-40). The Beloved Disciple is the sole authoritative person in interpreting Jesus' words and signs. The Gospel could have been written by the evangelist, 'the disciple of the Disciple', who was looking upon the BD as the guarantor of the traditions written down. Disputing the tradition according to which John, the son of Zebedee was the BD, modern interpreters contend that: 'The Beloved Disciple was instead an otherwise unknown teacher and theologian whose legacy has been passed on in the Fourth Gospel.' Before coming to summarize all the scholarship's effort to deal with the authorship, an attempt must be made to compare the BD and the blind man.

The BD competes for the authorship only at the level of the guarantor of the tradition that led to the writing of the gospel. His closeness to Jesus makes him the true mediator and interpreter of his teachings. His school, or sphere of activity, is to be placed in the context of the Christian communities of Asia Minor in the last decades of the first century (see Hengel 1989:81). According to him, "[as] an outsider – claimed to have been a disciple of Jesus, indeed – in the view of the school – a disciple of a quite special kind" (1989:80) stood, for the community, behind the writing of the Johannine corpus, letters, Gospel (and Apocalypse). The Gospel reflects not only the theological and literary genius of the writer but also the history of the community in which it was shaped.

Regardless of the mystery surrounding the persona of the BD who, because of his faith, has been viewed as ‘the hero of the Book of Glory’ (Charlesworth 1995:119; cf. O’Brien 2005:296-9), a group of scholars portray the BD as the paradigmatic figure of a believer focused on in John 20.8 (for a complete discussion, consult Kurz 1989:105; Bauckham 1993:37-8; Byrne 1995:39-41; Dundberg 2002:254-6). Nevertheless, the full standard of discipleship in the FG, as O’Brien contends, is not only to believe but also to witness. The FE portrays the first disciples as Jesus’ witnesses. Surprisingly, until Chapter 21, the BD does not bear witness to anyone nor brings anyone to faith (O’Brien 2005:292). When, in the later edition of the Gospel, he testifies to other disciples that ‘it is the Lord’ (21.7), he is granted the status of witness. Yet further in the narrative, the BD twice fails to bear witness. In 13.22-9, when Jesus tells the disciples that one of them will betray him, Peter asks the BD to find out who will betray Jesus. He asks and receives an answer, but there is no indication that he informs Peter. Another passage to note is in John 20, where it is said that he sees and believes, but no witnessing is mentioned. At any rate, the BD fails to do what is expected of the disciple. Since, as Culpepper (1975:273) argues, ‘writing the Gospel was an integral part of fulfilling their mission to witness’, it seems that the Johannine community attempted to correct the lack of witnessing by referring in 21.7 to the BD as a witness for the very first time. The understanding of the BD as the guarantor of the tradition that led to the writing of the gospel is another attempt to give the status of witness of the whole gospel (19.35 and 21.24). The FG, in its final form, is no longer the work of an individual, but pertains to the community or, as some prefer, the Johannine School. The end of Chapter 21 shows that behind the ‘Johannine community’, stands the BD as the head and as an outstanding teacher who, as an intellectual personality, is the active force who speaks with the authority of his own deep knowledge. The school to which the FE and the final redactor belong, under the leadership of the BD, is interested in the status of the disciple towards the end of First Century. All the passages in which the BD appears enable scholarship to perceive him as the emblematic figure of the whole gospel.

A close exegetical reading of the whole Chapter 9 would help to conclude that full or authentic discipleship is not easy since it involves overcoming darkness mediated by the world of the ‘Jews’. The BD is exempted from such a perception

and it is there that the man born blind competes with him. According to the rhetoric construct of the writer, seeing and hearing are brought together in John's understanding of discipleship. Secondly, the blind man, although struggling in an environment of harsh conflict between Judaism and Christianity, is sketched as witnessing to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of Man. In emphasizing Jesus' divinity, the Church challenges the Jewish exclusive monotheism. The climax of his adventure of being a disciple is shown in his own confession of faith: 'He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped him' (9.38). There are few texts in the NT that share the same theological depth as John 9, or are christologically as profoundly elaborated. The healed blind man is at the root of the Christology. Jesus is initially perceived as a man, later as a prophet, up to the height of Christology in the NT by confessing Jesus as Lord, or God. The blind man progresses in his faith to attain the πλήρωμα, or the fullness of faith. This poignant journey to a state of faith is deepened by the words of Jesus, which reveal that his identity as the 'divine agent', the Son of Man, has been revealed (Asiedu Peprah 2001:149). The progress of the blind man in the knowledge of Jesus echoes the evolutionary experience of the earliest followers as elaborated in the NT. Jesus, known as a prophet in the early group of followers, was eventually confessed as God. The blind man is the model of the disciple, not only of John, but also as one of the most prominent figures of the Gospels.

Chapter 6

THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY: TOWARDS THE DEFINITION OF THE GROUP OF DISCIPLES

1 Introduction

This chapter aims to outline the understanding of the world, or the socio-historical backdrop from which the Gospel originated, which relates closely to the issue of discipleship. Although one might expect this to be incorporated in socio-cultural texture, it should not be since, before we get to the interpretation of Chapter 9, it is advisable to draw the historical-contextual framework within which discipleship will be interpreted. The history of the Johannine community is one of the flourishing areas of interest in Johannine studies.³⁰ The present chapter does not

³⁰ For extensive study on the Johannine Community, consult these selected publications: N Mitchell (2006). 'Liturgy's language of presence: light from the Bible'. *Worship* 80 (2), 162-76; R Kysar (2005). 'The whence and wither of the Johannine Community.' In *Life in abundance*, 65-81; H-J, Klauck (2005). 'Community, history, and text (s): A Response to Robert Kysar.' In *Life in abundance*, 82-90; B Olsson (2005). 'All my teaching was done in synagogues...' (John 18,20). In *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel*, 203-24; T Hägerland (2003). John's Gospel: A Two-level Drama? *JSNT* 25 (3), 309-22; I Dundeborg (2002). The Beloved Disciple in John: Ideal Figure in an Early Christian Controversy. In *Fair Play*, 243-69; CM Conway (2002). The Production of the Johannine Community: A New Historicist Perspective. *JBL* 121 (3), 479-95; PB Kabongo-Mbaya (2002). Life in abundance: A Biblical Reflection on John 10.10. *Reformed World* 52 (4), 151-61; FJ Moloney (2005). *The Gospel of John: Text and Context*, 119-121; RA Culpepper 2001. Anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel as a Theological Problem for Christian Interpreters. In *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, 61-82; PJ Tomson (2001). 'Jews' in the Gospel of John as compared with the Palestinian Talmud, the synoptics, and some New Testament apocrypha. In *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, 176-212; JA Draper (2000). Holy seed and the Return of the Diaspora in John 12:24. *Neotestamentica* 32 (2), 347-59; M Coloe (2000). Households of Faith (John 4:46-54; 11:1-44): A Metaphor for the Johannine Community. *Pacifica* 13 (3), 326-35; A Reinhartz (1998). The Johannine Community and its Jewish Neighbors: A Reappraisal. In *What is John? II, Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, 111-38; D Rensberger (1998). Sectarianism and Theological interpretation in John. In *What is John? II, Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, 139-56; GR O'Day (1997). Toward a Narrative-Critical Study of John. In *Gospel Interpretation*, 181-87; UC Von Wahlde (1997). Community in Conflict: The History and Social Context of the Johannine Community. In *Gospel Interpretation*, 222-33; M de Jonge (1993). The Conflict between Jesus and the Jews and the Radical Christology of the Fourth Gospel. *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 20, 341-55; UC Von Wahlde (1993). The Gospel of John and the Presentation of Jews and Judaism. In *Within Context*, 67-84; F Wisse (1992). Historical Method and the Johannine Community. *Arc* 20, 35-42; DA DeSilva (1992). The Social Setting of the Revelation to John: Conflicts within, fears without. *Westminster Theological*

claim to go further into all the issues surrounding the Johannine community, but it is an attempt to reconstruct the issue of discipleship in John 9. The results of this chapter are a window that sheds light on the exegetical study of Chapter 9.

The reconstruction of the history of the Johannine community has often been realized in the light of different stages that marked its development. Two scholars, namely Brown and Martyn, enabled with the historical-critical approach, had sensitively influenced scholarship in this matter. Their reconstruction is helpful to understanding the struggles that the Johannine Community was facing and that were only alluded to in the Gospel. The Christological faith was basically the cause of the rift between the Johannine Community and Judaism. Today it is impossible to fully reconstruct the history of the community from which the Gospel originated by means of external data (Martyn, Brown, etc.). The internal evidence must therefore be taken into account (De Jonge and Painter, etc.) and is no less important. In other words, the text is used to reconstruct the hypothetical community, which then unlocks the meaning of the text for our interpretation. This unfortunately makes the schema to be cyclical. We should be able to develop an understanding of how the hermeneutic conflict around the identity of the Messiah was achieved by reading anew about the Jewish expectations, Jesus' earthly ministry and Church experiences after Easter. It should then be possible to understand how the Christological faith has become the source of the conflict and how the birth of the community did not happen overnight, but was the result of a long historical process to which an understanding of discipleship in the FG is related.

2 Reconstruction and Critical Assessment of the Development of the History of the Community

In the ensuing lines, we will briefly reconstruct the development of the history of the Johannine community and assess Martyn's contribution, whose influence is already widely accepted by Johannine scholarship.

Journal 54 (2), 273-302; J Zumstein. La communauté johannique et son histoire. In J-D Kaesti, J-M Poffet, J Zumstein (eds) [1990]. *La communauté johannique et son histoire: la trajectoire de l'évangile de Jean aux deux premiers siècles*, 359-374. WR Domeris (1988). Christology and Community: A Study of the Social Matrix of the Fourth Gospel. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 64, 49-56.

2.1 Attempt to reconstruct the Johannine community

This section deals with the Johannine community and intends not only to delineate the development of its history, but to understand how the church's conflict with the synagogue and an alleged group of insiders (the adherents of the Baptist sectarian group, the disciples in secret and those holding a traditional view of the Messiah) is turned into a 'hermeneutic conflict'. The reconstruction of the Johannine community is often considered as hypothetical or speculative. A simple glance at Brodie's reconstruction³¹ is enough to conclude how hazardous the process of reconstruction can be (1993:20). Where, for instance, Martyn finds three stages, Brown traces four stages in the development of the history. Brown himself admits that his own reconstruction is somewhat speculative at certain points, because of the limitations of the method he used (1979:18-21). Nevertheless, Brown's 1979 publication *'The Community of the Beloved Disciple'* is a work with penetrating results in delineating four phases in the developmental history of the Johannine group (Duling 2003:413-5; cf. Carson 1983:14; Brown 2003:74-5; Keener 2003a:105-8): (1) At this stage (before the writing of the Gospel), John 1.35-41 seemingly alludes to an original group of Palestinian Israelites, including the former disciples of John the Baptist. This original group demonstrated a 'low Christology'.

³¹ Consult Brodie (1993:15-20). Culpepper takes the community as essentially a school, revering the BD as a foundational central figure, like one of ancient Graeco-Roman schools. For him, the Johannine community shares nine characteristics with ancient schools (for details, cf. 1975:258-9). Richter's reconstruction (1975) shows a community composed of Jewish believers interested in evolving Christology that leads it to splinter into four communities: (1) those who regarded Jesus as a prophet like Moses; (2) as Son of God, (3) as Son of God in a docetist way and (4) Son of God made flesh (cf. 1.14-8) and regarding the flow of blood and water in 19.34-5. According to Cullmann (1976), the community is composed of people who, from the beginning, were followers of John the Baptist, on the margin between Judaism and Hellenism. Being heterodox Jews, they have to be viewed as believers akin to the Hellenists of Acts 6 or even identical to them. Boismard (1977) lists three writers who contributed to the writing of the gospel. Around 50 CE, the BD composed a gospel whose picture of Jesus as a prophet-like Moses could have been acceptable to a Jew. During 65-90 CE, a second writer, John the Presbyter, refashioned the gospel (Aramaic – Greek) in a negative way about the world and the Jews. After that period, Jesus' picture has been elaborated to the extent that he is not simply like Moses but is a pre-existent figure. At the later stage, at the beginning of 2nd century, the gospel has been revised by an unknown member of the Johannine school at Ephesus. In light of Wengst's (1981) reconstruction, the gospel as a whole fits the situation of those Christian believers (mostly Jewish in origin) who lived in Gaulanitis, Batanea, and Trachonitis, an environment in which political and military power were in the hands of orthodox Jews. Jews who became Christians were subjected to hostility. The intensification of pressures compelled them to apostasize.

It seems that the conception of Jesus as Rabbi (v.38, 49); Messiah (v.41); the one of whom Moses (in the Law) and the Prophets wrote (v.45); the Son of God (v.49); the King of Israel (v.49) is nothing less than traditional perception. (2) *At the time the FG was written*, the group had consolidated its understanding by the inclusion of the Samaritans and other anti-Temple groups (this is reflected in Chapters 2-4). The group adopted a 'higher' Christology that accepted Jesus as the 'Man from Heaven', and became a focal point of new debates particularly with the synagogue. (3) *When the letters were written*, the community, having taken a closed stance against those outside their ranks (it seems that they migrated from Palestine to the region of Ephesus or some other city like Syria) and confessing a higher Christology, the movement began to suffer, and were then expelled from the synagogue. (4) *After the letters were written*, the final moment in the history of the community is its separation and the dissolution of the community into orthodox and Gnostic (docetic) camps.

There is little evidence of the existence of an original group that evolved into a group holding a higher Christology. Brown strove to reconstruct an academic community on Keener's terms (2003:108) and points out that the elements of his historical reconstruction are convincing. Brown agrees with Martyn (1978:90-121; see also the reimpression 2003:145-67) regarding the conception of the early group as a messianic inner-synagogue group which was not engaged in debates about the validity of the Torah (they did not experience any social dislocation). It could also have involved another *middle period* agreement, which treated the confession of Jesus as Messiah as a threat to monotheism.

Martyn attempts to explain the conflict in connection with the introduction of the reworked *Birkath ha-Minim* into the synagogue in order to be able to identify and punish the heretics. He delineates two traumas the Christian church suffered: (1) the excommunication was the price they paid because of their convictions; (2) when the group's existence came to be regarded as a violation of monotheism, Christians were arrested, subjected to trial and even to execution as seducers. They were accused as being ditheistic, that is, that they worshipped Jesus as a second god. It is during that period that the group broke away from the group who called themselves 'disciples of Moses' and who prosecuted the disciples of Jesus (9.28).

2.2 Assessment of Martyn's contribution to the history of the Johannine Community

Martyn made a major contribution with his *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1979). With regard to the concept of a Johannine community, his contribution is twofold: (1) some portions of the FG have to be read as a drama presented at two levels, one of which concerns Jesus during his earthly lifetime; (2) it also refers to events experienced by the Johannine church toward the end of the First Century in which Jesus' tradition was shaped (Reinhartz 1998:111; Hägerland 2003:311; see also Kysar 2005a: 68). Contemporary readers have a double history in the Gospel: the history and the experiences of the community are read back into the life of Jesus (Ferreira 1998:31). Evidence of this two-layered narrative is found most specifically in John 9, where three occurrences of the expression 'expel from the synagogue' (ἀποσυνάγωγος) in 9.22; 12.42 and 16.2 allude to an obvious atmosphere of division in which Christians are threatened with excommunication. The information in 9.22, which states that 'the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be put out of the synagogue', must be anachronistic and makes the narrative to mirror events that took place quite long after Jesus' ministry. It seems that the history of the Johannine community's conflict is played out in Jesus' conflict with the Jews.

Martyn's understanding of the narrative of John 9 as a drama occurring at two levels and grounded in the historical setting of the community within which the FG was produced, has greatly influenced scholarly readings of the FG. Scholars are divided into two different groups, those who advocate Martyn's interpretation and those who dispute his perception of things.

It is advisable to start with Hägerland (2003:309), who contends that the hypothesis of a Johannine two-level drama is highly implausible. He confidently draws two conclusions: *firstly* that there are no parallels in antiquity of the two-level drama that Martyn and others have tended to see in John's Gospel (see Kysar 2005:321).³² *Secondly*, the narrative sections of the Gospel show no traces of an

32 It seems that Martyn was aware of the need to determine the genre of the Johannine 'drama' and came to point to the Jewish apocalyptic as the background that would enable the Gospel's original recipients to perceive its two levels. Unfortunately, he notes the differences between apocalyptic stories and John's Gospel. Firstly, while the apocalyptic drama is

intention to tell anything other than the story of Jesus' life. We disapprove of Hägerland's attempt to demonstrate that the anachronisms present within the gospel 'are not grave and decisive enough to render the spontaneous understanding impossible' (2003:321). All these anachronisms (like the references to the disciples of John the Baptist and to the Samaritans, the mention of the 'Jews', even the frequent changes of the 'I' into 'we' and John's own language), in the absence of more explicit references, constitute internal evidence that need to be related to extra-textual evidence. Yet the story of the Samaritans in John 4.1-42 shows an interest in Samaria. Brodie (1993:11) argues that John's anti-Jewishness, present within the gospel, cannot reflect a recent conflict with or within a synagogue, but springs from the much older and broader antagonism between Jews and Samaritans. The internal reference to John the Baptist and his disciples (John 1.8, 15, 19-24, 30; 3.28-30; 10.41) reflects the existence of Baptist sectarians. Especially the polemical overtones within certain passages like 'He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light' (1.8) and 'he confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah' [(1.20), cf. also 3.28-30] help to show how a group of Baptist sectarians tried to give undue importance to their own master instead of acknowledging the pre-eminence of Jesus (Brodie 1993:12, referring to Baldensberger; Brown 1966a:lxvii-lxx; 1979:69-71). It would be misleading to attach greater importance to extra-textual evidence than to internal evidence.

However, Ashton, seemingly Martyn's proponent, opts for the understanding that the work is 'the most important single work on the Gospel since Bultmann's commentary' (1991:107). From the recent study of Waetjen (2005), *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple*, one can discover that all the attempts to sort out the enigmas of the origin and authorship of the Gospel with which scholarship was struggling,³³

enacted on two spatial stages, heaven and earth, both levels, according to the FG drama, are located on earth. Secondly, there is a temporal disagreement with the apocalyptic stories whose events are enacted in the present and future meanwhile those of the FG deal with things in the past and the present. Thirdly, the Gospel lacks those clear marks of level transition found in apocalyptic texts (cf. Martyn 1979:136-7).

³³ Bultmann (1971), whose table of contents reflects the original edition of the Gospel. He comes to the conclusion that the present form of the Gospel is the work of a later redactor who revised the earlier edition of the Gospel in order to reconcile it to an emerging catholic orthodoxy. By analysing the characteristic theological, stylistic, and linguistic changes and his attendant reconstruction, he claims to have recovered the original composition of the Evangelist. Others engaged in a similar diachronic interpretation of the FG utilizing source

‘only one inquiry’, that of Martyn, ‘has been more influential than others in elucidating the structure of the Gospel’s narrative world’ (2005:4). His work is not only considered by many scholars as the major inroad into the interpretation of the FG, but also his proposal of a two-level drama that determines the composition of the Gospel has impacted upon current Johannine scholarship to the extent that his thesis assessment is taken as a ‘paradigm’ (cf. Martyn 1979:14 note 30). Conway (2002:480-1), another proponent, goes a step further to view the Gospel as ‘a unified drama’ that has to be ‘used as a tool toward particular ideological ends’. He puts it this way (2002:487):

So, while the drama of the Johannine community emerged as a way to say something specific about the history of the Gospel's composition, it served the ideological goal of dealing with a virulent case of anti-Judaism in the Christian canon (...) the Johannine community drama is intended to function ideologically in the contemporary context. The point is to make clear what is not relevant in order to preserve the part of the Gospel that is. As the drama unfolds, we are to *recognize* that this historically contingent situation that gave birth to the anti-Jewish language (expulsion from the synagogue of one group of Jews who confess Jesus by another group of Jews who do not).

It is unacceptable to think about the Gospel as bearing an ideological motivation that deals with a virulent case of anti-Judaism. We will try to demonstrate that the conflict was instead read positively. It was transformed into a crucial moment to develop the Christology. Before trying to demonstrate it, it is convenient to indicate how Jewish expectations left traces within the John’s narrative.

3 Traces of Jewish expectations in the Fourth Gospel

The diversity of messianic expectations in second Temple Judaism is no longer to be demonstrated. To summarize, the messianic expectation among Jews was constructed around the coming of a figure like Moses (Deut 18.15) – one in whose mouth God would put his words so that he might tell them everything God

and redaction criticism, namely Lindars (1971:27-42); Lindars (1972:46-54); Martyn 1979:115, 120 and especially 150-51; Fortna (1970); Fortna (1988). According to Waetjen, ‘Fortna’s heroic effort at reconstruction, like that of his predecessors, is based on a form and redaction-critical investigation that presupposes ‘two very nearly contradictory modes of Jesus’ activity – his narrated deeds and the words of his discourses’ which, he contends, are not integrated’ (2005:3). Ashton (1991:199-204) and (1994:90-113) also criticises Fortna’s standpoint. On theories of displacement and redaction, cf. also Barrett 1978:21-6.

commanded (Deut 18.18). He would show miraculous signs, and would be able to give an answer to a difficult question (Ps 74.9). As a definite eschatological figure, he should be distinct from the Messiah (Martyn 1979:107). The Messiah should be equipped with the capacity to work signs, and to reign as king, and he was to abide forever. John's text is the only Gospel that portrays Jesus performing all three of the Mosaic signs mentioned in *Qohelet Rabba*: he feeds the multitude (John 6.1-14), he quenches thirst (John 4.13; 7.37) and he rides on the donkey (John 2.14). All these references, notes Martyn (1979:111), show that Jesus is the Mosaic Prophet-Messiah in accordance with the figure promised by God according to Deuteronomy 18.15, 18, a figure different from the Davidic Messiah who was not expected to perform miracles. The FE refers to these traditional beliefs, in order to clarify his own views. In the light of Jewish religious imagery, Jesus is more than the expected Messiah. He is the Son revealing the Father.

In reading the Gospel from its starting point, the ὁ Χριστός as an important term, has been taken over and applied to Jesus by his followers (John 1.17, 19-28, 41; cf. De Jonge 2000:216-7). The question now is: Is 'Christ' a personal name or a title? Chapter 1 is helpful in answering this question. While the first occurrence of the term clearly asserts that Jesus is the Christ (1.17), in the intra-Jewish discussion (1.19-28) the term is used without any reference to the Messiah and clarification is given in 1.41 and in 4.25. According to Painter, one may notice that the identification of Christ as the Messiah is the starting point of John's Christology, which is a Christian transformation of Jewish expectations (2000:250). We further argued that the original group developed from 'low' to 'higher' Christology. The conflict that is obvious in the Gospel was shaped by the development of the Christology.

Where does the influence come from? The influence of Palestinian Judaism on John, which Zumstein (2004:357) regards as incontestable, must be balanced into three aspects: (1) it is an integral part of the whole tradition of Jesus; (2) it belongs to the past of Johannine communities; and (3) the Law and the Temple, as central to Palestinian Judaism, are put into perspective in John's theology. The Temple, as a locus of worship, and other places of revelation are put into perspective in the light of Acts 7.44-8 and John 4.21ff. In the very first passage we learn from Stephen's speech that Israel's history is a history marked by unfaithfulness to the extent that the

decisive revelations of God are not bound up with a country or a particular place. In the latter, worship is connected with particular places in these terms: 'the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem (...) but the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth' (4.21-23). Reading both passages, Cullmann notes (1976:45) that Stephen, as representative of the Hellenists, takes a negative stance in relation to any fixed location for the cult while John, probably influenced by them, holds a positive perception of the cult that henceforth is located in Jesus who takes the place of the temple. The mutual influences that take place, as Cullmann strives to demonstrate, bring out the triangular relationship (Stephen's speech and the FG, both influenced by Heterodox Judaism). The opposition to the Temple, while characteristically in all sectarian groups in Judaism, is clearly radicalized more in Acts 7 and the FG than in the Jewish heterodox movements. What helps them to be closer to one another is a common belief in Christ (Cullmann 1976:52). Zumstein argues that the Baptist milieu, from which Jesus and his disciples originate, is an integral part of heterodox Judaism (2004:358); this contradicts Brown's contention that Jesus' first disciples mentioned in John 1.35f belonged to the original Palestinian group. It seems that the development of the Christology, as it stands, could be attributed only to the heterodox movement.

It should be borne in mind that the history of the Johannine community must be understood in the light of different stages, and that these Palestinian disciples belong in the first stage. According to Brown, the Johannine community, during a later stage of development and under the influence of the Hellenistic group, included the Samaritans and other anti-Temple groups. From that time onward Jesus was viewed as the localization of the divine presence. The development of the history of the Johannine community brings one to the understanding of the movement that existed before the FG was written and was represented by a group of Palestinians, disciples of John the Baptist, who shaped their low Christology. The distinctiveness of this marginal group is marked by its dynamism due to the profound fidelity to the historical Jesus and to the BD's understanding of Jesus. Brodie rightly points out that in the early church in Jerusalem the margin-based Johannine circle developed into a special Hellenist group (1993:16). His passage from Palestinian Judaism to

Heterodox Judaism is found in the movement operated from the 'low' to the 'higher' Christology. For the FE, ὁ χριστός is a term that plays a significant role in Jewish and Samaritan expectation (De Jonge 2000:216). In order to understand the basis of the conflict that leads to suspicious measures, even to the separation of both groups, a glimpse is needed on how the Jewish expectations left traces in the Gospel.

The traces that are obvious in John 6.14 (with the expectation of the prophet who is to come into the world), in 7.27 (the Messiah is of unknown origin), in 7.31 (the Messiah should be equipped with miraculous powers), in 7.42 (the Messiah must be born in David's village) and 12.42 (the Messiah abides forever) are grounded on Jewish hopes of two different figures, the eschatological prophet and the Messiah. The context in which these expectations occur, following the unfolding of the narrative, demonstrates that the evangelist reworked all of them. The Johannine Jesus is not at all the fulfillment of the Jewish expectations but, in John's view, he is a more august figure.

Two titles are applied to Jesus: Son of God and Son of Man. In his recent analysis De Jonge (2000:220-2), defines both as Christian designations. The first stresses God's initiative and the close relationship between the Sender (the Father) and the envoy (the Son). One needs to refer to the debates that place Jesus in opposition to the Jewish authorities in Chapters 5, 8 and 10 to ensure the indissoluble unity in words and action between the Son and the Father. Moreover, Son of Man is found a number of times where Jesus is also identified as Son of God (1.50-1; 3.13-21; 5.19-29; 6.27, 53, 63 and 6.40; cf. 12.34 where the crowd connects 'Son of Man' with the 'Christ'). In his analysis of the Johannine Christology, Ruyter, quoted by De Jonge, points out that 'John's emphasis on the unity of the Son and the Father is the corollary of the belief that the Son of Man, as eschatological judge and descendant of God, had already come in the earthly Jesus' (2000:213). Beyond the point of view that all of these titles hold the same meaning,³⁴ the title 'Son of Man' says something that is not expressed in the other titles (2000:221-2). According to Painter (2000:242), the activity of the Son of Man finds focus in two central aspects of the work of God, that is, giving life (6.27) and judgment. Yet, in John 5 the future

³⁴ For the discussion, see Freed 1967:402-9, Moloney 1976:209-20 and O Walker 'John 1.43-51 and 'the Son of man in the Fourth Gospel'. *JSNT* 56 (1994), 31-42.

judgment is expressed in a Son of Man saying (5.27), and the giving of life is associated with the Son of God (5.25-6). That understanding of the Son of Man as a figure concerned with both giving life (revelation) and enacting judgment constructs the story of John 9. Another specificity of the use of the Son of Man is in the contexts dealing with Jesus' exaltation: the Son of Man will ascend to heaven (3.13; 6.62, [1.51]; cf 20.17); he will be glorified (12.23; 13.31; cf. 7.39, and 17.1); the elevation of Jesus onto the cross and his return to God in heaven (3.14-5; 8.28; 12.31-4).

The FG is the Gospel most in touch with Jewish traditional roots; instead of presenting Jesus as the fulfillment of traditional messianic hopes for the restoration of Israel's kingship and independence, John presents Jesus as the eschatological fulfillment of biblical expectations (Moody Smith 1995:86). Jesus is the Son of Man rather than the Messiah of Jewish expectation. From this designation, the Johannine community followed another route to understanding Jesus as God's final envoy, but that understanding led to conflict within the synagogue.

4 Reading the FG from the community's elaborated Christology

The formulation of the Johannine Christology is surrounded by conflict in the Jewish context and finds expression as early as in John 1.5, 11 and 17 (Painter 2000:249). However, the conflict is formalized and developed in Chapters 5-10 on the basis of misunderstandings about Jesus' authority and origin (5, 6, 8 and 10) and lack of insight into his identity (7 and 9). The FE tries his best to emphasize the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship with the Father. The Johannine high Christology, as Fernandez (1991:400) points out, does not originate unmediated and out of the blue, but it is tied up with the experience of the community. In other words, the development of its Christology is connected with the community's struggle against the Jews.

In mentioning the expulsion from the synagogue (9.22; 12.42 and 16.2), the FG echoes the conflict of the Johannine Christianity with the pharisaic synagogue, a confrontation that left traces within the Gospel. Culpepper (2001:62) points out that 'the tragic conflict between the Johannine believers and the Jewish synagogue left an indelible mark on the Johannine community (...) Because of their new beliefs and practices, believers – those who would come to be known as Christians – were

persecuted, put out of the synagogue, and perhaps even killed by the synagogue authorities'. While before 70 CE, no situation was reported where a confession that Jesus was the Messiah led to exclusion from the synagogue, the reference to such a situation in Chapter 9 is evidence of the development of conflict. The birth of the community should therefore be seen not as a sudden event, but as the result of a historical process (Painter 2000:233) in which the development of Christology eventually became a point of division (1 John 2.18-9; 4.1-6). The conflict is radicalized by the hour when those who kill Christians will think it is an offering to God (16.2). In that sense, the Gospel is the community's reminder of the need to give Christological clarity with a view to challenging the internal discussions over Jesus' identity and debates with groups outside the community.

De Jonge (2000:227) asserts that the Gospel, in its final form at least, is an attempt to give a reliable answer to the question regarding Jesus' true identity, as some answers are misleading, and to reformulate essential viewpoints. The Johannine Christology is the result of a long process under the leadership of the Spirit (John 14.26; 16.13) that did not originate in a vacuum, but rather addresses specific historical contexts. Fernandez disputes the inextricable connection that must be drawn between religious belief and social experience inasmuch as the high Christology confessed (religious belief) is tied to the social experience of the community (exclusion from the synagogue). Köstenberger rightly argues that 'John would have formulated his Christology at least in part in the context of the crisis of belief engendered by the destruction of the temple' (2005:215). This might promote a clearer understanding of the interrelatedness of the events that occurred during the last thirty years of the first century. The event of the destruction of the Temple is read positively and has become helpful to the elaboration of Christology. Moreover, the conflict with the synagogue was transformed into an opportunity to clarify the relevant Christological issues. The 'hermeneutic conflict' with the synagogues and other sympathetic groups of 'believers' that belong to the Christian church is sorted out by the hermeneutic achievement. The community consciously carries out its mission to screen the Jewish expectations and Jesus' earthly ministry and at the same time to fill the vacuum left by Jesus' absence from the world by depicting him as sustaining the Christian church in its witness and struggles amidst a world opposed to God.

The text of John 9 is an example of the community's achievement. In aligning some traditional titles (prophet, Messiah and man from God) and making the story reach its climax in the invitation extended by Jesus to believe in the Son of Man, the community's influence is shown. Jesus comes at the end of the narrative to fill the gap of his absence; we see that the community's consciousness that the Light of the revelation is still at work even after the death of the revealer. One also needs to see how the traditional miracle of healing the blind is developed in the perspective of Christological faith to which the synagogue was opposed. The reference to the expulsion from the synagogue in 9.22 as a threat and the way the man's parents, fearing expulsion by the 'Jews', depict the faith of the members of the community as vulnerable in an environment of conflict. The blind man, by mastering his fear of the Jews and the risk of being expelled from the synagogue (9.22, 34), is sketched as the hero of John's narrative, not only because of his audacious confession, but also because he realizes that Jesus is the Son of Man and increases the risk to his person by showing devotion to him. Through him, John invites the Jewish Christians in the Diaspora synagogues to follow his example and disqualifies all of those who do not show a determined commitment. From this perspective, does the argument according to which the Johannine Community is a sect find a foundational basis?

5 Was the Johannine community a sectarian group?

To address the conception of the Johannine community as sect one needs to assess and compare the Johannine community with Qumran and Jewish groups and attempt to understand the community from a Graeco-Roman perspective.

5.1 State of question

Any evaluation of the Johannine community as a sect finds its starting point in Meek's provocative study that perceives the community as 'a minority group in their culture, and their emphasis on the in-group/out-group distinction' (Kysar 2005:69) influenced later scholarship. The perception of the Johannine community as a 'sect' left indelible traces. Kysar, refers to the dualistic language of the FG, 'light' against 'darkness,' and concludes that, as the members of Johannine community

‘conceived of themselves as the possessors of the truth while all around them live in error’ (Kysar 1992:912-31), they should be sectarians. The second is Neyrey (1988) who, by means of an anthropological model, calls the high Christology of John ‘a code of revolt’ against the synagogue and against Christians who were considered to have inadequate faith. Rensberger suggests that the Gospel comes from a sectarian social setting (1998:174) and that it originated in a situation of dissent and protest, where ‘insiders’ become outsiders and ‘outsiders’ become insiders to God’s revelation. The Johannine community, depicted as such, may be conceived as a counter-cultural group, conscious of its alienation from the larger society, seemingly opposed to it as is any sect.

According to Meeks, the Johannine literature is ‘a book of insiders’ (1972:70) that reinforces the community’s social identity and contributes to its isolation from the larger society. Exclusiveness and esoterism characterise the Johannine community and its writing as sectarian to the extent that ‘coming to faith in Jesus’ was taken as a ‘change in social location’ (Meeks 1986:193). In that sense, ‘to believe’ is not only to move from the world mediated by the Jewish synagogue, but also to join the Johannine community, meaning ‘a removal from the world,’ and transferral to a community that has ‘totalistic and exclusive claims’ (Meeks 1986:194). While Kysar conceives Meeks’ work (1972) as the crucial event that led to the genesis of the contemporary concept of the Johannine community, he nevertheless takes John’s descent/ascent motif as strengthening the community’s status as a sectarian counter-culture group (Kysar 2005:69). The group’s language that depicts Jesus as ‘a stranger from heaven’ must be understood only and properly by ‘insiders’ insofar as the ‘enigmatic myth is exclusive and esoteric’ (2005:17).

In order to demonstrate to which extent the Johannine community cannot be seen as a sectarian group, two other views are proposed.

5.2 Comparison of the Johannine community with Qumran and Jewish groups: an assessment

In his recently published thesis, Fuglseth critically and skilfully demonstrates at which level the Johannine community, compared with the Qumran and other

Jewish groups,³⁵ has been characterised by scholarship as a sect. There is no space to deal with everything he writes, but one may indicate that using the concept 'sect' in comparative studies, in studies of the Early Church as well as in studies of the Johannine community (Fuglseth 2005:9-26), he draws four conclusions (2005:27-8) of which three are the following: (1) there is a lack of agreement among biblical scholars in connection with the apprehension and application of the notion of 'sect' on the FG; (2) both the Johannine community and the Qumran community are definitely called 'sects'; (3) the debate shows a great disagreement among scholars.

Moreover, Fuglseth's thorough investigation achieves a comparison between 'cult' and 'sect' and concludes that the Johannine community can be conceived neither as 'cult' nor 'sect' (for details, cf. 2005:367-70). According to him, (1) 'cult' and 'sect' are in tension with society at large, while the Johannine group could be set in the middle; it has to be considered as a 'conjunction model' favouring innovation and not in high tension, despite the passages referring to the expulsion from the synagogue (John 9.22; 12.42; 16.2). (2) *'The "cult" is a schismatic group by new revelation.'* This does not fit with the Johannine community since its members did not reject the temple in principle, despite their new insight. (3) The Johannine community claimed to bring innovation within (and not outside) the Temple as it was for Jesus' movement. (4) The central feature of the Johannine community is that, the new beliefs regarding Jesus' identity create tension not with the temple institution, but with the local synagogue. (5) *The need for legitimation.* The Johannine Jesus is legitimated by the evangelist's using the scriptures that testify on his behalf (John

³⁵ Some scholars characterize the Johannine community and other Jewish group as 'sects'. Moody Smith (1974-75:224, 240) observes that the FG and the Epistles show a 'sectarian consciousness, a sense of exclusiveness, a sharp delineation of the community from the world'. Comparing the Johannine literature with Qumran writing, he brings out similar terminologies and referring to the dualism with both writings, he notices the Johannine community's separation or exclusiveness. Davies (1996:163ff) conceives the group behind the Damascus Document as a 'sect'. Charlesworth (1996:79-80) uses the similarities between Qumran community and Johannine epistles bringing him to conceive them as originally sectarian groups. From Esler (1994:91), both Qumran and Johannine communities were 'introversionist sects'. This is due to individuals and groups' withdrawal from the large society that characterizes such groups. Cohen (1987), *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, examining Qumran scrolls and those of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Christians in the Second Temple period, comes to the conclusion that all of them are sectarians. Finally, the notion of 'sect' was used to describe several groups in 1st century Judaism and goes to acknowledge Judaism and Christianity as separate religions.

5.39). A positive attitude of the Johannine community towards the temple institution as well as the synagogue is proof that synagogue leaders rejected the community and not the contrary. (6) *Accommodation to the culture at large*. The Johannine community shows an inclusive attitude since, while hated by the world because they do not belong to it (17.14), they are not taken out of the world but sent into it (17.15, 19). What makes a clear difference between ‘sect’ and ‘cult,’ is that a ‘sectarian’ cannot accommodate while a ‘cult’ does. That is why, in Fuglseth’s understanding, the Johannine community should be viewed as ‘cultic’ or ‘cult’-like for two reasons. Firstly, because of a certain tension that is absorbed in an innovation and not a wish to refurbish the traditional worship. Secondly, the inclusive attitude leads the community to mixed social relationships with ‘others’ (Fuglseth 2005:373-4). The recent publication of Fuglseth’s thesis argues that Meeks misapplied Berger and Luckman’s theories that ‘do not present a distinct theory of ‘sects’ connected to their phenomenological sociology’. Meek’s portrayal of Christian congregations as exclusive and sectarian is very problematic in the light of the internal evidences and the comparison between the Johannine community and sociological studies conducted on sects. Although Meeks calls the Johannine group ‘sectarian’ he unfortunately does not identify with any ‘specific ‘sect’ model in the modern sociological tradition (see Fuglseth 2005:15).

This brings us to another deciding factor, namely and understanding of the nature of the community in the Graeco-Roman world.

5.3 Toward the understanding of the Johannine community from the perspective of the Graeco-Roman World and through its own language

The Johannine community functioned as many associations in the Graeco-Roman World (for details, see Wilson 1996:1 and Kloppenborg 1996:16-7). The Johannine community, as a Christian group, and like other voluntary associations, did not live in a vacuum, isolated from the rest of the Graeco-Roman society, but felt at home in the polis of the Roman Empire (see Harland 2003:179; Robbins 1991:305-332). While other groups were associated either with a household or around a common trade (and civic locale), the Johannine community was a group around the cult of a deity, comparable to the worshippers of Zeus in Sardis. Harland

points out that ‘monotheism was a key distinguishing factor in the case of Christian (and Jewish) cultural groups’ (2003:198). Both Christian and Jewish groups undeniably participated in civic life,³⁶ even if, as Trebilco observes, ‘the dominant tendency of Diaspora Jewry was to live as loyal subjects of their gentile masters and participate in the culture and society as fully as possible within the constraints of their religious tradition’ (Trebilco 1991:187). It is obvious that the Jewish and Christian groups were at home in the Graeco-Roman world (cf. Neyrey 1991:305-32) since these groups lived and developed within similar civic settings.

All the members of the Johannine community were associated with the cult of Jesus, acknowledged as the broker of the association. In the Jewish milieu, Moses was God’s broker. It is in that perspective that the Jewish Synagogues and Christian movements made exclusive demands on the loyalty of their members according to the world view that implied another way of life within the group. In that troubled and divided ideological world, those depicted in the gospel as secret believers were not accepted as believers.

Another feature that the community shares with other Early Christian groups was the ‘interaction with society’ or ‘outsiders’ (cf. 1 Co 8-10; Harland 2003:190). Nevertheless, living apart as minority cultural groups should not contribute to their being regarded as ‘a sectarian body, a dissenting and disenfranchised community who understood the God and Father of Jesus Christ as a God of dissenters (...)’ (Rensberger 2002:185; for details, see 173-87). Their main distinctiveness might be sought in the unusual monotheism explaining the devotion to only one God, excluding all others. Because the Johannine Christians insisted that only their God

³⁶ The Jewish participation in civic life, as Harland comments (2003:201-10) possessed three main features that may be summarised as follows: (1) participating within the central socio-cultural institutions of the polis, for Jews could also participate in the activities of the gymnasium, in forming age-group associations or joining those that already existed; (2) secondly, some Jewish groups actively participated within civic networks of benefaction in a manner comparable to other associations, which could also involve interaction with the principal institutions. At Sardis, for example, the civic institutions provided the Jewish group with a place to meet. This synagogue illustrates well the ways in which a Jewish group could, quite literally, find a place for itself within the polis. As an institution common to many cities in Asia Minor, the bath-gymnasium was a place of education and athletics, as well as a place to gather, socialize, honour gods, exercise, and, of course, bathe; (3) thirdly, the Jews were involved or connected with other subgroups, such as physicians, shippers and artisans.

deserved recognition or honour in the polytheistic world, they were branded atheists.

To figure out how such an ambivalent relationship came to exist between the Johannine community and the larger society, one might consider the world or environment from which the FG originated, which was one characterised marked on the one hand by the pagan Graeco-Roman world dominated by a polytheistic worldview, and on the other hand by the Jewish religious world with its exclusive monotheism. John's attitude towards the world is positively constructed: the Johannine Jesus knows that as the Son sent by the Father he has a positive mission, and the community experiences a similar awareness of their mission into the world (cf. 3.16; 17.20-23; 20.21-3; 21.11; cf. Brodie 1993:151).

With this worldview in mind, the community reshaped or transformed Jewish exclusive monotheism in apprehending Jesus as the Son of Man through whom God reveals. By depicting the blind man believing in and worshiping Jesus the Son of Man in John 9.35-8, the evangelist hints at the community's spirituality towards the end of the First Century. Although Rensberger mistakenly regards the community's expression of spirituality as an expression of its sectarian tendency, he is right when he argues that the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah cannot be just a matter of intellectual assent. It is rather the faith expressed in all the moments and aspects of one's life. That is 'spirituality' looked at as faith put into practice (2002:176). The triple language that adopts the FG, namely abiding in Jesus, choosing downward social mobility and loving one another (for details, see Rensberger 2002:178-83) is depicted as a language that defines John's sectarian spirituality. As we will demonstrate further, the Johannine language has nothing to do with sectarian attitude. One might notice that *while the Jewish world has become an instrument of oppression, the Johannine community developed an ideology of survival and resistance* (see Fernandez 1991:406, 407). The language of the FG is a mode of resistance or an alternative to expressing its social experience within an environment where they are labelled as deviants or atheists.

Brodie argues that the unsuitability of the term 'sect' is increased by the fact that many of the sectarian attitudes attributed to the hypothetical Johannine community are based on a misreading of the gospel (1993:151). The Johannine community used its own language and developed its own Christological claims

which were naturally projected into the story of Jesus of Nazareth. The Jewish synagogue and Christian church are both corporate and competitive groups sharing the same interests in God but, at the same time, excluding each other since each one sees itself as the *familia dei*, and the other cannot belong at all.

Some scholars think the internal evidences (the alignment under the BD, the display of the uniquely high Christology and a stress on the individual's relationship with God through belief in Jesus) overshadow any ecclesiological developments (see Quast 1989:14). Nevertheless, following Kysar (2007:142), one should conclude that the internal life of the community (inward line) and its strong consciousness to hold a mission in the world (outward line) make the opposites directed lines to point in the same direction.

6 Conclusion: Johannine community

This chapter reconstructs the history of the Johannine community. The birth of the community did not happen overnight, but resulted from a long historical process. The present study strives to understand the relatedness between the history of the Johannine community and discipleship in the FG. The Johannine Christology, as the result of a long process, addresses specific historical contexts and is an example of the community's achievement. In order to learn about discipleship in Chapter 9, one needs to make a connection between religious belief (confession of high Christology) and social experience (the social implication of the confession viewed as a threat to monotheism). The caution with which the man's parents reply to the Jews' question (vv.18-21) because of the threat of being expelled from the synagogue (v.22) demonstrates that the faith of the members of the community, in an environment of conflict, was vulnerable.

Brown and Martyn support the idea of the conception of the early group mentioned in John 1.35-41, the formerly disciples of John the Baptist, as a messianic inner-synagogue group not engaged in debates about the validity of the Torah, but holding a traditional perception of Jesus, for whom they felt a certain affinity. They also agree that the confession of Jesus as the Messiah by the group was perceived as a threat to monotheism. It is against this confession and perceived threat that the FE relates the story of the blind man in Chapter 9. The threat by the 'Jews' to expel from

the synagogue those who confess Jesus to be Christ shows the FE, acting on behalf of the community, how critical the unbelieving world consisting of the so-called 'Jews' and other sympathetic groups are. In the evangelist's opinion, the disciples of John the Baptist who thought that their master was the Messiah, the so-called 'crypto-Christians', disciples with inadequate faith (John 6.60f) and those who held a 'low Christology', as well as the Jewish leaders, were all unbelievers.

The FE uses the conflict to develop the community's understanding of Christology relating to discipleship. The conflict with outsiders (the Jews or Pharisees) and with insiders (different groups of sympathizers), as described in Chapters 5–10, turned into a 'hermeneutic conflict', which achieved in order to provide a hermeneutic clarification of the relevant Christological issues in depicting Jesus as the Son of the Father or the Son of Man. Discipleship is impossible without such understanding.

The discussion of conflict between Christians and 'Jews', as given in the literary setting of John 5-11, is the evangelist's effort to face the awkward situation that marked the end of first century and to strengthen the faith of the believers or insiders. In fact, the FG was written primarily to intensify insiders' faith and make it more profound (Brown 2003:152; Culpepper 1998:244).³⁷ The community's faith needed to be strengthened because those who had accepted Jesus had been attacked and challenged by the 'Jews' and had undergone traumatic expulsions from the synagogue as mentioned in John 9.22. The FE tries his best to cheer them up and to instruct them that the controversies about Jesus' identity (the 'Jews' referred to themselves as 'disciples of Moses' and rejected Jesus as the Messiah, while the Christians saw God revealed in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of Man) should help to

³⁷ Culpepper supporting such a view, states, 'seen in a larger context, the Gospel as a whole appears to have been written primarily for the believing community, to provide ready material for telling the church's story for those who do not believe. John clarifies the reasons for unbelief and explores various misunderstandings and stages of faith (cf. John 5). It also reflects a rhetorical strategy that leads the reader to embrace the narrator's affirmation of Jesus as the Christ (cf. John 4).' Kümmel (1973) notes that: 'It is extremely unlikely that the author of [the Gospel] is thinking primarily of non-Christians ... Thus [John] was written, at least primarily, to confirm and secure Christians in the faith.' Du Rand (1997:55) argues: 'The aim is that the Christians as first historical readers should be encouraged to continue to believe that Jesus, the Messiah, is the Son of God. The Gospel of John is (in his view) thus not primarily a missionary writing that endeavours to bring people to faith, but rather its intention is to strengthen their faith.'

reinforce their belief. The understanding of the term itself is not easier. While the blind man's parents represent the secret believers (Rensberg 1988:43), he himself is portrayed as the believer whose *remarkable courage challenges all the unbelieving groups mentioned in the gospel*.

Among three criteria that Rensberger (2002:176) proposes, two may be applied to the blind man's adventure of faith without any conception of the community to which he belongs as a 'sect'. *Firstly*, the blind man openly confesses his belief in Jesus and accepts the truth of the Johannine claim regarding Jesus' identity, despite threats that he will be expelled from the synagogue (9.22; 16.42) and the radical call to kill the Jewish Christians (16.2). Adherence to the Johannine view, as Rensberger (2002:179) notes, 'includes adherence to group norms and refusal of inducements to return to the larger society'. *Secondly*, since faith implies abandonment of preconceived notions about what God may or may not do, the blind man of Chapter 9 is depicted as relying firmly on his own experience with God against the learned Jewish authorities who are not willing to abandon their preconceived ideas about what God will and will not do. Although membership of the synagogue was an honour and expulsion from it shamed the person being expelled, the blind man ran the risk of being expelled and therefore marginalised. Jesus was marginalised, and the Johannine believers similarly were subjected to downward mobility. They would surrender their membership of the synagogue if that was the price they had to pay to be Jesus' disciples.

The reinforcement of criteria to identify believers should not be regarded as confirmation that the community was a 'sectarian group.' The community was not by definition a sect, but a highly qualified group of people interacting dynamically that held their own Christology and had a very specific mission. Instead of treating the Johannine community as a 'sectarian' group, it would be better to conceive both the Jewish synagogue and the Johannine Community church as corporate and competitive groups sharing the same interest in God and yet excluding each other since each one believes that they alone are *familia dei*. Any reconstruction of the historical context from which the FE writes leads one to assume that 'the evangelist emerges not as the leader of an independent group, but as a prophetic voice from within the church – a voice critical of the world, critical in another way of the Jews

(...)' (Brodie 1993:152). The only way the FE finds to challenge all the groups of unbelievers around (and even within) his community is to criticize the so-called 'Jews' of his time.

Ultimately, the reconstruction of the history of Johannine community aids the exegetical study since the conflict between Judaism and Christianity mentioned in Chapter 9 is positively read to develop the Christology to which the issue of discipleship is related.

The blind man, by mastering his fear of the Jews and of being expelled from the synagogue (9.22, 34), is sketched as the hero of John's narrative and a role model within the community, not only because of his audacious confession, but also because it is evident that he recognises Jesus as the Son of Man and openly demonstrates his devotion to him. John uses the story of the blind man to invite the Jewish Christians in the Diaspora synagogues to follow his example and disqualifies all those who do not show a determined commitment. All of these findings in the effort to reconstruct the history of the Joh Com are an aid to the understanding of discipleship in the subsequent and extensive exegetical analysis of Chapter 9.

Chapter 7

SOCIO-RHETORICAL READING OF JOHN 9 FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DISCIPLESHIP

1 Introduction

The socio-rhetorical approach, as Robbins (1996a:9) points out, is more useful than previous traditions of interpretation because it generates multiple strategies for reading and rereading texts in an environment and spirit of integration by making words interact with words in a particular text, and simultaneously with phenomena outside the text. The starting point of this interdisciplinary approach in this current chapter is ‘inner texture’, which investigates how words interact with one another as tools of communication. Since the repetition of words helps to identify the theme running through the text and demonstrates how the composition of the text is a guide to the central thought, it also reveals a chiasmic analysis which draws semantic relations between words, concepts and phrases, helping us to extract meaning.

The second area of this investigation is the ‘inter texture’. This will enable us to determine how Chapter 9 refers to the phenomena that lie in the ‘world’ outside the text, for example, by using words such as μαθητής, light, or miracles. Before coming to the ‘inner texture’ to make a meaningful analysis of the text itself, readers are advised to try to understand Chapter 9 in the light of the co-text within the first part of the Gospel and to determine the structure (or the subsections of the verses), the evangelist’s argument or rhetoric (how the sections relate to one another) and the focus area of the text and the theoretical account of argumentation.

2 The locale of John 9 in the literary structure of the FG

One of the main things to consider in this section is how ‘light’ becomes a dominant concept throughout Chapter 9. In order to give sense to discipleship, Chapter 9 was selected from the setting of Chapters 1-12, which form a unit that concentrates on the descent of the Son. In Chapters 13-20 discipleship relates to the ascent of the Son. The whole chapter set within its micro- and macro-structure should lead one understand discipleship as ‘a discipleship of light.’ The first

challenge is to read John 9 upstream from Chapters 5, 7 and 8, and downstream from Chapter 10 (even within the Book of Signs).

Johannine scholars widely agree that a meaningful interpretation of Chapter 9 is dependent on the ability to see its connection to the preceding Chapters 7 and 8 (Menken 1985:189-90), and also to Chapter 10. Robbins (1996b:19) argues that ‘endings are not endings at all but simply introduce topics and events that provide resources for a new beginning’. The story of John 9 does not end with v.41, but continues up to John 10.21 (cf. Keener 2003a:775) and even to 10.39. The conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, which started in Chapters 7 and 8, comes to a head in John 9.1 to 10.39. It is widely understood that Chapters 9 and 10 must be considered together (for details, we refer to Dodd 1953:354-356.362; Brown 1966:305-40; Hobbs 1968:160; Lindars 1972:337; Moloney 1976:144; Menken 1985:189-90; Van Tilborg 1993:229; Keener 2003a:775-820). As Moloney (1976:144) puts it:

Before any analysis of the meaning of Jn 9, one must decide on the role of the chapter within the wider context of Jn.8-10. Is this encounter with the light, conclusion to the bitter polemic of ch. 8, where Jesus was questioned because of his claim to be the light of the world (8, 12-13) or is it a preparation for ch. 10, in which the Pharisees, who should have been the shepherds of Israel, are condemned as thieves and robbers who have come to destroy (see 10,7-10 and Ezek. 34).

As for Lindars, he believes that John 9.1 – 10.42 must be grouped under the same theme: ‘Jesus enlightens men to know that he and the Father are one’ (Lindars 1972:337). He contends that the theme of the light of the world (8.12) is taken up and developed in the story of the blind man, which occupies the whole of Chapter 9 and which is one of ‘the most brilliant compositions in the New Testament’ (Lindars 1972:338), for the closely knit internal construction of the story shows consummate artistry. The whole of Chapter 8 considers Jesus’ identity in the light of the claim that he is the light of the world (see 8.12 together with vv. 19, 25, 27, 33, 48, 53, 58; Moloney 1976:145). This theme is continued into Chapter 9, where Jesus himself claims to be the light of the world (9.5) and gives sight as a symbolic proof of that fact.

The miracle of giving sight to a man born blind serves as a perfect example of the statement in 8.12. This claim, confirmed by the gift of sight made to the blind

man, strengthens the narrative sequence since ‘the light is subjected to opposition, trial and rejection by those who represent the darkness, it will be no different for his followers who have experienced the light of life’ (Lincoln 2005:279-80). Throughout the chapter, in the on-going story, the debates are concerned with the origin and identity of Jesus and before narrating the story, the Evangelist makes sure that Jesus points out the meaning of the sign as an instance of light coming into darkness. The blind man is drawn from darkness to light, not only physically, but also spiritually. The writer’s artistic skills are visible in the way ‘the story starts in verse 1 with a blind man who will gain his sight, and it ends in verse 41 with the Pharisees who have become spiritually blind’ (Brown 1966:377). The blind man emerges from the narrative as the one of the most attractive characters in the Gospels. The question of Jesus’ identity is a main concern throughout Chapter 9 (see 9, 10-12, 16, 17, 24, 29, 33, 35-37).

Even in Chapters 8 and 9, the Jews or Pharisees repeatedly make the same enquiries regarding Jesus’ identity, but they fail to realise who he is. The condemnation of the Jewish leaders, in Chapter 10, alongside the proclamation of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (10, 11) is not something new or surprising and is very closely linked with the preceding chapter. John 9.39-41³⁸ is situated at the crossroad of John 9 and 10, being the conclusion of Chapter 9 and the introduction to Chapter 10.

Although John 9 skillfully dovetails into the context of the other chapters (Schnackenburg 1980b:238), this chapter clearly forms an independent unit, even though it fits very well into the present co-text.³⁹ Verse 1 relates directly to Jesus’ departure from the Temple. The theme of Jesus as ‘the Light’ of the world, developed in the healing of the blind man, is made clear in the explanatory comments at the beginning (v. 5) and at the end (v. 39), and realities to the word of revelation in

³⁸ In the following conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees (John 9, 40-10, 18), Van Tilborg argues (1993:229), this leadership of, and in, Israel is discussed. In this exciting text, the relation between Jesus and the healed man no longer plays a role, but is revisited at the end of the story in the description of the reactions of the Judeans to the discourse of Jesus (10, 19-21).

³⁹ For more details, see Smalley 1978:195; Moloney 1978:142-5; Resseguie 1982:295, 303; Culpepper 1983:73; Holleran 1993a:11; Lieu 1988:83; cf Menken 1985:195; for a discussion of considering chap.9 and 10 as a literary unit see Dodd [1953] 1968:356-7; Beasley-Murray 1987:148-9; Beutler & Fortna 1991:3; Du Rand 1991:94-8; Tolmie 1999:17; cf Menken 1985:190-1.

John 8.12. The evangelist's literary skill is evident in the construction of the story (Schnackenburg 1980b:239). The miracle briefly recounted at the beginning, probably from the σημεῖα source,⁴⁰ is characterized as a sign and valued as evidence. Throughout the narrative it is clear that the Evangelist regards the cured man's faith as having been increased (v. 12, 17, 33, 38; see also McCready 1990:151) and the attitude of Jesus' opponents as becoming more and more rigid (v. 16, 18, 24, 28-29), until it is exposed as malice (v. 34) and blindness (v. 40-41) which are, in Jesus' perception, inexcusable unbelief (v. 41). The official Pharisaic Judaism not only argued vigorously against Jesus' messiahship and divine origin, but also fought the followers of Jesus Christ with external measures – which was not so evident in other stories – and so defectors were excluded from the Jewish religious community and were also subject to social sanctions (v. 34).

As demonstrated, John 9 presents the development of the issue that is at the centre of the four chapters. Extending the link, Chapter 9, which belongs to the book of signs, is placed within the broader co-text where the controversy between Jesus and those who opposed him, especially the Jewish leaders, gradually became more intense (see Du Rand 1991:95; cf. also Hisayasu Ito 1999/2000:49).

For instance, between Chapters 5 and 10, the Evangelist leads the reader through a series of Jewish feasts: Sabbath (Chapter 5), Passover (Chapter 6), Tabernacles (Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10:21) and Dedication (Chapter 10.22-42) [cf.

⁴⁰ Bultmann distinguishes three sources in John, namely passion narrative, miracle source and source for the discourses, and other sources and traditions. The Passion narrative was drawn from a source independent of the synoptic accounts. The miracle source (*Semeia Quelle*) or signs source contained an account of the signs or miracles referred to in John. Most of the discourse material in John is “*Offenbarungsreden*” or “Revelatory Discourse Source” assigned to this source. Finally, come other sources and traditions. Bultmann assigns those passages which seem to echo the synoptics to these sources. (For details see Bultmann 1971:6-7; see also Brown 1966 and Culpepper 1998; Moody Smith 1984:40-61). Even though I am not tempted to be involved in the debate, the great weakness of Bultmann's view is that he puts the signs-source on one side and the revelatory discourse source on the other. He did not perceive that in John, signs and discourses are closely woven together. In addition, Schnelle's eight objections to the idea of a ‘Semeia Source’ seem convincing (for details, cf. Schnelle 1992:150-164). The fact that the FE uses the term ‘semeion’ in John 20.30 or elsewhere does not mean he drew from the so-called ‘Semeia Source’. John, by ingeniously using the word ‘*semeion*’ to designate the miracles performed by Jesus, tries to show that ‘there is a truth behind the miracle, a truth greater than the miracle itself’ (Toussaint 2001:50). Beyond the visible miracle stands Jesus the Son, the revealer of the Father.

Borchert 1996:235; Köstenberger 2004:173-320]. All of these Jewish feasts, according to Coloe, are, in John, interpreted in the light of the Gospel's Christological claim, i.e. that Jesus is the new Temple of God's dwelling (Coloe 2001:115). John 7 and 8 examine the feasts of Sabbath and Tabernacles where 'the Temple and its rituals play a critical role in the Gospel narrative's revelation of Jesus' identity' (Hisayasu Ito 1999/2000:115-6). Chapters 7, 8 and 9 are centered on the Christological debate concerning the identity of Jesus. Moloney's recent publication draws a helpful connection between three rites⁴¹ of the Jewish traditional Feast of Tabernacles and John 7 and 8. He demonstrates that Jesus' claim that he is the source of water recalls the gift of water long associated with Moses, the Torah and the coming of the Messiah (2005a:201). The way the narrator constructs the story makes the water ritual and its messianic association point to Christology, since the light emanating from the nightly celebration in the courtyard in Jerusalem and in the temple is fulfilled in the person of Jesus (2005a:202). While the Jewish celebration of light was marked by an offering of dance, song and praise of God, Jesus' claim to be the light (8.12) operates as a dividing factor. While each morning, during the feast of Tabernacles, the Jews were giving praise and allegiance to express their loyalty to the one true God (*Sukkah* 5:4), in John 7 and 8 they are still questioning Jesus' credentials as the one sent by that very God.

The relatedness between the two chapters can be seen in Chapter 7 where the

⁴¹ Moloney (2005:196-8) lists them as follows:

- *The Water Libation Ceremony (Sukkah 4:9-10)* John 7.1-8.59 should be read against the background of public celebration of messianic expectation. The celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles was marked, each morning of the seven days, by a joyous procession of priests and Levites to and from the Pool of Siloam. The joyful celebration associated with the request for the gift of rain (cf. Zech 14.16-7) but more specifically the Messiah is linked with a final gift of water from the well in *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 1:8' (cf. Moloney 2005:196-7);
- *The Ceremony of Light (Sukkah 5:1-4)* John 7.1-8.59 should be read against the background of the eschatological of God's saving actions (see Zech 14.6-8) [Moloney 2005:197]. The joyful celebration, during illuminated nights, was marked by men dancing under the lights (cf. *Sukkah* 5:4) and the whole of Jerusalem this spectacular ceremony was illuminated (cf. *Sukkah* 5:3).
- *The Rite of Facing the Temple (Sukkah 5:4)* John 7.1-8.59 should be read against the background of Israel's recognition of its one true God, to whom all praise and allegiance was due. The priests, each of the seven days, at the moment of sunrise, proceeding toward the temple recited *Sukkah* 5:4 whose sentiments and words recall Zech 14.9 and the *Hallel* of Ps118.28-9 (see Moloney 2005:198).

truth of Jesus' messiahship is questioned. The people of Jerusalem claim to know where the Messiah is from (v.27). Jesus responds by announcing that he has not come on his own but from the one who sent him and with whom he is united (vv.28-9). In Chapter 8, Jesus' claim to be the light of the world (v.12) brings the Pharisees to the forefront when they dispute the validity of Jesus' testimony (v.13). The validity of his testimony is stated in v.14b: 'I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from (...)' and in v.18 and 19: 'I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf (...) you know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.' Although Jesus' messiahship is questioned in Chapter 7 by what the participants brought into the story by the writer claim to know, Jesus chooses to take a stand. He is the One sent by the Father, unknown to the people of Jerusalem (Chapter 7), and unrecognized by the Pharisees (Chapter 8). In Chapter 9, they claim to know that Jesus is a sinner (v.24) and that God has spoken to Moses. They avoid dealing with where Jesus came from (v.29), even when the blind man who had been healed speaks out about his miraculous healing (v.32). Against the background of conflict that is constructed around 'knowledge' from Chapters 7 to 9, the blind man is depicted as the paradigmatic figure that exemplifies the principle: 'Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' Facing two alternatives, 'follow Jesus, the light of the world, and walk in the light, or reject that Jesus makes God known, and consequently walk in darkness' (see Moloney 2005b:207), the Jewish authorities choose to walk in darkness. In contrast, the blind man chooses to walk in light, and so becomes the illustration of the 'discipleship into light' in John.

Chapters 7 to 10 of John are oriented towards the Christological debate and the writer strives to bring out the truth about Jesus' identity, which 'the Jews' refuse to admit. Jesus reveals himself to be 'Living water' (7.38), 'the Light of the World' (8.12 and 9.5), 'the gate...' (10.7-9, 11) and 'the Good Shepherd' (10.14).

3 Conclusion

Chapter 9, as 'the most brilliant composition', takes up the theme of light of the word from Chapter 8 and develops it into the well-construed story of the blind

man. The story about the miracle by which a man born blind was healed serves as a perfect illustration of Jesus' statement 'I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (8.12). As the story continues, the light is subjected to opposition, trial and rejection by the Pharisees or the 'Jews' who represent the darkness. They repeat the same questions about Jesus' identity in Chapters 8 and 9. The link that is perceived within the broader co-text (5, 7-10) is extended to the controversy between Jesus and the Jewish leaders who oppose to him. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 are centered on the Christological debate concerning the identity of Jesus.

In the Jewish feasts of Tabernacles (Chapters 7 and 8) and Dedication (10), his identity is clarified. Out of the backdrop of the Christological conflict, the blind man is depicted as the paradigmatic figure that exemplifies the principle 'whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' The discipleship that is evident in these chapters, specifically Chapter 9, is clearly 'discipleship into light.' While the 'Jews' and other disciples (for instance, the parents of the man born blind) secretly reject the light of the world, the healed man challenges the Jewish authorities by following Jesus.

4 John's style of reasoning

The thought movement and techniques used by the FE have a clear influence on the research process. Firstly, an important peculiarity of the FG is the linking of long discourses with brief stories. For instance, the healing of the paralyzed man (John 5.1-9) is followed by the testimony to Jesus' authority (vv.10-47). More specifically, the miracle story of the multiplication of loaves (6.1-14) gives rise to the discourse on the bread of heaven (vv.22-59). Secondly, the structure of the Gospel as a whole displays a notably dramatic element that develops towards a climax.⁴² The FE uses various literary devices: misunderstanding (where the audience misses Jesus' point), double meaning (plays on words that can mean two things, i.e. from

⁴² In John 20 (the resurrection narratives), for instance, the scenes are so disposed that the reader might share the feelings of the characters there (the woman, two disciples hurrying to the tomb, Mary Magdalene, the twelve with and without Thomas). In his identification with the characters the reader comes to an experience of increasing faith, culminating in a supreme expression of faith (Schnackenburg 1965:115).

above – from below), irony (where the reader grasps the true meaning that eludes the speaker), chiasm (parallel ideas or terms pivoting around a central notion), etc. (cf. Harrington 1990:8). The chiastic literary construct is particularly perceptible from the prologue (John 1.1-18), and in John 9 and 17 where the writer ingeniously chooses parallel terms or concepts. As it stands in John 9, AA' (vv.1-7//39-41), BB' (vv.8-12//35-8), CC' (vv.13-17//24-34), all of them pivoting around a focal point, D (v.18-23). Thirdly, the discourses utilize another technique, i.e. verbal links through keywords, the concentration of ideas by means of recourse to earlier ones, and inclusion, whereby the thought is brought back full circle to its starting point (Schnackenburg 1965:115f). In John 1.1, Jesus is called 'God' at the end of the Gospel (20.28). Fourthly, the writer creates thought 'circles' around certain concepts, but still moves forward while remaining within a circle. The FG's movement of thought is best compared to a spiral: although the thoughts circle and return, they still move onward.

5 Inner-texture of John 9

From Robbins' proposal, the point of departure to building up the socio-rhetorical approach of reading is the 'inner texture.' It concerns communication – interaction between the author and the reader of the text, since a text does not truly become a text until someone reads it. In this sense, the 'complete' interpretation of a text involves the interrelation between the author, the text and the reader (Robbins 1996b:30). The preceding chapter dealt with the authorship of the FG as an aid to the exegesis, whose main task is to investigate the world from which the text originated and the world of the author.⁴³ The inner analysis focuses on words, which are perceived as tools of communication. The main interpretive task is to strive to bring out all the meanings from the words themselves and concentrate on the ways the words are used. The inner-texture has to do with the repetition of particular words (*repetitive texture*) from which emerges a kind of progression as the reader moves from the first occurrence to another occurrence of the word (*progressive texture*).

⁴³ According to Robbins, 'authors create texts in their world; readers create a world of the text in their own world. Socio-rhetorical criticism interactively explores the world of the author, the world of the text and the world of the interpreter to interpret the inner-texture of a New Testament text' (see Robbins 1996b: 30).

Inner-texture includes how characters are introduced, how their actions are described, how other written texts are introduced by the narrator (*narrational texture*) and how all of these textures work together to create the opening, middle, and closing of a unit of text (*opening-middle-closing texture*; cf. Robbins 1996a:19-21). The inner-texture concerns *argumentative texture* that investigates multiple kinds of inner reasoning in the discourse (1996a:21-29).

As Robbins puts it ‘discourse presents assertions and supports them with reasons, clarifies them through opposites and contraries, and possibly presents short or elaborate counter arguments’ (1996a:21). In other words, repetitive, progressive, narrational, opening-middle-closing and argumentative textures are part of inner texture, according to Robbins’ approach. This indeed describes what is, in the exegetical field, always designated as syntactical, semantic and rhetorical (argumentative and pragmatic) aspects of a text.

The inner texture concerns also sensory-aesthetic texture that resides in the range of senses that the text evokes, for instance thought, emotion, sight, sound, touch, smell and the manner in which the text embodies reason, intuition, imagination, or humour (cf. Robbins 1996a:29-36). Of these six different kinds of inner texture, this study will deal with four of them. The *repetitive and progressive texture* focuses on the occurrences of terms, words and phrases, because when the same word occurs at least twice in a text, this may lead to ‘repetitive texture’ - multiple occurrences of many different kinds of grammatical, syntactical, verbal or topical phenomena, and specifically on how words and phrases occur in detail throughout the whole chapter and are handled in the author’s construct of the story. *At the level of Opening-Middle-Closing Texture*: repetition, progression, and narration regularly work together. Intending to create the opening-middle-closing of a unit of the whole of John 9, the main thing is to discover ‘the exact place where the opening ends, where the middle begins and ends, and where the conclusion begins and ends’ (Robbins 1996a:19). Since the ‘endings are not endings at all but simply introduce topics and events that provide resources for a new beginning’.

However, the manner in which the structure operates by examining how topics and events are introduced does not reveal more sense than a chiasmic structure. This draws semantic relations between words and phrases that serve to make sections

interact with another and words whose meanings do not originate in simple repetition but in their context.

In order to make words interact with other words in a particular text, I propose to put aside the Robbins's 'inner-texture'⁴⁴ and use only, at this stage, discourse analysis. This reading approach is useful as it looks closely at words and phrases that create 'linguistic cohesiveness' (Reed 1999:29). The words and phrases repeated throughout John 9 do not make sense, or produce a message, unless we look at how they relate and make different sections cohere. A word becomes a sense-bearer when it is set in its context. Words, in a semantic analysis, emphasize how semantics is concerned with more than merely the 'meaning' of words since words are simply employed as symbols representing particular features of the meaning (Louw 1989:21). The repetition of words⁴⁵ in John 9 does not necessarily indicate

⁴⁴ Robbins' inner texture is incomplete since it leaves much room for further delineation, expansion, development that discourse analysis takes into account. Indeed, Robbins, in his *'Where is Wuellner's Anti-Hermeneutical Hermeneutic Taking Us? From Schleiermacher to Thistleton and Beyond,'* takes Wuellner's approach seriously. While he recognizes the validity of Wuellner's role in moving rhetorical interpretation into a position of recognition and prominence in biblical studies today, Robbins, advocating for rhetorics, does not fail to describe Wuellner's approach as an anti-hermeneutical hermeneutic since it is simply opposed to rhetoric (2004a:106). Following Wuellner's reasoning, argumentation and exegetical work, Robbins reaches the conclusion that Wuellner leads one to 'the transcultural nature of early Christian discourse and, in the process, to the challenge to formulate a transcultural rhetorical mode of argumentative/persuasive practice in exegetical interpretation of NT literature' (2004a:124, for details, cf 2004a:118-125; see also <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/WuellClarPrePub.pdf> Looking, 1-27). The weakness of this extensive study is that while it determines the transcultural nature of early Christian discourse and puts a finger on the challenge that the nature implies, it neglects to demonstrate how a transcultural rhetorical mode of argumentative/persuasive practice in exegetical interpretation of NT literature works. It is not enough to indicate its mode of argumentative or persuasive practice. It is important to actually apply it to a text. Another weakness of Robbins' inner texture lies in focusing on how words are repeated without demonstrating to what extent they relate to one another. The repetition is little more than a first step. It would be better to understand how the words relate to one another; it is in that sense that they become meaningful. Discourse analysis is more helpful in that regard.

⁴⁵ In John 9, some words occur as follows: 'the man' (12 references), 'blind' (13 occurrences), 'parents' (7 references), the verb λέγω much more used than other word or verb throughout the chapter by 24 occurrences, whose main contender is the term 'Pharisees' cumulated with 'the Jews' with 23 references, the conjugated verb ἠρωτησαν (they asked) occurs 3 times, the verb ἀποκρίνομαι with three occurrences, 6 references of οἶδα from v.24 to 31, the verb 'to see' occurs 8 times meanwhile the substantive 'sight' occurs three times. There are eight references the substantives ἁμαρτία and ἁμαρτωλος and their correspondent verb ἥμαρτεν, eight implicit and explicit references to 'Jesus' occur in the whole chapter. Moreover, the term 'μαθητῆς,' either in singular or in plural form, has four occurrences, etc.

cohesiveness. ‘Repetition is not a phenomenon of the code itself but of the code as it is used by a speaker/author in a particular discourse’ (Reed 1999:42). In the process of interpretation, the repetition, as code, must be decoded. In such a way, one might as well analyze co-referential ties (pronouns, demonstratives), co-classificational ties (substitution, ellipsis), co-extensional ties of both instantial (those tied to the situational context) and general types (such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy and repetition).⁴⁶ The discourse analyst utilizes all of these to demonstrate how far the text brings out its cohesiveness.

Discourse, Halliday notes, ‘gets its cohesive quality by means of semantic relations involving “elements of any extent, both smaller and larger than clauses, from single words to lengthy passages of text... [which] may hold across gaps of any extent” ’ (Halliday 1985:287). The semantic relations are built up within the communication system that characterizes language. Louw (1979:3) explains this as follows:

Language is a communication system. As a system it involves a multiplicity of elements functioning in relationship to each other. In order to understand what is communicated by a language segment, the system of that segment must, of necessity, be decoded with reference to its parts and their interrelationships, as well as – when relevant – with relationship to a particular context of frame of reference. Decoding is in fact an analysis, and analyzing a language segment entails a systematic grouping of elements into constituent units in order to mark the more immediate constituents in relation to each other. In other words: analysis involves the marking of constituents and their relations to one another. Since language as such is a highly complex system with multidimensional interrelationships (...) One may, for instance, count the number of words in an utterance, or assay their relative length with respect to each other, or analyse the sounds involved, or determine the case relations between constituents etc.

Even though various perspectives could be used to approach a discourse, it has become important to analyze the semantic content of the language of John 9 – segmented as such – in order to see how its constituent units are segmented according to the argumentative construct of the FE.

⁴⁶ For a more detailed explanation of concepts, cf. Reed (1999), 36-43. In order to find out organic ties that take place in the text, one has to refer to logico-semantic relationships between clauses, paragraphs and phrases and componential ties that have to do with repetition of words (or individual linguistic components). Halliday and Hassan, as quoted by Reed (1999:36), appeal to three types of componential ties (1) co-reference, (2) co-classification and (3) co-extension.

5.1 Structure of the whole chapter 9⁴⁷

The structure of John 9 divides scholarship into many factions. One group of commentators advocate that John 9 is structured into six scenes;⁴⁸ a second group into eight scenes while others oscillate between fourfold syntactic division⁴⁹ and threefold division (Hoskyns 1947:351-2; Lee 1994:164-5). We have opted to follow the critics who envisaged structuring John 9 into seven scenes.⁵⁰ Between those who

⁴⁷ See Crosby 2000:88; L'Eplattenier 1993:196. Both authors structure chap. 9 as a chiasm, but unfortunately all of them failed to bring out to what extent the so-called chiasm has a theological meaning in the interpretation of the whole chapter. Though the latter pointedly contends that the story structured in seven scenes presents a narrative chiasm, his study does not make any allusion to the issue of discipleship.

⁴⁸ Among them may be cited Schnackenburg (1980b:239) and Malina & Rohrbaugh (1998:169) whose structure is to provide an introduction in vv.1-5, followed by four episodes through which the event unfolds: first the healing in vv.6-12, then a first interrogation of the newly sighted person in vv.13-17 followed by the interrogation of his parents in vv.18-23 and a second interrogation of the healed man in vv.24-34; then the author provides a conclusion in vv.35-41. To them may be added Molla (1977:128) who takes John 9 as a typical example of the juridical setting in which the author places the healing of the man born blind (1977:128). According to him the whole story is construed to the extent that the reader has to find out who Jesus is and what his presence means for the world. The healing of the man born blind is at the same time a sign and a symbol. And the sayings of the neighbours, the perplexity of the Pharisees, the different interrogations are all witnesses to the trial which takes place in the narrative. Bruce (1983), in spite of the fact that he breaks the entire chapter into 6 scenes, does not make any comment on the structure. For six scenes, see also Lindars [1972] 1981:341-52; Brodie 1993:343-4; Holleran 1993a:12-4.

⁴⁹ See also Du Rand (1991:98) consult Ito 2000:60. In Bultmann (1971:329), the new section is introduced by a healing story (9.1-7), followed by a conversation about the miracle, or rather the miracle-worker, between the healed man and the Jewish authorities (v. v. 8-34), and between the healed man and Jesus himself (v. 35-38). Both conversations pave the way to introduce the discourse of Jesus in 9.39 – 10.21.

⁵⁰ One can bear in mind the reference above made to Van Tilborg, Panackel and Martyn. It should be noted here that Zumstein (2003:169-70), was not the first to note that a good understanding of John calls forth the structure of seven scenes for any exegetical analysis. We can mention Morris (1971:476-97), who shows that 'this chapter has significance in John's plan for showing Jesus to be the Messiah (...) Jesus is the Light of the world, and light is always in conflict with darkness' (see p. 475). Kysar dividing this chapter into seven scenes asserts that: 'the chapter is a finely polished drama of seven scenes which shows in an exemplary way how John recites a wonder story and then proceeds to explore its symbolic meaning. While it is a physically blind man who is healed, it is his spiritual sight and the spiritual blindness of the religious leaders that constitute the central message of this section' (Kysar 1986:148). L'Eplattenier (1993:196) considers the narrative of Chapter 9 as presenting some analogies with the healing of the paralytic man of John 5, but it is more complex because of its organization into seven delimited scenes that constitute a narrative chiasm that I shall discuss below. For Beasley-Murray (1989:152), whose we shall consider later, the structure of the chapter is clear since after the sign in vv.1-7, the controversy occasioned by the healing is described, at the centre of which stands the blind man who is

opted for six or for seven scenes, there is no significant difference; for the first group, the conclusion is drawn in vv.35-41, for the other this unit has to be divided into two different sub-units:

vv.35-38, where Jesus solicits the faith of the healed man, and vv.39-41, where the Pharisees, in contrast to the man born blind, are declared blind even though they claim to see. The choice of these seven scenes was dictated by the chiasmic construct of the chapter, which makes it meaningful on both the literary and the theological planes. The recounted episode is framed between a physical blindness which, in a symbolic bearing, emphasizes the blindness of the Jewish authorities. John 9 may thus be structured as follows:

- **A** – vv.1-7: Jesus and his disciples discuss sin.
- **B** – vv.8-12: The formerly blind man and his neighbours discuss who healed him.
- **C** – vv.13-17: The healed man is brought to the Pharisees;
- **D** – vv.18-23: The Jews' decision regarding expulsion from the synagogue is employed to contrast the secret believers (like the man's parents) with the disciples in John's outlook.
- **C'** – vv.24-34: The blind man appears before the Pharisees a second time. The disciples of Moses are placed in opposition to the disciples of Jesus.
- **B'** – vv.35-38: The healed man professes that he believes in Jesus the Son of man and worships him.
- **A'** – vv.39-41: Pharisees' sin: blindness opposed to the giving of sight (Jesus distinguishes between physical blindness and spiritual blindness).

Even though Jesus appears only at the beginning of the story (vv.1-7) and is not mentioned again until v.34, the writer brings him back into the story when he hears that the 'Jews' had driven out the man born blind. Jesus' presence is needed to

subjected to a series of interrogations as follows: in vv.8-12 the blind man is questioned by his neighbours; in vv.13-17 he is interrogated by the Pharisees, in vv.18-23 the parents are interrogated; in vv.24-34, further interrogation of the man by the Pharisees; in vv.35-38, Jesus seeks him and leads him to full confession of faith and at the end, in vv.39-41, Jesus declares that the purpose of his coming is to make the 'blind' see and the 'seeing' blind.

solicit the blind man's faith (vv.35-38) and to proclaim the judgment of the Jews who claim to see even as they are in darkness (vv.39-41). Meyer (2004:256), analyzing Chapter 9, contends: 'The story is one of the most dramatic in the whole Bible – not only in the general sense of being a moving and vivid account but also in the very specific sense that it is composed of a series of scenes (...), which follow each other in an artful and theological purposeful sequence.' The option chosen for these subsequent seven scenes is important to ensure a good and detailed exegesis of the text.

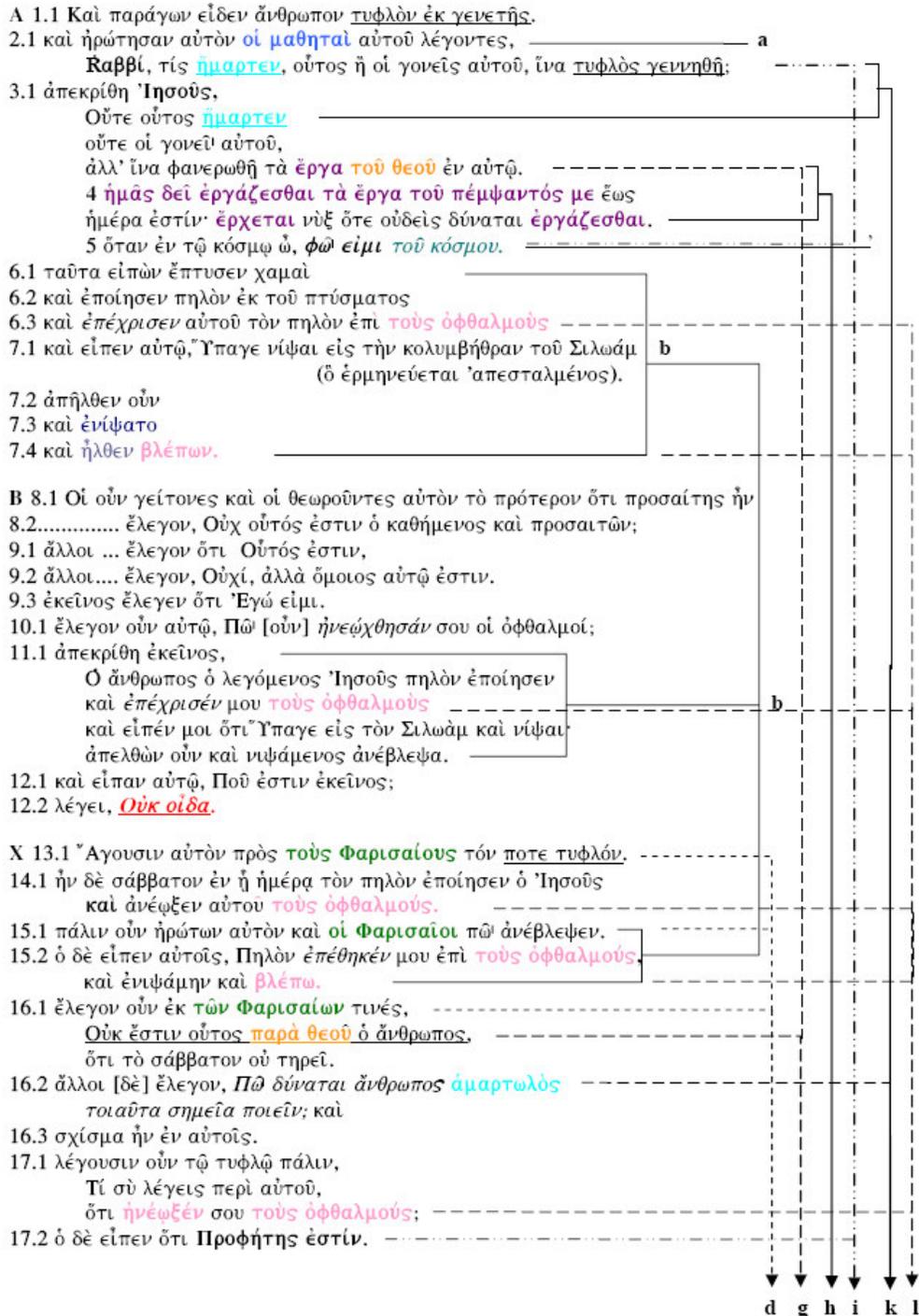
To uncover the structure of the text, one has to see John 9 as a series of seven scenes [see Schnackenburg (1980b), Van Tilborg (1996) and Panackel (1988)]. Martyn (1979:26),⁵¹ observes that John 9 is a piece created out of the little healing story of verses 1-7 (...) and skillfully transformed by the evangelist, and that it effectively prepares the reader for the important discourse of Chapter 10. In Ito's view (1999/2000:59), John 10.21 explicitly refers back to the miracle event, but also to the relationships between Jesus, the blind man, and the Jewish authorities, which are implied and depicted in the figures of speech. The blind man is implicitly depicted as one among the sheep that is protected by Jesus as the good shepherd against the authorities considered as chiefs.

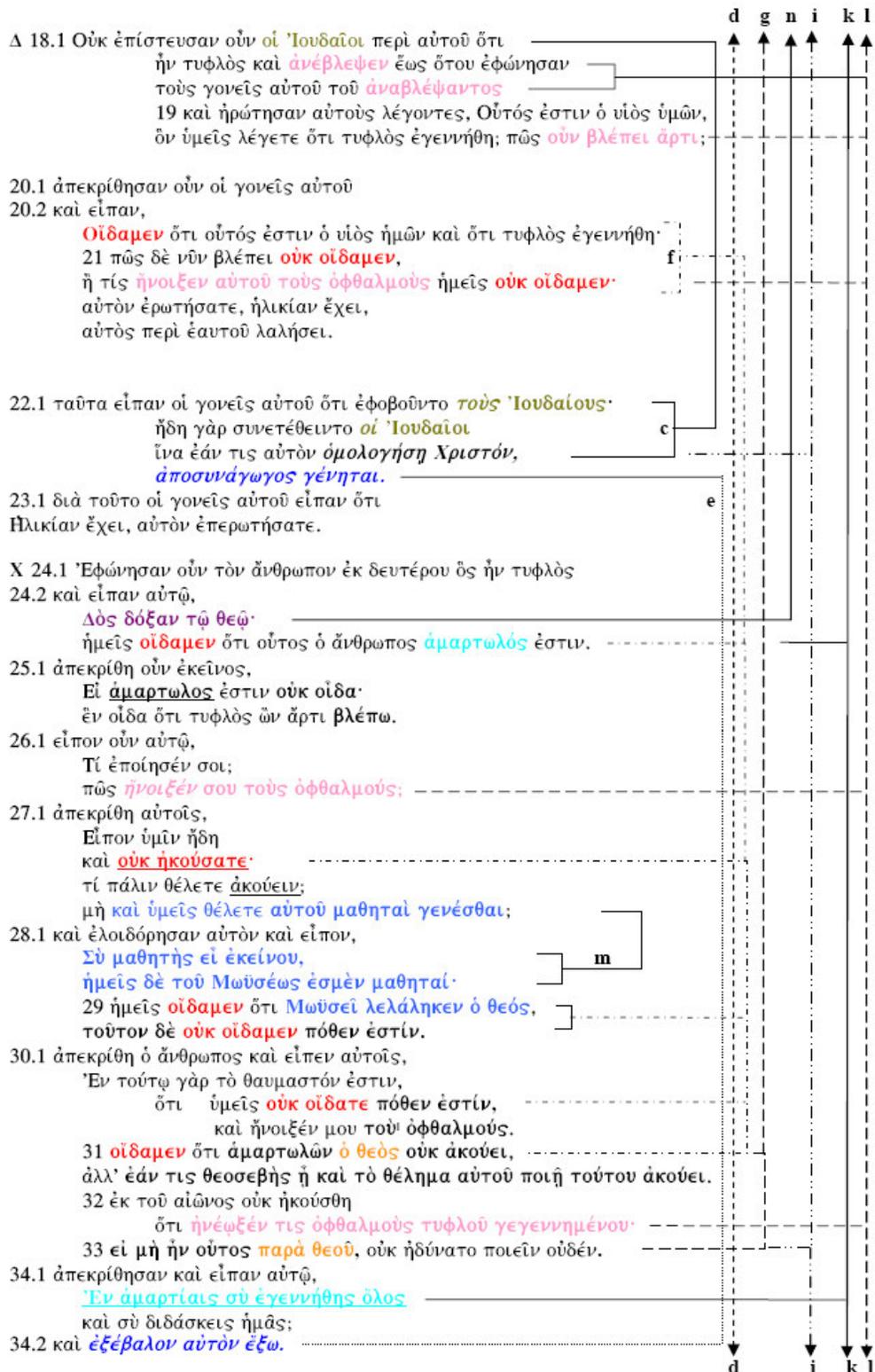
5.2 Semantic relations of Chapter 9

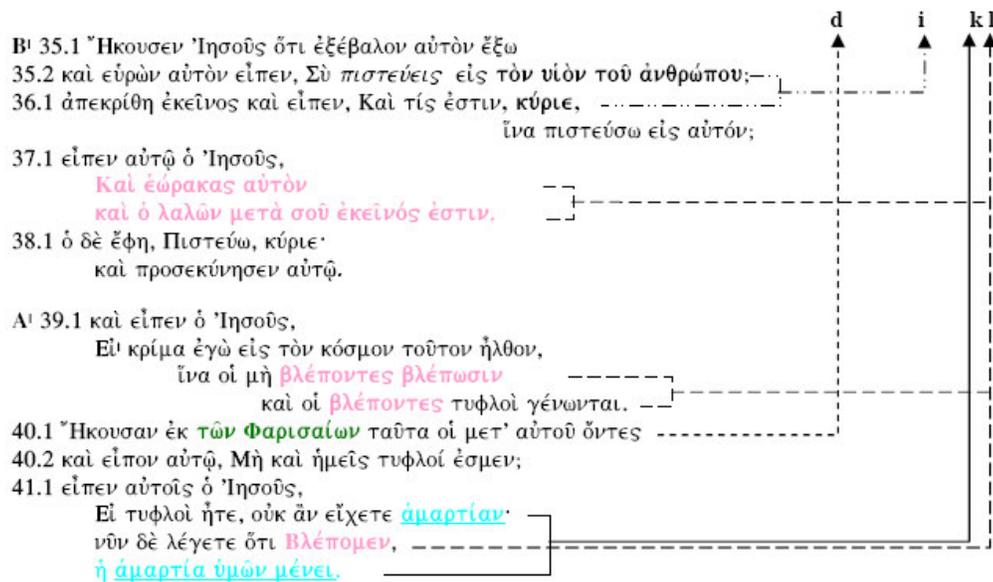
Discourse analysis has three purposes: [1] rhetoric through repetition, [2] building up thematically to a climax in vv 18-23, [3] in which fit properly ideological and religious textures. This chiasmic pattern helps one to interpret, from three different perspectives, the issue of how to be (or to remain) a disciple of Jesus within a context marked by ideology and conflict around the religious figures of Moses and Jesus.

⁵¹ vv. 1-7: Jesus, his disciples, and the blind man,
 vv. 8-12: the blind man and his neighbours,
 vv. 13-17: the blind man and the Pharisees,
 vv. 18-23: the Pharisees and the blind man's parents,
 vv. 24-34: the Pharisees and the blind man,
 vv. 35-38: Jesus and the blind man,
 vv. 38-41: Jesus and the Pharisees.

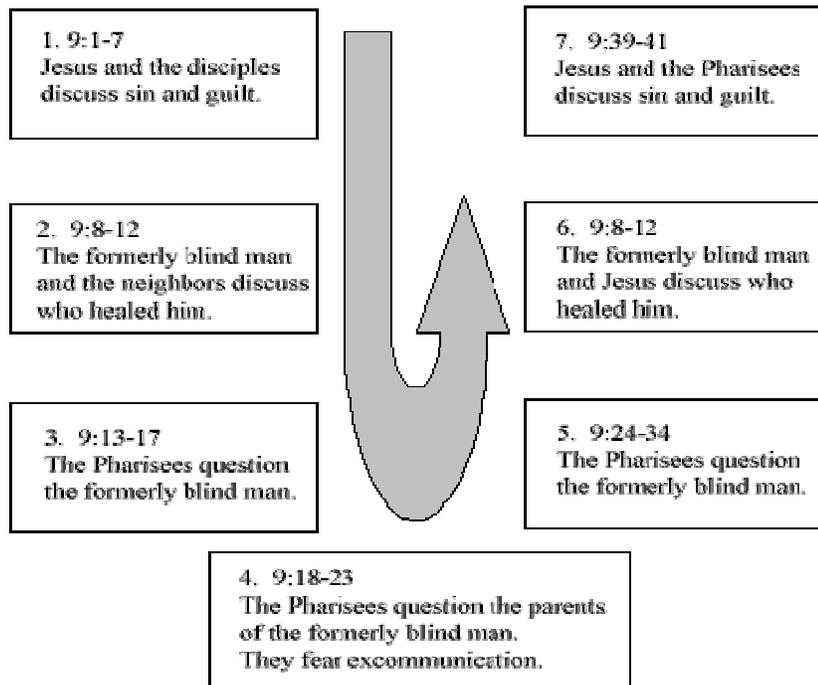
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS







In order to show how the different sections of Chapter 9 relate each other and to the focal point of the whole chapter, the chiastic structure⁵² is sketched as follows:



Semantic relations (a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m) of the whole of Chapter 9

⁵² See Internet site <http://moses.creighton.edu/jrs/2004-8.html>

The chiasmic structure of John 9 can be summarized as follows:

- * Semantic relation 'a' μαθητής : it is encapsulated in v.2.1
- * Semantic relation 'b' miracles : it includes vv.6.1-6.3, 7.1-7.4, 11, 15
- * Semantic relation 'c' 'the Jews': that is encapsulated in vv.18.1, 19, 22.1
- * Semantic relation 'd' 'Pharisees': it includes vv.13-16.1; 40.1
- * Semantic relation 'e' synagogue: that is encapsulated in vv.22.1 and 34.2
- * Semantic relation 'f' οἶδαμεν: it includes vv.20.2, 24.2, 28.1, 30.1-31
- * Semantic relation 'g' God the Father: it includes vv.3.1, 16.1, 31
- * Semantic relation 'h' God's glory: it includes v.3.1, 4, 5, 24.2
- * Semantic relation 'i' Jesus' identity: it includes vv.2.1, 5, 17.2, 22.1, 33, 35.1, 36.1
- * Semantic relation 'j' light: it includes v.5
- * Semantic relation 'k' sin: it includes vv.2.1, 3.1, 16.2, 24.2b, 34.1, 40.1, 40.2, 41.1
- * Semantic relation 'l' seeing: it comprises vv.6.3, 7.4, 10.1, 11.1b, 12.1, 14.1, 15.2, 17.1, 18.1, 19, 21.2
- * Semantic relation 'm' disciples of Moses: it comprises vv.27.1, 28.1, 29.

All these above indicated semantic relations will be discussed thoroughly in the different textures. This discourse analysis opens up and structures the whole exegetical investigation of the thesis.

6 Inter texture of John 9

The second area of the socio-rhetorical criticism is 'intertexture,' that is a text's reference to the phenomena that lie in the 'world' outside the text. The text's language would be either physical objects, or historical events (historical intertexture), texts themselves (oral-scribal intertexture), customs, values, roles, institutions and systems (social intertexture) [Robbins 1996b:40; *id.* 1997:31]. NT writers used different kinds of discourse, namely prophetic, miracle, wisdom, apocalyptic, that convincingly ensure that early Christians were nurtured in the same rhetorical environment. Robbins successfully addresses the interaction between the

oral-scribal and cultural intertexture of apocalypse discourse in the Gospel of Mark (Robbins 1996b:96-115, 121-124, 129-143; 1996a:40-62). In a recent publication entitled 'The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the Gospel of Mark', Robbins ingeniously demonstrates how apocalyptic discourse employed by Mark left traces throughout the Gospel. The apocalyptic language serves as an argumentative purpose in Mk 1.1-20 and in miracle discourse in Mk 1.21-8.26. It serves in wisdom discourse and in the seeking of signs in Mk 1.21-8.26 as well as in a prophetic context in Mk 13 (see 2002:15-44). John 9 is neither apocalyptic nor wisdom discourse but starts as a miracle discourse whose rhetorical development enables one to seek to know how the language refers to what lies behind the text itself.

6.1 Cultural and social intertexture

In this subsection, the words, concepts and expressions used in John 9 interact not only with one another, but also interact with the reality outside the text. In John 9, for instance, terms like μαθητής, light and miracles are used in such a way that they refer to texts or writings other than the Gospel itself. The term μαθητής has been used in the OT, in the Graeco-Roman philosophical writings and in the Synoptic Gospels. The term 'light' also appears in the Qumran, Gnosticism, the OT, the NT and in Graeco-Roman writings. The use of the term 'miracle' in different types of writing also has to be examined.

The major concern of intertextual analysis is 'to determine the extent to which the changes made to these references help to create meaning in the text' (see Van den Heever & Van Heerden 2001:113). The interpretation of John 9 should become meaningful with a rich configuration of texts (how the terms referred or alluded to in the text refer at the same time to others in other texts), cultures (the reference to Moses as figurehead within the religious Jewish imagery) and social life (synagogue as social institution), and all these phenomena need to be examined.

6.2 *Comprehension of discipleship*

6.2.1 Introduction

This section does not claim to be a comparative study. There is no semantic similarity between the use of noun μαθητής, in v.2 and its usage in vv. 27 and 28 where two groups, the disciples of Moses and the disciples of Jesus, are clearly opposed. Although mentioned in passing at the outset of the chapter, its understanding calls for a thorough investigation of the noun μαθητής.

A study of the noun μαθητής is of some importance. As also occurs elsewhere in the Gospel (cf. 2.2, 11-2, 22; 3.22; 4.2, 7, 27-38; 6.16-21, 60-71 and 12.16), the disciples mentioned right at the beginning of the chapter (vv. 2-3) are nameless followers of Jesus who struggle to understand the scriptures.

In order to understand discipleship in the FG by applying the inter-texture, it is necessary to reconstruct the meaning of the term μαθητής from the historical and social environment, in other words, to understand it not only in its NT context (by highlighting its meaning where it is used in all four Gospels) but also how it is used in the OT (the LXX) and in the philosophical schools of the Graeco-Roman world. Such an overview is useful to discover how the FE, dealing with ‘disciples of Jesus’ borrows from the synoptic tradition and, at certain levels, is indebted to the background of the OT. Let us survey the term in the OT tradition, in the philosophical schools and the whole NT.

6.2.2 Discipleship in the OT (LXX)

The noun μαθητής does not occur in the established LXX tradition, but occurrences of the verb μαθάνω are well attested (for more details, consult Brown 1975:484-5; Kittel 1967:400-1, 427). Basically there are two reasons why the term μαθητής does not occur in the established LXX tradition. Firstly, in the OT world, unlike in the classical Greek and Hellenistic world, the master-disciple relationship was totally unknown.⁵³ While Hengel (1981:16ff) conceives the relationship of

⁵³ Even popular prophets did not have disciples, but assistants or servants. Joshua is depicted as the servant of Moses (Ex 24.12; Num 11.28); Elisha as the servant of Elijah (1 Kings

Elijah-Elisha as the OT background to Jesus and his disciples, Hausman, following the same vein of thought, suggests that ‘Elijah and Elisha together stand out in the Old Testament as the primary model of the true master-disciple relationship’ (1975:98). Secondly, as Brown explains (1975:485), the lack of any OT vocabulary for a learner, such as the teacher-pupil relationship describes, is bound up with Israel’s awareness of having been elected God’s people. This excludes any possibility of a disciple-master relationship since the prophets did not teach on their own, but on God’s authority.

The difficulty of establishing a master-disciple relationship stems from the Israel’s awareness that it must submit to the authoritative word of God, which made it unheard-of to have a human word for any great personality alongside God’s word. The learning of the Law in order to be obedient did not make the Israelites disciples of such agents or representatives of God’s revelation as Moses or the prophets. These, as Kittel argues, did not interpose as factors of independent worth in the dialogue between God and his people, and this is borne out by the fact that they never speak on their own behalf and never fight for their own persons. They work as commissioned agents or stewards of the received word of God (Kittel 1967:430). Although the word of the commissioned witness implies commitment, this must be credited not to men, but to God himself. In the OT tradition, there is no consciousness of the Israelites as disciples of any prophet, not even Moses; they are simply enacting the mission of God’s elected people in the world. The idea of the Jews being ‘disciples of Moses’ is not traditional, as will be demonstrated.

6.2.3 Discipleship in the Philosophic Schools

We do not imagine that in the following lines we can explain how different philosophies developed through history; we are simply trying to find out more about relationship between master and disciple in philosophic schools. The starting point is to define the philosophic ‘school’⁵⁴ in Antiquity.

19.19ff.); Gehazi of Elisha (2 Kings 4.12) and Baruch of Jeremiah (Jr 32.12f) (Brown 1975:427-8; Kittel 1967:485).

⁵⁴ The word ‘School’, a derivate from ‘σχολή’,⁵⁴ means, ‘at first a phase of life and an occupation for a man who is free and able to provide for his own needs’ (Bénatouïl 2006:415). Accordig to this writer the philosophic ‘school’ was, in the first place, ‘a set of

Four great philosophies⁵⁵ developed in the Hellenistic period. Prior to that there were the pre-Socratic philosophers, who had disciples who eventually established their own independent schools where they modified the doctrines of their teachers.⁵⁶ When dealing with philosophical schools, one is compelled to start with Socrates ‘the mythic father and patron saint of philosophy’ (Morrison 2006:101). No discussion about the history of philosophy can ignore Socrates, for philosophy is what he did and what he started. If one refers to the etymological definition of the term *philo-sophia*, which is ‘love of wisdom’, it is clear that Socrates was a philosopher in the strictest sense. It is known that philosophers urged common people to convert to their philosophy, which would ensure them of having wiser teachers and better knowledge (Culpepper 1975:220). While ‘pre-Socratic philosophers’ like Parmenides and Heraclitus claimed that they had already attained wisdom, Socrates professed ignorance. By conversing in the marketplace with whoever happened to pass by, Socrates strove to demonstrate to interlocutors, through a series of questions, how their basic beliefs about good and bad and about how to live were unfounded (Grill & Pellegrin 2006:109). By re-directing inquiry from the world of nature⁵⁷ to the affairs of human beings, he proposed *philosophy as a way of life* and eventually influenced not only his followers, whom he instructed to hold moral beliefs that contradicted traditional Greek values (Morrison 2006:107-

received teachings (*diatribe*), and above all a ‘school of thought’ (*hairesis*), as well as a ‘succession’ (*diadoche*) of teachers – a continuous tradition of thinkers who had cultivated and transmitted to students a doctrine and a method specific to a first teacher, the founder of the school’. According to this definition there is no school without a founder who transmits his doctrine and method of thought through his followers. While *σχολή* originally pointed at one who enjoyed educating himself and participating in the political and cultural life of the city, the term came to designate more narrowly an institution for apprenticeship.

⁵⁵ All of these schools were founded in Athens during the 4th century BCE; (Plato’s Academy; Aristotle’s Lyceum; the Epicurus’ School (the Garden) and, finally, Zeno’s Stoa). Socrates, *dans son corps défendant*, should not to be viewed as one of the founders of schools, even though he did make a considerable impact in drawing numerous apprentice philosophers to Athens, even after his death. The first on the list to cite is Plato.

⁵⁶ Here one ought to start with Thales (6th century BCE), in Miletus, who taught Anaximander, who in turn taught Anaximenes. In Southern Italy, Parmenides’ students included Zeno and Melissus (5th century BCE); in the same region, Pythagoras was the first to gather a real group of disciples. The sophists, who included Protagoras, Hippias and Gorgias, were itinerant professors devoted to rhetorical and political knowledge, giving lessons to students who could afford to pay fees.

⁵⁷ The pre-Socratic philosophers, like cosmologists and physicists Anaxagoras and Xenophanes, inquired into things in the sky and below the earth.

8.),⁵⁸ but also the entire subsequent development of philosophy. The philosophies of the Hellenistic-Roman age were, above all, a way of life based on reason insofar as they were viewed as offering ‘inner security and stability’ (Tripolitis 2002:36). All of them promised their followers the same self-sufficient, imperturbable tranquility that provided protection from the miseries and vicissitudes of life.

While Socrates never professed to be a teacher like the professional sophists who charged for their lessons,⁵⁹ he influenced his young associates by argument and advice but, above all, he led by example.⁶⁰ The dialectic method (maieutics) Socrates used purposefully sought to kindle a moral sense in the hearers to lead them to self-awareness and to prepare the way for moral action in the existing situation (Kittel 1967:395, 418-9). Even though Socrates did not found a school, he emphasized a purely ideal fellowship between those who contributed to his intellectual development and those who were enriched by his intellect (Kittel 1967:419). In order to understand the greatness of Socrates and the kind of relationship between him and his followers, Caizzi (2006:121) observes:

However, we must not forget that what we call philosophy, with its familiar list of figures starting with Thales, is the product of the reflection and activity of the heirs of Socrates, notably Plato and his disciple Aristotle. In other words, those who formed Socrates’ audience, a few of whom also became faithful companions, were not motivated by the desire to become ‘philosophers’, but rather by the conviction that Socrates had something of importance to offer them for their own life.

⁵⁸ Socrates criticized Greek religion, which led to accusations that he was corrupting the youth. Yet he defended himself by assuming that divinity is good and does indeed exist. The traditional stories about gods misbehaving as human beings do, for instance, when Zeus told lies, raped women and killed his father, led Socrates to assert that either those stories were untrue, or Homer and Hesiod’s teaching about the gods were false, so how could any Athenian citizen accuse him of ‘corrupting’ the youth (Morrison 2006:106).

⁵⁹ Protagoras was the first Sophist to take μαθηταί for a fee. The success he attained drew to him great crowds of students who followed him enthusiastically and compensated him financially for the intellectual direction they received (cf. Kittel 1967:420). Socrates avoided the title of διδάσκαλος, and consequently the implied teacher-pupil relationship, by avoiding payment. The basis of the relation advocated was Socrates himself; rather than the knowledge at his disposal, he granted fellowship to those drawn to him, allowing them a share in his intellectual life.

⁶⁰ Xenophon in the *Memorabilia* or *Recollections* of Socrates devoted the whole book to defending Socrates against the accusation of corrupting the young. He asserts that ‘Socrates made his associates desire virtue and gave them hope that if they took care for themselves, they would become good.’ (Mem. 1.2.2-3, as quoted by Morrison 2006:115).

Plato, his genuine pupil, rejected the teaching and learning practiced in the Sophist schools. It is widely admitted that in Greek and Roman antiquity, philosophy was practised in gymnasia, stoas, and other public places, or in private homes, but not in institutions of teaching or learning. According to Meyer, the Platonic Academy, the Aristotelian Peripatos⁶¹ and the Epicurean Garden have to be viewed as the only institutions that provided space for continuous philosophical activity and the collecting of philosophical texts (Meyer 2006:20). Besides these schools, Stoicism must not be overlooked.⁶² Philosophical schools were a kind of private foundation or brotherhood dedicated to teaching and philosophical reflection that

⁶¹ The name 'peripatos', commonly given to Aristotle's school, otherwise called 'Lyceum', means a space provided for strolling, in a public or private location (cf. Lynch quoted by T Bénouïl 'Philosophical schools', 416 note 3).

⁶² Zeno is the founder of the Stoic school in Athens (ca 335-265 BCE). Stoicism was both metaphysical and a system of ethics, whose primary interest and emphasis was ethics. On the metaphysical plane, the Stoics claimed the universe to be a single, ordered whole, a perfect organism that unites within itself all that exists in the world. The Logos, as supreme cosmic power, ruled the universe. The Logos was seen as the organizing, integrating, and energizing principle of the whole universe (Tripolitis 2002a:37). As a perfect entity, the universe combined within itself the Logos or Divine Reason, which is its soul, and matter its body. The soul is a part of the universal Logos or God that controls everything in the universe, and therefore the principle goal of an individual is the pursuit of virtue – this is the ethical plane – and virtue is to live 'in harmony with one's own nature and the nature of the cosmos, namely God' (Tripolitis 2002a:38). They focused on the necessity for the individual to live in harmony with himself and his environment. For the Stoics, 'knowledge means action: it suffices to know the good, in order to put it into action' (Klauck 2000:336). That is freedom can only be obtained if desires are abolished. For Stoics, 'the virtuous individual is one who has attained inner discipline by controlling all emotions and passions and, if possible, eradicating them completely' (Tripolitis 2002b:38). Human passions and emotions were considered as irrational and a disease of the soul. Stoicism, viewed as a gospel of the masses, pursued the dual aim of rendering the individual self-sufficient and independent of externals and at the same time qualifying him to act not only as a member of society, but also as 'a citizen of the world' (Angus 1967:65) under God, the one universal law according to which all are the children of God and brothers and sisters of each other (Tripolitis 2002b:38). This universal brotherhood developed the ideas of duty and responsibility to each other and to the world in general. Stoics preached self-renunciation, and that the human would reach self-realization through the unity of man and God and interpenetrating reason. The Stoic self-discipline bore its fruit in Christian self-sacrifice. Stoicism, like Christianity, was called upon in its humanism to deal with the perennial enigma of suffering and in the attitude to suffering we find the true heroic fibre of the Stoic soul (Angus 1967:66). They did not deny suffering, but they idealised calm, endurance, and self-discipline so much so that they could not consistently weep with those that wept, but rather encouraged the heroic temperament in suffering. The Stoics could not solve the enigmatic problem of suffering, but Christianity offered the average man neither an idealized wise man nor an abstract ideal, but he who himself 'having learned obedience from his sufferings that they might have my joy fulfilled in them' (see Angus 1967:66-7). Stoicism as the philosophy of suffering and of despair contrasted strongly with Christianity, a philosophy of 'joy in suffering'.

grouped pupils around the head of school whose memory, after death, was preserved in the School. The best-known and most original philosophers of the 3rd and 4th centuries CE are none other than Platonists who gathered groups of disciples (Bénatouil 2006:419). Plato's Academy was not as such a school, but a circle of fellowship and intellectual life. Aristotle, strongly influenced by the Socratic-Platonic judgment, did not deal with the relationship between master and disciple, but with the dependence of the pupil on the teacher. Plato's influence may be found primarily in the development of the Middle Platonism School.⁶³ In Stoicism and Epicureanism, the aim was the attainment of individual happiness through self-sufficiency, and both these philosophies stressed the importance of ethics and morality and aimed to liberate the self from all that is external.

Basically, the disciples learned from their masters not just arguments and doctrines, but also attitudes and behavior in conformity with the ancient conception of philosophy as a way of life (Hadot quoted by Bénatouil 2006:421). Within the schools, the disciples who entered a community lived like 'companions' (*hetairoi*) or 'friends' (*philoï*) devoted to the practice of philosophy. The older disciples assisted

⁶³ In the Hellenistic-Roman world, at the time of the barbarian invasions, of bloody civil wars, and of recurrent plagues, famines, and economic crises, Middle Platonism attempted to provide a solution to the problem of human destiny and salvation through a philosophical understanding of the universe. This philosophical system of Middle-Platonism was fundamentally rooted in the teachings of Plato, but also combined elements of Aristotelian logic, Stoic psychology and ethics and Pythagorean mysticism, in varying degrees. Middle Platonism postulates a hierarchy of three divine primary beings. The first principle of reality is the Divine Mind or God. This supreme God is often called 'the One' or 'the Good' and is a simple, changeless and transcendent being who has no direct contact with the material world and is inaccessible to the human mind in this life. From himself derives the second Mind or God, subordinate to, and dependent on, the first God, who creates and governs the world. The third principle in this Middle Platonic hierarchy is the World Soul (Tripolitis 2002:41). Human souls are, for Middle-Platonists, parts of the Divine that have descended into the material world and have become embodied. That is why, for them, the aim of life is to be freed from the world of matter and to return to the Divine. This understanding of human desire to return to the Divine was to be emphasized by Neo-Platonists. Plotinus is pre-eminently the exponent of mystical philosophy and a psychologist. He is to be seen as an apostle of the union with the divine. According to him, the divine potentialities are inherent in the Soul, and he encourages the soul to find ineffable joy in immediate contact with reality and to understand that the supreme duty of man is to bring all conscious life into identification with God (Angus 1967:72). It is the profound religious experience and earnestness of Plotinus that gave vitality to the Neo-Platonist movement. Like Jesus, he believed that his highest statements about the possibilities of the life of the Spirit could be referred to and verified by experience. The souls have to, anew, experience the return to the Father in order to actualize the potentially divine within them.

the scholar in training younger disciples (Bénatouil 2006:420). The principle ‘*primus inter pares*’ was strictly observed into the school. The particularity of the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic period is that one philosopher usually succeeded another as head of a particular philosophical school and that various schools were connected with one another (cf. Sotion as quoted by Meyer 2006:30). The freedom afforded the ancient pupils of the schools to develop and to modify the teachings of their masters demonstrates the extent to which *the disciples were aware that they followed not a teaching but a person*. The disciples of philosophical schools can be seen as followers of masters. This paves the way to examine this term in NT literature.

6.2.4 Discipleship in the canonical Gospels

The term μαθητής, used frequently in John (see later on), appears 78 times, which is more than it appears in any other Gospel. The Gospel of Matthew is a strong contender with 73 occurrences, whereas the term occurs 46 times in Mark (for details, cf. Wilkins 1995:250-2, 253-4), 38 times in Luke and 28 times in Acts. Culpepper notes that the frequency, at which this term is used in Matthew and John, reflects the nature of the communities that produced them, for both were concerned with what it meant to be a μαθητής of Jesus during the period in which the gospels were composed (Culpepper 1975:271). The way of discipleship was understood by both evangelists will be dealt with at a later stage.

Basically, throughout the NT, the term μαθηταὶ refers to the disciples during the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Brown sets out a list of nine characteristics of discipleship (for details, cf. Brown 1975:488-9). This survey of discipleship in the NT is helpful since Jesus’ idea of discipleship contrasts with that of rabbinical and philosophical schools. However, such a synchronic reading of different passages could be misleading since the issue of discipleship has to take into account the particularity of each Gospel before underscoring the common features of discipleship that they share with the FG.

6.2.4.1 Discipleship in the Synoptic Gospels

Those who study discipleship in the FG either look to the general outline of the Gospel in order to highlight the BD as the believer par excellence representing the epitome of the Johannine notion of discipleship, or they approach the theme by comparing the Gospel and the Synoptics, from among which Mark is considered to be the major literary source (Collins 1990:46). This section attempts to reconstruct John's outlook on discipleship from the synoptic tradition. The blind man of John 9 should be portrayed as a paradigmatic figure of the disciple in the light of the Gospels. The main concern here is not to conduct a comparative study, but to obtain a glimpse of the theological perspective of the disciples in Mark, Matthew and Luke in order to explain how the entire synoptic tradition shares, in a relative way, the same perception of discipleship. This subsection does not deal with an extensive study of discipleship in the synoptic tradition, but intends to bear out Brown's contention (1978:378) according to which the blind man emerges from John as one of the most attractive figures of the Gospels.

6.2.4.1.1 *The Gospel of Mark*

Malbon confidently argues that the Gospel of Mark must be regarded as a metaphoric and imaginastic document, for the disciples and the crowd together evoke a composite of fallible followers (Malbon 2000:45). Although Jesus does the same things for the disciples as a group and for the crowds,⁶⁴ the evangelist mentions some individual characters (Simon, Andrew, John and James) as having been called by Jesus (1.16-20). He acknowledges some of them as having emerged from the crowds to follow Jesus (Levi in 2.13-5; Bartimaeus in 10.46-52). In this sense, as Malbon observes, the 'following' so central to discipleship could not be limited to 'disciples,' for the definition of the category of followers and the crowd overlaps with that of

⁶⁴ One needs to read the Gospel of Mark ver carefully to ascertain whether both the crowds and the disciples are portrayed both positively and negatively in relation to Jesus (Malbon 2000:44-5). Jesus calls both the disciples (1.16-20; 3.13-9; 6.7; 8.1, 34; 9.35; 10.42; 12.43) and the crowd to him (7.14; 8.34). The disciples are depicted as having followed Jesus (1.18, 20; 6.1; 10.28) and the crowd as well (2.15; 3.7; 5.24; 10.32; 11.9). Jesus teaches the disciples (8.31; 9.31) and the crowd (2.13; 4.1-2; 6.34; 10.1). Jesus feeds the disciples (14.22-5) and the crowd (6.39, 41, 42; 8.2, 6), etc.

disciples (for details, see Malbon 2000:72-7). What is the Markan perspective of discipleship?

The best way to address this question is to turn to Mark 8.22-10.52, where Jesus' extensive teaching is linked to three predictions of his own death and resurrection (8.31-33; 9.30-32; 10.32-34; cf. Hurtado 1996:11; Williams 1994:127).⁶⁵ This central part of the Gospel is 'a carefully constructed section' in which everything relates 'either to the meaning of the Christ or to discipleship' (Best 1986:2). The way in which it is constructed constitutes 'the frame' and embodies an ancient literary device that scholarship calls *inclusion* (Hurtado 1994:13).⁶⁶ The beginning presents the story of the blind man (8.22-6) and the end forms an account of the healing of Bartimaeus (10.46-52). It should be noted that the section begins and ends with a confession about Jesus. Peter confesses Jesus as Christ (8.29) and the blind man at Jericho cries out that Jesus is the 'Son of David' (10.47-8). This acknowledgment of Jesus as King-Messiah brings Jesus to present another viewpoint of messiahship (Swartley 1981:138) by using this opportunity to predict the rejection and the death of the Son of man. While both extremes relate to the healing of physical blindness, within the setting, each prediction of the passion is directed first and foremost at the disciples, to teach them as a group or as individuals.⁶⁷ Each

⁶⁵ According to him, after each passion prediction, the disciples reveal their lack of understanding, and that brings Jesus to teach them the nature of discipleship.

⁶⁶ France (2002:320-1), after having reckoned that this part of the Gospel is to be regarded as a coherent subsection in the story, highlights five remarks consecrated to the section Mk 8.22-10.52. He notes the recurrent use of the phrase ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ and related language (8.27; 9.33-4; 10.17, 32, 52). A close reading of these passages enables one to see that they emphasize not only the geographical movement of the story (the way to Jerusalem), but also how discipleship can be depicted as a journey. It is in this sense that the term ὁ ὁδός in Acts 9.2; 16.17; 18.25-6; 19.9, 23; 22.4; 24.14, 22 must be interpreted. From such a perspective, the term holds more than literal significance for Mark. Since where the section starts and ends poses too many problems to scholarship, Best (1981:15) states: 'it is now generally accepted that 8.27-10.45 forms the centre of Mark's instruction to his readers on the meaning for them of Christ and their own discipleship.' He goes on to say that this section predicts the way Jesus will go and the way his disciples must follow if they are indeed his disciples. In between, a blind man is healed, but not all in one action (8.22-6) and in the end another blind man is healed instantaneously (10.46-52). In order to show that this author is at pains to end the section to 10.45, he finds that Bartimaeus is already 'beside the way' (10.46) and follows Jesus 'on the way' (v.52a). He highlights that v.52a 'follow him on a way' provides a climax to the long section. The analysis is ended by concluding that the disciples are able to follow the way Jesus goes (Best 1981:146).

⁶⁷ The first prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection (8.27-30) is followed by Jesus teaching the disciples and the crowd (8.34-9.1); the event of transfiguration is another way of

prediction is preceded by a demonstration of the disciples' inability to grasp what Jesus is telling them.⁶⁸ Räisänen interprets Peter's confession in Mark 8.29 as an assertion that the disciples have moved from a situation of partial understanding to a full understanding of Jesus' identity.⁶⁹ William points out that the disciples, instead

teaching a select group of disciples constituted by Peter, James and John (9.2-13). The second prediction (9.31) is followed by teaching (9.33-7). The third prediction (10.32-4) is followed by James and John's request to Jesus to sit, one at his right and another at his left; a request that provokes Jesus' teaching to these two, which is then extended to the other ten disciples.

⁶⁸ The first prediction is preceded by Peter's partial understanding of who Jesus is (8.27-30.32-3) [this will be explained below]; the second prediction (8.30-2) is preceded by an account of the story of the disciples who fail to cast out the unclean spirit that makes the boy cry and convulse; an inability that brings Jesus to conceive of the disciples as a 'faithless generation' (9.19). It seems that all those gathered at the scene around him, the disciples, the scribes, the crowd and the man from the crowd are lacking in faith (cf. Williams 1994:139). The third prediction (10.32-4) is preceded by the disciples' lack of understanding of Jesus' teaching about the richness (10.17-31). Following Hurtado, one may notice that each of the three situations has three components: (1) a Jesus' prediction of death and resurrection; (2) an account of misguided behaviour of the disciples represented either by one or by more of the Twelve; (3) Jesus' corrective teaching on the true nature of discipleship (Hurtado 1994: 12). The understanding of Mark's outlook on discipleship should be found out from such a sketch. Definitely the two healings to which the evangelist refers, at the extremes of the frame of Mk 8-10, holds symbolic significance. Williams points out that 'Jesus' ability to bring sight to a man who is physically blind creates the expectation that Jesus also possesses the ability to bring sight to those who are blind to his identity and mission. Jesus is able to give understanding to those who lack insight [...] or able to bring true understanding to others, perhaps even to the disciples' (Williams 1994:129). The way in which the disciples are portrayed in the setting has been diversely interpreted by scholarship. It is well known that Mark portrays the disciples in a poor light. According to Räisänen, their incomprehension has to be seen as focused in three areas: (1) in the light of Mark 4.41; 6.52; 8.17-21, despite having witnessed Jesus' miracles, they failed to recognize his true identity; (2) they also failed to understand the fact that Jesus' teaching concerned the abrogation of the Jewish food laws (cf. 7.18f.); (3) the disciples showed a lack of understanding concerning Jesus' teaching dealing with his passion and resurrection (cf. threefold pattern in Mk 8-10; cf. Räisänen quoted by C Tuckett 2002:132-3). It has been observed that the disciples fail to recognize Jesus' true identity. The mention of their great awe (4.41), for instance within the first section consecrated to the authority of the Son of God (1.14-8.21), after seeing Jesus stilling a storm, confirms the disciples' lack of faith that Jesus rebukes. The explanation to be given to the above mentioned prediction is that, right after the first prediction, Peter's lack of faith comes to the fore since, representing other disciples, he misunderstands God's perspective on the mission of Jesus, the Son of man who must suffer, die and rise again (8.31). It seems that Peter knows that messiahs should rule and not die. In other instances (second and third predictions), the disciples demonstrate to what extent their thoughts are concerned by a certain greatness when arguing on the way with one another as to who is the greatest (9.34-5) and elsewhere specifically with political greatness when James and John make this request: 'Grant us that we may sit, one on your right hand and the other on your left, in your glory' (10.37). In Swartley's terms, the disciples are concerned by the 'imminent political pomp and prestige' (cf. Swartley 1981:138-9).

⁶⁹ Cf. Tuckett 2002:139-143; unfortunately when he comes to v.33, he contradicts himself on

of moving from partial (8.14-21) to complete understanding (8.27-9.1), actually moved from bad to worse (Williams 1994:31). Because of their hardness of heart, the disciples would still not understand (8.21, 29-33cf. also v.17). In the context of 8.22-10.52, sketching Jesus and his disciples ‘on the way’ to Jerusalem, it is worth noting that Jesus’ identity, and discipleship as well, cannot be understood except from the event of the passion and the resurrection (Best 1986:6). Mark puts each passion prediction side by side with some reference to the implications for those who follow him (cf. 8.34-9.1; 9.33-7; 10.35-45) to elaborate his narrative in connection with discipleship.

Bolt (2004:48), referring to Evans (1981) and Gundry (1993), disputes as a misleading stance the idea that the whole section of Mk 8.27-10.52 is about discipleship. Even though he thinks this overshadows Mark’s story that has Jesus as the major character propelled towards the cross, in my view, the central theme in this section relates to Jesus’ identity and his followers.

Both are closely related insofar as an understanding of discipleship emerges from an understanding, not of Jesus’ teaching, but of who Christ is and what he did (Best 1981:15).⁷⁰ Right at the beginning of Mark’s narrative, Jesus challenges Simon and Andrew: ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’ They immediately leave their nets and follow him (1.16-8). In the same way, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, leave their father and follow Jesus (1.19-20).

By using the phrase to follow Jesus ‘on the way’ (ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ) throughout the central section,⁷¹ Mark conceives of the Christian life as a pilgrimage; a notion widespread in the NT with its background in the OT and Judaism.⁷² The conception

account of having misread the verse out of context (see p.133).

⁷⁰ Previously France (2002:321) rightly contended that from 8.31 onwards, as soon as Jesus’ identity as Messiah is explicitly acknowledged, the messianic mission involves not only him, but also those who follow him (8.34-9.1; 10.30, 39).

⁷¹ Firstly, at the beginning of the incident of Peter’s confession where Jesus ‘on the way’ asked his disciples ‘who do people say that I am?’ (8.27); at the end of the second prediction of the Passion in the context where the question of greatness arises among the disciples (9.33) and when Jesus made the third prediction ‘they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them ...’ (10.32). The last reference may be found, at the end of the section, where it is stated that ‘(...) immediately he [Bartimaeus] regained his sight and followed him on the way’ (10.52).

⁷² One needs to consult Best (1981:16). In the Book of Hebrews, for instance, the emphasis is that Jesus goes before his people to open a new and better way to the heavenly holy place (2.10; 3.7-4, 16; 10.19f; 12.1f). In the Acts of Apostles, Christian life is described as ‘the

of discipleship as ‘the way’ is not Mark’s trademark.

In a corollary way, discipleship is defined as a condition in which the followers deny themselves and take up their crosses: ‘if any want to become my followers, let them *deny* themselves and *take up their cross* and *follow* me’. (8.34 parallels in Mt 16.24 and Lk 9.23 will be discussed at the end of this section.) This verse, relates to the significance and implications of discipleship and is central to Mark. In Malbon’s point of view (2000:78), it is ‘a pivotal verse concerning disciples, the crowd and followers’. Admittedly, by placing the crowds and the disciples together and introducing a conditional particle εἰ at the beginning of the sentence *τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖ*, Mark consciously clarifies what it means and involves to be a disciple of Jesus. Three initial actions, namely ‘come after me’, ‘deny’ and ‘take up’ have to be understood by disciples who hope to ‘keep on following’ Jesus. Best (1986:7, 13) points out that discipleship means taking the step to fall in behind Jesus and go with him. In this respect, discipleship must neither be taken as a readiness to suffer nor as a call to accept a certain system of teaching to live by or to faithfully continue to interpret by passing it on, as would a rabbi. It is not a call to accept a philosophical position that expresses itself in a certain type of behaviour like Stoicism (cf. Best 1986:7). The would-be disciple is called to walk behind Jesus. Discipleship is defined as *to follow a person and not a teaching*. Following on the way implies a full dedication to Jesus to the extent of self-denial expressed by taking up the cross. Every potential follower has to pay with his life as shall be shown in Matthew.

way’ (9.2; 19.23; 22.4); the great central section of the Gospel of Luke (9.51-18.14) is structured in the form of a journey to Jerusalem. It is not a matter of chance for Paul to use a favourite metaphor to describe Christian existence as ‘walking’ (peripatein) in Gal 5.16; Rom 6.4; 13.13; 14.15; Ph 3.17; 1 Th 2.12). in the FG, Jesus is portrayed as ‘the way’ leading to the Father (14.6). Turning to Early Christianity, there are ‘the two ways’ (Barnabas 18-20; Did. 1-5; cf. also 1 QS 3.13-4.26; 1 Clem. 35.5; Did. 6.1). One might notice that both the word and the conception have to be traced back into Judaism and the OT in referring to the pilgrimage of Abraham to the Promised Land and the journey of Israel through the wilderness (cf. many passages in OT). Bearing this in mind, Best (1986:6) asserts that ‘Mark’s idea is therefore based in the Judaistic background of Christianity and is part of the primitive pattern of Christian life.’

6.2.4.1.2 *The Gospel of Matthew*

According to Edwards, a good way to pinpoint Matthew's understanding of discipleship is to concentrate on the distribution of the narrative material rather than its total effect (1985:48). The scholar is comfortable with his approach,⁷³ but its merit does not need to be discussed here. Our focus upon Wilkins' work is his statistical analysis of the frequency with which the term μαθητής appears and its theological implication.

Matthew's interest in the term μαθηταὶ is confirmed by the fact that he uses it no less than 73 times, which is far more frequently than Mark or Luke. Moreover, Matthew employs Markan material almost exclusively and draws on 'Q' in accordance with the 'two-source theory.'⁷⁴ One should keep in mind that Matthew uses Markan material, interpreted skilfully and explicitly. Bonnard contends that 'Matthew makes Mark clearer, more explicit, more pedagogical and easier to memorize' (Bonnard 1970:8). Such reinterpretation of Mark has been described by him as 'the Matthean genius'. Wilkins devoted his study to demonstrating how Matthew specifically uses the term μαθητής in five different ways (for details, cf. Wilkins 1995:127-44). Briefly, Matthew uses the term more explicitly than does Mark. Matthew privileges the disciples to the extent that he consciously identifies them as the followers of Jesus. The μαθηταὶ are viewed as a more intimate group of companions in Jesus' ministry (9.19), participating in the teaching of the crowds. Where they are used in conjunction with the crowd, the μαθηταί are fellow-workers caring for the ὄχλοι (9.36-7), exemplary in doing the will of the Father as Jesus' true family (12.46-9). Where Jesus speaks to the crowd using parables, the disciples are

⁷³ Edwards, reading the Gospel of Matthew, contends that the author manipulates or guides the reader through the narrative sections over a period of time and in a definite sequence in order to arrive at the cumulative intent.

⁷⁴ The theory according to which Matthew used Mark and the material called Q, as well as material shared by Mt and Lk that are not found in Mk, is the most widely accepted today among students of the gospels. Out of all the occurrences of the term μαθητής, 31 references are shared with Mk or Q, 4 (or 5 references) are expanded from references in the source context, 4 (to 6 references) are occurrences in unique Matthean material, and 33 (or 34) are inclusions (cf. Wilkins 1995:129). 'Inclusion' designates the phenomenon where μαθητής occurs in a section parallel to the other gospels. 'Inclusion' is preferred to 'insertion', for it employs a methodology flexible enough to be of value to varying source theories and because its use connotes incorporating new elements to form a large whole.

shown as holding the spectrum of spiritual understanding (13.1-11)⁷⁵ by the fact that they can know the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven.

Saldarini, analyzing some references in the gospel, contends that ‘Kinship is the dominant metaphor in Matthew for internal group relationships. Father-son and brother-to-brother relationships are most common’ (Saldarini 1994:90). Nevertheless, Matthew, aware of the divisions that take place in families and the Jewish community, relativises family relationships in favour of a new commitment to Jesus (10.36-7; 8.21; 19.29, cf. Saldarini 1994:91-2). The conflict that the gospel causes is sharpened between, on one side, the believers-in-Jesus and the Jewish leaders, and on the other side, their own families. They were at the same time alienated from their families and excluded from Jewish assemblies. Seen from this perspective, one may say that *being a disciple of Jesus is radicalized in the Matthean perspective*. Jesus’ own assertion according to which the true family is not dependent on blood-ties, but is composed of those who do the will of his Father (12.46-50) confirms the matter.

The recourse to the Father/child language not only legitimates the special relationship between the disciples and God, but also delegitimises the position of opponents to Jesus’ community. But the strategy also stresses that, while Jesus’ disciples are viewed by the larger (Jewish) community as deviants,⁷⁶ they are, *in contrario*, ultimate insiders (Foster 2002:490-1), a composite group in which all the members are aware of being brothers and sisters exercising discipline within the church (18.15-7). It was a community in which brotherhood implied non-hierarchical relationships because all were brothers and leadership titles like ‘rabbi’ were avoided (23.8). Only Jesus was their teacher and master, and God their Father (23.8-10) [Saldarini 1998:92]. It seems that for the Matthean community, in a context of rejection and persecution, the unique way to survive was to identify oneself as *familia dei* with the mindful decision to function as a household where all the

⁷⁵ Wilkins 1995:137-43; Edwards 1985:56, notes that ‘the disciples have been highlighted, both in the narrative and in Jesus’ words, as truly distinctive followers – they understand the parables of the kingdom. After the initial good impression, followed by the apparent inadequacy in crisis, they are presented favorably again – they comprehend parables. They should see the real significance of Jesus – that is, to interpret his teaching and his actions.’

⁷⁶ The division between Matthew’s group and the larger community is perceptible through the references to ‘your/their synagogues in light of Mt 4.23; 9.35; 10.17; 12.9; 13.54; 23.34.

members were brothers and sisters and where God was the Father.

Discipleship as the embodiment of devotion to Jesus, as in Mark, is conceived as ‘keeping on following’ Jesus, a kind of discipleship that encompasses the whole way of life (Morris 1992:431), since the saying of Mt 16.24-5 is a reminder of 10.38-9 set at the conclusion of the disciples’ discourses in Mt 10. By repeating the saying, Luz remarks, Matthew is concerned with the disciples’ Christ-likeness, which costs them suffering that is not passive acceptance but an active form of life (Luz 2001:383). By saying εἴ τις θέλει ... (if anyone wants...in Mt 16.24 par. to Mk 8.34 and Lk 9.23), the fact of becoming a disciple is a committed act of willingness to deny oneself, to take up one’s cross,⁷⁷ then keep on following him. In that sense, to deny himself and to take up the cross are not separate stages following Jesus. In Schnackenburg’s view (2002:163), the cross to be taken up by the disciple (daily in Luke’s mind – cf. 9.23) presupposes total self-sacrifice for the sake of belonging wholly to Christ; any renunciation is to be included but the decisive one is the rejection of one’s own ego in order to signify the total dedication to God, as the crucified Jesus did.

The disciples in Matthew have superior knowledge because of the instruction they receive from Jesus (cf. Mt 13-22). Matthew’s attempt to establish Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom as central to his followers’ understanding of their own life, their relations with others, and of the world itself (Saldarini 1994:98) is not a haphazard fact. The weakness of Wilkins’ extensive study (see 1995:126-216) is the failure to demonstrate how the term μαθητής must be understood in conjunction with the ‘heavenly language’ (Foster 2002:487-99)⁷⁸ endorsed in the phrases ‘Kingdom of heaven’ and ‘Father of heaven.’ According to Foster, such language is employed ‘to demonstrate that Jesus was Messiah in ways the leaders of formative Judaism did not understand and to reaffirm to Jesus’ disciples that their identity, affirmation, and goal were in heaven and not on earth’ (Foster 2002:490). Analyzing Matthew’s rhetorical and sociological strategies, the preference for the expression ‘kingdom of heaven’ (used 20 times) over ‘kingdom of God’ (used 4 times) should

⁷⁷ This expression, as observes Keener, meant in antiquity, marching on the way to one’s execution (the patibulum), and shamefully carrying one’s own *death-instrument*. This is the reason why the cross becomes the metaphor for sufferings (for details, cf. Keener 1999: 434).

⁷⁸ I owe this expression to Foster 2002:487-99.

be seen as a strategy to reaffirm the disciples of Jesus as the true chosen people of God and to deter weaker members tempted to yield to apostasy (Foster 2002:489). More clearly, Matthew's rhetoric tries to reinforce the disciples' commitment to Jesus in the midst of persecution (Foster 2002:487-99), reminding them that they are children of the Father, adopted into God's family. Similarly, by using the phrase 'Father of heaven', Matthew tries not only to reinforce the community's devotion to Jesus, but also to assert that they are part of the *familia dei*⁷⁹ from which the Pharisees and religious leaders are excluded.

6.2.4.1.3 *The Gospel of Luke*

Luke 9.51-19.27 is the narrative setting within which one may see what being a disciple of Jesus actually signifies and implies. These verses, the so-called travel narrative in Luke's Gospel, contain a lengthy section with numerous references and depict Jesus and his disciples travelling from Galilee to Jerusalem (9.51, 52-6, 57; 10.1, 38; 11.53; 13.22, 33; 17.11; 18.31, 35; 19.1, 11), with arrival at Jerusalem quite evidently being the goal of the journey (Longenecker 1996:64). The specificity of the section is that it incorporates 'the evangelist's own understanding of how Jesus' ministry progressed and how his teaching should be understood – particularly, for our purposes, of what Jesus taught about discipleship' (Longenecker 1996:65). Within the setting, Luke makes limited use of Mark (see 10.1-52) and Q insofar as Luke 9.57-62 may be paralleled to Mt 8.18-22, since both deal with 'conditions for following Jesus', and Luke 14.25-33 parallels Mt 10.37-8, as both deal with 'the cost of discipleship' (Longenecker 1996:63). These later passages are indicative of Luke's perspective on discipleship.

Luke and Matthew differ with regard to the conditions imposed on those who want to follow Jesus. Matthew describes 'the scribe' who approached Jesus as saying, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go' (Mt 8.19). Luke, however, speaks of three potential disciples that exemplify the rigours of following him (Reid 1996:29). The manner in which Jesus replies to the request of two would-be followers (9.59-62) demonstrates that Jesus' invitation is quite urgent and

⁷⁹ This is my own comprehension of Matthew's group of disciples.

irreversible. Despite the real differences between Matthew and Luke, *they do agree on the conditions with which a disciple of Jesus must comply. One of them is willingness to endure an unsettled and insecure life style for Jesus' sake, and the other is that of being unencumbered by other allegiances* (Longenecker 1996:63). In contrast to Matthew, Luke goes farther in asserting that discipleship has to do with the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

For the sake of the Kingdom of God, the disciple in Luke will endure separation from his household (Destro & Pesce 2003:223) already divided according to Lk 12.53 (father against son, son against father, mother against daughter and vice versa, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and vice versa). Luke radicalizes the call to discipleship by the call to hate relatives (14.26-7). The radicalism of Luke's treatment of the 'cost of discipleship' (Longenecker 1996:63) has to be seen against the parallel passages of Mt 10.37-8 and Lk 14.25-33. Whereas the Matthean Jesus warns of the necessity to avoid loving father or mother, son or daughter, more than him (10.37), the Lukan Jesus speaks of having to hate them, and in adding wife and children, brothers and sisters even life itself (14.25-6). The call to discipleship also implies, in Lk 14.27, the carrying of one's cross (ὅστις οὐ βαστάζει τὸν σταυρὸν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἔρχεται ὀπίσω μου). In all likelihood this passage relates to Lk 9.23 where the necessity to carry the cross is, for the disciple, a *daily* experience. In Green's mind 'Luke's emphasis on daily cross-bearing precludes a literal understanding of 'cross-bearing' as preparation for one's own crucifixion' (1995:108-9). The need to bear one's cross corresponds to the denial of one's own life and should be interpreted as 'to deny one's inauthentic manner of existence, to deconstruct the proud façade of one's identity, and to bring to view one's genuine, plain, fragile 'I' in relationship to Christ' (Bovon 2002:366). It should be pointed out that the Lukan Jesus defines discipleship as following him (9.23), or being with him (6.17; 7.11; 8.1, 22; 9.10; 22.11, 14, 28, 39; cf. 8.38; 22.33).

The parallels between Matthew and Luke show how Luke's use of Q vis-à-vis the theme of discipleship enables him to clarify how being a follower of Jesus requires '(1) new attitudes toward wealth, poverty, and the use of riches for the benefit of others, and (2) a radical new type of lifestyle that puts following Jesus before every other allegiance' (Longenecker 1996:64). In this sense, *truly following*

Jesus cannot be made concrete reality without self-sacrifice. This is perceptible through the willingness to relativize family ties and attachment of one's life. In Luke's view, it involves abandoning one's possessions for the sake of the Kingdom of God in the light of what is written in Luke 14.33, '(...). None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions'. An interpretation of Luke's idea of discipleship, shows Jesus expecting his followers to give to the poor and the marginalized without any expectation of return or reward. The parable of the dishonest manager of Luke 16.1-9 should probably be read from that perspective. After hearing that the master had decided to take his position away from him, the manager summoned his master's debtors one by one and cancelled a great part of their debts so that they might welcome him into their homes. The dishonest manager is commended as having acted shrewdly (v.8) for he acted like his contemporaneous within the schema of patron-client. Similarly, the rich ruler of Luke 18.18-25 who was asked by Jesus to sell all his possessions and distribute the profits to the poor (Lk 18.22) is a paradigm. By rejecting Jesus' offer, he shows himself as belonging to those of his generation who are not prepared to be parted from their possessions and thus excludes himself from becoming a disciple of Jesus (cf. v.24). The condition of having to give up all possessions for the sake of the Kingdom of God seems to have conditioned Luke's concrete perspective of discipleship in the light of three examples taken from the Gospel itself.⁸⁰

Green, aware that giving takes place in a context where the patron-client relationship is one the most prevalent models, demonstrates that out of that context, a potential patron requires honour and loyalty from the client who exists in a state of

⁸⁰ Cf. Green (1995:84-5). The first two examples have to be taken from the Third Gospel whose very first disciple to be called is Levi (5.27-32) and the second is the quest of Zacchaeus (19.1-10). Green points out that their stories share four common elements as follows: *firstly*, both narrate the encounter of Jesus with a toll-collector. *Secondly*, both disclose the low status to which all the toll-collectors pertain, both considered 'sinners' in light of Lk 5.30 and 19.7. *Thirdly*, both illustrate the expected behaviour of being Jesus' disciple; Levi left everything and followed Jesus (5.28) while similarly Zacchaeus on becoming a disciple, gives the half of his possessions to the poor and decides to make fourfold restitution to those who have been defrauded by him (19.8). *Fourthly*, both examples clarify the contours of Jesus' mission to have come to call the sinners to repentance and not the righteous (5.32) and as Son of man to seek and to save the lost (19.10). The third example is from Peter's saying 'Look, we have left our homes and followed you' (18.28) recalling Lk 5.1-11 where Peter and his partners, James and John, sons of Zebedee, are depicted as having left everything to follow Jesus.

obligation and debt (1995:114-5). Jesus' teaching strikes to the root of that model by striving to overthrow such values of friendship in antiquity and by proposing another model for candidates for the Kingdom of God, 'calling for an economic redistribution in which the needy are cared for and the wealthy give without expectation of return' (Moxnes, quoted by Green 1995:117). With this concern in mind, it is clearly stated that the way to become a disciple is to leave everything and to follow Jesus (as Levi, Peter, James and John did) and to give all possessions to the poor (as Zacchaeus did). However, leaving everything does not only concern one's goods but also one's home and those living in the household (brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers, etc). The cost of being a disciple is separation or the breaking of every connection.

6.2.4.1.4 Conclusion: discipleship in the Synoptic tradition

To what extent is the synoptic tradition in agreement on the issue of discipleship? In order to address this important question we are compelled to reconsider the meaning and the implication of the act of being a disciple. In the light of the survey made according to Mark's view, the group of Jesus' followers is not 'a locked, but an open circle' (my own expression), since it integrates both those who perform powerful deeds and those who simply offer a cup of water to a thirsty person in Jesus' name (9.39-41). All the same, in examining Mark's perspective of discipleship, to be a disciple is to follow Jesus 'on the way'. Three initial actions ('come after me', 'deny' and 'take up') succeed one another, placing the disciples in a process where they 'keep on following', in other words, discipleship is to fall in behind Jesus and go with him. From that perspective, discipleship is defined as the act of following a person and not a teaching.

Matthew regards the act of becoming a disciple as a committed act of willingness to keep following Jesus. The evolution of Matthean thought is to be taken through the act of denying oneself to taking up one's cross. The decisive way is the rejection of one's own ego in order to signify total dedication to God. Matthew, taking into account the environment of sharpened conflict in which Jesus' followers lived, begins to radicalize the act of being a disciple. While the disciples are

excluded from Jewish assemblies and alienated from their families, Matthew strives to reinforce their commitment to Jesus in the midst of persecution, reminding them that they are children of the Father, adopted into God's family. That is why the disciples are invited to love Jesus more than their father or mother, brother and sister. The only way for them to survive is to constantly be mindful that they are part of the *familia dei* from which all the opponents (even the authorities and parents) are excluded.

In Luke's perspective, following Jesus cannot be made concrete reality without self-sacrifice. Giving up one's possessions for the sake of the Kingdom of God seems to have conditioned Luke's concrete perspective of discipleship. Nevertheless, not only goods and homes have to be abandoned relationships with brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers have to be sacrificed too. Matthew says that they should not love other people more than God, but Luke radicalizes discipleship by inviting disciples to hate those to whom they are tied by family bonds. The cost of discipleship is separation from the so-called encumbrances of relatives or possessions.

In summary, we can say that all the evangelists share the view that a disciple keeps following a person and not a teaching or a philosophy. However, from Mark to Luke through Matthew, an evolution is perceptible; being a disciple is a matter of much sacrifice, self-sacrifice as far as it implies the sacrificing or breaking down of any encumbering connection, human or material (even legitimate relations like those with parents, siblings or a spouse), or goods, possessions or one's life. This paves the way to us to look at how discipleship is conceived in Johannine thought.

6.2.4.2 Discipleship in the FG

6.2.4.2.1 Brief introduction

The survey of the use of the term μαθητής in the synoptic tradition was undertaken in preparation for an examination of the FG. At this stage, we need to examine the characterisation of the disciples in the FG. Köstenberger presents the disciples in the FG as inextricably linked to a story line or the events surrounding Jesus' earthly ministry (Rengstorf quoted by Köstenberger 1998:44), but one has to

take into account ‘the Johannine two-level drama.’⁸¹ Searching out the identity of the disciples in John’s Gospel reminds us that they are on the one hand those who responded to Jesus’ call at his earthly ministry and, on the other hand, those who believed in him at the time when the FG was written (Hillmer 1996:78). The term μαθητής is well-attested to by its 73 occurrences⁸² throughout the gospel.

The choice of the term ‘disciple’ over ‘the twelve’ or over ‘apostle’ to designate Jesus’ followers is appropriate as an inclusive name since the disciples, collectively or individually, are representatives or models with whom readers may identify (Culpepper 1983:115). Our approach will be to read all the passages where the disciples appear as anonymous characters in the first part of the Gospel.

In order to characterize Jesus’ followers in John, it is necessary to take into account the FG as a whole. It is worth noting that the FE makes a clear distinction between Jesus’ large group of followers illumined by the use of the term ὄχλος⁸³, and the inner group of ‘οἱ δώδεκα’ (the Twelve).⁸⁴ As we will see later, such a

⁸¹ It is widely admitted that the FG has to be read at two levels, that is (1) as portraying the story of Jesus and his followers; (2) as reflecting issues and concerns that take place within the community out of which the gospel originates.

⁸² Moulton’s Concordance to the Greek New Testament (2002:660) lists the different instances where the term is used: John 1.35, 37; 2.2, 11, 12, 17, 22; 3. 22, 25; 4. 1, 2, 8, 27, 31, 33; 6.3, 8, 12, 16, 22 [twice], 24, 60, 61, 66; 7.3; 8.31; 9.2, 27, 28, 28; 11.7, 8, 12, 54; 12.4, 16,; 13.5, 22, 23, 35; 15.8; 16.17, 29; 18.1 [twice], 2, 15, 16, 17, 19, 25; 19.26, 27 twice, 38; 20.2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 30; 21.1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 12, 14, 20, 23, 24. Köstenberger (1998:145) points out that the term μαθητής occurs only in 15 passages (18.15 [twice], 16; 19.26, 27 [twice], 38; 20.2, 3, 4, 8; 21.7, 20, 23, 24 while in 58 other passages, the term μαθηταὶ is used (see note 12).

⁸³ The way the FE makes a distinction between Jesus’ close followers and those who follow from a distance is illumined by the term ὄχλος. Five elements feature the crowd as a group with a distant relationship to Jesus: (i) it follows Jesus only externally (6.2, 5, 22, 24); (2.31); (ii) it is only impressed by Jesus’ miracles (7.31; 12.9, 12, 17-8); (iii) it holds divided opinions regarding Jesus (7.12, 40-3); (iv) the crowd is without understanding (11.42; 12.29, 43) [see Schnackenburg (1980:208 note 5). And yet it is amazing that the crowd of people that were present when Jesus healed a paralytic on the Sabbath day (5.13), were fed by Jesus (6.2, 5, 22, 24, 26), were present at the various feasts in Jerusalem (7.12, 20, 31, 32, 40, 43, 49; 12.12, 17, 18, 29, 34) and at the raising of Lazarus (11.42; 12.9), according to the conclusion of the Book of signs, did not believe in him ‘Although he had performed so many signs in their presence’ (12.37). Köstenberger rightly contends that the predominant characteristic of the crowds in the FG is unbelief and they function in it as an example of ‘following Jesus’ that falls short of actual discipleship (cf. AJ Köstenberg (1998:145-6). They not only were unable to understand the significance of the miracles performed by Jesus, but also they failed to believe in him.

⁸⁴ The second group consists of the ‘Twelve’. A comparison between the FG and the other Gospels, [Moulton & Geden (2002:239) shows the following occurrences of the term δώδεκα as follows: Mt 9.20; 10.1, 2, 5; 11.1; 14.20; 19.28 (twice); 20.17; 26.14, 20, 47, 53;

distinction is clearly set out in John 6, a chapter that promotes our understanding of the meaning of the term disciple in John's perspective. This is one of the chapters that will now be closely examined.

6.2.4.2.2 Discipleship in the Book of Signs⁸⁵

The analysis of the term μαθηταί, in this section, does not deal with the whole Gospel, but is limited to the first part of the FG. Van der Merwe, in his unpublished doctoral thesis (1995:78-111), strives to list, in a synchronic approach, all the different appearances of this term throughout the FG. The technical term μαθηταί is manipulated to the extent that, throughout the first part of the Gospel, the disciples are active, especially in John 1, 2, 4, 6 and even in Chapter 9,⁸⁶ 11, 12.

Mk 3.14, 16; 4.10; 5.25, 42; 6.7, 43; 8.19; 9.35; 10.32; 11.11; 14.10, 17, 20, 43; Lk 2.42; 6.13; 8.1, 42, 43; 9.1, 12, 17; 18.31; 22.3, 30, 47]. The circle of 'the Twelve' is mentioned only in 6.67, 70, 71 and 20.24. The fact that no reference is made to 'the Twelve' in the remainder of the FG indicates that even though they followed him, they were not exclusively sent to participate in Jesus' mission (cf. Köstenberger 1993:236-7). The reference to 'the Twelve' towards the end of John 6 is made in the context where many of Jesus' disciples desert him because of the 'hard teaching' (6.60). Against this backdrop stand two disciples: First there is Peter, who replies to Jesus' question 'Do you also wish to go away?' Representing the group, Peter makes a confession regarding Jesus as the Holy One of God. Second, we have Judas who is mentioned as the one of the Twelve who will betray Jesus. Despite 'the Twelve' being depicted as having opted to show loyal commitment to follow Jesus, Köstenberger notes that the disciples with inadequate faith fell away (1998:147). I am inclined to argue that Peter's confession fails to attain the fullness of what is expected of the disciple, which is to acknowledge Jesus as Son of man.

⁸⁵ In the characterization of the μαθηταί, A detailed study of the disciples throughout the FG is not part of my current research. Schnackenburg 1982:203-7; Culpepper (1983:115-25) and Segovia (1985:76-102) are useful contributors on this matter. The present study is concerned mainly with the issue of discipleship in the 1st division in order to highlight the extent to which the blind man of John 9, as important figure, contrasts with the designated and nameless disciples of John 1-12.

It is widely held that Chapters 1-12 and 13-21 bear notable differences in connection with the issue of the disciples. During Jesus' public ministry described in the first part of the Gospel, Jesus' words and deeds are addressed to a wide audience provoking a crisis of faith. While the crowds shows themselves as having misunderstood Jesus' identity, the 'Jews' refuse to believe. Chapters 13-17 are addressed to the restricted group of Jesus' disciples who believe that he came from God (16.30; 17.8, 25)

⁸⁶ Reading chaps 7 to 9, one notes that the disciples maintain a low profile and, as Schnackenburg (1975:234) argues, the idea of discipleship enters these chapters in a concealed way. While all these chapters are dominated by Jesus' intense confrontation with the 'Jews,' as it will be discussed, the disciples are mentioned in 9.2 where their understanding of sin and retribution is in line with the popular notion that affliction and misfortune are God's judgment upon a sinner (cf. Brown 1975:371; Barret 1978:356).

My main aim is to ascertain how the blind man of John 9 breaks loose from the backdrop of the disciples, whose portrait is negative, to behave as a truly committed disciple from the beginning of the Gospel to the end of the Book of Signs.

6.2.4.2.2.1 The call of the disciples in John 1

The issue of discipleship in the FG finds its starting point in the individual characters whose names are cited in John 1. John 1.19-51 has to do with the origins and growth of the first disciples of Jesus. John the Baptist, baptizing in Bethany (v. 28), proceeds to identify Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (v. 29), on whom he saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and remaining there (vv.32-33). Verse 35 shows the Baptist standing with two of his disciples⁸⁷ and pointing to Jesus, who was passing by, saying ἰδε ὁ ἀμνος του θεου.⁸⁸ The unfolding of this story shows that the role of the disciples is to bring faith to others. This is established at the very beginning (Culpepper 1983:115-6). This is when Andrew, along with an unidentified character,⁸⁹ abandoned their master John the Baptist to follow Jesus.

John 1 does not depict individual disciples, but rather outlines discipleship in the FG as being concerned with ‘come and see’, remaining with Jesus (v.39) [see Collins 1990:51-55] and making messianic confessions. The conflict between ‘Jews’ and Christians that developed as the result of the acknowledgment of Jesus as Messiah may have originated in a messianic group holding that Jesus fulfilled the

⁸⁷ It is assumed that all the Gospels agree that John the Baptist had disciples [see Brown (1971:74); cf. also Barrett (1978:180); Carson (1991:154)].

⁸⁸ According to Kysar (1976), John, in spite of the title ‘Lamb of God’ generally means (i) the symbol of the new liberation offered by God, (ii) the innocent victim whose suffering and death gain the removal of human sin, (iii) the figure who appears at the end of time to destroy all evil in the world, (iv) the servant of God whose suffering atones for the sin of others, John, however, seems have given a new and fresh meaning to the title, that is Jesus to be viewed as the liberating revealer of God cf. pp.36-7).

⁸⁹ Beck pointedly observes that this unidentified figure ‘stands early in the narrative as an indicator that others followed Jesus besides the well-known and outspoken, and opens to readers the possibility for them to be numbered among Jesus’ followers’ (1998:44). The appearance of these unidentified followers of Jesus early in the Gospels invites readers to include themselves among his followers. Such an invitation is reiterated by another Fourth Gospel distinctive or marked preference for the term ‘disciple’ by which the followers of Jesus are designated.

messianic hopes of Israel. In the preceding chapter we have seen that all the titles granted to Jesus in John 1.35-49 promote the small group of the disciples as belonging to the community within which the high Christology will take shape. In acclaiming Jesus by traditional messianic titles [Messiah or Christ (1:41), the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote (v.45), the son of God (v.49), and the king of Israel (v.49)], the movement from which the Johannine community originated reveals a low Christology.

All the above-mentioned titles summarize the Jewish expectation of the figure or the special agent of God who is to come, an ideal king who will rule justly as Kysar (1986:37) puts it:

By the first century of the Common Era all the messianic titles were suggestive of more than a political ruler. They connoted one who would rescue the people from economic as well as political oppression; who would correct religious injustices and falsehoods; who would destroy the forces of evil in the world; who was variously thought of as a man, a superman, and an angelic type of divine creature.

The whole range of titles is used in this context to make the point that Jesus is the Messiah. One of the distinctive features in this Johannine account of the calling of the disciples is the certainty that exists from the outset that Jesus is the Messiah (Longenecker 1996:79). The above-mentioned disciples might be considered as would-be disciples who, despite all the enthusiastic confessions made, have not reached a full understanding of the meaning of Jesus. That is why the Johannine Jesus directs to them the promise in v.51 '(...) you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man'. The invitation to move from the traditional view surrounding God's agent expected at the end time brings the story to its climax in the little treatise on Jesus' identity: he should be called the Son of Man (v. 51). In section 1.35-51, five disciples (Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathanael, and an unnamed disciple) are cited as having joined the group of followers of Jesus.

The enthusiastic acclamations concern all of these first followers impressed by Jesus' promise that forms the conclusion and the climax of the section (Schnackenburg 1965:318; Segovia 1985:81; Carson 1991:164f). The invitation in John 1.51 with its curious plural form, should take us back to v.43, where Jesus found Philip and said to him ἀκολούθει μοι (follow me). *This unique reference, at*

the beginning of the Gospel, is crucial to our understanding of the meaning of John's discipleship in the Synoptic tradition.

The use of the verb ἀκολουθεῖω (to follow) in v.43 and elsewhere (in John 8.12, 10.4, 27; 12.26, 21.19, 20, 22) seems to imply 'following a master'. In John 11.31 it has a neutral meaning.⁹⁰ Ἀκολουθεῖω, in Schnackenburg's view (1980a:308), should be understood metaphorically in John for the dedication of faith to such an extent that 'following' is the first step towards faith or 'towards becoming disciples to Jesus ...' (Beasley-Murray 1987:26). To follow Jesus is not an isolated act but has to be subtended, in the process of following, by what John previously referred to in Jesus' first meeting with the two disciples, namely 'to come and to see' and 'to remain' with Jesus. It is clear that another step connected to the first is perceived in the use of the verb 'μεινεῖν' or to 'remain' (see vv.38-39 and see also John 14.2-3, 23), signifying a permanent fellowship with Jesus (v.39). This verb is one of the important verbs used in John. When its frequent occurrence⁹¹ is taken into account, one finds out how it creates a theological concentration in John. The two disciples, after hearing John's witness on Jesus, came and saw, and in response to Jesus' appeal, remained with him (1.38-9). Even if the writer refers to this in passing, right at the beginning of the Gospel, John is trying to emphasize the true meaning of following Jesus. To discuss the issue of the disciples in John, one must start with the pericope (vv 35-51) where it seems that following Jesus implies not only to 'come and see' but to 'remain' with him. The way the first followers participate in the foundational work of recruiting other disciples by witnessing and using messianic titles, Jesus' invitation in v.51 'to believe' has much to do with the necessity of penetrating insight in connection with Jesus' identity. In a programmatic view, John 1.51 is a reminder that Jesus has to be acknowledged as the Son of Man.

The FG profiles what has been developed in the Synoptic tradition where we see two models of disciples (those called by Jesus to follow him and individuals who come to Jesus and say, 'I want to follow you' (see Luke 9). Andrew and the unnamed one, formerly disciples of John the Baptist, who follow Jesus, are invited to come

⁹⁰ For the Jews who came to console Martha saw her sister Mary getting up quickly and going out, and they followed her thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep.

⁹¹ Cf. John 1.32, 33, 38, 39, 39; 2.12, 3.36, 4.40, 40; 5.38, 6.27, 56, 7.9, 8.31, 35, 35; 9.41; 10.40; 11.6, 54; 12.24, 34, 46; 14.10, 17, 25; 15.4, 4, 4, 5, 6, 7, 7, 7, 9, 10, 10, 16; 19, 31; 21, 22, 23.

and see, but the reader is not told what they saw. In John 1.51, Jesus' promise 'you will see heaven open ...,' the word 'seeing,' as it is used in this chapter, has much to do with being a disciple of Jesus, as we will demonstrate in the subsequent chapter, especially in connection with the man born blind.

6.2.4.2.2.2 *Discipleship in John 2*

John 1.51 is situated at the turning point because of the enigmatic title 'the Son of Man' mentioned in John's narrative for the very first time. It convincingly makes a link with the rest of the Gospel, firstly because it concludes the first chapter (1.19-51), and secondly because it introduces the book of signs (Chapters 2-12) in which Jesus' first miracle is followed not by a revelation discourse (as elsewhere) but by many encounters with the Jewish world (the 'Jews' vv 13-22;⁹² Nicodemus cf. 3.1-21; the Samaritan woman and his neighbours cf. chap 4).⁹³ Jesus' first miraculous sign performed in Cana in Galilee makes his glory to be revealed⁹⁴ and

⁹² The narratives of the wedding at Cana and of the purification of the temple are realistically and dramatically rooted in normal human life (Dodd 1953:317), in Galilee and Jerusalem, with its incidents of marriage and merry-making, public worship and trade, and they fit naturally into the picture of the historical ministry of Jesus as it was handed down in tradition and presupposed in every presentation of the Gospel. According to Coloe (2001:69), the wedding at Cana provides the theological introduction to Jesus' first entry into the centre of Israel's religious institutions, namely the temple in Jerusalem. The connection between the two scenes, argues Coloe, is shown through the fact that the jars of purification and the temple in Jerusalem give way before Jesus, who, in relation to the new is both the giver of the wine and the gift of his body. In Christ a new kind of religion is inaugurated, symbolized by the wine of Cana, the 'living water' which he gives, and the new temple which he will raise up. The relationship between John 2.1-25 and John 4 becomes indisputable when Jesus explains to a Samaritan woman that the hour is coming when people will worship the Father neither on Garizim Mountain nor in Jerusalem, but the true worship will be to worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4.21-23).

⁹³ The narrative of cleansing the temple (2.13-22) maintains its interest in the Jewish world in which we meet men and women – Mary (John 2) and Nicodemus (John 3.1-21) and other Jews who came to believe in Jesus – seeing the signs he did (John 2.23-25) and John the Baptist and even John's disciples. The writer of the Fourth Gospel ingeniously set the incidents together in the Jewish world – before coming up to a Samaritan woman of John 4 – intending to show how Israel responded to Jesus. Moloney (1990:436) points out that the narratives and the discourses of 2.1 – 3.36 all reflect encounters between representatives of Judaism and Jesus. All of these traditions intend to keep the implied reader in a Jewish world but also at its periphery where the Samaritan woman stands, as representative of the Gentile world, in order to show how all of those people responded to Jesus' revelation.

⁹⁴ According to Brown (1971:103f), the FE relates this miracle to the other miracles of Jesus and the concrete place he gives to it in Jesus' ministry, in order to tell that it reveals his glory and his disciples believe in him. The purpose granted to it, as other subsequent miracles in

brings the disciples to believe in him (2.11).⁹⁵ While the section (Chapters 2-4) enables one to see how the Jewish world responds to Jesus, the Jews and the disciples are set side by side in Chapter 2. The disciples respond faithfully to Jesus' sign (2.11), even though this kind of faith is essentially an openness to become disciples (as in 1.35-51). After Jesus' challenge to the Jews to 'stop making my Father's house a marketplace' (v.17), the Jews demand a sign from him (2.18). At the end, the conclusion drawn in 2.23 is that πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ θεωροῦντες αὐτοῦ τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει (many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing). The reason why Jesus does not trust (believe in those who believe in him) is that the new believers of John 2.23, being in Jerusalem, were tempted – like Nicodemus who appears at the beginning of Chapter 3 – to make little or nothing of a public expression of their faith. Jesus, as he 'himself knew what was in everyone' (verse 25), did not entrust himself to them. Within the framework of the Johannine presentation, the kind of faith unacceptable to Jesus was not the faith based on signs, but the faith of those who lack the courage to face opposition from the Jewish leaders (as will become evident in the story of John 9) or who do not dare to confess their commitment of faith in the name of Jesus (12.42). In John's presentation of 'faith/to believe', those who believe have to confront opposition, belief as such being a way of life while those who are not seen as believers, including 'disciples in secret' (for example the parents of the man born

John, is to give revelation about the person of Jesus. Jesus reveals his glory is significant in the FG (cf. 1.31; 14.21-22; 16.14-5; 17.6; 21.1, 14). The term φανερώω employed in 1.31; 3.21, 7.4; 9.3; 17.6; 21, 1, 14 refers to the works of Jesus that reveal his character and identity. Its correspondent term δεικνύμι is used to demonstrate the reality of Jesus' resurrection (20.20; δεικνύω is used in 2.18) and to reveal the Father's character (5.20; 10.32; 14.8-9). Cf. Keener 2003:516.

⁹⁵ This group, already in existence at the time of Jesus' first visit to Cana (2.1-11), is labelled μαθηταὶ (cf. Segovia 1985:78). While their number is unknown, they are presented as following Jesus in his ministry. From there until Chapter 6, no indication about the size of the group is given. The faith of the disciples referred to in John 2.11, is accordingly preparatory. For the Gospel writer, Christian belief is incomplete until it fixes itself on the death and resurrection of Jesus for Jesus' words and works can be understood only in the light of his resurrection (Newbigin 1982:34). That is why v.22 alludes to the disciples who, after Jesus' resurrection, remembered what Jesus said before and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

The disciples' response is probably set, at the beginning of the Book of signs, in a paradigmatic manner since, according to John 20.28-29, signs-faith is problematic. The words and works of Jesus can be understood only in the light of his resurrection (Newbigin 1982:34).

blind) are not to be seen as believers; they are not different from ‘the Jews,’ for both seek to safeguard their advantages by remaining members of the synagogues.

6.2.4.2.2.3 The picture of the disciples in John 4

In John 4, however, the disciples do not participate in the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, which leads the Samaritan woman and her Samaritan neighbours to believe in Jesus. In the rhetorical construct of the story, referring to vv7-8, Jesus asks the Samaritan woman for a drink of water after his disciples had left to buy food in the city. When they return they are astonished to find Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman, leaving the water jar behind, promptly she went back to the city witnessing: ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’ (cf. vv27-30). Cuvillier (1996:252) says « du point de vue du scénario mis en place par l’évangéliste depuis le v.8, on assiste ainsi à un véritable chassé-croisé entre la femme et les disciples: ils sont partis à la ville (v.8 : ἀπεληλύθεισαν εἰς τὴν πόλιν) quand vient (v.7 : ἔρχεται) la femme vers Jésus ; elle part à la ville (v.28 : ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὴν πόλιν) dès lors que viennent (v.27 : ἦλθαν) les disciples vers Jésus ». The disciples and the Samaritan woman do not meet but intersect, for the narrator is most likely aware of the fact that they do not have to play any role in the story of the mission in Samaria.

In the unfolding of the narrative, the disciples are presented with an image less favourable than the Samaritan woman, and the evangelist does that purposely since the readers could probably identify more easily with the disciples than with the Samaritan woman. The striking example is in the context of vv31-8, where the disciples are urging Jesus to eat something and Jesus said to them: ‘I have food to eat that you do not know about’ (vv31-2). While the Samaritan woman knew that the Messiah was coming (v.25) and many Samaritans who believed because of the Samaritan woman’s word said: ‘...we know that this is truly the Savior of the world’ (v.42), the disciples are surprisingly told that they do not know, and this is in a special setting where the Johannine Jesus develops a major theme of the FG, namely Jesus’ mission, which is to do the will of the Father (cf. 5.30, 36; 6.38; 17.4; 19.28, 30). In John 4.34 we read: ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.’ According to Cuvillier, it is noticeable that the disciples’

misunderstanding (they do not understand what Jesus means with ‘other’ food) is concerned with what is at the heart of the mission of the Johannine revealer. The disciples are deprived of the whole objective knowledge of the revelation, for their knowledge of the penetrating sense of the mission is negated by Jesus himself in v.32 (Cuvillier 1996:254). To develop an argument, one needs to link the disciples of John 4 to those mentioned in Chapter 6.

6.2.4.2.2.4 *The picture of the disciples in John 6*

In the section ‘Jesus and the principal Jewish Feasts’ (Chapters 5-10), the circle of the disciples is bypassed, with the exception of John 6, where the disciples play a prominent role as a group (Van der Merwe 1995:83).⁹⁶ Chapter 6 (71 verses) is a long chapter that forms ‘a self-contained unit which shows evidence of careful composition’ (Schnackenburg 1980b:10). Nevertheless, John’s well-elaborated writing poses a source criticism⁹⁷ and literary criticism problem.⁹⁸ Moreover, in all

⁹⁶ According to Stibbe (1996:86), discipleship is a dominant idea for, ‘from v.25 onwards, the narrator is concerned with what is involved in coming to Jesus, and then in remaining as a follower.’

⁹⁷ The starting point of John’s composition recounts a double story of miracles, namely the great sign of the feeding which comes first (vv.1-15) followed by the miracle of Jesus walking on the sea (vv.16-21). Both these signs, described in the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 6.35-51 parallel to Mt 14.14-27 parallel to Lk 9.10-17) are linked. Unlike Mark and Matthew, Luke does not mention the second miracle of feeding the crowd (Mk 8.1-9 parallel to Mt 15.32-8). Witherington (1995:148) points out that John 6, as a self-contained unit with its complex internal structure, sets the two miracle narratives together (vv. 1-15, 16-21) which serves mainly as an interlude between the feeding miracle and the dialogue about it. The sources’ criticism has convincingly demonstrated the narrative correspondence between Mark and John, with the difference that John, according to his custom, stresses Jesus’ initiative and his freedom in action (cf. Schnackenburg 1980b:271; Roulet and Ruegg 1997:233-4). The literary correspondence, standing between three evangelists, is not without theological explanation. The principal argument explaining the insertion of the walking on the Sea (vv.16-21) between vv.1-15 and vv.22-59 is to discover. It seems obvious that John refers to the well-known tradition of Mark and the other Evangelists but, as he used to do, he reworked the tradition he attributed to the tradition in a meaningful theological sense (cf. Kysar 1986:92, 94; Borgen 1997:97). When the miracle of walking on the Sea is transformed into the theophanic experience in ending with Jesus’ saying ἐγώ εἰμι μὴ φωβεῖσθε of v.20, this introduces the discourse of Jesus’ self-revelation in vv.22-59.

⁹⁸ Lindars (1977:50) maintains that John 6 was in fact inserted by John after John 5.46-7 in support of Jesus’ claim that Moses had written about him. In spite of this we cannot agree with him that John 6 is an addition, since John 5 refers, at the end, to Moses. There is a thematic link with John 6 which, in v.15, shows people who have seen striving to see Jesus as a Prophet like Moses. And it is this which necessitates the FE, through the discourse on the bread of life, to present Jesus as greater than Moses, thus the Son of Man. In Brown’s

likelihood, it tackles the issue of discipleship in a Christological perspective. John 6, a coherent and well-structured literary text, is framed at either extreme by the indication of disciples (6.1-15, 16-21⁹⁹ and 60-65, 66-71). At the beginning of the chapter, two appearances of the disciples reveal their misunderstanding (vv 1-15) and their lack of understanding (vv 16-24). The disciples that Jesus deliberately ‘tests’ (πειράζω) on the subject of feeding the crowds agree that it will be impossible to feed so many because of the expense involved (Philip cf. v6) and that their present supply of food is simply not enough (Andrew cf. v9).¹⁰⁰ In another scene, the disciples are returning to Galilee when they see Jesus walking on the sea (vv 16-21). They are afraid and without faith in the one who identifies himself by the expression ἐγώ εἰμι, which appears for the very first time (v.20), and which occurs again in v.35 (cf. its analysis elsewhere in this study).

There is no direct reference to the disciples in the discourse on the Bread of Life (vv.22-59) which occurs in the middle of the story.¹⁰¹ During Jesus’ long and increasingly hostile conversation with the crowd (vv 22-39), who have been attracted by the miracle, and who seek an earthly deliverer like Moses to provide them with food and political freedom (Keener 2003a:675),¹⁰² it becomes apparent that the

point of view, the projected arrangement is attractive but not compelling, firstly because there is no manuscript evidence for it and secondly, there is no rearrangement that can solve all the geographical and chronological problems in the Gospel of John (1966:236). It therefore seems that to rearrange John 6 on the basis of geography and chronology is to give undue importance to something that was not of major importance to the evangelist. Nevertheless, it should be noted that all these transpositions do not affect the text of John 6 which, for many commentators, is a composite since its unity is not disputable.

⁹⁹ The persons mentioned in both stories of miracles: Jesus himself (v.1), the crowd of five thousand (vv.2, 5, 9, 10, 14) and the disciples, some of whom are named (vv.3, 5, 7-8, 16-21). In the first story, the crowds dominate, and in the second the nameless disciples dominate: on the one hand people who kept following Jesus because of the healings he conducted misunderstood the sign of feeding and confused Jesus with a Prophet-king, which caused him to withdraw to the mountain (vv.14-15); on the other hand the disciples who assist at a special revelation of who Jesus is.

¹⁰⁰ Segovia (1985:97) is correct in asserting that the disciples fail to see the present gathering in terms of mission. According to him, the purpose of the test of Jesus recalls the background of 4.31-38 and the close agreement between 4.35 and 6.5.

¹⁰¹ It is important to bear in mind that the framing of the whole chapter by sections (vv.1-15, 16-21, 22-59, 60-71) demonstrates the writer’s ingenuity by the portrayal of the crowds whose misunderstanding is clearly exhibited, of the ‘Jews’ whose unbelief is underlined and, at the end, of the disciples’ decision to withdraw from following Jesus.

¹⁰² Jesus strives to turn their attention from physical food to spiritual food demonstrating that Moses, of whom they are proud, is simply the mediator of God’s gift, whereas Jesus himself is God’s gift (6.25-35).

'Jews' (v 41-52) contest Jesus' self-revelation that he is the bread (of life or living bread) and comes from above.¹⁰³ The writer pragmatically seeks to reveal that the decision of faith cannot grow from seeing signs, but must ultimately be based on the word of Jesus.

Marchadour contends: 'Le long chapitre 6 marque un tournant dans la prédication de Jésus et, en conséquence, dans l'attitude de ceux qui veulent le suivre. Une clarification importante s'opère sur son identité, ce qui oblige chacun, juifs et disciples, à se déterminer face à celui qu'ils connaissent comme "fils de Joseph" (6,42) et qui se prétend "fils du Père" ' (2003:186-7).¹⁰⁴ In a rhetorical way, the author constructs the story so as to involve many groups (the disciples who are mentioned by name, the crowds, the Jews, the many anonymous disciples, and the Twelve, represented by Peter) in order to demonstrate how they each react to Jesus' self-revelation.

In Marguerat's opinion, Jesus is the principal hero of the narrative and it is around his person that each group or individual concretizes a type of possible relationship with him. The characters offered to the reader serve to set out positions that range from trustworthiness to betrayal (Marguerat 2003:29). The pericope in which the disciples are mentioned (vv.60-71) is shaped so as to form the conclusion to the story.

The narrator definitely intends to show that, in accordance with the story line, the term 'disciple' is a writer's literary construct to ensure that Jesus' self-revelation has been rejected not only by the crowds and the 'Jews', but even by many of his own disciples (Léon-Dufour 1990:178)¹⁰⁵ who were ultimately offended by Jesus'

¹⁰³ The twofold complaint is in connection with Jesus' saying « I am the bread that came down from heaven » (v.41) and 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.' (v.51). While throughout the discourse on the Bread of life, there is an illustration of the attitude of the crowds (vv.25-40) and of the 'Jews' (vv.41-51b), here, in this pericope, is the illustration of the effect of Jesus' words on his nearest group of disciples.

¹⁰⁴ The betrayal of the disciples (6.60 and 66) does neither precede the crowd's misunderstanding of Jesus' sign of the multiplication of loaves who ask Jesus to give them a sign so that they might see and believe (cf. vv.22-40) nor the Jews who complain about Jesus' revelation of himself as the bread of life coming from above, the Son sent by the Father (vv.41-58).

¹⁰⁵ Some commentators, reading John 6, are confident to mention two historical groups of disciples. It seems that such a view is misleading for, as we will demonstrate later, John does

teaching. This pericope is the unique story, in John and in the Synoptic Gospels, that deals with how the ‘disciples’, as recipients of Jesus’ teaching, not only found it difficult or unacceptable, but chose to fall away from Jesus (vv.60-61, 66).

It has been clearly stated above that the issue of discipleship in John 6 comes from a Christological perspective. The offence that brings about the disciples’ defection is caused by Jesus’ teaching, which is qualified as being σκληρός (v.60), that is to say, ‘difficult to understand’ or simply offensive. The teaching that informs the Christological discourse (6.22-59, 60-71) offends the Jews, and also Jesus’ disciples. To the first group, Jesus’ revelation that he is the bread from above that brings life is unacceptable, and to any in the other group his invitation to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man¹⁰⁶ becomes a stumbling-block.

This chapter, and indeed the Galilean ministry, ends (Van der Merwe 1995:84) with a large number of Jesus’ disciples deserting him (v.66). At the same time, a small group represented by Peter, the spokesman of the ‘Twelve,’ makes a remarkable confession of faith ‘ἡμεῖς πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἄγιος’ (v.69b). The title granted to Jesus in 6.69 has been diversely interpreted.¹⁰⁷

not think about true and false disciples of Jesus. Either one is a disciple or one is not. The term ‘disciples’ could be a literary construct of the author towards the end of 1st century as Schnackenburg argues in these terms:

In the ‘disciples’ of the past the evangelist is thinking of his readers too. The second concept of a disciple, which appears abruptly here and conflicts with 6:3, 8, 12, 16, 22, 24, derives from an already firmly established primitive Christian terminology in which all believers are ‘disciples’ (cf. on 4:1). The evangelist is not trying to distinguish two historical groups, a closer and a wider circle of disciples – he would have had to make that much clearer – but wants to speak to the later disciples of Jesus, the members of his community, who are similarly threatened by shocks to their faith (see on 8:31). Cf. Schnackengurg (1980b:70-78).

¹⁰⁶ The claim to eat Jesus’ flesh and drink his blood in the Eucharistic celebration is the community’s way to face the harsh pains of persecution or the trauma of being expelled from the synagogue. It is feeling in close fellowship with Jesus by means of an open and public declaration of one’s faith in the observance of the Lord’s Supper (cf. Culpepper 1998:163).

¹⁰⁷ According to Keener (2003:697), it is a title for God (2 Kings 19.22; Job 6.10; Ps 71.22; 78.41; 89.18; Prov 9.10; 30.3; Jer 50.29; 51.5; Ezek 39.7; Hos 11.9, 12; Hab 1.12; 3.3; specially in Isa 1.4; 5.19, 24; 10.17, 20; 12.6; 17.7; 29.19, 23; 30.11-2, 15; 31.1; 37.23; 40.25; 41.14, 16, 20; 43.3, 14, 15; 45.11; 47.4; 48.17; 49.7; 54.5-6; 60.9, 14).

The OT uses the phrase ‘God’s holy one’ to refer to men consecrated to God like ‘nazirite’, meaning ‘one separated’ or ‘one consecrated,’ namely Samson (Judg 13.7; 16.17) whereas ‘the Lord’s holy one’ for Aaron (Ps 106.16) (cf. Brown (1966:298). This title which is recognizable nowhere, not from Jewish or Hellenistic-Gnostic tradition, as a messianic title, argues Bultmann, expresses that Jesus stands over against the world simply as the one who comes from the other world and belongs to God. Better, it expresses his special relation to God, and that is why Peter and others experience that Jesus has ῥήματα ζωῆς αἰωνίου

With this answer, and in a context where the ‘the Twelve’ are mentioned as a group three times, it seems that the FE makes a theological concentration upon the term, in order to highlight the inner circle’s faithfulness and to contrast it with the disappointing disbelief of the larger group. Peter is given a positive role as spokesman of the ‘Twelve’. Recalling Peter’s other confession on behalf of the disciples, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God’ (Mt 16.16), the FE, against his will, strives to address the so-called rivalry between the ‘pro-Petrine’ and the Johannine community¹⁰⁸ and assert that the latter is part of the Great Church of which Peter is the rightful representative. Peter is not in the forefront in the story of the disciples’ recruitment, since Andrew is cited to have found Peter (1.40-1). However, in the synoptic gospels Peter is chief candidate (Mk 1.16-20; Mt 4.18-22; Lk 5.1f.). In John 13.24f and 20.3-4, one sees the BD holding more privilege than Peter even though in 21.15-19 Peter reappears as bearing the leadership role in the church. Admittedly, Peter’s confession attributes to the ‘Twelve’ a positive role, but it is important to examine the content of the confession in the light of John’s Christological outlook.¹⁰⁹

The study of Jesus’ disciples in John 6 is complicated. However, as a backdrop painted throughout Chapter 6, the large crowd that kept following Jesus because they saw the signs did not, in John’s opinion, fulfill the demands of being true disciples. The language in connection with discipleship used throughout the chapter is criticized by John; one needs to look at how the writer makes a symmetric construct of his story. The beginning and the end join together to clarify that the initial faith of the crowd is not adequate, for it proves to be ‘signs-faith’ (Keener 2003a:665). The defection of so many defines what it means to be disciples of Jesus.

(the words of eternal life; cf. John 6.68). See Bultmann (1971:449-50. This expression is paralleled in John 10.36 dealing with Jesus as ‘the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world.’ In my view, the title ‘Holy One of God,’ compared with the title ‘Son of Man,’ does not have any prominence whose centrality is obvious in the first part of the Gospel (1.51; 3.13-15; 5.27; 6.27, 53, 62; 8.28; 9.35-38; 12.23, 34-6; 13.31) whose three occurrences are found in chapter 6. Jesus’ greatness is underlined not in through the title ‘Holy One of God’ but in the idea that he is the One sent by the Father, which recurs in John 6 and elsewhere in the Gospel. As it is told elsewhere, Jesus works like a diplomatic envoy, the Son commissioned by the Father, carrying his authority and acting on God’s behalf (Kysar 1976:41).

¹⁰⁸ See the discussion in the section ‘The BD as ideal character’ cf. p. 59, note 20.

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion of the strangeness of the title, cf. Keener 2003a:697; Kysar 1976:41.

Indeed the disciples are not those who begin to follow Jesus or who show enthusiastic attachment, but rather those who persevere. John (especially 6.66; cf. 16.32) ensures that within the Johannine community, to the latter period of its history, the tendencies of apostasy are shaped. That is why the enthusiastic faith based on signs seems to have been vulnerable to any kind of ‘offence’. Only those attached to Jesus’ words would try to face the challenges due to the precarious situation experienced by the community; for the Johannine Christians experienced a profound crisis of identity.

6.2.4.2.2.5 *Discipleship in John 9*

2.1 καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες,
 Ῥαββί, τίς ἡμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα τυφλὸς γεννηθῆ;

In John 9, ‘disciple’ is not a heavily used term.¹¹⁰ The disciples in John 6 leave a bad impression. They are not mentioned at all in Chapters 7 and 8, but re-enter the Gospel story in 9.2. They are introduced merely to get the action started (Culpepper 1998:175). The disciples, ‘present only as foils’ (Lincoln 2005:280), assume, by their question, that the blindness must be punishment for either his own or his parents’ sin. All the classical commentators on John 9 are more interested in the issue of sin than in the issue of the disciples.

The FE is coherent in his construct of the disciples as being in an unfortunate position. The insertion of the disciples who question Jesus in v.2 plays a decisive role in the literary and theological construct of the story. On the one hand, the choice of the term μαθητής is significant. The FE makes it quite clear that the man born blind is a paradigmatic figure of the disciple in the contemporary time of crisis. The insertion of the disciples, at the outset of the story, though themselves influenced by

¹¹⁰ Throughout the story, the term μαθητής occurs four times: in v.2 where it refers to the disciples of Jesus; in v.27 where the blind man asks the ‘Jews’ whether they also want to become disciples of Jesus, meaning implicitly that he already has become one of them; in v.28 where the ‘Jews’ twice tell the blind man that he is a disciple of Jesus, but they are disciples of Moses. These three later occurrences show to some extent that discipleship was a disputed issue at the time when the FG was written. Going back to the token of the disciples of Jesus in v.2, it has to be said that this unique reference is not anodyne in the construct of the figure of disciples in John inasmuch as the figure of disciples, in the Book of signs, is not fortunate. One needs to look at John 4 and 6 in order to reach a likely meaning.

a widespread belief in Jewish tradition, are depicted by the narrator as cutting a poor figure, in vivid contrast to the man born blind. The evangelist proposes to recount the adventure of faith in such a perspective. By asking, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ (9.2) the disciples clearly not only reveal that they do not understand Jesus’ mission, but also buy into Jewish culture according to which the congenital blindness of the man was thought to be punishment for his own or his parents’ sin or that of his parents.¹¹¹ Bultmann (1971:330-1) points out that ‘whether the question is simply prompted by curiosity, or whether it is meant to bring out from the start the absurdity of the Jewish view, it does at least serve to provide occasion for a saying of Jesus.’ Jesus’ reply, as we shall see, shows that the disciples’ inability to understand is at the heart of Jesus’ message, and that he came into the world as ‘the Light of the world’.

In Beck’s opinion (1993:44), the Gospel calls the disciples to respond positively and the narrator seeks to persuade the reader to do the same. He argues that the disciples as characters are literary figures constructed in such a way that readers are invited to identify with them in order to become as they should be. However, the disciples in John 9 (and elsewhere) are not to be perceived as exemplary figures. Since they show a lack of understanding of Jesus’ teaching, they are not idealized or paradigmatic figures, and this does not make it easier for readers to identify with them. Chap.11 is another instance where the issue of discipleship may be tackled.

6.2.4.2.2.6 *Discipleship in chap 11*

The disciples, who have not been mentioned since the healing of the blind man (9.2), reappear to warn Jesus to avoid going to Judea (v.8), the sphere of

¹¹¹ Bultmann (1971:330) hints at the idea of illness being regarded as punishment for a man’s sins to the extent that punishment for parents’ sins could be transferred to their children. This was a universal idea in the ancient world (for instance in the OT, Ex 20.5 and Deut 5.9), and the idea developed as such in Judaism (see Tob 3.3f). For Witherington, III (1995:182), various Jews believed that there was no death without sin in light of Ezek 18.20 and no punishment or suffering without guilt in light of Ps 89.33. Léon-Dufour considers the disciples as ignorant of the Jeremiah and Ezekiel’s diatribe posed in Jer 31.29f and Ezek 18 but they opt for the common opinion according to which the responsibility for sin was transmitted from fathers to sons (cf. Gn 25.22, cf. *SB* ii, 528s; lire Jr 1.5; Is 58.4; also Rabbinical later writings *I QH* 4.29f; 15.17 as well as *Shab* 55a; Ps 89.33).

influence of the Jewish authorities (cf. 7.1) and they remind him of their earlier attempt to stone Jesus (10.39). As in 9.4, the imagery of the day and night is introduced in Jesus' reply to the disciples: 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them' (vv 9-10). In John 9, Jesus' ministry is subjected to the 'law of time allotted to him' (Schnackenburg 1980b:325). There is a reference to the time when it will be impossible for anyone to work; Jesus' passion and death will make 'night' where the 'works' exhibited will no longer be possible (Bernard 1963:326; Lightfoot 1963:202).

In John 11, however, the mention of ἐὰν τις περιπατῆ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ at the beginning of v.9 and ἐὰν δέ τις περιπατῆ ἐν τῇ νυκτι at the beginning of v.10 show the absence of apparent metaphorical reference to Jesus as the Light of the world (cf. 8.12; 9.5). The ἐὰν-clauses contain a simple exhortation to make full use of the day (cf. 9.4), to use to the full the short time still remaining to pass on earth (Bultmann 1971:399). The emphasis is upon the daytime that is to be used for moving around (περιπατῆ cf. Van der Watt 2000:253). The context reveals something additional that both verses say about Jesus. He is going to Judea where his Jewish opponents are plotting to kill him (v.8). Although Jesus is warned about the plot, he plans to go to Judea in daylight (the one walking on the day cannot stumble). With the ambiguous term προσκόπτειν in both verses, Jesus possibly exhorts the disciples to walk with him while it is day (Schnackenburg 1980b:325). In Van der Watt's opinion, Jesus' departure to Jerusalem is inscribed in the limited time he still has on his schedule (2000:253).¹¹² The disciples fear for Jesus' safety, but Jesus invites them to go with him and says, 'if you refuse to walk with me, refuse faith and discipleship (cf. 8.12), you run into darkness and are in danger of a much worse sort of fall, failing to attain salvation' (cf. 12.35; 1 Jn 2.11; see Schnackenburg 1980b:325). A person walking in the light of day does not stumble because he sees (βλέπει) the light of this world (v.9b). Used in this context, βλέπει denotes 'clarity of vision that makes true insight possible' (Waetjen 2005:272). It will be

¹¹² Recently Waetjen (2005:272) observes that Jesus shows a willingness to return to Judea in spite of the threatening situation for there is still time within the framework of the twelve hours of daylight.

demonstrated later that the use of this term ten times throughout John 9 implies a kind of seeing that can grasp the transcendent realities of truth. The seeing to which John refers here is not the physical reality of the light of sun but the light embodied and represented in Jesus' ministry (Waetjen 2005:272). In my opinion, the passage implicitly helps us to see what discipleship, circumscribed by 'walking in the day,' signifies, since it is only 'in the day' that the light of the truth, the light of the first day of creation, is visible and therefore discernible (Waetjen 2005:272). Moreover, walking in the night corresponds to the absence of incarnated light that enables a human being to differentiate between truth and falsehood and therefore between good and evil (Barrett 1978:392). The disciples did not grasp the true meaning of what Jesus was saying.

After having defined discipleship as being of the domain of light, Jesus says that Lazarus has fallen asleep but that he intends to awaken him (v.11). The conversation that develops yet again reveals the disciples' misunderstanding (vv.11, 12) and lack of understanding (vv.14, 16; Segovia 1985:87). Schnackenburg (1980b:326) maintains that this is a stylistic device used by the FE to reveal the distance that separates men from the revealer, their human minds from the thoughts of God. The disciples' inability to comprehend is essentially the same as in the synoptics, particularly Mark, translated into John's language. The misunderstanding comes up from the disciples' struggle to understand Lazarus' real situation (v.11), which compels Jesus to clarify that he is dead (v.14). His absence at the time of Lazarus' death is intentional [(see v.15 (ἵνα πιστεύσητε: so that you may believe)]. In John's perspective and with regard to the context, we do not agree with Bultmann (1971:400) that Jesus is glad for his disciples' sake that they could witness the miracle of the raising of the dead to strengthen their faith. We also have to remember that it is not in Jesus' power to cure diseases or to bring a dead man back to life that is important, but faith in him as Messiah and Son of God (Schnackenburg 1980b:327). The disciples' shaken faith needs to be strengthened by the raising of Lazarus. The saying of v.4, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it' is clarified in v.15, since the disciples have an opportunity to believe. Believing in the Son is definitely the unique way to see God's glory (ὅτι ἐάν πιστεύσης ὄψη τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ

v.40). In this last miraculous sign of Jesus, the purpose, it seems, is to glorify the Father and the Son, united. At the end of the Book of the Signs, the evangelist sets cautiously out the act of seeing as being an integral part of being disciple.

6.2.4.2.2.7 Discipleship in Chapter 12

This chapter contains neither miraculous signs nor discourse; the disciples are mentioned indirectly in 12.1-8 and directly in 12.16, 20-26. In the first passage, the misunderstanding stems from Mary's act of anointing Jesus' feet with expensive perfume, spending what, in Judas' opinion, should have been invested in helping the poor (12.4-7). The reaction that follows shows that the disciples did not grasp that Mary was anointing Jesus for his death (12.8) and that they did not realize that Jesus was going to die.

V.16, situated in the middle, explains the disciples' inability to understand Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the testimony that his true kingship has nothing to do with political claims, but is concerned only with the revelation of truth (18.36-7; Schnackenburg 1980b:376). This event means as little to them as Jesus' sign when he cleansed the temple (2.19-21). V.16 is parallel to 2.17, 22 in its assertion that after the glorification of Jesus, the disciples finally understood that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem fulfilled the Zecharian prophecy (Bultmann 1971:418). The disciples' realization and understanding of the scriptures is, in John, the work of the Spirit after Easter. One should therefore not seek evidence of their understanding of Jesus' words in the first part of the Gospel.

Before looking at how the FE strives to conclude the disciples' vocation towards the end of the Book of Signs, let us summarize the portrayal of the disciples from Chapter 1 to Chapter 12. Van der Merwe (1995:78-89), who takes a synchronical reading of the whole Gospel, comes to the conclusion that 'the disciples are portrayed negatively throughout the FG, with only a few exceptions: 1.35-51, 2.11; 6.69; 16.29, 30; 17.6-8, 25; (...)' (1995:102). Nevertheless, this exception attributed to John 16.29-30, because of the disciples' claim grounded on Jesus' omniscience, seems to be very relative regarding vv.31-32 (see Dettwiler 1995:260-262). Jesus' objection in v.31 puts into perspective the disciples' claim that they believe and understand that it is not helpful to withstand his imminent Passion ordeal

(Zumstein 2007:154), since the disciples will be scattered and every man will return to his home (εἰς τὰ ἴδια). This expression does not bear geographical but theological significance inasmuch as the disciples' break in fellowship implies a return to the world which is separated from God. Every disciple returned to his own 'world' before he came to meet the Revealer (Zumstein 2007:155). In that sense, the faith grounded on Jesus' omniscience is insufficient and not yet authentic. It is below the Johannine Christological credo. Since the disciples' faith has first to face and accept the time of crisis, for otherwise their self-confidence will collapse (cf. Dettwiler 1995:263; Dietsfelbinger 1997:238-239).

In addition, in my view, the disciples are, in the first division of the Gospel, without exception, negatively portrayed. In Chapter 1, after their enthusiastic confessions, the disciples are invited to move from the traditional perception of Jesus to a new understanding of him as the Son of Man. In Chapter 2, the faith of the disciples in v.11 paves the way to belief. In the evangelist's perspective, any faith based upon signs (of either the disciples or the 'Jews') will inevitably be vulnerable since only believers will manage to overcome any offence or any opposition. Towards the end of Chapter 6, we demonstrated the inadequacy of the faith of the large crowd that kept following Jesus because they saw the signs and yet they did not, in John's opinion, fulfill the demands of being true disciples. The defection of so many disciples helps to understand that the disciples are not those who begin to follow Jesus or who show enthusiastic attachment, but rather those who persevere.

At the end of Chapter 12, after the disciples have been described as not understanding the significance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem according to the scriptures, two groups appear in the narrative, namely the Greeks and the crowd. What Jesus says to both groups is critical to the characterization of the disciples in the narrator's perspective. Schnackenburg (1980b:386) points out that John has constructed this section from a Christological understanding: 'the cross becomes Jesus' glorification, and the disciple must follow his Lord along this road.' It seems that the evangelist buys into the synoptic tradition (Brown 1971:472)¹¹³ by referring to the parable of the grain of mustard (Mk 4.30-1 parallel to Mt 13.30-2 parallel to

¹¹³ Brown notes that in John and the Synoptics, there are two parables relating to the productivity of a grain (of wheat, of mustard). According to him, both contemplate the coming of the Gentiles to God.

Lk 13.18-9). Brown's opinion, according to which the synoptic picture of the kingdom has much in common with the Johannine picture of Jesus, is not convincing. Admittedly the evangelist takes material from Synoptic tradition, but he has edited it in a peculiar manner (Bultmann 1971:420). It is arguable that the parables, in the synoptic tradition, are related to the kingdom of God, whereas the parable of the grain of wheat of John 12.24 has to do with Jesus' death that paradoxically leads to fruitfulness and his glorification. In the Synoptic tradition, Jesus' announcement of his passion and death provokes offence and misunderstanding in the disciples, while in John the grain of wheat that falls onto the earth and dies is a figurative reference to Jesus' death and implies his large following.

In John 12.25, the expressions 'loving life' and 'hating life' recall the synoptic tradition (Brown 1971:473-4).¹¹⁴ Mk 8.35, compared to John 12.25 (Schnackenburg 1980b:384), demonstrates that John is indebted to the synoptic logion, but he shaped it in accordance with his own theology. This logion may have originated from a pre-Johannine saying (Keener 2003b:874). The way John's materials overlap the synoptics show that the FE thoroughly rewrites his sources, clarifying to the disciples that Jesus' self-sacrifice is not the termination of life but the perfection of true life. Jesus' death becomes, so to speak, a paradigm for his followers. Verses 23-26 are obviously related to discipleship.

Very recently, Neyrey (2007:214) pointed out how these verses are cast in a distinctive chiasmic structure as follows:

- A. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be *glorified*.
- B. Unless a grain of wheat *falls* into the earth and *dies*, it remains just a single grain; but if it *dies*, it *bears much fruit*.
- B' Those who *love* their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will *keep* it for eternal life. Whoever *serves* me must *follow me*, and where I am, there will my servant be also.

¹¹⁴ Brown, analyzing these paralleled passages, and in adding two more (Mt 16.25 and Lk 9.24), highlights two patterns in terms of alternative attitudes toward one's life: (i) destroying life comes forth to (a) whoever wishes to save his life, (b) whoever seeks to gain his life who loses it (ii) preserving life is possible since (a) whoever destroys his life for my sake will save it; (b) the man who loses his life for my sake will find it; (c) whoever loses it will keep it alive.

A' Whoever serves me, the Father will *honour*.

To comment on this chiasmic structure, he strives to demonstrate that 'glory' and 'honour' (A and A') refer to the same value in antiquity that speaks of divine honour, shown first to Jesus who is to be 'glorified', and then to his servants who will be 'honoured.' In the cluster B-B,' the talk is of dying and bearing fruit, hating and keeping, or becoming a servant and being honoured (Neyrey 2007:214). One may say that in the perspective of Jesus' glory and his servants, to be honoured by the Father creates the necessity for Jesus to die like a grain of wheat that falls into earth, and then bears much fruit. Likewise those who show willingness to follow him have to hate their life even to death, so they may keep it for eternal life. To follow Jesus is to follow him unto death; that is to be prepared to die,¹¹⁵ or to 'lay down their lives' for him (10.4, 27; 13.37).

This is the type of radical discipleship demanded by Jesus (cf. Mark 8.34-38). The parallelism between Mk 8.34 [εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι] and John 12.26 [ἐὰν ἐμοί τις, διακονῆ ἐμοὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω] lies in the call 'follow me', which is at the centre. However, in Mark the word is about the discipleship of the cross, whereas the Johannine logion has been expanded, for the disciple's path leads to where Jesus is and the Father's honour is promised to whoever serves him (Schnackenburg 1980b:385-6).¹¹⁶ Towards the conclusion of the Book of Signs, the evangelist tries his best to make discipleship radicalized, as Neyrey puts it, 'just as God "glorifies" the Son of man in his death, so, too, God will 'honour' the disciple who follows Jesus. Honour is lost before the people, but divine honour is awarded later by God' (Neyrey 2007:215). The price to pay, in following Jesus, is not only to despise one's life but also the worldly honours, and to value rather God's honour.

Besides such radicalism, another important instance highlights that, in John,

¹¹⁵ Keener (2003b:874) lists the groups that are ready to lose their lives. Philosophers talked about being ready to face death (cf. note 56). Generals used to warn troops before battle that those who are ready to risk their lives will ultimately be apt to preserve them (cf. note 57); an oath was required to show loyalty to the divine emperor (cf. note 58).

¹¹⁶ While 'following' in 8.12 means 'believing,' however, in 12.26, it is the particular 'following' of the disciple 'unto death.' Those who follow Jesus unto death will be united with him and see his glory (17.24). Just as the Father seeks Jesus' honour and glorifies him (cf. 8.50, 54; 13.32), to the disciples will be given the gift of heavenly glory, that is the full love of God (17.24-6). This is the highest reward for those who have followed him to death.

discipleship must be conceived as a *'discipleship into light'* that has much to do with the understanding of Jesus as Son of Man. Jesus' saying in John 12.35-36¹¹⁷ is visibly preceded by the reply of the ὄχλος introduced in order to indicate how far they misunderstand Jesus' true identity. As the evangelist used to do, he interrupts the flow of the discourse to tackle an important issue in connection with the Christian-Jewish controversy. The crowd that represent the Jewish religious world in this story take offence at Jesus' reference in v.34b ὅτι δεῖ ὑψωθῆναι τόν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (that the Son of Man must be lifted up) after having asserted that the Law states that once the Messiah (ὁ χριστὸς) comes, he remains forever (v.34a). The fact that the crowd identifies the Son of Man with the Messiah shows that they acknowledge that the Son of Man is the eschatological bringer of salvation (Bultmann 1971:354-5), but the difficulty stems from the evangelist's effort to make him known in the present. Schnackenburg argues that the expected Jewish Messiah was the Davidic Messiah king. It seems that the passage the evangelist has in mind is Ps 89.37 – τὸ σπέρμα (David's) μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, which means the Christ is David's seed that remains forever (LXX).

John, as I will demonstrate in the discussion of the issue of the Son of Man, disputes the whole Jewish standpoint. The Law does not play any decisive role; through Jesus, the Son of Man, the revelation of God is ultimately made manifest. This explains the obvious contrast between the Jewish expectations constructed around the Davidic Messiah-king, above whom stands the Son of Man. In vv 35-6, the FE links this figure with the Light, an important term in these few verses.¹¹⁸ Jesus extends an urgent invitation: 'περιπατεῖτε ὡς τὸ φῶς ἔχετε' (walk while you have the light), since Jesus' being 'lifted up' inspires a new force and urgency (Schnackenburg 1980b:396). The crowd's misunderstanding allows Jesus to make a final call to faith in him as the Light of the world. The image of walking in light or darkness is present in 8.12, and the light of life is the consequence of 'following the light', which enables one to be preserved from 'walking in darkness'. Likewise, in 12.35-6, whoever walks in light is opposed to whoever walks in darkness for the

¹¹⁷ 'The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light'

¹¹⁸ It is used five times for Jesus and once for the would-be disciples.

latter does not know where he is going. In a parallel manner, the FE makes recourse to the image of ‘night’ mentioned in 9.4 and 11.10. Taking into account the whole of v.4, the imagery of day and night¹¹⁹ refers to the time when it will be impossible for anyone to work. The ‘night’ has often been interpreted as the time after Jesus’ public ministry on earth has ended. In Schnackenburg’s opinion (1980b:396), the night in which no-one can work or move without falling, casts its shadow over the work of Jesus and his disciples. The darkness is nothing other than Jesus’ approaching death to which the Jewish authorities are committed. Their hostility demonstrates that they belong to ‘the realm of sin and death, judgment and annihilation’ (cf. 1.5; 3.19; 5.24; 8.21).

Jesus is portrayed as the Light of the world and as the only way to escape the threat of being overtaken by darkness. The unique way is: ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΤΕ ΕΙΣ Τὸ ΦΩΣ ἵνα υἱοὶ φωτὸς γένησθε (believe in the light so that you may become children of light; cf. John 12.36). Although Brown (1966:479) is confident that the theme of light and darkness, as introduced here, is to direct the crowd from intellectual to the moral realm, we rather think the crowd is summoned to believe. Faith, to which the FE invites all, is not presented as a moral issue anywhere. The only way to escape darkness is to ‘believe in the light’. The use of the metaphor ‘light’ is directly attached to ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΙΝ ΕΙΣ, as will be discussed elsewhere in this study, and it implies a personal and committed relationship between the believer and Jesus.

The evangelist takes advantage of *the conflict that places Christians and Jews in opposition by envisioning it as a conflict that places the forces of light against the forces of darkness*. The dualistic language in this story fits with the Qumran, whose expression ‘sons of light’ is one of the standard descriptions for the community (Brown 1966:479; Keener 2003b:882 note 135) that regarded all outsiders as ‘sons or children of darkness’. John uses the term to describe those who believe in Jesus as Paul did in 1 Th 5.5 and Eph 5.8. The following section will deal with this matter.

¹¹⁹ Reading John 9.4-5, for the first time the imagery of day, of work, is joined to that of light and explicitly applied to Jesus’s mission. In the FG, he continues, the images are interlaced inasmuch as Jesus is the Light (8.12) and he makes use of the light to do the work or accomplish the mission given by the Father (John 5).

6.2.4.2.2 8 Conclusion: Discipleship in the FG

To end this section, we have to evaluate how this analysis of discipleship in the ‘Book of Signs’ (1.19-12.50) contributes to the understanding of discipleship in Chapter 9. While the first part of the Gospel narrates Christ’s revelation to the world, the ‘Book of Glory’ (13.1-20.31) depicts the revelation of his glory to his own. These notable differences influence the approach of discipleship. This study deals with discipleship throughout the first part of the FG. From the analysis it emerges that the original group of disciples mentioned in John 1.35-51 participate in the foundational work of winning more disciples by means of witness, fulfilling, so to speak, the integral mission entrusted to any disciple. The enthusiasm provoked by Jesus’ miraculous acts as described in Chapter 2 and a traditional confession about Jesus, as can be read in Chapter 1, are not strong enough to ensure the courage that is required by those who decide to follow Jesus.

While the unnamed disciples in Chapters 4, 6, 9 and 11,¹²⁰ show either a lack of understanding of Jesus’ mission (Chapter 4) or teaching (Chapters 6 and 9), it seems that the different occasions in these chapters where the disciples intervene are opportunities for them to integrate themselves in Jesus’ mission, but they fail to do so. In the first division of the Gospel, the unexpected crisis of defection by so many of Jesus’ disciples in John 6.60, 66 is a decisive event. The disciples who give up are not ideal figures with whom one has to identify. In John 6 and 9 we read that being a disciple of Jesus requires more than enthusiasm. Above all, being a disciple of Jesus implies remaining in his teaching and revelation. True discipleship demands absolute

¹²⁰ Segovia analyses John 4, 6, 9 and 11 and demonstrates that varied and consistent failure of the disciples to understand and to integrate the events of ‘the hour’ into their belief prior to ‘the hour’ and their persistent lack of awareness about their own role in the context of Jesus’ mission. In John 4, the disciples fail to see that Jesus’ food is none other than the mission entrusted to him by the Father (4.34). Another lack of understanding occurs in John 6.1-15 where Jesus deliberately tests the disciples on the subject of ‘feeding’ the crowds – the disciples fail the test for they do not see the present gathering in terms of Jesus’ mission. In John 9.2 the question of sin is introduced, and the disciples’ lack of understanding is quite obvious from their proposed association of physical blindness with sin (v.2), despite the previous definition of sin as unbelief in John 8.21-30; they seem to have failed to grasp the real meaning of sin. In John 11.1-12.11, the disciples’ lack of understanding for they attempt to dissuade Jesus from undertaking the proposed journey because of the dangers involved. The lack of understanding of the disciples of Jesus led many of them to an unexpected crisis and to defection (John 6.60-66).

understanding of who Jesus is. The progress into the understanding of Jesus' identity that is made by the man born blind is not a consequence of Jesus' explicit invitation to 'follow me' and 'come and see', as we read in 1.43 and 46, but a spin-off of the miracle of receiving sight. A physical seeing is symbolically constructed to transform not the miracle to 'believing', which is a unique way to see God's glory. The courageous confession that challenges the unbelieving Jews to follow Jesus clarifies that in Chapter 9 discipleship is nothing other than 'discipleship into light.'

The FE constructs the story of the blind man in Chapter 9 in such a way that he takes advantage of the conflict that between Christians and Jews by envisioning it as a conflict between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. Discipleship is a matter of walking in light and never in darkness, but it also implies a firm commitment, strong determination and real perseverance.

After having reconstructed the noun μαθητής from the Synoptics and the first part of the FG, the second term that occurs in Chapter 9 to tackle is 'light'.

6.3 The Light metaphor¹²¹

The imagery of light developed in the first part of the FG is part of the larger metaphorical network (Van der Watt 2000:245-6).¹²² Scholarship has suggested numerous and diverse backgrounds as the source of the idea in John. This section will aim to demonstrate how the metaphor of 'light,' as a divine reality, was a widespread concept in the ancient world (Burkett 1991:161).¹²³ Some scholars place its origin in a non-Jewish location, either in Gnosticism (Bultmann 1971:342f; cf. Schnackenburg 1980b:190) or in Hellenistic religion as exemplified by the Hermetic literature (cf. Dodd 1953:201-12). Others propose a Jewish background, either the ceremony associated with the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Brown 1966:343-4;

¹²¹ On the definition and nature of metaphor, see Van der Watt 2000:6-14. He defines the term 'metaphor' as maintaining 'the individual meanings of both "words" at the same time that it combines them to form a new meaning. This new meaning is metaphor (...) in a sense, each metaphor is a new word, which encourages the exploration of free meanings without giving up the tied meanings of its constituent parts.' Referring to Aristotle, he pursues that the metaphor helps to say something in a new way; that is to say, ordinary words that are often used can help to gain fresh insight only through metaphorical usage.

¹²² See overview of the imagery of light and darkness.

¹²³ Macgregor (1953:193) sees in the expression an echo of the Prologue and does not hesitate to reject a reference to the symbolism of Tabernacles (see Brown, 1966/1970:343-44; Beasley-Murray 1989:127-8; Lindars 1972:314).

Schnackenburg 1980b:189; Beasley-Murray 1989:127-8), the thought-world of Qumran (cf. Schnackenburg 1980b:190; Lindars 1972:316), or Jewish thought, especially in connection with Wisdom and the Law (cf. Brown 1966:344; Lindars 1972:314; Barrett 1970:278-9). Others find the source of the idea in OT scriptures, such as those describing the pillar of fire in the wilderness (cf. Macgregor (1953:193; Morris 1971:437; Beasley-Murray 1989:127.8), one or more of various passages from Isaiah (9.1-2; 42.6; 49.6; 60.1-3), or Genesis 1.3.¹²⁴

My proposal in this section is to find out from which tradition (Qumran, Gnosticism,¹²⁵ Hellenistic religion or the OT) John drew his conception of light which he then applied to Jesus' person and ministry. It is advisable to calculate that the world, in which the Johannine tradition was shaped, in the course of the Hellenistic age, has had an impact on the evangelist's understanding.

6.3.1 Light in the OT

There is no developed or systematic expression of a dualistic language in the OT as it stands in Qumran and John. It is a source of amazement that we read in the OT, in the story of creation, that while the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, God intervened not to create darkness, 'which was there at the beginning' but light. This indeed is an echo of an older mythology, probably speaking of a divine light (Gunkel 2006:7). God created the light and separated it from the darkness by calling it 'day' and the darkness 'night' (Gen 1.2-5). Any mixture of light and darkness cannot be presupposed since light might be set apart (Noort 2005:7). The theme of separation is common to Genesis 1, for a dome in the midst separated the waters from the waters (vv 6-7), the day was separated from the

¹²⁴ See Schnackenburg 1980b:189-90; Barrett (1978:337) who wrote a lengthy and important note to show that the background of the saying is complex. He sees it in the ceremonies of the feast of Tabernacles, in pagan religions – notably the Hermetic literature - in Judaism, and in the synoptic gospels.

¹²⁵ It is widely held that R Bultmann's thesis, in the past, consisted to argue that the interpretation of the FG has to be done in light of Gnostic categories, or simply that Johannine thought has been much influenced by Gnosticism. Nowadays such a consideration of the FE dependent upon Gnostic thought no longer makes any sense. Following Painter, I will try to demonstrate that the world in which the Johannine tradition was shaped, in the course of the Hellenistic Age, was a syncretistic Judaism in which Gnostic tendencies had developed, or that Hellenised Judaism is well-known from Qumran texts.

night (v 14), the light was given to rule over the day and over the night, and light was separated from the darkness (vv 17-8). To sum up, Noort explains: '[light] is set apart from the creation of the luminaries. The creation of light in relation to the already existing darkness and their subsequent separation differs from the other works where separation plays a role' (2005:11). Westermann (1987:8) further clarifies this when he asserts:

Unlike any other known description of creation, P begins with the separation of light and darkness, thereby giving the category of time precedence over that of space. The created world is to be understood first and foremost as an event, and only then as matter. The creation of light and its separation from darkness makes possible the succession of days, the temporal order in which the world was created. Darkness is not described in the same terms as light, being good. Darkness is indispensable as light but only light can signify salvation.

The function that seems to have been attributed to light in the creation story clarifies the narrator's intention to not only portray God as the Creator of the light, but especially of the Light illuminating the face of the deep covered by darkness, and of salvation as well. Such a conception of God as light is to be found in two similar passages in the Book of Psalms, whereas the idea of salvation lies in the later passage. The first is Ps 36.9: 'For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.' The second passage is Ps 56.13: 'For you have delivered my soul from death, and my feet from falling, so that I may walk before God in the light of life.' This verse contains the important expression the 'light of life'.

The constant for all these references (Ps 36.9; 56.13) is the depiction of God as the light or the source of life for humanity in light. Even Ps 27.1, where the declaration about Yahweh as the light, characteristically spelled out, implies deliverance (Goldingay 2006:392). In Burkett's understanding, the parallelism between 'life' and 'light' in Ps 36.9 and 56.13 implies that they refer to the same reality: within God is a fountain of life or light that is the source of humanity's light (Burkett 1991:163). The metaphor 'light' is employed for provision and blessing, in that God provides for people's needs not only in the temple but also in everyday life (Goldingay 2006:511). Yahweh is the light whose face shines out upon people.

While in Genesis and the Psalms God is described as light, the vision in Second Isaiah describes a transferal of light to Israel, who now has God's mission to

fulfil. In Is 42.6-7, it is asserted that Israel has been called to be ‘a covenant for the peoples and a light to the nations, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison...’. The echo of Is 42.6-7 and I *Enoch* 48.4, 10 (cf. 2 *Baruch* 70.10 as well) makes the opening of a blind man’s eyes a definitive sign performed by God’s messianic servant. It seems that Is 42.6 echoes the words addressed to Cyrus in 42.2 and to Israel in 41.10. Verse 6 makes much more explicit the universal scope of the mission of the servant (Mackenzie 1968:9). The servant, who mediates as light between Yahweh and humanity is a mysterious figure. The term servant, as used in Second Isaiah, does not occur for the first time in 42.1, but is introduced in 41.8 along with a variety of familiar attributes (Childs 2001:325). Israel/Jacob is designated as servant, the elect one, and offspring of Abraham, even friend. As God’s elect in whom he delights and on whom his spirit resides, he will bring forth justice to the nations who await his teaching (Childs 2001:324). So, either the term ‘servant’ is a title granted to Israel or a reference to a historical persona whose mission it is to open the eyes of the blind man and to free captives from prison, i.e. from ignorance about God and service to false gods.

Jesus indeed opens the eyes of the physically blind; but both that miracle and release from prison found their real fulfillment in the spiritual sector (Coffman 1990:400). This passage anticipates Jesus’ fulfilment of this prophecy by healing blindness, and indeed Jesus’ healing activity is characterized as fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy. The Messiah fulfils the office of the servant in caring for the weak and fragile. Yet, conversely, it is Isaiah’s portrayal that interprets Jesus’ healing as bringing justice to victory and giving the Gentiles hope (Childs 2001:327). That is why Jesus, as Light, is able to mediate the knowledge of God that is eternal life. The conception of light in the OT undergoes a kind of evolution. While God is conceived as ‘light’ and ‘life’ in Genesis and the Psalms, this status is granted to his own servant in later literature (Isaiah, Enochus and Baruch). Is John’s language influenced most by Qumran, Gnosticism or the OT? Let us start with the Qumran community.

6.3.2 Light in Qumran

Light and darkness are the dominant symbols that give expression to the dualism of both John and Qumran (Charlesworth 1990:76-106). The dualistic way of Qumran thinking is expressed in *I QM* and *I QS*, whereas the consciousness of election, divine revelation and proximity to God lies in *I QH* (Schnackenburg 1980a:129). The significant Qumran passages are *I QS* 3.13-4.26 and *I QM* 13.9-12 where the dualism is so clear:

In the order created by God there is a conflict. God supports one side and is opposed to the other. Men are divided into two groups and the conflict between the light and darkness is worked out in their lives so that just as the light opposed to the sons of darkness so are the ways of the sons of light opposed to the sons of darkness (Charlesworth 1990:32).

Another throughgoing expression of dualism lies in *I QS* 3.17ff:

He (God) has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of his visitation: the spirits of truth and falsehood. Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of falsehood spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light; but all the children of falsehood are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness.

In terms of dualism, the world is divided into two opposite sides, one composed of the sons of light and another of the sons of darkness, or those born of the spirit of truth springing from a fountain of light and those born of the spirit of falsehood springing from a source of darkness, and both are engaged in a conflict.¹²⁶ Moreover, in *I QS* 3.13-4.26, the light and truth are aligned with God, who is opposed to the darkness. *I QS* speaks of the two Spirits, of truth and falsehood, identified by Angels of light and of darkness. In spite of the doctrine of the two

¹²⁶ The battle between sons of darkness against the sons of light implies an outcome whose pathetic moment is expressed through confession of victory (*I QM* 13.1-18): [God] has decreed for us a destiny of light according to thy truth. And the Prince of light you have appointed from ancient times to come to our support; [all the sons of righteousness (...) are in his hand] and all the spirits of truth (...) under his dominion. But Belial, the Angel of Malevolence, you have created for the Pit; his [rule] is in darkness and his purpose is to bring about wickedness and iniquity. All the spirits of his company, the Angels of Destruction, walk according to the precepts of darkness; towards them is their [inclination] (13.9b-12a). cf. Painter 2005:230.

spirits, the *Testaments* represent an eschatological dualism that asserts and anticipates the ultimate triumph of the spirit of truth over the spirit of wickedness (*I QS* 3.18; 4.18-23; *Test. of Dan* 6.3; *Test. of Levi* 18.12; *Test. of Judah* 25.3). In the book of Jubilees there appears a single leader of all evil spirits, Mastena, the opponent of God and his angels (Collins 1997:271). The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* combine dualistic battle imagery and ethical exhortation and focuses the evil spirits into the single figure of Beliar who controls all of those inclined to evil (Hakola 2005:202-3). The Angel of darkness in *I QS* corresponds to Belial, or the Angel of Malevolence, in *I QM*. It is worth keeping in mind that the reference made is in connection with the spirit of truth (under the rule of the Prince of Light) and the spirit of falsehood (under the rule of Belial) [Charlesworth 1990:32]. The discussion of the ‘fountain of light’ and the ‘source of darkness’ in *I QS* 3.18-20 does not ground the source of darkness in God (Painter 2005:238). From Brown’s point of view, in the Qumran literature, a prince and an angel are both created by God (2003:140). In Jewish and early Christianity tradition, the conflict between the forces of light and darkness is always combined with the belief in one God who has created the world (Hakola 2005:204). Although *I QM* 13.14-16 testifies to the expectation of the appointed day of battle, from ancient times, to destroy iniquity and to bring darkness low and to magnify light, the power of the devil over the world is restricted by the belief of the anticipation of his eschatological defeat. To understand how far early Christianity operates such a movement, let us look at the similarities and differences between Qumran and John’s languages.

In both writings, the similarities are found in the use of dualistic language.¹²⁷

The most impressive literary parallels between John and Qumran must be sought in the antithetical language.¹²⁸ According to Hakola’s analysis (2005:199), the dualism

¹²⁷ In John, the belief into two worlds is well assumed in light of the ‘world above’ (ἀνωθεν) and the ‘world below’ (τὸν κάτω). From ‘the world above’, the angels and the Son of man descend and ascend (1.51; 3.13, 31, 33); the living bread came down from heaven (6.41, 50, and 51). The ‘world above’ is contrasted with the ‘world below’ being comparatively limited in quality and quantity (6.51, 58, 63; 4.13f.). Two groups of antithetic categories contrast the two worlds. Light characterizes the ‘world above’ and darkness distinguishes the ‘world below’.

¹²⁸ One needs to refer to the dualistic conception of light and darkness (cf. 1.5; 3.19ff.; 8.12; 12.35f., 46; 1 John 1.5f.; 2.8-11), truth and falsehood (cf. 8.44f.; 1 John 1.6; 2.21, 27; 4.6), love and hate, life and death, flesh and spirit (cf. 3.6; 6.63 and 1.13). cf. Painter 2005:230; also see Schnackenburg 1980a:131.

is expressed in terms of two cosmic spirits that explain the presence of evil in the world. *I QS* 3.19-21 deals with the spirit of deceit, or of the Angel of Darkness, designated as being in total dominion over the sons of deceit. John speaks of the ruler of this world (12.31; 14.30; 16.11). Both writings speak of the spirit of truth (*I QS* 3.18-9; 4.21-3; John 14.17; 15.26; 16.13). The Qumran refers to the 'spirit of holiness,' and John to the 'Holy Spirit' (*I QS* 4.21; John 14.26; 20.22). The Qumran and John mention the sons of light (*I QS* 3.13, 24-5; John 12.36), the light of life (*I QS* 3.7; John 8.12) and those walking in darkness (*I QS* 3.21; 4.11; John 8.12; 12.35).

Even though the dualistic perspective is not of sustained treatment in John, it emerges as an underlying perspective that surfaces from time to time in significant passages (cf. John 1.4-5; 3.2, 19-21; 8.12; 9.5; 12.35-6, 39-41, 46; 13.30). In these Johannine passages, the dualism between light and darkness is explicit. Moreover, references to light do not stand alone but express a conflict with darkness (Painter 2005:229, note 18). The similarities between the Johannine and Qumran languages have led some scholars ¹²⁹ to conclude that later writings are relevant to the FG. Others go so far as to consider John as a member of the Qumran community. This will be discussed below. The power of darkness remains real in the light of John 1.5. John sees Jesus as the light that has come into the world to overcome the darkness (John 1.4 – 5.9) and all people must choose between light and darkness (3.19-21; cf. Brown 2003:140). Jesus' ministry is portrayed not only as an assault on the power of darkness (3.19-21; 8.12; 9.5, 39-41; 12.35-36a, 46) but also as a struggle leading up to a decisive assault (12.31; Painter 1991:124-8; *Id.*:1992:27-42). The decisive assault takes place in Jesus' death and culminates in the casting out of the ruler of this world (12.31; 14.30; 16.11; 1 John 5.19), the adversary of God's plane.

¹²⁹ Cf. L Mowry (1954), *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Background for the Gospel of John*. In *Biblical Archeologist* 17 (1954), 78-97; RE Brown, *The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles*. In *CBQ* 17 (1955), 403-19, 559-74; WF Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St John*. In WD Davies – D Daube (eds), [1964], *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 153-71; FM Cross (1958), *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995, 149-56. R Bauckham, *The Qumran Community and the Gospel of John*. In *Dead Sea Scrolls* (2000), 105-15; R Bauckham, *Qumran and the FG: Is there a Connection?*. In *Scrolls and the Scriptures* (1997), 267-79.

According to John, Jesus has come into the world as the light to overcome the darkness (1 John 1.4-5, 9); that is why all are called to decide in favour of the light or the darkness, for Jesus or Satan (3.19-21; 8.12, 31ff; 12.36; Painter 1991:31).¹³⁰ One may notice that besides similarities, there are notable differences expressed in these terms. Whereas considering the dualistic terminology, children of light and of darkness have been placed on their separate ways by God's decree, commonly known as predestination (1 *QS* 3.15-21; 4.15-9; 1 *QH* 15.12-17; Schnackenburg 1980a:132), the way of 'dualism' operates at the human level, in John, and depends on the overall belief according to which all men are in darkness (1.5), but have the potential to believe. Inability to believe stems from the prince of this world or the power of darkness that has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts (12.40), a fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy.¹³¹ Such an explanation of unbelief demonstrates that there is no doctrine of predestination in the Gospel, nor any strong emphasis on determinism since man's destiny is balanced between God's sovereign initiative and man's response (Schnackenburg 1980a:249). The invitation to believe in Jesus as the light of the world and to become 'sons of light' (12.36) disparages any doctrine of predestination. There are not two groups, i.e. one from above and one from below (as in 1 *QS* 3.15ff.); only Jesus is from above and transfers that quality to those that truly believe. The most dualistic division of people into sons of God (Abraham) and sons of the devil is not fixed (Schnackenburg 1980b:265-9). By reading the FG, it is clearly asserted that 'in life decisions people choose their origin and origin is perceived on the basis of human action' (Painter 2005:241). The debate takes place between Jesus and the Jews in John 8.31ff, who claim to be sons of Abraham (v.33), even sons of God (v.41). However, Jesus does not buy into this status as they do not love Jesus and their willingness to kill him sufficiently demonstrates that they are allied with the devil.

The mark of sensitive difference between John and the Qumran is that in the latter there is no question of conversion of the 'children of darkness', who are to be

¹³⁰ In Brown's opinion (2003:140), to choose between light and darkness.

¹³¹ This would seem to be the reason why the Jews are portrayed as having the devil as their father (8.44). This finds explanation in their refusal to believe in Jesus as the revealer sent by God (cf. 5.40-44; 9.41; 12.43; 15.22f.). Charlesworth (1990) argues that Jesus' statement in 8.44 does not reflect a cosmological or ontological connection, but a practical and soteriological category.

judged by the 'prince of light' sent by God at the eschatological war (*1 QM* 17.6f.) The 'children of light' find safety in strict observance of the law and separation from the rest of the world (Schnackenburg 1980a:249). Moreover, while in John, it is the Logos who gives enlightenment, revelation, life and salvation, in the Qumran, it is God himself or the Torah. The idea of the heavenly envoy whose coming in the flesh is a historical event and who is himself the 'light of the world' is of Johannine and not of Qumran origin.

In closing this discussion, it is worth noting that in John the dualistic language that features Johannine conceptuality is as present in Qumran literature. However, the symbolism of light and truth differs from that of the Qumran. In Johannine thought, the centre is the persona of Jesus, whereas in Qumran thought the keystone of Qumran dualism is the Law (Zumstein 2003:358). Only ethical obedience to the Torah divides human beings into two camps, while John's dualism originates in Christology (Zumstein 2003:358). Belief in Jesus, the personal light that has come into the world, causes separation between human beings. Another difference between the Qumran and John is that, while in the former the prince of light and the spirit of Truth are titles for the same angelic being, in the latter the Light and the Spirit of truth are two distinct agents of salvation (Brown 2003:141). John's Jesus, as an agent of salvation, is identified not only as the light of the world (John 8.12), but also as the truth (John 14:6) and the idea is that the 'Spirit of truth', as another agent of salvation, has to remind his disciples of the words of Jesus and lead them into all truth (John 14.26; 16.13). Although in John the two realms contrast (that of 'above' and that of 'below'), the realm of 'below' is not locked in the judgment, but Jesus as the Son of man makes a link between heaven and earth (1.51). He connects earth and heaven, becoming the medium through which continuous communication between men and God is made possible (Vanderlip 1975:134). Despite John's typically dualistic language, it has often been interpreted as being close to the language of the Qumran movement.

Due to this, I can conclude that the idea of John having been a member of the Qumran community makes no sense. Light was used as a metaphor in the apocalyptic literature. Qumran and John share the same Jewish background. The use of such language would therefore rather bring John closer to the heterodox Judaism

than to the rabbinical pharisaic Judaism preponderant after 70 CE. Having excluded Qumran, one might ask whether the FE could possibly have been influenced by Gnostic language.

6.3.3 Gnosticism

We need to reconstruct John's background in order to gain a proper understanding of the Gospel and bring out the evangelist's message. Any examination of Gnosticism benefits from Bultmann's work (1971:8), in which the Gnostic view is outlined as follows:

In the primeval time a part of the light fell into the power of the darkness. In order to be able to maintain their hold on the light, the evil powers created the world and human bodies. They divided the imprisoned being of light into mere sparks of light, and banned these parts of life to the physical world. In order to redeem and bring home this lost creature of light, the good God of life sends the saving knowledge (Gnosis) into the world. By illuminating man as to his true origin and his true being, this knowledge bestows on him the power to return to the heavenly homeland after he puts off his body. In this connection, the figure of the redeemer is often met in the primeval time, to impart the knowledge. Under his world, men separate themselves into the children of light, who are from above, and the children of darkness, who do not bear any soul or light in themselves. After his completed work of redemption, the Redeemer ascends again and so makes way for the elements of light that follow him.

The Gnostic view of the world starts out from a strict *cosmic dualism*: life and death, truth and falsehood, salvation and ruin of human life are anchored in the cosmos. All Gnostic systems rest upon a metaphysical dualism. Their understanding of human life encompasses a sense of life's misery and futility. The human being is imprisoned in a material body, which is part of a material order of things (Dodd 1953:103). Dualism is seen in the reasoning that contrasts the material body with a higher order, entirely spiritual, which does not have any contact with matter.¹³² Gnosis was characterized by a rigorous dualism since it endeavoured to devalue all that was material and bodily, and ascribed to the idea that the primal state to which

¹³² The idea of both Basilides and Valentinus is that this material world, of which human beings are a part, is separated from a higher world above it, which is superior to it in all respects. Man is part of the lower forms of the world, but he at least has the desire to rise to a higher plane.

human beings had to return was immaterial and bodiless.

In that sense, the gnosis is an effort to re-evaluate this world as something to be rejected (Martin 1987:134), a place that is similar to a prison (Klauck 2000:432). In such an insecure world where ‘anxiety’ or ‘fear’ are ever-present, human beings strive to survive. The alternative they proposed was to seek spiritual knowledge by finding answers to certain fundamental questions.¹³³ That is why, by the end of the second century, Gnosticism had become a worldwide movement with an ‘elect’ membership who claimed to possess secret knowledge that was not available to the rest of the populace.

The Gnostics distinguished two modes of human existence: the ‘*pneumatikoi*’, those who possess knowledge, and the ‘*sarkikoi*’, who do not possess it. Their knowing has exclusive and soteriological significance (Klauck 2000:433); soteriological because the possession and acquisition of knowledge are salvific *per se* (this knowledge is all that is required for salvation, everything else is non-essential trimmings). It is exclusive because whoever possesses this knowledge is saved, while all who lack it are damned.

The claim to possess secret knowledge had a psychological appeal (Tripolitis 2002:141), providing to the Gnostics, so to speak, a sense of security in an insecure world, and a sense of superiority over the rest of the human beings that did not belong to their movement. In their endeavour to re-evaluate the world, the various Gnostic traditions understood themselves as seekers of a higher spiritual knowledge than that offered by the more worldly cults and philosophical teachings (Martin

¹³³ Those questions are: Who are we or where were we? Where do we come from? What have we become? Where are we going? What are we waiting for? Whither have we been thrown? What awaits us? Whither are we hastening? Whence have we been set free? What is birth, what is rebirth? Through these questions it is easy to understand that their concern is with the being of human persons, their origin and future, their expectations of life, subjectively and objectively considered (Klauck 2000:431). In this sense, the gnosis is to be understood as the knowledge that confers freedom, consisting in knowing the answer to these seven questions. In Tripolitis’s view (2002:141), Gnosticism did not provide adequate answers for the ordinary individual who was seeking solutions to the problems of human existence. Although the Gnostics attempted to offer solutions to the concerns of the time, they failed since they were too hostile to the world. They viewed it as the place of evil and suffering, and rejected it and its governance. They also rejected the human body as evil and negated the importance of human existence. Some Gnostics expressed their hostility to the world by advocating an austere and ascetic way of life and others by accepting an extreme antinomianism.

1987:140). They considered themselves, in terms of the Christian Gnostic gospel of Thomas, as 'seekers'. Believing that the present human condition is completely without hope, the Gnostics imagined another way to regain the lost primal state through gaining knowledge or insight 'into the true state of affairs and into the true essence of things' (Klauck 2000:432), or to return to the 'heavenly world of light' (Schnackenburg 1980a:148).

Discussions of the imagery of light can be found in the Hermetic,¹³⁴ Mandaean and other 'Gnostic' literature, all covered by the concept 'Gnosis'. The Johannine concept 'the Logos' has a parallel in the Hermetic cosmogony (I,5f.) in which the Holy Logos is thought to originate from the realm of light; light is identified with *Nous*, that is, the highest God (Schnackenburg 1980a:137). The term '*phôs*' is a symbolic expression for the absolute or eternally real. In the ancient religious world, 'light seems to be a natural symbol for deity' (Dodd 1953:201) as much as, for the naïve observer, the light of the sun is both the cause of life on earth and simultaneously the medium by which we become aware of phenomena. In a philosophical framework, for example, Plato used the sun as a symbol of the Idea of Good, identified with the supreme God (Dodd 1953:201).¹³⁵ In the Hellenistic religious world, in Philo's writings and in the Hermetica, light is commonly associated with life as a description of the real, or the divine. Philo regarded God as light and the archetype of all other kinds of light.¹³⁶ The conception of God as 'Light' is shared with the Mandaeans who constantly praised God, the 'Lord of Greatness' as the 'high King of Light' and the 'Great Life'.

God is 'the light in which there is no darkness, the living one in whom there is no death, the good one in whom there is no wickedness' (Ginza 6.26f.; cf. Schnackenburg 1980a:140). The portrayal of God as light is influenced by the Hellenistic world of Zoroastrianism and Oriental sun worship. There is also evidence of influence from Egypt, where light was the attribute of various gods. The world God inhabits is a world of brightness and light without darkness. The Mandaeans believed that the man's body belonged to the realm of darkness, and that man's soul,

¹³⁴ God is conceived in the Hermetic tradition not as a visible reality, but rather as the eternal reality of which visible light is the 'copy' (Dodd 1953:36).

¹³⁵ See the influence of Zoroastrianism, with its antithesis of light and darkness, the realms of Ahura-mazda and Angramainyu.

¹³⁶ Philo Dreams 1.75 (Ps 27.1), as quoted by Keener 2003:194.

in spite of the fact that it was sent down from the realm of light, was a prisoner in the body, tormented by the powers of evil. They imagined two ways for the soul to escape, either through the death of the body, or by being prepared through the Mandaean ritual, combined with the communication of a myth through the powers of light that had already overcome the powers of darkness (Dodd 1953:116-7). For the Mandaeans, the central part of the ritual was baptism¹³⁷ in running water, considered as the celestial water of life.

The contemporaneous exegesis focuses its debate upon the historico-religious rootedness of the FG in the Gnostic movement. Basically, the dualism and the Christological conception of the figure of the heavenly envoy favoured such a hypothesis. The main proponent is Bultmann (1971) who, for the first time, argues that the figure of the pre-existent Son who descended to reveal salvation among human beings plunged in darkness, then returned to the heavenly Father is nothing other than a critical reworking of the Gnostic Myth of the Redeemer. The idea that the FG is indebted to the Gnostic universe of thought is not easily addressed. Zumstein found three reasons (cf. 2004:359-60; *my own translation*) that render the question particularly difficult: (i) the definition of 'Gnostic influence' is, in itself, problematic. It is not enough to detect a concept or a representation in the Gospel that, at the last, will appear in the Gnostic systems in order to reach a conclusion about membership ties. Whether the concept or representation is not integrated into the whole Gnostic system, the judgement is misleading; (ii) the definition of the term 'Gnosis' is thorny *per se*. Is it a profiled comprehension of the existence that is real in the antique syncretism that traverses many systems of thought (Jonas, quoted by Zumstein 2004:359), or in the systems constituted by the documents accessible nowadays (Sévrin 1990:251-68). (iii) This brings one to the idea that the literary Gnostic documents available nowadays are dated to the second century, which means that they were written after the FG which was written towards the end of the first century. The term 'light,' despite its privileged usage in the FG, is not a recurrent concept in the rest of the NT.

¹³⁷ The person baptized wears a white robe which symbolizes the garments of light worn by celestial beings. Various other objects, particularly a crown and a staff, similarly symbolic, are employed also in the rite. In the act of baptizing, the priest lays his hand upon the baptized, and names divine names over him. When he emerges from the water he gives him his right hand, symbolizing his entry into the fellowship of the realm of light.

6.3.4 Light in the rest of the NT

The metaphor of light punctuates the NT passages [cf. Paul (1 Thess 5.4-5; Rm 13.12; Phil 2.15); Peter (1 Pet 2.9); James (Jas 1.17, 18); Heb 6.4)] and adopts an eschatological perspective as inaugurated in Jesus' resurrection event (cf. Bouttier 1991:225).

1 Thess 5.5, the first writing of the whole NT, warns the Thessalonians by alluding to the children of night or darkness as follows: πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας. Οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους. Οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους (for you are all children of light and children of day. We are not of the night or of darkness). Similarly, in Eph 5.8, the distinction is temporal; the past life of the Ephesians symbolically termed as 'darkness' and the present marked by the Lord's light ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ ὡς τέκνα φωτός περιπατεῖτε (but you were formerly darkness, now in the Lord you are light. Walk like children of light). Employed in the opposite view, the term 'light' stresses the today of the Ephesians. By setting verse 8 in its own context, one ought to read it in light of other references. The Ephesians, living in sin, were following this world and the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit at work among disobedient people, those who were by nature children of wrath (cf. 2.1-3), whose understanding was darkened and alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart (4.18). The darkness here symbolizes their earlier state of being lost (Roberts 1991:155), because of the lack of true knowledge of God. Moreover, light symbolizes enlightenment, deliverance, new life and a relationship to God that has been brought by the message of salvation (Roberts 1991:155). In the past, the Ephesians had not only been in darkness or in an evil environment, but were part of the realm of darkness, but now, through having obtained true knowledge of God, they belong to the realm of light (Ps 36.9), righteousness and holiness (Eph 4.24), and happiness (Ps 97.11; Isa 9.1-7; Hendriksen 1967:231). The symbolism of light should be understood from the perspective of the eschatological day that finds its starting-point in the Jesus event. Openness to the Jesus event and refusal to accept it separated people into two groups: they were either children of the day or children of darkness. John's treatment of light is not dealt with here since in the following chapter the term light must be analyzed as a Christological title.

6.3.5 Conclusion: the Light metaphor

This section is linked to a need to ascertain to what extent the assumption according to which John's language could be related to the Qumran and Gnostic language is reasonable. The metaphor 'Light', as employed in the OT, passing over the Qumran and Gnosticism, is nothing other than a religious concept that is shared by many religious traditions. It seems that the FE wrote against a certain background of ideas with which he assumed his readers were familiar. Indeed, the Christian church had been strongly influenced by the varied and cosmopolitan society with its Hellenistic world view. The common view held by John and the Hermetica stems from the fact that they represent a similar religious milieu and their usage of such terms as 'light', 'life' and 'word' show their dependence on the terminology resulting from the combination of Oriental speculation on Wisdom with Greek abstract thought (Brown 2003:132). Johannine thought is neither speculative nor abstract. Having recourse to the language common in Qumranic and Gnostic world views does not explain this influence. John had recourse to that language, in a strictly rhetorical sense, since he reworked it, as he used to do, from his own theological perspective. For instance, he wished to emphasize that access to God occurs not by a metaphysical knowledge, nor by direct super-sensuous vision of the absolute, nor by mystical ecstasy or 'enthusiasm', but rather by communion with God, or that 'dwelling in God is mediated by the historical manifestation of Jesus, the Logos' (Dodd 1953:201). It is in his person that the archetypal light was manifested. He is the Light in which human beings can see light and know the truth, for he is the ἀλήθεια revealed by God to the world.

The FE was not influenced either by Qumran or by Gnosticism, but what is valuable in all these traditions is that they shared the same religious background. Convincingly, the conception which strongly influenced the FG is the conception of the divine as 'Light and Life' as it stands in OT tradition. With regard to Burkett's groupings,¹³⁸ the usage of light in the Prologue finds his argumentative basis in the

¹³⁸ The ideas or motifs appearing in John have to be paralleled to the text of Genesis 1 (see Burkett 1991:162) as follows:

1. The light comes into the world (1.9; 3.19; 12.46; cf. 9.5).

Book of Genesis 1.3 where Jesus identifies himself as the primal light of the first day of creation. The application of this title to Jesus, as used in the section consecrated to Jesus' identity, underlines the truth that he is as worthy as the one who sent him and enabled him to perform the miracle of giving sight to a man born blind. This will be discussed in the next section, which will focus on miracles.

6.4 Miracles

Many definitions for miracles exist, but I will focus on only one, which is the definition formulated by Harold Remus (as quoted by Neyrey 1999:19). According to Remus, a miracle has three components: (i) an act that causes wonder; (ii) is extraordinary and inexplicable in terms of everyday causation, so that (iii) it is ascribed to a superhuman force or agency.

The cultural world shared by the Jews and Christians was dominated by the perception of gods or holy men who possessed supernatural capacities. Schüssler Fiorenza conceives Judaism and early Christianity as having used the miraculous deeds of their heroes (cf. 1976:1-20) to produce propagandistic literature to convince their audiences. According to her, 'Jews as well as Christians appealed to the Graeco-Roman world and used the means and methods of Hellenistic religious propaganda (...) painted the great figures of their religion as heroes and demi-gods, exhibited the miraculous, magic, and ecstatic powers of their religion' (Fiorenza 1976:2). Not only was Moses depicted as a divine miracle-worker, but also Jesus and the apostles, for example Paul in Acts 19.

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2. There is a separation of light from darkness (*krisis*, 'judgment', lit. 'separation'). Those who love the light come to the light, while those who love the darkness separate themselves from the light (3.19-21; 9.39).
 3. Whenever the Light is in the world it is day. Day is followed by night when the Light is no longer in the world (9.4-5; 11.9-10).
 4. The Light does the work of God during the day, when he is in the world. No work is done at night (9.4-5).

These motifs recall the creation account of Gen 1. They correspond to the following aspects of that account:

1. When God says, 'Let there be light', light appears in a previously dark world (1.3).
2. God separates the light from the darkness (1.4).
3. Whenever the light is shining, it is day. Day is followed by night, when there is no longer light (1.5). The work of God is done during the day; no work is done at night.

In the Gospel of John, right at the beginning of Chapter 9, Jesus' activity is depicted as a thaumaturgy. He 'spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means 'sent'). Then he went and washed and came back able to see' (vv.6-7). Although the miracle of the giving of sight is briefly encountered, it is a miracle of an extraordinary nature since there is no record anywhere else in either the OT or the NT of the healing of a person born blind. That is why it has to be linked to the OT, the cultural-religious milieu of the Graeco-Roman world, where miracle-workers were so prominent, and to the Synoptic tradition that tells of the healing of blind men. To understand the miracles one needs to understand the backgrounds against which they took place. It is advisable to start with the Graeco-Roman world and end with the NT through to the OT.

6.4.1 Miracle-workers or Graeco-Roman healers

In the Graeco-Roman world, miracles were attributed to the gods and holy men. Among the healing gods, three names have to be cited (cf. Wendy Cotter 1999:11-2). The first is the famous Hercules, because of his compassion for the human condition; remembering its pains and troubles. The second is the Egyptian goddess Isis, one of the foreign deities, worshipped for her beneficence toward humanity and approached for healings (cf. Tripolitis 2002:26-32; Klauck 2000.132f.) As the Hellenistic age progressed, there was an increased tendency to experience the gods as beings withdrawn and distant, with the result that divine beings were described in abstract terms: no longer 'gods', but the 'divine'. The personified abstract forces, such as Fate, Fortune, Health and Peace came to be venerated (cf. Van den Heever 2001:27). People thought that in order to face the antipathetic or ambiguous forces of nature personified by Tyche, or Fortuna, salvation had to be found in the sympathetic forces needed to challenge them. In the fictive world of Apuleius, only Isis, the feminine saviour, was able to offer an alternative to Tyche/Fortuna,¹³⁹ the capricious feminine deity.¹⁴⁰ It is here that the terrestrial

¹³⁹ According to Martin (1987:36), folk or traditional piety consisted of those everyday practices which maintained domestic and social order – offering to Hestia, the guardian of the house or Goddess of the Earth, a little food and wine, for instance. Such traditional

feminine principle, restructured as the soteriological 'Queen of Heaven', Isis, is victorious over 'cruel fortune'. Isis, as the saviour goddess, was able to effect a transformation of existence by offering a religious alternative to a dangerous and chaotic world (Martin 1987:25). The Isis cult was famous throughout the Mediterranean. Unlike the gods in the Olympian system, she is not subject to the Fates, according to Wendy Cotter. While she could foretell the future of her devotees, in a broad sense, Isis, as queen of the universe and goddess of cosmic good in every form, played the role of a healer (1999:30). In Antiquity, because of the desire for bodily health and comfort, on the one hand there was Asclepius who, among a number of older heroes and gods of healing, emerged as the dominant figure that formed the centre of human hopes for healing (Klauck 2000:155-60). On the other hand there were holy men¹⁴¹ like Apollonius of Tyana.¹⁴² Alongside him were other miracle-workers or healers, like the Jewish Honi, the rainmaker or the Circle-Drawer, and Hanina ben Dosa.¹⁴³ The story of Honi is part of the tradition that

practices associated with the piety of family and field assumed a localized order of things that oriented and structured a secure existence. The Mother Goddess, who personified agrarian piety, presided over both life and death, plenty and famine, success and failure, and so became known as Tyche or Chance.

¹⁴⁰ The sovereignty of Tyche/Fortuna was characterized by antithetical feminine personifications and attributes, and was ordered by a process of transformation in which only the sympathetic aspect of this feminine structure could overcome the ambiguous or antipathetic aspect of the same feminine structure. This mythic-cosmological dynamic of antipathetic/sympathetic feminine ambiguity gave structure to religious formation throughout the Hellenistic period, and directed its syncretistic dynamic (Martin 1987:22-23).

¹⁴¹ In this study, the term holy man is used in an interchangeable manner with such terms as divine man, magician or miracle worker. All these terms refer to the same type of religious entrepreneur, 'people who functioned without fixed office in mediating divine power directly to people' (Smith 1977 quoted by Craffert 1999:128).

¹⁴² Apollonius was a Neopythagorean philosopher, and while this narrative recounts his philosophical expositions and exploits as a traveling sage, he is also portrayed as a holy man, cult reformer and miracle-worker. Van den Heever & Scheffler (2001:32) find the combination of philosopher and healer-cum-miracle worker of particular interest. The emergent Christian tradition casts Jesus in a similar light, namely as a teacher who is also a miracle-worker and a healer. As one moves forward into the world of second and third century Christian literature, especially the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, the literature brims with portrayals of the apostles as holy men who work miracles.

¹⁴³ Hanina ben Dosa, another Jewish miracle worker, lived, like Jesus of Nazareth, in the first century CE, prior to the destruction of the Temple in a small Galilean village in the district of Sepphoris (Craffert 1999:134). He was renowned for his ability to heal from a distance. His name appears in the Mishnah as an example of holy men of great piety who spent a long time directing their hearts to God before prayer. One of the stories tells of the son of Gamaliel, who was ill with a mortal fever. Two servants were sent to Hanina, who then retired to his upper room to pray. He returned to say that the fever had departed. Back at

prophets like Elijah and Elisha had the power to exert their will upon natural phenomena, which led to traditional liturgical prayers and sacrifices for rain (cf. Craffert 1999:32). These figures were regarded as holy, but more especially:

... divine or deified men and their many varieties lay the Greek notion of the gods as being like men, possessing the human virtues to a higher degree, and possessing also gifts that men wanted, above all immortality and eternal youth. Hence it was natural and common to describe as 'divine' any man who excelled in any desirable capacity – beauty, strength, wisdom, prestige, song, fame, skill in speaking, or success in love (Smith, as quoted by Craffert 1999:128).

Holy or divine men were therefore thought able to mediate with the divine world, for divine power was directly available to men through personal miracle, ritual or word, as opposed to such indirect means as communal rituals or sacrifice (Craffert 1999:129).

Although Apollonius of Tyana, a well-attested historical figure, was thought to be a θεῖος ἀνὴρ (divine man) – an expression applied especially to those who transcend the general human measure or who have a particular charismatic gift (Klauck 2000:176) – he is credited with only two miracles.¹⁴⁴ While in the Hellenistic world divine men were considered as ligaments connecting the divine and the human world (Van den Heever & Scheffler 2001:30), the difference between Apollonius of Tyana and the Johannine Jesus is that in the FG Jesus is not portrayed as an exorcist, and no accounts of healings performed by Apollonius are encountered.

6.4.2 Miracles in the OT

This study does not claim to fully dissect the understanding of the miracles throughout the OT. Three decades ago Sabourin (1971:246) described three types of miracles, namely those directly connected with salvation history, authenticating or

home it was confirmed that the fever had left at exactly that moment. Besides miracles such as these, Hanina was also credited with bringing forth rain in a period of drought and with multiplying food.

¹⁴⁴ One is the exorcism by commanding the demon who left through the overturning of the statue, and the other the raising of a young girl who died just as she is about to marry while the weeping bridegroom was following the bier (see See *Vit. Ap.* 4.20 & *Vit. Ap.* 4.45, *Ibid.*, 172-4)..

legitimizing miracles, and the private miracles of Elijah and Elisha. The first types of miracles are those worked by God in favour of Israel in order to strengthen its faith and guide its destiny. In spite of the mediation of Moses and Aaron, as later wonder-workers, Yahweh's activity remains implied. Worked out in the formative period of Israel's history, the signs and wonders were performed by the God of the Covenant to form a people for himself (Deut 4.34; Jr 32.17, 21) so that Israel could learn to live in faith by remembering the glorious deeds of the past (Sabourin 1971:246-7). The second type of miracle gives legitimacy to the mission of such figures as Moses in the book of Exodus (cf. 4.1-9; 7.8ff).

In the Jewish world, miracle and prophecy are closely tied together; God enabled Moses to perform signs to testify to his prophetic mission before the Egyptians and to expose their magicians (Kolenkow 1980:1482-3). In that perspective, the miracles were performed to grant legitimacy to the miracle-worker as God's spokesman. Moses' vocation to lead Israel out of Egypt was confirmed by the presence of God at his side: 'I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you' (Ex 3.11). God's promise, 'So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it' (v.20) seems, in the light of the unfolding of the narrative, to show that the miracles played two important roles. On the one hand, they revealed Pharaoh's unbelief (cf. 7.14-11.10), evident from his refusal to let the Israelites go, until the last plague, which caused the death of all firstborns, from the firstborn of Pharaoh seated on his throne right down to the firstborn of the prisoner in the dungeon (see 12.29-32). Although Pharaoh was compelled to agree to let Moses, Aaron and their relatives leave, he surprisingly changed his mind and pursued the Israelites (14.1ff); what consecrated their judgment and Israel's salvation from there on will be commemorated. This leads to the second role of the miracles, which was to show the great works of God to lead people to believe not only in God, but also in his servant Moses (14.30-1).

The third type of miracles includes those attributed to Elijah and Elisha and characterized by Sabourin as 'private miracles'. This terminology does not make sense, even if it is based on a series of miracles that occurred against the backdrop of the first two types. Instead of underestimating Elijah and Elisha's miracles as

Sabourin did, except for the two mentioned above, it would be better to see Elijah and Elisha as itinerant miracle workers. As Blenkinsopp puts it (1999:59):

Elisha simply repeats the act of Elijah (2:8) on the way back from the ‘translation’ of the master on the east bank, and does so in the same way, by means of the prophetic mantle. It also stands outside the series since it serves to legitimate the prophetic succession of Elisha vis-à-vis the ‘sons of the prophets’ – an important but exceptional function of the miracle.

Both are reported to be mighty prophets, taking into account the well-known Elijah-Elisha cycle 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 8.¹⁴⁵ According to Neyrey, ‘healers such as Elijah, Elisha, [...] enjoy ascribed honor; they are brokers¹⁴⁶ of God-Patron, who designates them as prophets mighty in word and deed, which ascription needs be acknowledged by the people’. These two prophets,¹⁴⁷ whose ministries seem to be interrelated, are the champions of Yahweh to their epoch and have to be perceived as speaking out for him. Most of their miracles are performed as a confirmation of this dignity. Unfortunately, no miracles of healing the blind are attributed to them in the OT.

Despite the absence of miracles involving the giving sight to the blind in the OT, Isaiah prophesied the restoration of sight as being evidence of the fulfillment of the messianic expectation (29.18; 35.5; 42.7), and this fulfillment is acknowledged in the Gospels (Mt 11.5 par. to Lk 7.22 par. to Lk 4.18). Although Isaiah 61.1-2 does not indicate the prophecy of the restoration of sight, Luke, reworking the passage to which he refers, replaces ‘to bind up the brokenhearted’ (v.61a) by ‘recovery of sight to the blind’ (4.18b). All these OT instances demonstrate how clarity of vision is one of the characteristics of the Messianic age, sight being understood, so to speak, as the possession of knowledge of God (Hoskyns 1947:350). Such an understanding of the

¹⁴⁵ In the light of 1 Kings 18.1-39 and 2 Kings 5 where, on the one hand, Elijah’s triumph over the priests of Baal ends up in the acknowledgement of the Lord indeed being God (v.39) and, on the other hand the healing of Naaman, the Syrian commander is intentionally made aware of the presence in Israel of a prophet, namely Elisha, in accordance with 5.8b, but above all, the healed man confesses: ‘Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel’ (5.15b).

¹⁴⁶ The terms ‘honour’ and ‘brokers’ will be dealt with in the next chapter of this study.

¹⁴⁷ The interesting debate that placed them within the Deutonomistic history during or after the exile, attributes to them the status of ‘saints’, ‘local heroes’ or ‘holy persons’ (Doorly 1997:107-8), but later they were referred to as prophets. This debate does not concern the current study.

recovery of sight seems to have strongly influenced the writers of the Gospels, especially Mark and John, in their own constructs of the narrative. As recounted in Mark, the miracle of healing does not hold physical significance. In John 9, the account of the miracle depicts the Pharisees as the ones who are really blind. They remain blind while the blind man who has been given sight also experiences spiritual illumination. The physical healing is symbolically interpreted for him and all who believe and follow Jesus.

6.4.3 Miracles in the Synoptic tradition and John 9.6-7: similarity or dissimilarity?

6.4.3.1 Semantic relations « b » miracle

6.1 ταῦτα εἰπὼν ἔπτυσεν χαμαὶ

6.2 καὶ ἐποίησεν πηλὸν ἐκ τοῦ πτύσματος

6.3 καὶ ἐπέχρισεν αὐτοῦ τὸν πηλὸν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς

7.1 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ὑπαγε νίψαι εἰς τὴν κολυμβήθραν τοῦ Σιλωάμ
(ὃ ἐρμηνεύεται ἁπεσταλμένος).

7.2 ἀπῆλθεν οὖν

7.3 καὶ ἐνίψατο

7.4 καὶ ἦλθεν βλέπων.

These verses describe how Jesus went about performing this miracle. In vv.6.1-6.3 Jesus is placed in the centre of the action, and in v.7.1 he instructs the blind man to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. The miracle happens. The blind man obeys and receives sight.

The healing of the blind man should not be conceived as John's trademark. The healing of blindness was not unheard-of in the Synoptic tradition.¹⁴⁸ Although there are accounts of blind people being healed throughout the Synoptic tradition,

¹⁴⁸ In Mk 10.46-52, parallel to Lk 18.35-43, the blind is unnamed. In Mt 20.29-34 the evangelist lists two unnamed blind men. In both first passages, Jesus heals by using his word. In Matthew, two blind men are healed (Mt 9.27-31), but this story seems to duplicate the preceding one. It is told that Jesus touched the men's eyes. Another story is that of a demoniac in Galilee who was blind and mute (Mt 12.22-3 parallel to Lk 11.14-5) who is healed when Jesus powerfully casts out the demons.

Bultmann does not agree with the idea that the Synoptic tradition is determinative in the reconstruction of stories in the FG in these terms:

There is no strict literary dependence of the healing of the blind man in Jn. 9 upon the stories in Mk. 8.22-26; 10.46-52, for the Johannine account produces its own independent variant of the motif in those stories. Stylistically the greatest difference between the Synoptic and the Johannine stories lies in the fullness of the discussion which follows the miracle in the Johannine account. It is a sign of the advanced stage of development of the story that Jesus himself seizes the initiative in performing the miracle, so that the miracle becomes a demonstration of his power; this is particularly underlined by the Evangelist's own verses 4f. Consequently the mention of the sick man's $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ is omitted, as in 5.6ff (Bultmann 1971:330).

The peculiar significance granted to the healing of the blind man is paralleled in the Gospel of Mark 8.22-23¹⁴⁹ and John 9.6-7,¹⁵⁰ in order to clarify that 'in the Gospels, miracles of the healing of the blind man seem never to be recorded merely as acts of physical healing, but as actions that reveal the Messiahship of Jesus and the illumination of those who believe in him and follow him' (Hoskyns 1947:350).¹⁵¹ The use of spittle in both stories enables one to identify the Markan account as the source of John's use of this motif (Painter 1991:265). However, other aspects of John's story demonstrate how the tradition has undergone a more extensive literary development than that of the Synoptic tradition in the light of the distinctive features of the miraculous nature of the healing in John: (i) the healing that takes place is of a man blind 'from birth' (9.1) is a healing of an incredible nature (9.32). The development may be seen in the Hellenistic terminology 'blind from birth', rather than a Semitic one, 'blind from the mother's womb' (Brown 1971:371; Bultmann 1971:330 note 6.). (ii) The emphasis is placed on Jesus taking the initiative to heal the man, not acting in response to a demand by the man or his relatives; (iii) the account is appropriately extended by John to bring home the reality

¹⁴⁹ 'They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?"'

¹⁵⁰ 'When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.'

¹⁵¹ Mark's accounts of the healing of the deaf-mute (Mark 7.31-37) and of the blind man (8.22-25) was intended as a midrashic recreation of the vision of Isaiah 29-30 according to which God would do 'marvelous things with this people' – 'the deaf shall hear and the blind shall see' and 'those who err in spirit will come to understanding' (Isaiah 29.18, 24a).

and the true nature of the miracle (Martyn 1979:4ff).

Even in Mark 7.33, viewed parallel to 8.23,¹⁵² the constant is that in both passages Jesus uses saliva to perform the cure. In Hellenism and Judaism, spittle¹⁵³ was regarded, like every other bodily secretion, as a vehicle for a supernatural power that could be either beneficial or harmful. It seems that supernaturalism, recognized in the spittle, leads to the belief that Jesus' saliva is charged with his holiness and destroys the demonic force that binds the tongue of the mute in Mark 7.33-37. By using spittle to heal the blind man in John 9.6, refers to the Vespasian tradition¹⁵⁴ that reports that spittle was used to heal blindness. John makes a significant reference to this tradition when he states that Jesus used saliva to mix the mud that he spread on the eyes of the man who had been born blind. In doing this, Jesus recalled God's creative act of Gen 2.7: 'The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.' Many commentators, including Bultmann, agree that in John 9 the giving of sight is

¹⁵² What is astonishing in both passages is that Jesus took the deaf man aside, in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and led him out of the village. This removal from the crowd, according to Lane (1974:285), was an important action in establishing communication with an individual who had learned to be passive in society, better in order to establish a personal relationship to him. In Mark 8.22-26, Jesus seems to have failed to restore the sight of the blind man by firstly performing the healing by spitting in the man's eyes and secondly laying his hands on him, since, after Jesus has laid his hands on him, then the man, who could see people like trees began to see clearly. This demonstrates that the man was not born blind for he conserved in the imagination certain images to which he could refer (Lagrange 1911:202). The so-called failure of Jesus could be 'understood in a parabolic sense' (Painter 1997:123), when inserted in the writer's rhetoric. This story intended to relate the gradual restoration of sight of the blind man alluding to the progressive understanding of Jesus' disciples. Those who do not understand who Jesus is (Mark 4.41) because their hearts are hardened (6.52; 8.17), are represented by Peter, to whom the following text refers (Mark 8.27-30) and who already possesses insight into Jesus's identity, even if Jesus appeals to him to move away from popular opinions on him (v. v.27-28) to the truth that has not been revealed to him yet, that Jesus is the Christ (v. 29). However, in the unfolding of the story, in Mark 8.31-38, Peter's insight had to be deepened or (in Painter's words (1997:125)) 'enriched by a new perception of Jesus as Son of Man.'

¹⁵³ Spittle or saliva was extremely popular as a folk remedy in antiquity and was even highly regarded by 'professional' physicians. The spittle of famous or charismatic personalities was especially prized; Tacitus (*Histories* 4.81) and Suetonius (*Vespasian* 7) tell a story about a blind man who begged the Emperor Vespasian to heal him with his spittle. The idea of its medicinal effectiveness was widespread among Jews, for Hanina sends people in need to his son, 'for he is the first-born, and his saliva heals.' However, rabbis opposed the use of spittle because of its magical associations. The belief surrounding the curative power of spittle was widespread even if it was granted a destructive capacity (see Marcus 1999:473). See also Keener 2003a:780, notes 49-52.

¹⁵⁴ Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81; Suetonius *Vesp.* 7.

prepared and indicated to be the work of God performed by Jesus, the Light of the world.

Scholars have attempted to explain the persistent differences between the story of the healing of the blind as recounted by Mark and John in different ways. One group of scholars explain that the genre has seemingly been borrowed from the Hellenistic world, which used to mediate the presence of outsiders as witnesses. Such a literary genre would recount the healing miracles under four movements: (1) the introduction indicating how Jesus encounters the sick; (2) the intervention of outsiders, either the crowds or the disciples, in order to attract Jesus' attention to the sick or sickness; (3) healing by means of a gesture or words; (4) confirmation of the healing by an action of the man healed or the acclamation of the crowds (Devilliers 2002:401; cf also Martyn 2003:35-6).¹⁵⁵ Devilliers applies these different elements of the classical unfolding of a healing miracle to John 9, especially vv1, 6 and 7. The plausibility of this argument is to be found (i) in v1 as the introduction, and (ii) in v2, where the disciples attract Jesus' attention to the desperate plight of the man.¹⁵⁶ The third important factor of the healing is found in Jesus' gesture when he uses saliva to mix mud to spread on the man's eyes. Note that the fourth level of confirmation proposed by Devilliers is quite absent within the story since Jesus' act of healing is not approved either by the neighbours and acquaintances of the man, much less by the Pharisees or the Jews. Verses 8-9 do not deal with the confirmation of healing as it is in the Synoptic tradition and this raises a strong debate that questions the veracity of the miracle in connection with the origin of the healer. These verses

¹⁵⁵ Martyn established a similarity with stories in the Synoptic Gospels and even in other Hellenistic literature. He points out three elements that are very often found in the miracle story form: (1) the description of the sickness, often emphasizing its serious nature (see Mk 2.3); (2) the sick person is healed (see Mk 2.11); the miracle is confirmed either by the healed person who demonstrates his health (see Mk 2.12a) and/or by the crowds testifying to the miracle's reality (see Mk 2.12b). This author, using the literary form of John 9, considers v.1 to be a description of the hopeless malady and vv.6-7 as the healing itself with a statement of means and result. We will discuss the third factor in the confirmation of the healing of the man born blind, which Martyn found more difficult to explain in the section of vv.1-7. See also Dodd 1963:181-8.

¹⁵⁶ To the disciples' question, Jesus' reply attributes another meaning to the blindness (cf. v3-5). Devilliers proposes to delete all these verses in the new construction of the story and to leave aside v6 which, in his opinion, deals with the gesture of healing and must be taken as the third level of movement. Note that the fourth level proposed by Devilliers is quite absent within the story since Jesus's act of healing is not approved either by the neighbours and acquaintances of the man, or by the Pharisees and the Jews.

introduce essential characters who were not previously mentioned in the story. According to Martyn (2003:36), ‘the man’s neighbors somehow confirm the miracle may have been the third element in an earlier form of this story. In the present form of the text, however, the neighbors are employed as actors who come onstage only in a separate scene, and who introduce, therefore, what we should probably term a dramatic expansion of the original miracle story (vv.8-41)’. Devillier’s argument falls into disuse owing to its inappropriateness to the miracle story of John 9.

Even if Mark and John did not belong to the same theological school, it is obvious that both stories are based on a theological concern, inasmuch as the writers’ intention to show, through the healing of the blind man, not only Jesus’ messianic act, but also that, by way of that public act that he intended to reveal himself as the Son of Man and to illuminate the disciples’ belief. Moreover, the story of the healing of the blind man in John 9 uncovers another form of physical blindness to show how far the FE reworked the well-known synoptic tradition to solve the enigma of discipleship in the harsh environment of the struggles between Judaism and Christianity towards the end of the first century.

6.5 Conclusion: Socio-cultural intertexture

This chapter is intended to examine how the terms (disciple, light, miracles) that occur in Chapter 9 echo the phenomena outside the text. After a brief definition of the term μαθητής, we tried to determine how it is applied in the OT, and by philosophical schools and Synoptic tradition. In OT tradition, the awareness of being committed to God himself did not allow for any other commitment to any prophet, including Moses. In the philosophic schools, the way the ancient pupils felt free to develop and modify the teachings of their masters demonstrates that they knew that they followed not a teaching, but a person. In the synoptic tradition, all the evangelists agree that a disciple follows a person and not a teaching or philosophy. From Mark to Luke through Matthew, the perceptible evolution is that to be a disciple is a matter of much self-sacrifice, in other words sacrifice that breaks down any encumbering of our conventional connections, be they human or material.

After scanning the first part of the FG, the disciples are sketched into a twofold perspective. The foundation passage of John 1.35-51 mentions Andrew,

Peter, Philip and Nathanael, who participate in the foundational work of winning more disciples through their witness. The nameless disciples that are mentioned in Chapters 4, 6 and 9 show a lack of understanding of Jesus' mission (Chapter 4) or teaching (Chapters 6 and 9). The unexpected crisis of defection of the disciples in 6.60-6 aids the reconstruction of the FE's portrayal of the disciple in the first division of the gospel. It is clear that these figures are not ideal disciples. Dealing with the issue of discipleship in Chapter 9 (as also in Chapter 6), it appears that being a disciple has nothing to do with enthusiasm or zeal. The mark of a true disciple is that he remains faithful to Jesus' teaching and revelation. The disciple, as the blind man demonstrates, has to show firm commitment and a strong and courageous determination to keep on following Jesus, even in an environment where believing in him brings conflict and possible persecution. With regard to discipleship, Mark, Matthew, Luke and John belong to (or share) the same tradition. Even though John recounts Jesus' story (the life, teaching, death, and resurrection) in a radically different fashion, he does not betray the roots of the original Christian tradition (Moloney 2005:131). Between the synoptic tradition and John lies a phenomenon of 'hypertextuality' in which the relation between two texts demonstrates that the hypotext (the source) is not merely taken up, but is used in a modified way or distanced manner (I borrowed the expression from Zumstein (2007:97, referring to Genette 1982).

Dealing with the metaphor of 'Light' we discover that the evangelist's language was not subjected to the Qumranic and Gnostic influences that share the same religious background. The gospel language was rather influenced by the conception of the divine as 'Light and life' as it stands in the OT tradition. At the end, while the miracle-workers were so prominent in the Graeco-Roman context, the clarity of vision that Mark and John share with the OT concern is one of the characteristics of the Messianic age, where sight is understood as the possession of knowledge of God. It is that symbolic meaning that makes the miracle of the gift of sight in Chapter 9 a miracle of an extraordinary nature since it helps us to understand what the concept of the disciple signifies and implies.

7 Social and cultural texture of John 9

7.1 Introduction

A meaningful and proper interpretation of John 9 cannot be attained unless the social and cultural context evoked by the text is taken seriously. The FG is embedded in the first-century Mediterranean world view, and so the process of interpretation must account for the social and cultural nature of *the text as a text*. In this section, we are not concerned with the historical nature of the social and cultural issues, but rather with how the text is immersed in the culture it evokes. Since a text *constructs* a social and cultural world which it exhibits to the reader, the investigation of the social and cultural texture of a text includes the exploration of the social and cultural ‘location’ of the language, and the type of social and cultural world evoked and created by the language. Robbins investigates the language of the epistle of James in order to evaluate how Early Christianity, towards the end of 1st century, exhibited the process of making Christian culture. According to him, the language of the epistle is very characteristic of traditional Jewish discourse during the Hellenistic period (Robbins 1996c:349). Abraham is taken as a paradigmatic figure who, called by God to leave home, going out into the world, successfully endured the tests that arose on the journey of faith. The epistle of James is understood as the particular version of the venture of faith as well as a Messianite discourse. James strives to maintain a Messianite community as part of Abraham’s venture of faith (Robbins 1996c:343-349). Since the major activities in the venture of faith are periods of testing in many ways. The epistle evokes two different worlds, the world of his addressees, the so-called Messianite community (those who love God are warned not turn away from him) and the dangerous world of those who love the world who are depicted as ‘friends of the world’ (James 4.4). One notes that the language is never innocent. It evokes the social and cultural context to which it belongs. We will try to understand how John 9 evokes two worlds.

Robbins (1996a:71ff) recommends three descriptive tools to use when dealing with the social and cultural texture of a text. In order to look at how social or cultural categories are reflected in John 9, though not present in it, the following tools will be employed: (i) specific social topics; (ii) common social and cultural

topics; and (iii) final cultural categories.

7.2 Specific social topics

Specific social topics reflected in the text reveal the religious responses to the world and its discourse (Robbins 1996a:71). Certain questions are posed which characterize that world, and which show what needs to be done to live in it or to change it. The healing of the blind man is a drama that serves to characterize the world from which the gospel originated and deals with how the church thought one should live in that world in order to avoid evil practices. Some of the seven possible taxonomies (conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, Gnostic-manipulationist, thaumartigical, reformist and utopian) will undoubtedly characterize that world. We do not intend to outline the extent to which these taxonomies describe John 9, but aim to discover how the text demonstrates two different worlds, each with its own world view, and how they challenge each other.

The two different worlds evoked by John 9 are that of the Jews, on the one side, and on the other hand Christianity. Surprisingly, the Jewish world is dominated by two sets of characters, the Pharisees and the Jews, so prominent in the synagogue towards the end of the first century. Meanwhile, the Christian world is represented by the blind man. They are all, as reflected by John 9, depicted in a struggle over their respective utopian views. The reconstruction of the social and cultural world cannot be achieved by using the text itself, but by striving to understand why the new belief of Christianity was perceived as a threat to the Jews to such an extent that it was decided to exclude from the synagogue anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah. To be ἀποσυνάγωγος was a social trauma that reflected the church's conviction that Jesus was the Son of Man, was Lord, which led to the choice to worship him. The issue at stake between Jews and Christians seems to be a 'conflict of utopias'. Before reconstructing the social and cultural world reflected by John 9, we will look at how the phenomenon of groups is characterized by the text's references to the Pharisees and Jews.

7.3 The 'Jews' in the FG and the Jewish-Christian dichotomy

This section deals with the concept of 'the Jews' as a prominent concept in the conflict between Christianity and Judaism, and with the dichotomy experienced by both the Jews and the Christians.

7.3.1 Semantic relations 'c': the concept 'the Jews'

- 18.1 Οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι περὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι
ἦν τυφλὸς καὶ ἀνέβλεψεν ἕως ὅτου ἐφώνησαν
τοὺς γονεῖς αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀναβλέψαντος
- 19 καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτοὺς λέγοντες, Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς ὑμῶν,
ὃν ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι τυφλὸς ἐγεννήθη; πῶς οὖν βλέπει ἄρτι;
- 22.1 ταῦτα εἶπαν οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἐφοβοῦντο τοὺς Ἰουδαίους·
ἦδη γὰρ συνετέθειντο οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι
ἵνα ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ Χριστόν, ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται.

In vv.13-17 the Pharisees are the investigators. In vv.18-19 and 22 a shift is operated from the Pharisees to the 'Jews', who are depicted as unbelievers. Here, for the first time, the verb πιστεύειν is, applied to them in its negative form, hinting at their conscious incredulity. In their efforts to find a way to avoid the reality of the miracle, they questioned the parents of the man born blind who was healed by Jesus. The Gospel describes the fear experienced by the man's parents, who were fully aware of the steps that had already been taken to ban believers from the synagogue (9.22). Like some of the people in the crowd and Joseph of Arimathea, who believe, the parents are secret believers who refrain from public confession 'for fear of the Jews' (7.13; 19.38). In order to keep retain their membership of the synagogue they avoid affronting the opposition. According to v.22.1, the 'Jews', mentioned twice, had already decide that those who confessed Jesus to be Christ would be put out the synagogue. From this one can clearly see how the reality of unbelief (v.18.1) determines the radical, legally established official policy (v.22.1).

The term 'Jew' is used frequently in the Book of Signs (2-12), but does not occur in the Prologue (1.1-18), the Farewell discourse (14-17) and in the final

chapter (Chapter 21). If one considers the vocabulary of the evangelist's time and of Jesus' ministry (Brown 1978:41), it becomes evident that the particular use of the term in that part of the Gospel stems from 'the situation of the Evangelist and his community' (Tomson 2001:195). The term 'the Jews' calls for a detailed study of the FG (Von Wahlde's survey 1989:42 and Beutler 2001:229-34). Many scholars who referred to Von Wahlde's survey (see 1989:42), which synthesised all the studies up to 1982, found five references that provide evidence that the term 'the Jews' was used to designate the authorities.¹⁵⁷ In other words, the term, in the plural form, refers to the authorities in power, who were feared by other Jews at that time. These leaders, referred to in some instances as 'Pharisees', but elsewhere as 'Jews' (in John 9, for instance), were powerful and influential enough to exercise authority over other Jews, even Jewish authorities. These leaders would not confess their faith publicly for fear of being put out of the synagogue (7.48; 12.42). In order to sketch the role of the Pharisees as characters in the FG, and especially in the narrative of John 9, it is essential to study their relationship with 'the Jews'.¹⁵⁸ Since Tolmie and Robinson, among others, observe a switch from 'Pharisees' to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, 'Jews' in 9.18 clearly refers to exactly the same group of characters that are portrayed in 9.13-17 (Tolmie 2005:388; Robinson 1985:89). This reinforces the idea that the Jews are

¹⁵⁷ In fact, Von Wahlde brings out the following reasons as helpful to deal with the term 'Jews' in the FG: (1) the term 'Jews' is used interchangeably with other terms for the authorities within a single passage. In the section relating to the healing of the man born blind (9.1-41), the term 'Pharisees' (9.13, 15, 16) is replaced by 'Jews' (9.18, 22), after which the term 'Pharisees' is used again (9.40). Clearly, these two terms refer to the same group of authorities. (2) In John 11.45-52, the authorities are called 'Pharisees', while in John 18.12-14, the authorities are identified as 'Jews.' (3) A third argument is those who are Jews by ethnicity are said to 'fear the Jews' (John 7.13; 9.22; 20.19), and in John 5.15 we read that a man reported to 'the Jews' as the people in authority. (4) A fourth indication of the identity of the Jews in this context is found in the fact that they are able to pass a formal edict of excommunication against those who believe in Jesus (9.22). (5) A fifth indication of the identity of the Jews is evident in 7.15-20. The crowds of 7.20 are distinguished from the Jews, for the people in the crowd were not aware of the intention of the Jews to kill Jesus. See also Beutler (2001:230) who listed these listed instances (John 1.19; 2.18, 20; 5.10, 15f., 18; 7.1, 11, 13, 15, 35; 8.22, 31, 48, 52, 57; 9.18, 22 (twice); 10.24, 31, 33; 11.8; 13.33; 18.12, 14, 31, 36, 38; 19.7, 12, 14, 31, 38; 20.19) as this will provide a sound basis on which to conclude that one would be justified in assuming that Ἰουδαῖοι is used in the gospel to indicate 'the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem'.

¹⁵⁸ For an extensive study and a better understanding of this issue, consult J Beutler, HJ De Jonge, MC de Boer, RF Collins, PJ Tomson, A Reinhartz, in R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville (eds) [2001], *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel. Papers of the Leuven Colloquium*, 229-356.

generally ‘the authorities’, and are alternately referred to as ‘the Pharisees’ in John 9. From John 9.22, it may be deduced that the ‘Pharisees’¹⁵⁹ are religious leaders who exercise considerable authority in the synagogues. *De facto*, ‘Jews’ may be ‘Pharisees’, but they should not be confused with the common people, except in the case of John 6.41 and 52. Note that, despite the powerful influence of the Jewish authorities, that the fact that in 8.31 and 12.42 reference is made to a small group of the Jews who believed in Jesus and in 9.16-7 where a division takes place in the midst of the Pharisees, this is an indication that the group described as ‘the Jews’ was not monolithic. There is no consensus regarding Jesus’ identity, which is why, to close ranks, they agree that anyone who confesses Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue (9.22b).

Throughout the Gospel references to ‘the Jews’ should be regarded as referring to ‘the authorities’. Referring to John’s hostility towards ‘the Jews’, one could list passages that depict ‘the Jews’ as the perpetrators of hostile and murderous behaviour, not only towards Jesus, but also towards his followers (see 5.16, 18; 7.1; 8.31, 37-38, 44, 47; 9.22; 16.2-3; 18.36; 19.38; 20.19). In John 5.18, the evidence is clear. The Jews were seeking to kill Jesus because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but also making himself equal to God. In Chapter 8, even though in v.30 we read that ‘many believed in him’, the Jews’ general feeling is one of extreme antagonism (see Counet 2005:199, 207, 209; also De Jonge 2001:239; De Boer 2001:261). In Chapter 10, Jesus calls God his Father, which provokes a dramatic clash. To sum up, from the *literary context*, evidence of the murderous attitude of the ‘Jews’ is found in Chapters 5, 7, 8 and 10, within a context that deals with religious concerns. On the *theological plane*, in the light of Chapters 5, 8 and 10 Jesus equates himself to God, and this becomes the stumbling block that prevents them from accepting his teaching.

The conflict mentioned in the selected passages referred to above is exacerbated by the fact that Jesus is prepared to work on the Sabbath and by his claim that he is (or was) sent by God. That is why they persecute Jesus’ disciples (9.22; 19.38; 20.19) and might even kill them (16.2), and seek an opportunity to kill

¹⁵⁹ While in the Synoptic Gospels, the Pharisees are a group within Judaism, in John they sometimes seem to be identical with Judaism and its influential authorities (Charlesworth 1990:80).

Jesus (7.1; 8.37, 44). Unlike Martyn and many other exegetes who regard the excommunication of Christians from the synagogue as the historical starting point for the reconstruction of the origin of the Johannine community, there is another group of scholars who are of the opinion that ‘the Jews’ is a defamatory invention by the evangelist (De Boer 2001:262, 278-9), and that the event of the excommunication is a literary invention (De Jonge 2001:138-9). Henceforth, the ‘Jews’ of the FG do not represent historical figures of the first century, but rather ‘represent or symbolize the attitudes of (Jewish or other) Christians’.¹⁶⁰ It has been said elsewhere that the FE does not invent events and characters. To my mind, the FE, in order to construct his own understanding of faith, tries to develop the argument regarding the exact meaning and implication of ‘believing in Jesus’ towards the end of first century. The conflict between Christians and Jews helps the FE to complete his own mission.

Indeed, writing towards the end of the first century, the FE shows his genius in addressing the challenge of unbelief, and, significantly, he refers to ‘the Jews’, a term through which, on the whole, he brings together different groups considered by himself *and* by the community he represents to be unbelievers.¹⁶¹ Scholars have

¹⁶⁰ For the discussion, consult WA Meeks 1975, ‘Am I a Jew’: Johannine Christianity and Judaism, 183; BWJ de Ruyter, *De gemeente van de evangelist Johannes: Haar polemiek en haar geschiedenis* [Delft, 1998] and Chapter 6 by de Jonge, in which he criticizes Martyn’s overview on the issue of the Jews in John, according to which the formative version of John is a two-level drama testifying to a situation in which Johannine Jewish Christians were in conflict with Jews of the synagogue in the late first century. ‘The Jews’ of the narrative represent, in Martyn’s view, not Jewish or Gentile Jews, but a particular group of synagogue Jews in John’s own setting. De Boer (1996:55) argues that the ‘point of correspondence between the two levels, or stages, of the Johannine drama is to be located primarily in the pervasive and bitter conflict of Jesus with “the Jews”.’ In certain discrete passages (cf. 6.60ff.), the Gospel reflects a schism within the Johannine Christian community over the issue of Christology, as De Boer (1996:63-71) points out in Johannine Perspective, but this conflict plays a subordinate role in the Gospel drama as a whole. The Christian Jews mentioned or alluded to in John 8.30-31 and 12.42 belong to the primary setting in which the Gospel took shape, that is the conflict with ‘the Jews’ of the synagogue (see De Boer (2001:143).

¹⁶¹ Dealing with the development of the history of the Johannine community, at Stage 4, about 90 CE, Brown lists seven groups: first, *three groups of outsiders* constituted of those called ‘the world’ (see John 9.39; 12.31, 35-6); second, outsiders like the chief priests and scribes and the Pharisees at Yavneh who are protagonists of the exclusion from the synagogue; third, the followers of John the Baptist (3.2-26). The *other three groups of sympathizers* whose belief was inadequate constituted with secret believers in Jesus because they feared expulsion from the synagogue (9.28; 12.42-3). The second group of sympathizers consisted of members of Jesus’ movement whose faith was inadequate (6.60-6; 7.3-5; 8.31; 10.12). The last group consisted of believers in Christ, represented by Peter. Cfr Duling

made a distinction between the two groups. De Boer, for instance, elaborated on the interesting distinction between Jewish Christians and Christian Jews (De Boer 1996:182). According to him, the Jews of the period before 70 CE should be regarded as belonging to the first group, whereas those after 70 CE belonged to the second group. Yet in John 9, the two groups confront one another; the first group is represented by the blind man's parents, and the second by the blind man himself. It should be borne in mind that Johannine Jewish Christians (those who tried to remain within the synagogue) had been threatened with expulsion from the synagogue because of a somewhat double allegiance to Moses and Jesus, which the authorities conceived as real apostasy. Their expulsion from the synagogue was due to the high Christology of the Christian Jews.

The analysis made to illustrate the word 'Jew', as used in the Gospel of John, is ambivalent (Brodie 1993:151), or not consistently used (Kysar 1976:67). While on the one hand the author uses the Jews as 'symbols of unbelief', as resistant to and negative towards God's self-revelation through Jesus, the one he sent into the world, the FE, on the other hand, strives to integrate Jewish religious values to achieve a good understanding of Jesus' identity and mission. It is in that perspective that we will try to apprehend the Christian's dichotomy.

7.3.2 Scholarship's world view on the Jewish-Christian dichotomy

Any attempt to try to understand the particular use of the term 'the Jews' in the FG without dealing with Jewish-Christian dichotomy is likely to fail. The conflict between Judaism and Christianity, from which the blind man of Chapter 9 emerges as a paradigm for discipleship, is viewed by many scholars as a condemnation of Judaism. The FG itself is regarded as an anti-Semitic document. Dealing with discipleship in the FG is concerned more with the controversial issue of 'the Jews', from which this anti-Judaism is construed.

2003:414-5. Moreover, Martyn trying to solve the enigma hidden behind the evangelist's use of the term 'the Jews', thinks of four groups as 'referents' in the gospel: (1) 'Jews' within the synagogue who rejected the belief in Jesus; (2) 'Christian Jews' within the synagogue who secretly believed in Jesus; (3) other 'Jewish Christians' who had been expelled from the synagogue; and (4) the Johannine community of 'Jewish Christians', cf. Martyn 1978:149-75.

John 8.44 is, for example, often criticised for expressing anti-Jewish sentiments or attitudes since it portrays the ‘Jews’ as being children of the devil, who is a murderer and a liar (v.44). According to De Boer’s analysis (2001:265), this verse makes the FG anti-Jewish, but he concedes that it can be read in such a way only in ‘a very limited sense’, since the term ‘Jews’ is not always a hostile term (by referring to John 11.19, 31, 33, 36, 45; 12.9, 11) and since the ‘Jews’ of the narrative represent a certain limited group of Jews, the scriptural authorities in the synagogue (De Boer 2001:268-9).¹⁶² Hengel argues that the term is a ‘unique, idiosyncratic terminology’ (see 1989:119) expressing the polemic attitude of the FG towards Judaism (Brown 1966:lxix). The vivid polemic perceptible in the debate between the Johannine Jesus and the ‘Jews’ brings scholarship to conceive of the FE, through his writing, as being anti-Jewish. By taking a stand that the evangelist was led by anti-Jewish sentiments, one would run the risk of misreading the gospel. Even though the FE did indeed address the issue of Jewish unbelief polemically, there is no reason to attribute this to an anti-Jewish inclination (see De Jonge 2001:239). While De Jonge rightly notes that by glancing through John 5, 6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12 (for details, see 2001:244-58) one can see that the polemic in the gospel is not anti-Jewish, he maintains that John’s polemic does not reflect a dispute with traditional Jews, but

¹⁶² Two decades earlier Martyn had already asserted that the Jews should be seen as ‘an authoritative body within Judaism’ (1979:41) who reached a formal decision regarding messianic faith in Jesus. They agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue (John 9.22). This passage, along with John 19.38 and 20.19, are references used by scholarship (Reinhartz included) to assert that the οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι are Jewish leadership holding ‘the power to strike fear into the hearts of other Jews.’ (Reinhartz 2001:346). Reinhartz further considers the term ‘Jews’ as a polysemous concept that includes ethnic-geographical, political and religious elements to be applied to Jesus as the King of the Jews (ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων) and yet a man of Nazareth, hence a non-Judean. This gives one an idea of the Jewish nation in John 18. It is clear that his analysis contests any understanding of the term in a narrower and more limited sense. The FE uses the term almost as a technical title for religious authorities, particularly those who are hostile to Jesus (Brown 1978:lxix). The understanding of this technical term may be substantiated in three ways: (i) First, it is quite clear that in many instances the term ‘the Jews’ has nothing to do with ethnic, geographical, or religious differentiation. The proof is that the parents of the blind man, obviously Jews themselves, are said to fear ‘the Jews’ (see John 9.22). Only the Pharisees are investigators. (ii) Second, in some passages, the Gospel speaks interchangeably of ‘the Jews’ and of the chief priest and the Pharisees. In John 18.3, the chief priests and the Pharisees supply the police, while in 18.12 they are the police of ‘the Jews’. In 8.13 the interrogators are called Pharisees; while in 8.18ff they are called ‘the Jews’. Such an understanding is borne out by a comparison with the Synoptic Gospels. In John 18.28-31, ‘the Jews’ bring Jesus before Pilate, while in Mark 15.1 the Sanhedrin has this task.

rather a controversy between the evangelist and other contemporary first-century Christians or non-Johannine Christians who do not share John's high Christology (De Jonge 2001:242). Indeed, the groups of Christians that maintain low Christology are polemically addressed in the gospel, as will be demonstrated. These Christians make out an integral part of the 'the Jews', a monolithic and authoritative group feared by other Jews because of the threat of excommunication from the synagogue, according to John 9.22. The clarification in connection with 'the Jews' made by the gospel itself is undeniable.

The use of dualistic language throughout the FG (light/darkness, life/death, from above/from below, flesh/spirit, being from God/not being from God, believing/not believing, accepting/not accepting, doing good/doing evil, loving/hating, disciples of Jesus/disciples of Moses) shows the evangelist's willingness to assert that the FG implies the existence of two types of people (Reinhartz 2001:343). The first term of each pair constitutes those who, by accepting Jesus as God's son sent into the world, align themselves to light. The second term of each pair constructs a negative pole for those who, by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, align themselves to death (2001:343, 355). That is why, in the second part of the gospel, the 'Jews' are considered as belonging to 'the world'. They are part of that division of men who are in dualistic opposition to Jesus and refuse to come to him as the light.

The negative use of the term in the FG could be interpreted as indicating strong opposition to Judaism. Kysar states that the references to the Jews in the Fourth Gospel has had some tragic consequences as it has been used again and again as a basis for Christian anti-Semitism (1976:67). Fortna, quoted by Culpepper, denies that the FG to be in any way racially anti-Semitic and that the issue is strictly and solely religious (2001:64). What is novel and makes the issue of the 'Jews' very interesting is that the FG is the first document to draw a connection between 'the Jews' who condemned Jesus and the Jews known to the Christian community at a later time (Culpepper 2001:66). Such a connection makes the 'Jews' in the evangelist's time the spiritual descendants of those who condemned Jesus. This is therefore a transfer of hostility. Martyn asserts (1968/1979) that these two levels of meaning in the FG

create a dangerous potential for anti-Semitism. Are anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism essentially the same?

Hare and Flannery state that anti-Judaism must be understood on the theological plane; Christianity leads to a clean break with Judaism, or to the rejection of Judaism as a way to obtain salvation (see Culpepper 2001:66-7).

Whether anti-Judaism is a rejection of the Jewish people or not, it will be understood as anti-Semitism. However, Culpepper is convinced that the FG's anti-Jewish polemic is motivated by theological concerns and its anti-Judaism implicit in confessions of Jesus' divinity (see 2001:67, 69). To me this appears to be misleading, since in representative texts dealing with Christological issues (John 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10),¹⁶³ the exclusive monotheism in Jewish tradition is not rejected at all, but perceived anew. Jesus is not a concurrent God, but the emissary holding the same privilege or dignity of the one who sent him. Those scholars that characterize John's Gospel as 'the most Jewish of the four gospels', rather than emphasize the anti-Jewishness of the gospel,¹⁶⁴ are right. This is not only because it refers to Jewish festivals, or major Jewish heroes like Abraham, Jacob and Moses, but also because it is firmly rooted in the Jewish context. Dealing with Jewish time and space right at

¹⁶³ In John 5.19-29, the authority of the Son stems from his love relation with the Father who shows all that he himself is doing. So the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing. That is why he is enabled to raise the dead and give them life as the Father does at the point to execute judgment since he is the Son of Man. In John 7.10-18, while Jesus is viewed as illiterate yet holding an outstanding teaching, Jesus claims it coming from the one who sent him. For this reason, he is seeking not his own glory but the glory of he who sent him. From John 8.12-18, one learns from Jesus' self-revelation 'I am the Light of the world' leading to life. While his judgment is taken as invalid, Jesus shows his challengers that their judgment is by human standards, meanwhile he is from the Father who sent him and who testifies on his own behalf. In light of John 9, all the debate between the Pharisees (Jews) and the man born blind not only shows the remarkable progress of the healed man in the knowledge of Jesus' identity, but culminates in the self-revelation of Jesus as Son of Man (9.13-35). From John 10.22-36, the 'Jews' who show themselves as concerned to know whether Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus states that the works he does testifies to me. The conflict becomes vivid when Jesus states 'the Father and I are one.' The 'Jews' wanted to stone him for blasphemy, because Jesus though only a human being is making himself God – this accusation in 10.33 is the same in 5.17. Jesus replies that he is the Son of God who has sanctified and sent him into the world.

¹⁶⁴ It is not that Brown, Martyn and Smith, among others (see Charlesworth 1990:49), assert that the Gospel of John is, in many ways, the most Jewish of the Gospels. Its earliest tradition is related to the apostle John and the knowledge of Palestinian places, situations, and customs found in it. Most important is the improved understanding of 'the Jews'. The Jesus of John is portrayed as fighting the Jews, while in Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus is seen warning against the demons.

the beginning of the gospel (1.19-2.13), Collins (2001:282-3) pointedly notes that the phrase 'the Jews', as used in 2.6 and 2.13, does more than simply identify Jesus' story as a Jewish story. It helps the reader to gain a glimpse of the relationship between Jesus and Jewish space and time. By viewing the FG as anti-Jewish, without taking into account the positive perception of the Jewish time and space from which it originates, is misleading.

The Gospel originated in a context that was shaped by Judaism. Since the FE thinks in Jewish categories, it could be argued that the gospel is not only 'Jewish', but in fact 'pro-Jewish' (Culpepper 2001:68). However, to prefer 'pro-Jewishness' to 'Jewish' does not make sense as the FE does not take an apologetic stand regarding the position of the Jewish community that is so well integrated into Asia Minor. Living in close contact with pagan cults and shrines which might influence them, or, more likely, their children, the Jewish community, as aliens, remained loyal to their religion. The origin of the gospel is definitely 'Jewish', as demonstrated by the references to Jewish festivals (cf. 'the Passover of the Jews' in John 2.13-22; the 'festival of the Jews' in John 5; 'the Festival of Booths' in John 7.10ff; 'the Passover of the Jews' in John 11.55 and the mention of 'six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany' in 12.1; the Sabbath in John 5 and 9) and the heroes of Jewish religious imagery [Jacob (cf. implicit mention in John 1.51 and some explicit references in John 4.12), Moses in John 5, 6, 7 and 9) and Abraham in John 8.

The FE acknowledges that 'salvation is from the Jews' (John 4.22) and he recounts episodes such as those involving Nathanael, who is 'truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit' because he comes to and acknowledges Jesus as the 'Son of God' and 'the King of Israel' (1.49). However, he [Nathanael] is called for to the understanding of Jesus as the Son of Man upon whom the angels will ascend and descend (1.51). The token of the mighty figures in the history of Judaism, like Abraham, Jacob and Moses, shows to what extent the claims made on their behalf were excessive, since they were the forerunners of the revealer, Jesus, as we read in John 5.46 and 8.39. In John 4, the 'true worshippers' are not those who proudly worship God in Jerusalem or Gerizim, but those who worship in spirit and truth (4.20-24), in other words, those who acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, like the Samaritans to whom the Samaritan woman testified and who come to hear Jesus

themselves and acknowledge him as ‘truly the Savior of the world’ (v.42). Jesus is perceived as the bread of life that had come down from heaven to give eternal life. This evokes memories of the manna the ancestors ate in the wilderness (John 6.35-51). Jesus is the good shepherd, laying down his life for the sheep (10.11-18), which is in sharp contrast with the Pharisees mentioned in the preceding chapter who drove out the blind man while they, who claimed to have sight, were condemned to spiritual blindness (9.41). The FG does not set itself up against Jewish tradition, but stands in the mainstream of the history of Jewish tradition and culture (Painter 1991:23). Those Jews who believed Jesus to be the Messiah understood such a belief arose from the mainstream of that Jewish history, but those who rejected the claim saw it as a break with tradition. This is the only acceptable perspective for the interpretation of the Jewish-Christian dichotomy depicted in the FG.

7.4 The Pharisees – semantic relations ‘d’

- 13.1 Αγουσιν αὐτὸν πρὸς τοὺς Φαρισαίους τὸν ποτε τυφλόν.
 15.1 πάλιν οὖν ἠρώτων αὐτὸν καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι πῶς ἀνέβλεψεν.
 15.2 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Πηλὸν ἐπέθηκέν μου ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς,
 καὶ ἐνιψάμην καὶ βλέπω
 16.1 ἔλεγον οὖν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων τινές,
 Οὐκ ἔστιν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος,
 ὅτι τὸ σάββατον οὐ τηρεῖ.
 40.1 Ἦκουσαν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων ταῦτα οἱ μετ’ αὐτοῦ ὄντες

In the preceding section, we referred to the ‘Jews’ as a powerful group. In this section we hope to ascertain whether the ‘Jews’, the central figures in vv.18-23, and the Pharisees, who are in the forefront in vv.13-7 and 24-34, constitute two different groups or only one. It is of paramount importance to clarify this issue since the Pharisees or the Jews, as mentioned throughout the first part of the Gospel,¹⁶⁵ are both prominent groups (Schnackenburg 1980b:247) represent an authoritative body

¹⁶⁵ Passages like John 1.19; 3.1, 5.10-7; 7.32; 10.31-2; and 12.42 all lead to scholars viewing the Pharisees as being enabled to investigate or make decision regarding matters of religious uncertainty.

struggling to gain political power.¹⁶⁶ We need to determine the extent of the authority exercised by the Pharisees and the ‘Jews’.

Grabbe contends that the power of the Pharisees raises a major debate in that it cannot be construed from the entire NT, but only from three passages in two later Gospels. The first of these passages is Matthew 23.2,¹⁶⁷ where the Pharisees are pictured as sitting in Moses’ seat; the second is John 9.22-35, and the third John 12.42, in both of which we read that the Pharisees had the authority to expel people from the synagogue (Martyn 1979:57). It is necessary to distinguish between Matthew and John. The Pharisaic group of the Synoptic Gospels is a group of the experts in the interpretation of the Law. Note that Matthew’s negative view of the scribes and Pharisees, portrayed as hypocrites, is not confirmed in John or anywhere else in NT. Their hypocrisy is related to false teaching. The Matthean Jesus contests, not by arguing with the Pharisees, but rather by doing things that challenge their interpretation of Moses.¹⁶⁸ When Jesus refers to the scribes and Pharisees as sitting on Moses’ seat, this reflects the dynamics of the social milieu from which the gospel was produced. At the same time, the powerful social and religious position of the Pharisees is acknowledged, for as long as they quote Moses, they must be right (Powell 2005:431-2). In remaining faithful to Moses, they retain the power to teach. It is only from that perspective that Jesus’ disciples have to direct their teaching.

¹⁶⁶ Grabbe (1999:45) points out that the Pharisees are often portrayed as seeking political power, which they sometimes exercise as a group, especially under Alexandria Salome, and sometimes they have prominent positions. Grabbe made an analysis by placing all the passages relating to the Pharisees parallel to each other. (For details, cf. Grabbe 1999:47-50). Following the same vein of thought, Saldarini (1989:281) notes that the Pharisees are a group whose actions are influenced by political interest, but who do not have great and direct power. In every era of Jewish history from the Hasmonean period until the destruction of the Temple, they were present and struggling to gain access to power and influence society (cf. also Reinhartz 1990:175). In his opinion, the Pharisees and high priests are clearly portrayed within the Johannine narrative as authoritative figures attempting to control the Jews.

¹⁶⁷ For details, see Sanders (1985:360-1), who goes further by taking into account the negative view of the Pharisees that is present in the repeated refrain ‘scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites’ (vv.13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29) and the expression ‘their synagogues’ that is used several times. According to him, this does not reflect the lifetime of Jesus, but rather the situation of the early Church.

¹⁶⁸ Powell (1995:423-4), analyzing Mt 23.2-3, he lists 10 proposals that do not manage to resolve the tensions created in light of the rest of the Gospel. The apparent contradictions seem to affirm that Jesus acknowledges the Pharisees’ authority, and then commends his disciples to do and keep whatever the scribes and Pharisees say; that is to live in accordance with their interpretations (cf. Powell 1995:420-1, 424-30).

In John 9, the Pharisees are introduced to the scene as a body of characters (v.13.1)¹⁶⁹ authorized to investigate religious matters (here the reality of the healing), as well as to examine the legitimacy of Jesus' claim to divinity. The Pharisees were regarded as familiar with the Torah and its interpretation, and were therefore assumed to be able to decide on matters of religious uncertainty (Schnackenburg 1980b:247). The pronouncement of judgment upon Jesus because he performed a healing on the Sabbath (v.16.1) was based on such authority. The narrator points out the irony of the situation when differing ideas about what has taken place brings about a division (σχίσμα) among the leaders. Some say, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath,' while others say, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' Zumstein (2003:172-3) rightly contends that in this scene where the division between the Pharisees echoes the situation among the common people in the preceding scene, the debate attains its full theological significance in that:

Les autorités religieuses se distinguent des voisins et des parents du fait que d'emblée elles reconnaissent la portée théologique de l'événement. La mention du sabbat (v.14) signale l'irruption du religieux comme registre d'évaluation. Le phénomène de la guérison de l'aveugle doit être envisagé en relation avec l'agir de Dieu dans le monde. Non seulement les autorités religieuses placent la guérison dans son juste contexte, mais encore elles focalisent leur attention sur la question décisive, à savoir celle de la légitimité du guérisseur. Le rapport de l'aveugle les plonge cependant dans la profonde perplexité. Le dilemme dans lequel elles sont précipitées a la teneur suivante. Qu'est-ce qui est décisif dans la juste interprétation de la guérison de l'aveugle? La tradition établie avec ses normes reconnues, laquelle implique le respect du sabbat? Mesuré à ce système de références, Jésus ne révèle pas Dieu, mais s'oppose à sa volonté (v.16a). Ou est-ce la guérison de l'aveugle qui est décisive parce qu'elle actualiserait le pouvoir créateur de Dieu vivant? Dans ce cas de figure, Jésus serait l'envoyé de Dieu, nanti de son pouvoir (v.16b). De même que le geste révélateur et libérateur du Christ avait mis en crise le sens commun, il met en crise la tradition religieuse. La division (v.16, σχίσμα) qui naît dans les rangs des pharisiens sanctionne l'échec du savoir théologique.

It is clearly stated that not only average, but surprisingly religious leaders too, are unable to interpret the eruption of the divine into reality. The division that so

¹⁶⁹ The Pharisees are consulted by the neighbours of the man born blind as men of mature judgment able to examine the case and to arrive at definite conclusions. Unfortunately, they failed to reach a conclusion.

frequently arose among Jesus' own disciples (6.66-9), among people in crowds (7.12-3, 30-1, 40-43), among Jews over Jesus (10.19-21), now takes place among the Pharisees. The division in the Pharisees' ranks, as Zumstein (2003:173) points out, sanctions the failure of traditional theological scholarship; the Pharisees are unready to renounce their tradition and to open their minds to the newness of God, who comes in the persona of Jesus. The division that takes place among the Pharisees demonstrates to some extent the magnitude of what is at stake. In this regard Udo Schnelle (1992:119) observes:

John describes the possible reactions to Jesus' miracle working: on the one side, the rejection of the divine legitimation of Jesus by means of a remark on his nonobservance of the tradition: on the other side, the σημεῖα that evoke faith, permitting the witnesses to conclude to the divine origin of the miracle worker (...) the miracle provokes both rejection and trust, so that a disagreement now arises among the Pharisees, just as the neighbors had disagreed among themselves in v.9.

Thus the reality of the miracle turns on the identity of its author. In other words, the question moved from how the healing was possible (v.15a) to who the healer was (v.17). Before the man born blind was asked to identify his healer, the Pharisees betray themselves by their own contradictory convictions. The pluralism in the Pharisaic group regarding the issue of Jesus' divine origin is highlighted. While some among them persist in claiming that Jesus cannot be from God because he does not observe the Sabbath (v.16a), others dispute the validity of such a view by asking 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?' (v.16b).

John 9.22 and 12.42 depict the 'Pharisees'¹⁷⁰ as religious leaders who exercise considerable authority in the synagogues, as well as political and religious authorities with legitimacy over their compatriots (Reinhartz 1990:175). Thus, instead of giving rise to the hypothesis of two groups, the switch from Pharisees to 'the Jews' in 9.18 is a reference to exactly the same group of characters named in 9.13-7 (Tolmie 2005:388; cf. Robinson 1985:89).

In Martyn's opinion, John 9 reflects the behaviour of later Pharisees in the city where the author of the Gospel lived, who were probably active in the Diaspora

¹⁷⁰ While in the Synoptic Gospels, the Pharisees are, of course, a group within Judaism, but in John, they sometimes seem to be identical with Judaism and its influential authorities (Charlesworth 1990:80).

(1979:61). The Pharisees are members of the local Gerousia who enforced this formulation, much to the discomfort of the believing rulers. After the destruction of the Temple, the Pharisees gained complete ascendancy over the Jewish people and reformulated Judaism after long consultations extending over many years in Jamnia. The Pharisees, in the Jewish era and also in the Diaspora, were trying to maintain and increase their power within Judaism, even in their struggles to contain the growth of Christianity towards the end of the first century, and in their efforts to obtain power, they reached a formal decision regarding messianic faith in Jesus.

Moreover, the Pharisees were one of four philosophical groups¹⁷¹ that developed in Hellenistic Judaism. Neusner (1995:237) regards the Pharisees as primarily a purity sect, but they should rather be seen as ‘separated ones’,¹⁷² who find self-definition in keeping themselves apart as a primarily pure group. Yet in Josephus’ point of view, it is a group that stands among their contemporaries in rabbinic perspective, concerned with the accurate interpretation of the law¹⁷³ and in the development of a distinctive ‘*halakhic*’ interpretation of Torah, ‘the traditions of their fathers’ (see *Ant.* 13.297, 408; 17.41; *Life* 198; Mk 7.3, 5; Gal 1.14; the so-called ‘oral law’). The Pharisees championed not only the binding nature of the written law, but also the authority of the orally transmitted traditions of the elders

¹⁷¹ For details, see Martin 1987:105-6 and Neusner 1995:239-42.

¹⁷² Léon-Dufour (1990b:342-3), defines the Pharisees as separated lay who, up to the time of Maccabees, were opposed to the hellenisation of Judaea and who attempted to realize the ideal of holiness required from Israel. Characterized by their concern to instruct people, the Pharisees, unlike the Sadducees, were close to the people. As experts of the oral tradition, they were seeking to make the law practicable in daily life experience. The great merit of the Pharisees is that they maintained a respectful attitude towards human beings. It is after 70 CE that the Pharisees came to identify with the power of the Jewish nation and henceforth their orthodoxy became intransigent. Such intransigency is perceptible in the conflict to which the FG refers between Church and synagogue, mainly because of Jesus’ claim that he was the Messiah and an eschatological revealer.

¹⁷³ *War* 1.110; 2.162; *Ant* 17.41; *Life* 191; Acts 22.3; 26.5. Rabbinic Judaism is the form of religion that developed after the failure of the first revolt against Rome and the destruction of the temple in 70 CE and, to some extent, was a response to those events. The Pharisees to whom the FG refers belonged to the Rabbinic or Pharisaic Judaism. Its foundations, however, had been laid earlier by the Pharisees (Magie 1950:11). The Rabbis emphasized the study of the Torah (Pentateuch). Dodd (1953:75-6) and Barrett (1978:33) maintain that rabbinic Judaism needs to be taken into account for the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. Many scholars, such as Barrett (1978:73) and Brown (1978:lix), agree that the principal background for Johannine thought was the Palestinian Judaism of Jesus’s time. It was not ‘monolithic’, but encompassed the Old Testament itself, rabbinic Judaism and the Judaism of the Qumran sect. The Johannine background, according to Dodd, is to be found in three themes: the Torah, the Messiah and the Name of God.

who had adapted the written law to changing historical conditions (Martin 1987:105).

Matthew and John agree in respect of their reference to Judaism as being most closely related to the Pharisees, the Judaism of Rabbi, Torah and Hallakah, which survived the disaster of 70 CE. That group was dominant in Judaism in the evangelist's lifetime. One might keep in mind that the FE uses 'the Jews' almost as a technical title for the religious authorities, particularly those who are hostile to Jesus (Brown 1978:lxxi) in order to show them as 'symbols of unbelief'. The text of John 9 is a reconstruction of the historical context and reflects the behaviour of later Pharisees in the city where the author of the Gospel lived. Considering the power they wielded in the Jewish synagogue, it is important to know exactly who the Pharisees were and what their powers, privileges and responsibilities were within the Synagogue.

7.5 Synagogue

7.5.1 Understanding of the term

'Synagogue' means 'assembly', and the synagogue seems to have been much more than just a place of prayer (building) for religious activities to take place in, especially for the reading and exposition of the Law (Grabbe 1995:62). What should be said about the Synagogues during the first century? In the first-century Diaspora,¹⁷⁴ the synagogue was, according to Horsley, the local assembly place of socio-ethnic communities for quasi-political as well as religious functions. In whatever city they lived, the Jews gathered in their synagogues¹⁷⁵ to try to run their own affairs.

¹⁷⁴ For details, see DD Binder (1999), *Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogue in the Second Temple Period* (SBL DS, 109); RA Horsley, 'Synagogues in Galilee and the Gospels.' in HC Kee & LH Cohick [eds], (1999), *Evolution of the Synagogue: Problems and Progress*, 50-1; LI Levine (2000), *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*; B Olsson – D Mitternacht – O Brandt (2001), *The Synagogue of Ancient Ostia and the Jews of Rome*. Interdisciplinary Studies (Acta Instituti romani Regni Sueciae. Series in 4, 57), cf B Olsson, pp 13-7).

¹⁷⁵ The synagogue was initially a secular meeting house in post-exilic Judaism whose role was for worship and sacrifices for pious Jews unable to go up to Jerusalem. It developed as an informal alternative to the temple worship which became systematized under the

Referring to Binder, Levine and Runesson, Olsson underscores ten features (cf. Olsson 2005: 211-2) of the synagogue at that period, four of which are taken up here: (i) the synagogue, primarily a community centre, is the dominant institution that served, at the local level, to integrate social, religious, political and educational activities; (ii) as many scholars struggle to demonstrate, the year 70 CE need not be seen as pivotal in the development of the synagogues that have their histories along with the Temple; (iii) the synagogues that developed in Palestine and those in the Diaspora are significantly different: in the Diaspora, synagogues functioned as local temples or as Hellenistic *collegia*; (iv) it is misleading to stress the opposition between the Temple and the synagogue. Even they had different functions the synagogue eventually took on an increasing number of the functions of the Temple.

The absence of conflict between the Temple and the synagogue in the FG is clear from Jesus' words: 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught *in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together*. I have said nothing in secret' (John 18.20). Towards the end of the narrative the FE implies that the high priests had questioned Jesus about his disciples and teaching and makes it clear that Jesus' teaching took place in both synagogue and temple. This matter was included intentionally and deserves careful attention. Jesus' saying recalls such passages as John 6.59: 'He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum'. John 7.14, 28 and 8.20 (see also 10.23-39) depicts Jesus teaching in the temple. This implies that as Jesus was not animated with sectarian behaviour, his disciples likewise did not separate themselves from the synagogue.

Whereas Mark names the synagogue as the place where Jesus taught with authority (1.21-3) and as the nucleus of the new community (2.1f; 3.19b-20) or of private instruction (7.17, 24; 9.28, 33; 10.10; cf. Lieu 1999:57),¹⁷⁶ Matthew's point of view is that the synagogue is not a neutral site but has become a place of conflict

influence of the Pharisees. After the destruction of the Temple that takes place in 70, the former gathering with patterns of worship and prayer becomes a meeting place for Jews in any given locality for a variety of purposes and not only a centre of worship (cf. Kee 1990:3).

¹⁷⁶ I do not agree with Lieu, who bases her argument on the first three in which she gleaned certain passages, forgetting others like 3.1 where it is stated that Jesus entered the synagogue where he healed a man with withered hand. Another important instance is Mark 6.2: 'On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard him were astounded.' These two instances demonstrate that Jesus, by making the house the location of private instruction, does not abandon the synagogue completely.

(12.9-14). That is why in the scheme opposing the Church to Judaism; Matthew creates a sense of distance by using the phrase ‘their synagogues’ (4.23; 9.35; 12.9; 13.54). The FE, on the contrary, mentions that synagogues and the temple as places where Jesus taught, especially in the central part of Jesus’ own revelation to the ‘Jews’ (Chapters 5-12), specifically intending to show the existence of the most common setting for the teaching of Jesus and the disciples or Johannine Christians in John’s perspective (Olsson 2005:223). John clearly observes that Jesus is not to be seen as a false prophet who secretly led the people of God astray, and the Johannine community cannot be judged as a dangerous sect (Olsson 2005:222). Lieu emphasises the fact that John’s use of narrative spatial markers does not trace the separation of the community from the synagogue and goes as far as to assert that the Gospel is not shaped by a conflict with the synagogue and conceives the Temple as the place for both God’s revelation and Jesus’ formal rejection (cf. Lieu 1999:51-69). She fails to grasp the understanding of the conflict that takes place within the synagogue to which John 9.22 refers. The FG, like the Gospel of Matthew, as scholarship maintains, are involved in a post-70 CE conflict between their communities and the synagogue. The statement in John 9.22 is to be seen as the key to the situation of the Johannine community and the origins of the Gospel (Horsley 1999:67; cf. also Martyn 1979:37-62). The drama of Chapter 9, where John’s usage of the term ‘synagogue’ appears to be unique, cannot be understood without an understanding of its precise meaning. There is no archeological evidence that the synagogues were in fact buildings, so it would be reasonable to assume that they were rather assemblies or congregations (Horsley 1999:53), in which case it would have been easier for ‘secret believers’, the group represented by the parents of the blind man in John 9, to avoid expulsion.

Expulsion from the synagogue, as we will see, holds social implications insofar as the synagogue was ‘the principal form of local self-governance in which the communal life was expressed and local problems dealt with (...) including religious expressions of community identity, solidarity, and loyalty’ (Horsley 1999:68). To become, or be made *aposynagogoí* should be read as exclusion from the Assembly of God’s people, not just from the building, and even from fellowship with God.

7.5.2 The social trauma (experience) of ‘having no synagogue’

Driven from the Synagogue (semantic relations ‘a’)

22.1 ταῦτα εἶπαν οἱ γουεῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἐφοβοῦντο τοὺς Ἰουδαίους·

ἤδη γὰρ συνετέθειντο οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι

ἵνα ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ Χριστόν,

ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται.

34.2 καὶ ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω.

The official policy of expulsion from the synagogue as the penalty for confessing Jesus as the Messiah (v.22b) created in the blind man’s parents a fear of the ‘Jews’ (v.22a), and the episode results in the expulsion of the healed man from the synagogue (vv.28, 34). While in v.22.1 the expulsion is an explicit measure, in v.34.2 it is alluded to implicitly.

Petersen (1993:84) concludes that it is clear that Jesus’ work precipitated a crisis that highlighted how believers experienced hostile social rejection by non-believers. There is a strong connection between the attitude of the parents and the exclusion from the synagogue to which the FE refers three times (9.22; 12.42; 16.2).

In John’s community, those who ‘believed in Jesus’ were being expelled from the synagogues in which they desired to worship or to celebrate the high Jewish holidays. The hostile portrayal of the Jews in John was occasioned by a harsh social situation that creates the Johannine intrigue of belief and unbelief as evidenced in the phenomenon of ‘Jews fighting with other Jews’ (see Charlesworth 1990:50). John emerges from a historical situation marred not by non-Jews versus Jews, but by Jews fighting Jews. Before indicating the extra-textual data related to the expulsion from the synagogue, the analysis of three related passages in John proceeds to group together 9.12 and 12.42 and close the literary analysis by 16.2-3 where radicalization is indisputable.

7.5.2.1 Synoptic Analysis of the three passages

A synoptic reading of the above-mentioned passages discloses that the expression ἀποσυνάγωγος γίνεσθαι (put out of the synagogue) is an expression

that, on the literary plane, links all the references to the drastic penalty of expulsion from the synagogue (Morris 1995:434; cf. Kysar 1986:152). The way the expression is used in 9.22 (ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται) and 12.42 (ἀποσυνάγωγος γέωνται) makes the FE retrospectively assessing, that is to say, thinking of his contemporary circumstances. The clear differences between the passages may be stated as follows: Firstly, while 9.22 deals with the threat of being expelled from the synagogue, 12.42 makes an assessment of just how many Jewish authorities believed, but did not confess for fear of the Pharisees. Secondly, in the former passage the Jews are feared, whereas the latter underscores the Pharisees as characters to be feared. These texts do not reflect the context of the Sanhedrin in the Jerusalem Temple courts, but that of the synagogues after 70 CE, located in the Diaspora where the Pharisees/rabbis were involved in promoting unity among the Jews (Olsson 2005:214-5, 217; see Lincoln 2005:252). The Pharisees became increasingly intent on achieving unity and self-definition after the destruction of the Temple. Martyn's analysis (2003:56) contains four key points that in John 9.22 that must be highlighted: (i) a formal decision (ii) was made by the Jewish authorities (iii) to threaten or punish the Christian Jews (iv) by applying the drastic measure of excommunication from the synagogue. Starting with the verbal thought συνετέθειντο originating from the verb συντίθημι,¹⁷⁷ conjugated in plusperfect middle passive 'to reach an agreement or a corporate decision', Barrett (1978:361), with whom I agree, is surprised by the use of ἤδη γὰρ συνετέθειντο (they had already agreed), for from the outset of the narrative we have heard nothing of such an agreement in John. Unfortunately, Martyn's work (2003:57) failed to hint at the use of the phrase ἀποσυνάγωγος as a good Greek construction with parallels,¹⁷⁸ and whose general meaning could be 'having no synagogue', or 'away from the synagogue', or 'synagogueless'.

Even when used in the future tense in 16.2 ἀποσυνάγωγους ποιήσουσιν ὑμᾶς' (they will put you out of the synagogue), the pronouncement is already part of

¹⁷⁷ A verb that occurs only three times in the NT (Lk 22.5; John 9.22; Acts 23.20), meaning to agree or decide together.

¹⁷⁸ These parallels have been proposed by Jerker Blomqvist, quoted by B Olsson (2005): 'All my Teaching was done in the Synagogue....' 215. Ἀποδήμιος 'away from one's country, away from home, abroad,' ἀποφύλιος 'having no tribes, foreign,' ἀπό(π)ολις 'far from city, homeless, banished,' ἀποβώμιος 'far from an altar, godless,' ἄποικος 'away from home, abroad'.

and constitutes an external prolepsis, for the event that is announced belongs to a temporal segment. Since it alludes to the post-Easter experience of the disciples, it is not integral part of the story (Zumstein 2007:122). The warning is not only focused upon 'to be killed', but on 'to fall away in light' of v.1 (ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ σκανδαλισθῆτε = I have said these things so that you may not be scandalized or to keep you from stumbling). The particularity of this passage is that, by referring to the disciples' killing, the conflict is radicalized. As recently pointed out by Zumstein (2007:124; *my own translation*), the situation of the extreme tribulation holds twofold theological qualification: *firstly*, by the evocation of ἔρχεται ὥρα (the hour is coming), the eschatological hour is inaugurated during the post-Easter time. The hour when God makes his ultime presence through the word proclaimed is the space of fatal conflict. *Secondly*, the persecution holds theological foundation since the disciples' persecutors, through their action, radically contest God's plenary and ultimate manifestation in the person of the incarnated Christ because they are aware of offering service to God, perverting, so to speak, the significance of the service. As Zumstein notes, 'la signification du culte est totalement pervertie: ce dernier n'est plus l'expression de l'adoration, mais de la revolte humaine' (2007:124).

All the references (9.22; 12.42; 16.2-3) deal with the Johannine Christians who, it seems, enjoyed fellowship with other Jews in the synagogue over a long period of time. Later on, some were made 'synagogueless' and others were killed by their fellow Jews. By the end of the first century, the Jewish Christians were not only removed from the synagogue, but were actively persecuted. When the authorities realized that the confession of Jesus as Messiah (9.22) and as the glory of God (12.42) constituted not only unacceptable messianism, but also a violation of monotheism, they not only excommunicated Christians, but also arrested some of the confessors and subjected them to trial and even to execution as seducers whose ditheistic doctrine was leading other Jews into the worship of a second god alongside Adonai (second trauma). To be severed from the synagogue implies many social, religious, political, economical and even educational consequences.

7.5.2.2 The extra-textual data of the decision

What was involved in the drastic decision of expulsion from the synagogue? Scholarship strives to explain the expression ἀποσυνάγωγος.¹⁷⁹ Schnackenburg, alluding to the historical context in which John wrote, as well as the Jewish authorities' commitment to overthrow any allegiance to Jesus' messiahship,¹⁸⁰ probably refers to the decision to expel (Schnackenburg 1980b:250). The exact significance of the term (put out the synagogue) is uncertain. Both Schnackenburg (1980b:250) and Morris (1995:434) convincingly demonstrate that, at a later time, there were two forms of excommunication. One was a temporary exclusion from the synagogue and social contract for a period of 30 days to persuade the person to return as an obedient observer of the Law. The other was a permanent ban. Excommunication involves cutting a person off from all normal dealings with the Jewish community, if not from worship.¹⁸¹ It is obvious that John refers rather to a hint of division that has already taken place between those confessing Jesus as the glory of God or the Messiah, and Jews who knew the truth but did not 'walk in the truth' or 'do the truth' (1 Jn 1.6; 2 Jn 4; 3 Jn 3-4; cf. Olsson 2005:216). Such a

¹⁷⁹ Although there is no general consensus insofar as its dating seems unstable, Schnackenburg believes that it was 90 CE (see above), while in Martyn's opinion this would be set somewhere in the period 80-115 CE since Rabban Gamaliel was the head of the Jamnia Academy during that period (2003:58). The Jews who, according to John 9.22, had decided to expel from the synagogue anyone who acknowledged Jesus as the Christ (Messiah) refer 'to the action taken under Gamaliel II to re-work the *Birkath ha-Minim* so as to make it an effective means for detecting Christian heresy.' According to Martyn, the depiction of the Jews in John 9.22 would seem to be John's way of referring to the Jamnia Academy after the resurrection, and reflects the Jewish community at the end of the first century. This was a community that had been shaken by the introduction of a newly formulated means of detecting those Jews who wanted to hold a dual allegiance to Moses and to Jesus as Messiah (Martyn 1979:61).

¹⁸⁰ See Excursus at the end of this section, cf. p.217.

¹⁸¹ The practice of excommunication to which John refers was undoubtedly old, as confirmed in Ezra 10.8: 'and that if any did not come within three days, by order of the officials and the elders all their property should be forfeited, and they themselves banned from the congregation of the exiles'. There are indeed references to being cut off from the people in a number of places in the Law, specifically in Exod 31.14: 'You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people.' Though no indication is given of how this kind of discipline was practiced in New Testament times, one cannot assume that the rule was not enforced. In another text in *Ta'an* 3.8, a threat of excommunication is uttered by Simeon b. Shetah, c.80 BCE. It is widely accepted that the benediction against the heretics was aimed at the Christians and was composed by Samuel the Small toward the end of the First Century.

decision had been taken within Rabbinic Judaism, a form of religion which took shape after the failure of the first revolt against Rome and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and, in some measure, was a response to those events. Its foundations, however, had been laid earlier by the Pharisees (Magie 1950:11). The Rabbis emphasized the study of the Torah – Pentateuch.¹⁸² It is widely held that in Judaism, after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the major threat to Judaism was its disintegration.¹⁸³ In order to reconstitute this disintegrated unity, the unique way to survive was to reformulate the prayer.

Is the Academy's decision to expel Christian Jews from the synagogue a historical fact? To address this question, one must start with the proposals that have been made in connection with the dating of these events, which oscillates between 80-115 and 85-115 CE. Although it is very difficult to know exactly when the excommunications at Jabne took place and how they spread throughout the Diaspora, Vouga (1977) proposes the period between 85-90 CE, during which the twelfth benediction was added within the *Shemone' Esre* when Judaism felt threatened by pluralism and heterodox tendencies. The Pharisees were committed to protect a religion subject to the crisis.

7.5.2.3 The *birkat ha-Minim*: the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the expression

The *Sitz-im-Leben* of the expression may be found in the worship service of the Pharisaic synagogue. The reformulation by Samuel ha-Katan, at the request of Rabban Gamaliel II, reworded the *Birkat ha-Minim*¹⁸⁴ so as to make it an effective

¹⁸² The Rabbis produced the Mishnah, a summary of practice in commentary form which was supplemented by the longer *Tosefta*. For both, the climax will be found in the Babylonian Talmud.

¹⁸³ Vouga (1977:62-63) tries to formulate two consequences stemming from the catastrophe of the destruction of the Temple by Titus – but also under Vespasian – undoubtedly constituted a prominent event for Early Christianity, even for the Judaism of the end of the First Century. From the theological point of view, the fall of the Temple has been interpreted by Christians as God's punishment for the Jews responsible for Jesus' death and therefore God's verdict on Israel. For the Jews, however, the temporary test has been compassed by the elaboration of apocalyptic hopes couched in the Apocalypse of Baruch. From the social point of view, the fall of the Temple implies the fall of priestly families and the fall of the Sadducees who did not bring their policy of collaboration with Rome to an end. The Zealots declined during the war of 70 CE and completely disappeared after 135.

¹⁸⁴ For more details, cf. DI Brewer (2003), 'The Eighteen Benedictions and the *Minim*

means for detecting Christian heresy (Martyn 1979:65). The curse on heretics in the twelfth of the eighteen *berakhah* (*Birkath ha-minim*) was inserted in the old Jewish prayer *Shemoneh Esreh*¹⁸⁵ around 90 CE. From that date, extremely severe measures came into force to ensure social segregation between the Jews and the ‘Nazarenes’ and the ‘Minim’, who were considered to be heretics. In order to separate them from the synagogue, the twelfth Benediction had to be recited three times daily by all pious Jews as follows:

For the apostates let there be no hope
And let the arrogant government
Be speedily uprooted in our days

before 70 CE’, *The Journal of Theological Studies* 54/1, 25-44; SD Fraade, ‘Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Miqsat Ma’ase Ha-Torah (4QMMT): The Case of the Blessings and Curses’, *Dead Sea Discoveries* 10 (2003), 150-61; H-J Fabry, ‘Die Seligpreisungen in der Bibel und in Qumran’, in *The Wisdom Texts from Qumran* (cf.p.5), 2002, 189-200. The *Birkat ha-minim* or ‘the benediction’ which becomes a curse concerning *minim* (heretics), constitutes the twelfth of the benedictions of the weekday *Amidah*. The formulation of the prayer is attributed to Samuel ha-Katan at the request of Rabban Gamaliel II (*Ber.28b*). [cf. RJZ Werlowsky & G Wigoder (1997), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, p.131 and *Encyclopedia Judaica Vol IV/ B* (1971), 1035]. The wording of the benediction varies among the different rites. There is an opinion according to which this prayer originated during the Syrian-Hellenistic oppression in the time of the second Temple, and it is believed that it was directed against those Jews who collaborated with the enemy. While Wigoder (1993:173) takes the prayer as formulated against the Sadducees, he goes further in acknowledging that it was likely written in the context of the war of the Maccabees against the Jews who collaborated with the Hellenistic Syrian oppressor. In this respect, the ‘apostates’ spoken of in the prayer probably were Jews who abandoned their faith in favour of the marvels of Hellenistic culture that swept the Orient in the wake of Alexander’s armies. The term ‘arrogant government’, while appropriate as a Jewish expression for Rome, is frequently encountered in the Book of Maccabees as a means of referring to the Seleucid power personified in Antiochus IV ‘Epiphanes.’ The basic sentiments of the first three lines of the prayer would be precisely those of the famous seventeenth chapter of the Pharisaic *Psalms of Solomon*, written in the first century BCE. One would conclude that the task of Samuel the Small, under Gamaliel’s direction, seems to have been to make an old benediction relevant to the contemporary situation or crisis between Judaism and Christianity (cf. Martyn 1979:58). The prayer, in its actual form, is an adaptation of the benediction by R Chemouel ha-K[Q]atan against the heretics within Judaism threatened by them, after the destruction of the Second Temple, and committed to neutralize the Judeo-Christian and Gnostic sects and other heretics who were generally called ‘*minim*’. In that benediction against the heretics were included clauses like the Nazarenes (Judeo-Christians), the apostates, the denunciators and other accomplices of the persecution exercised by the Romans (*Tos Ber* 3,25). In its finished form, the *Birkat ha-Minim* consists in malediction conceived to the extent that the heretics (*minim*) could not recite the prayer aloud in the synagogues and to respond with Amen. It was a means to set them apart in public worship and to cause a rupture between them and the ‘Jews’ (cf. Wigoder 1993:173).

¹⁸⁵ See P van der Horst, ‘*The Birkat ha-Minim* in Recent Research.’ In *ExpT* 105 (1993-1994), 363-8, also published in *Hellenism – Judaism – Christianity: Essays of Their Interaction* (CBET, 8), (1994), 99-111.

Let the Nazarenes [Christians] and the Minim [heretics] be destroyed in a moment
 And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous
 Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the proud!¹⁸⁶

The Jamnia Academy,¹⁸⁷ under Rabban Gamaliel, by seeking to detect those Jews who wanted to hold a dual allegiance to Moses and to Jesus as the Messiah (Martyn 1979:61), reformulated the prayer. This led to the Christians feeling that they were excluded. The religious exclusion did not have any juridical status. The expulsion from the synagogue was not a formal decision, as Kysar (1986:153) points out:

Furthermore, the uses of the word *apodynamos* reflects the occasion of the writing of the Fourth Gospel, i.e., soon after the Johannine community (...) it is not, however, necessary to assume that it was a formal propagation of the benediction which occasioned the expulsion, and there is some evidence against the existence of such a benediction which occasioned the expulsion of the Johannine Christians from their home in the synagogue occurred as a result of an informal and local decision of the Jewish community.

The Jewish authorities, finding the Nazarenes' sect a new source of danger to fight, imagined that this was the best way to exclude them. The qualifier 'Nazarene' is never used for Jesus, except in the Passion narrative where it is used by Jewish authorities who depict him as 'the Nazarene' (18.5.7; 19.19), probably to contest

¹⁸⁶ This means that in the first line, the mention of 'the apostate' is a reference to those people who abandoned Jewish hope in adopting the Hellenistic ideology. The second line deals with an arrogant government that is nothing other than Roman Empire. The fourth and fifth lines classify Christians as heretics who must be uprooted from fellowship as testified in the Book of Life.

¹⁸⁷ During the war of 70 CE, in Jamnia, a rabbinic school was established by Johanan ben Zacchai, under the authorization of Vespasian, and was said to have replaced the Sanhedrin as the highest Jewish authority in the land, or replaced the Sadducees' major source of power. In that School, notes F Vouga, the Pharisees formulated great decisions that each gave its character and profile to the Judaism with which the Christians of First Century would be confronted. Under the Pharisees' impulsion, the teaching and study of law took on considerable importance, since around them and the synagogue Israel had been restructured (Vouga 1977:63). Note that this Jamnian School assumed priestly functions since, after 70 CE, priests and priestly lines continued to exist, but without their traditional functions. It is true that they still continued to get some support from the people, who still hoped for a future restoration of their worship centre. What seemed to be determinant during that period is that the houses of Hillel and Shammai began to assert themselves, and Pharisaic Judaism became the standard by which other forms of Judaism were measured (see Witherington III 2001:377-8). The Judaism to which the FE refers is not the Judaism of Jesus' lifetime, a Judaism dominated by the Pharisees and within which the Temple was replaced by the law and the synagogue.

Jesus' messianic identity.

How should one understand the identification of Christians as Nazarenes in the twelfth benediction? Is there some relationship between them and the Minim to which the prayer referred? Do they constitute a unique group? To address these questions one must turn to another instance from the NT, as well as to extra-textual data. The only applicable NT reference Acts 24.5 where the high priest Ananias accuses Paul before Felix in connection with the so-called 'sect of the Nazarenes'. This is a clear historical indication of the existence of a so-called group of Nazarenes (De Boer 1996:191). Paul, acting under coercion, shows himself as a Jew worshipping the God of their ancestors according to the Way of a so-called sect and believing everything laid down according to the law or written by the prophets (Acts 24.11, 14). In rabbinic literature, in *b. Avodah zarah* 61, for instance, the *Notzrim* are mentioned in a relationship with the Jews who used to avoid the fast on Sunday since they respected the Nazarenes. In the second passage, in *Taanit* 27b, the religious practices of the Nazarenes are no longer tolerated, but they are treated as pagans practising idolatry (De Boer 1996:196-7). The twelfth benediction, in mentioning Nazarenes and Minim, does not refer to two separate groups so as to emphasize the Church's perception that believing Jesus as the Messiah is heretical and akin to paganism.

This confirms, on the linear historical plane, how the Nazarenes, portrayed as 'Jewish Christians', were integrated and had their place in social and religious Jewish life before 70 CE, only to become 'Christian Jews', separate and distinct from Jewish institutional life (De Boer 1996:194). It is arguable that the Johannine Christians, the former messianic group that transformed into a separate community, experienced the social trauma and paid the price of their convictions and suffered excommunication. This inflicted social dislocation as well as great alienation from the synagogue, their social and theological womb, affording nurture and security (cf. Martyn 2003:140).

Two commentators, namely Beasley-Murray (1989:153) and Brown (1966a:380),¹⁸⁸ conceive that the FE updated the story of John 9 in the light of the situation that arose from such a decision by the Academy of Jamnia. That the

¹⁸⁸ Brown, commenting v.22-3, deduces that it is the final development of the apologetic use of the Johannine story. These verses suggest the hand of an editor bringing the story up to date.

followers of Jesus might still have been coming to synagogues in the Holy Land even at the end of the first century AD has no historical foundation, since the crisis led Christianity to become an independent, separate religion that the Jews regarded as a sect. In connection with the historicity of the expulsion of the Jewish Christians from the synagogue, some hypotheses have been formulated.

According to Horbury, the twelfth benediction did not and could not of itself have brought about the enforced separation of Christians from Jewish synagogues, but ‘simply reinforced an earlier, more drastic exclusion of Christians’ (cf. Beasley-Murray 1989:154). One needs to look at the Benediction, at first glance, in order to assert that exclusion from the synagogue is not specified in it (Kuhn quoted by Martyn 2003:63). Kysar contends that the proposal according to which the escalating conflict between the Johannine Christians and the members of the synagogue can no longer be sustained, thanks to historical research that shows no evidence of a formal decree issued by a council of rabbis towards the end of the first century (2007:27). According to Kysar, the interpretation of the theory of the exclusion is done in an anti-Jewish way. He argues that the conflict was rather caused by an intra-Jewish difference, suggesting that the differences between Christians and others in the synagogue were a ‘family matter’. There is also no evidence of a widespread rejection of Christian Jews by the whole body of Jews; the polemic language in the FG tells more about the Christian community than anything else.

The way Kysar limited the interpretation of the conflict and the Johannine language as a means to understand more about the Christian community is not less convincing. We have practically no information as to how the expulsion from the synagogue was carried out in NT times.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, Zumstein argues that the conflict with the synagogue pertains in indelible ways to a recent past of the history of the Johannine communities. He points out (2007:123):

¹⁸⁹ Morris 1995:434. Robinson pointedly contends that the benediction was concerned with cursing the Minim, not with excluding them from the synagogue, so that it has nothing to do with the problem here (Robinson 1985:72-81). For Edwards (2004:101), the measure to which 9.22b refers ‘is something more severe than the temporary excommunication which is occasionally enjoined in rabbinic texts. That is why some scholars have associated the edict with the “blessing of the Minim”, a curse on Jewish converts to Christianity which was once thought to have been recited in Palestinian synagogues as early as the year 85 CE (cf. Justin, *Trypho* 38)’. What is interesting here is the fact that Edwards, though he did not deal with how the measure was taken, rejoined other scholars who place the measure during a period long after 70 CE.

On a souvent mis en rapport l'exclusion des chrétiens joh de la synagogue et la malediction prononcée sur les dissidents dans la prière des dix-huit demandes (*semone esré* ou *amida*). La douzième benediction de cette prière, dite 'benediction contre les hérétiques' (*birkat ha-minim*) a le contenu suivant. (...) aussi bien la formulation de ce texte, que sa datation et sa signification pour le christianisme primitif sont objets de controverse. Si la critique s'accorde à penser que la fonction première de cette 'bénédition' était de travailler à définir l'identité juive après la catastrophe de 70 et que sa portée polémique visait exclusivement les juifs 'dissidents' (parmi eux, les judéo-chrétiens), mais en aucun cas des païens (et donc les pagano-chrétiens), sa signification pour l'interprétation du quatrième évangile reste incertaines. Ainsi, on ne sait pas de façon indubitable, si par la récitation de cette bénédiction, la synagogue voulait empêcher la participation des judéo-chrétiens à la prière commune ou, plus encore, d'y endosser le rôle d'officiant dans la conduite de la célébration. On ne sait pas davantage si les communautés joh ont eu connaissance d'un tel texte et, dans l'affirmative, sous quelle forme. Dans l'état actuel de nos connaissances, il est donc préférable de prendre acte de l'exclusion des chrétiens joh des synagogues sans chercher à l'expliquer par le *birkat ha-minim*. Cela n'affaiblit en rien l'effet dévastateur d'une telle mesure : les judéo-chrétiens se trouvaient par là même contraints à renoncer à leur identité nationale, sociale, religieuse et culturelle. On imagine l'effet dévastateur d'une telle épreuve.

The strength of Zumstein's argument is that he acknowledges the existence of the prayer whose polemical range was aimed exclusively to the dissident Jews. Even though it is no longer possible to know whether Christian Jews knew about the text and in which form it existed, it is better to take note of the exclusion of the Johannine Christians from the synagogues without trying to explain it through the *birkat ha-minim*. Zumstein's argument is remarkable in that he does not minimize the conflict along with its consequences. He is aware with the devastating effect of the measure of the exclusion of the synagogue, for the Johannine Christians had to renounce their national, social, religious and cultural identity.

Striving to wrap up the issue of *ajposunavgwgo~*, it should be borne in mind that it is nothing more than an anachronistic reference which does not concern the first disciples of Jesus, but has rather to do with the Johannine churches of the end of the first century. The drama of John 9 helps us to grasp the narrator's awareness of the painful experience of the Christian Jews. This painful experience was due to their confession of Jesus as the Messiah. The best way to learn about the Jewish expectation of the Messiah is to turn to internal evidence, which requires close scrutiny of certain passages in John 7. We opted for an excursus.

Excursus I: Jesus as Messiah or Christ

All the Gospels, even the rest of the NT, take Jesus to be the Messiah. As Juel, quoted by Moody Smith (1995:86 note 8) points out, the earliest Christians understood Jesus who had been crucified as a messianic pretender, that is the kingly Davidic messianic. That formulation is taken up by the synoptic tradition where the Messiah was expected to be a monarch of Davidic lineage enabled to restore the kingdom to Israel (Moody Smith 1995:86).¹⁹⁰ The FG follows another different perspective. I propose to handle this issue gently and to check certain passages in Chapter 7 to pay closer attention to the expectation of the Messiah in the Jewish religious context. In John 7, there are three significant texts (v.27, 31 and 42) that can be found in the debates among various groups in Jerusalem that allude to traditional views of the Messiah. The Ἱεροσολυμίται (Jerusalemites) represent a third group besides the ‘Jews’ (7.1, 11) and the ‘crowd’ (7.20, 31) in John 7.25-44, where Jesus’ messiahship is at the centre of the debate (Köstenberger 2005:235). Scholarship contends that the resident Jerusalemites should have been more familiar with the conflict between the Jewish leaders than the crowds (cf. Barrett 1978:321; Ridderbos 1997:267; Carson 1991:317; also Köstenberger 2004:235). All the traditional views around the Messiah, notes De Jonge, deal with the *coming* of the Messiah.¹⁹¹ The sources of these expectations, so elaborated, find their parallels in Jewish (or Christian) documents, which may corroborate or supplement the statements made by the Jews in the FG. Those statements are helpful to sketch a more coherent picture of Jewish beliefs concerning the Messiah at the time the FG was written.

(i) In John 7. 27: the Jews said: ‘Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one knows from whence He is’. The first part of this verse is an objection referring to Jesus’ supposed earthly origin (De Jonge 1977:90), but the crowd’s claim to know Jesus’ origin is an ironic device of the evangelist. But the

¹⁹⁰ For details, see Charlesworth and others (1992), *The Messiah. Developments in Judaism and Christianity*. Minneapolis:Fortress Press; M de Jonge, ‘The Earliest Christian Use of Christos. Some Suggestions. *NTS*, 1986 (32), 321-43; J Painter (1991), *The Quest for the Messiah. The History, Literature and Theology of the Johannine Community*, 7-25; JC Vanderkam, ‘Messianism and Apocalypticism’ in JJ Collins [ed. (1998)], *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism. Vol. I The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*. M de Jonge (1991), *Jesus, the Servant-Messiah*, 62-81. M de Jonge (1977), *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God. Jesus Christ and the Christians in Johannine Perspective*, 93-94.

¹⁹¹ De Jonge (1977:77). Besides these direct statements alluding to Jewish beliefs concerning the Messiah, he rightly adds John 1.19-34 in which John the Baptist is questioned by the representatives of the Jews to determine whether he is one of three figures, namely ‘the Christ’, ‘Elijah,’ or ‘the Prophet’. In this question it is attested that there were known variants in the Jewish expectation. The next text is 1.35-51, in which Jesus’ first disciples confess their faith in Jesus in terms that are obviously meant to represent various aspects of Jewish expectation. Andrew confesses him as Messiah, translated explicitly as ‘Christ’ (1.41); Philip speaks of him as ‘the one about whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets wrote’ (1.45) and Nathanael speaks of ‘the son of God’ and ‘the king of Israel’ (1.49). These enthusiastic claims will be discussed at a later stage. The last reference is 4.25, in which the Samaritan woman’s expectation is expressed in: ‘we know that the Messiah is coming ...’

claim made by the crowd that they know Jesus is an ironic device employed by the evangelist (7.28-29) who knows that it is not true. Another passage, John 6.42, states that Jesus is a man of well-known parents and of known Galilean origin, which means that he cannot be the Messiah. The second part of 7.27 presents a well-attested doctrine in Jewish sources – the doctrine that the Messiah has already come into the world, but is still hidden in some unknown place until the day appointed by God for his appearance (cf. *1 Enoch* 62.7; *2 Esdras* 12.32; *2 Baruch* 29.3: 39.7; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 8.3¹⁹²; 49.1; 110.1) [cf. Talbert (1992:82); cf. also Beasley-Murray (1989:110.)]. While *4 Ezra* 7.28; 13.32; *2 Baruch* 29.3 picture the Messiah as ‘revealed,’ in *4 Ezra* 13.1ff, he is taken as arising out of the sea implying, so to speak, a sudden appearance of the Messiah (Morris 1995:365). The Jews’ statement in John 7.27 represents a doctrine well-attested in Jewish sources of the expectation of the royal Messiah from heaven. Such an understanding of the concept ‘Messiah’ depends on the apocalyptic conception expressed in the *Similitudes of Enoch*, according to which the messianic Ruler and Judge has been ‘chosen and hidden before him, before the creation of the world and for evermore’ (*Enoch* 48.6; cf. also *4 Ezra* 13.51-2; for details, cf. Beasley-Murray (1989:110)). The hidden Messiah tradition often connects the Messiah with Moses, who had also been hidden before he was revealed (cf. Keener 2003a:718 note 149). With his usual irony, the FE shows Jerusalem thinking of a Messiah of the type found in *4 Ezra* (and *2 Apoc.Bar*). Yet, Jesus asserts that he comes, not from Rome or the north, nor from any unknown place of concealment, but rather directly from God himself (v. 28). According to Keener (2003:718), in Mediterranean antiquity, establishing a person’s origin was one of the first steps required to gain an understanding of his identity. Outsiders could not really know who Jesus was or where he had come from.

(ii) John 7.31:¹⁹³ **Certain Jews were inclined to accept Jesus as Messiah on the grounds that He performed many signs, saying: ‘...when the Messiah comes, will he do more signs than this man has done?’** since in Jewish understanding, the Messiah would be equipped with miraculous powers, as the prophets were believed to have corroborated their message with miracles (Dodd 1953:90). A series of *σημεῖα* (significant actions) are set forth in the FG, along with words (discourses) serving to explain what they mean. By calling Jesus’ deeds *σημεῖα*, the narrator brings them into the ambit of Jesus’ teaching activity. The miracle, in John’s outlook, is commonly viewed as a sign that reveals Jesus as the envoy of God, rather than simply the Son of God. Toussaint correctly puts it:

The word *σημεῖον* looks at a miracle as proof of a point or as a means of teaching something. The crucial thing is not the miracle, as genuine and

¹⁹² The doctrine is ascribed by Justin to Trypho the Jew, at least in one form current in the second century: ‘Christ – if he indeed has been born, and exists anywhere – is unknown, and does not even know himself, and has no power until Elijah comes to anoint him and make him manifest to all.’

¹⁹³ The assumption that the Messiah will perform signs is stated in Jn 7.31 (Painter 1991:11). In spite of Jn 1.15-51, considered as the source of the sign, Jesus manifests divine knowledge (verses 47 – 50) through the Samaritan woman who discovers the characteristic of the coming Messiah (Jn 4.25) though she did not recognize Jesus’ earlier manifestation of such powers as evidence of his messiahship, but only as an indication that he was a prophet (Jn 4.16-9).

important as it is, but the lesson to be learned from the miracle. The fact that John uses only σημεῖον in his Gospel to refer to Christ's miracles does not detract from the purpose of the miracles to teach something about the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact it enhances this truth (Toussaint 2001:45).

However, the signs within the synoptic tradition do not follow John's perspective. In Mt 11.2-6, parallel to Lk 7.18-23, when John the Baptist hears about τὰ ἔργα τοῦ χριστοῦ (the works of the Christ) while in prison, he summons his disciples to question Jesus: σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος; (Are you the one who is to come?). One may notice Jesus' reference to his miracles as signs that testify that he is 'the one who has to come' (the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them) [cf. Mt 11.5 par. Lk 7.22]. Note that, from Matthew's perspective, Jesus' works are to be taken as a fulfilment of OT messianic prophecy. When, elsewhere in the NT, for instance, Mk 13.22, the term σημεῖα (signs) καὶ τέρατα (wonders) is ascribed to ψευδόχριστοι (false messiahs) and ψευδόπροφῆται (false prophets), the apocalypse of Mark warns the disciples about pseudo-messiahs and pseudo-prophets who, at the end time, will appear and produce signs and wonders. It is in that sense that 2 Thess 2.9 has to be interpreted: 'The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders.' If then pseudo-prophets and pseudo-messiahs are able to produce signs, these are not definitive in the portrayal of the Messiah. In John's perspective, what is important is the lesson learned from the miracle when it provokes faith.

(iii) Another hint at Messiahship in the Jewish tradition is that the Messiah was to be born not in Galilee, but in David's village of Bethlehem (John 7.42). The Messiah was thought of as a second David. In accordance with that belief, it would be natural to assume that he would be like David in respect of his place of his birth as well as in other respects. While Matthew and Luke wrote in an apologetic vein and situated Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, the FE does not rest his argument for the Messiahship of Jesus upon either his descent from David, or his birth in Bethlehem. Jesus, according to him, is not the Messiah of Jewish expectation, but a more august figure (Dodd 1953:91). Jesus' origin is mysterious since his real place of origin is above (Lincoln 2005:258). Since he comes from another world and he works signs in a more profound sense than anything the Jews expected to see, and while his death seems to be his end, it in fact becomes the climax and seal of his manifestation as the eternal Saviour of the world.

The very last referential passage is John 12.34: 'We have heard out of the Torah that the Messiah abides for ever'. According to Is 9.6, the king who is to come will rule 'for ever'. Consequently, for the Jews, Jesus' own allusion to his approaching death signifies that he cannot be the Messiah. The Messiah is not to die but to rule 'for ever', and hence the Jews must view the death of Jesus as a logical and fatal disqualification from messiahship (Dodd 1953:92).

7.5.2.4 Conclusion: Messiahship in John

In John's outlook, Jesus' miracles are designated 'signs' that reveal his origin (Tilborg 1996:118) and identity. They are not connected to the notion of messiah. The Gospel of John is unique in its report that Jesus directly asserted that he was both the Messiah and the Son of Man. Jesus was thought to be the Mosaic Prophet but taking into account the complexity of the numerous expectations regarding the Prophet and the Messiah, Jesus is presented as Son of Man. The Johannine Jesus, according to Cullmann (see Rhea 1990:67), knew that he had not come to fulfill the popular and traditional expectations related to either of the figures mentioned above. In John 9, and throughout the Gospel, it is no accident that the evangelist records Jesus' emphatic pronouncement that he is the Son of Man. As the Son of Man, observes Moloney (1996:128), Jesus is a figure who brings revelation of God in human history.

The healing of the man born blind is an intentional occasion to manifest God's works and the works through the one who was sent. This opens a provocative debate constructed around οἶδαμεν and οὐκ οἶδαμεν according to the following semantic relations.

7.5.3 Conflict in the synagogue

The conflict between the Jewish authorities and the Christian Church represented in the person of the blind man has to be examined around the themes of knowledge and faith. In this section, we will strive to understand it.

7.5.3.1 Semantic relations 'f' οἶδαμεν (between the Pharisees and the blind man who understands/knows?)

20.2 καὶ εἶπαν,

Οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς ἡμῶν καὶ ὅτι τυφλὸς ἐγεννήθη·

21 πῶς δὲ νῦν βλέπει οὐκ οἶδαμεν,

ἢ τίς ἤνοιξεν αὐτοῦς τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦς ἡμεῖς οὐκ οἶδαμεν·

24.2 καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ,

Δὸς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ·

ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐστιν.

29 ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι Μωϋσεὶς λελάληκεν ὁ θεός,
 30.1 (...) ὅτι ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἶδαμεν πόθεν ἐστίν,
 31 οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτωλῶν ὁ θεὸς οὐκ ἀκούει,
 ἀλλ' ἐάν τις θεοσεβῆς ἦ καὶ τὸ Θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιῆ τούτου ἀκούει.

The verb οἶδα is abundantly used in these phrases, occurring seven times in as many verses (vv.20.2, 21 [twice], 24.2, 29, 30.1, 31). The pronounced concentration upon οἶδαμεν (affirmative form) and οὐκ οἶδαμεν (negative form) alternate in these phrases to show to what extent the two groups (Jews and Christians) are opposed with regard to some kind of knowledge. The choice of the verb οἶδα, its use in flexible manner, and the introduction of the figure of Moses cannot be gratuitous. It seems that John 9 provides some of the clearest and most straightforward instances of the objections raised by both Christians and Jews. The healing of the blind man and the debate that unfolds has theological and epistemological implications. The claim 'to know' or 'not to know' hides a kind of ideology.

7.5.3.2 The ideology construed around the claim 'to know' and 'not to know'

The pluralism in the Pharisaic group indicated above is constructed around Jesus' divine origin. The expression παρα θεοῦ lacks metaphysical significance (Bruce 1983:213) and is similar to the expression used for John the Baptist in John 1.6.¹⁹⁴ In Chapter 9, a group of the Pharisees contest Jesus' legitimacy. While the light is found operating in the healing of the man born blind, the Pharisees, who refuse to recognize such a fulfilment, base their argument on what they 'know' and 'do not know', an argument counter-balanced by what the better experienced healed man 'knows'. The verb οἶδα is abundantly used in John 9.¹⁹⁵ By applying it in an

¹⁹⁴ John the Baptist is reckoned as the man sent from God but whose function is to witness and testify to the light, for he was not himself the light (vv.6-8).

¹⁹⁵ Previously it was used for the neighbours and the parents' man only four times: firstly, for the blind man when his neighbours and acquaintances asked him where the man who opened his eyes is, he answered οὐκ οἶδα (v.12). Secondly, when his parents were asked to testify on how their son had been healed, they answered: 'we know (οἶδαμεν) that this is our son ... how then he now sees we do not know (οὐκ οἶδαμεν), and who opened his eyes we do not know (ἡμεῖς οὐκ οἶδαμεν) [cf. v20-21]. In this present section (v24-34), the verb οἶδα occurs 7 times, three times with reference to the healed man and four times with reference to

elastic manner to both the healed man and the Jewish authorities, the writer seeks to bring out the religious conflict between the opposing groups, Jews fighting against Christian Jews. The Jewish authorities, blinded to higher levels of quality, try to gather more data or more information without new insight (Ravindra 2004:120). They claim to *know* that the healer is not from God but a sinner (v. 24), and to *know* that God has spoken to Moses, but the *do not know* where Jesus is from (v. 29). The healed blind man is not prepared to go into the theoretical question of whether Jesus is a sinner or not. The experience of recovering of sight is *sui generis* in the light of v.25b (ἐν οἴδα ὃ τυφλὸς ὦν ἄρτι βλέπω = one thing I know, I was blind but now I see). Hitting the nail on the head, the formerly blind man, opposed to the Pharisees' principle, reacts: 'We know (οἴδαμεν) that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will' (v. 31).

In the light of the phrase ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν of v.24 (see also v.29), the emphatic 'we' of 'the Jews' is a reference to the Jewish authority they represent. This raises the existence of a theoretical principle on which their ideology is grounded.¹⁹⁶ The emphatic 'we' of the Pharisees' confession is contrasted with that of the blind man and the disbelief of the Pharisees is counter-balanced by the belief of the formerly blind man whose belief grows stronger (Lindars 1972:347). When the authorities say 'we know', they reject the marvellous restoration of sight because they cannot integrate it into their system of convictions (Zumstein 2003:173). The first οἴδα used for them is grounded on 'their fine points of theology' or 'theoretical and dogmatic assumptions' (Morris 1995:436-7), while its use for the blind man is grounded in 'his experience' (cf. Hobbs 1968:164). The concept of 'to know' is used as an expression carrying the weight of official Pharisaic ideology and is, at the same time, used by the church to assert its experience.

the Pharisees. I think that this abundant usage in a few verses led many scholars to claim that John 9 provides some of the clearest and most straightforward instances of the objections raised by both Christians and Jews.

¹⁹⁶ Nicodemus emphatically speaks on the authorities' behalf by asserting: 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God...' (John 3.2). Such an authority is matched by the man born blind with his own 'I know' of v. 25, based on his own experience. The Jews speak 'with responsibility and authority of Judaism, and correctly' (Barrett 1978:362). The repeated οἴδαμεν is emphasized by the pronoun ἡμεῖς of vv.24, 28 and 29 and in the appeal to Moses (cf. Schnackenburg 1980b:250-251). From the Jewish perspective there is no doubt that Jesus transgressed the Law by performing a healing on the Sabbath, which confirms that he is an ἁμαρτωλός.

The literary and theological interest attached to the choice of οἶδα has not yet been highlighted. Not one of the authors quoted so far discusses the privileged use of οἶδα in John 9. O'Day (1987:66) points out that the two verbs for knowing in Greek, γινώσκω and οἶδα, occur more frequently in the FG than in any other NT writing. Γινώσκω occurs fifty-seven times throughout the FG, while οἶδα appears eight times in Chapter 9 alone (v. 12, 20, 21ab, 24, 29, 30b, 31).

Excursus II: the use of γινώσκω and οἶδα

Even though John, dealing with 'knowing', uses these two verbs, it is striking that in Chapter 9 he uses only οἶδα and never γινώσκειν. O'Day (1987:66-7) comments on this as follows: It is even more striking when one realizes that 'oida' is actually derived from a Greek root for seeing (*id-*), in Chapter 9, the FE is establishing an intimate connection between sight and knowledge. His use of the verb that is semantically linked to verbs for seeing is not unrelated to his use of words with an innate double meaning in John 3.

De la Potterie (1959:710), dealing with the verb γινώσκειν asserts that it meant "to reach knowledge", that is the progress of thought which leads the knowledge to reach its outcome. In this respect, 'to know' cannot mean to possess or to acquire the knowledge but a progress of thought intending to reach knowledge. According to Kittel, in the FG, as in 1 John, γινώσκειν played a greater role than in another early Christian writings. It denotes emphatically the relationship to God and to Jesus as a personal fellowship in which each is decisively determined by the other in his own existence (see the use of εἶναι ἐν in John 10.38; 14.11; 17.21; cf. also 1 John 2.3, 5; 5.20, even εἶναι ἐν in 10.30). The mutual knowledge between the Father and the Son implies Jesus' relationship with the disciples (cf. John 10.14f., 27; cf. 7.29; 8.55; 15.1f.; 17.21). In consideration of this, γινώσκειν does not mean the knowledge of investigation, observation or speculation, nor of mystical vision remote from historical contacts or action, but the knowledge of ἀγάπη, since God is ἀγάπη. Direct knowledge of God is impossible since 'No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known' (John 1.18). That is why all pretended knowledge in the Jewish milieu was tested by the openness to Jesus' claim that he was the envoy of God (John 5.37f.; 7.28f.; 8.19). God does not exist except through revelation. To see and confess him is to see the Father (14.7-9; cf. 14.20; 1 John 5.20). To know Jesus, however, is not merely to have information about the circumstances of his life (6.42; 7.28). It is to understand his unity with the Father (10.38; 14.20; 16.3). One would then understand that to know Jesus does not mean a mystical relationship with him and an understanding of his obedience and love. It means seeing him as ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ, the one whom God has sent and who has sanctified himself for the world (14.31; 6.69; 17.3, 18f.). The Johannine view is paradoxically building on the γινώσκειν of Hellenistic Gnosticism, as Kittel contends: (1) γινώσκειν is combined and used interchangeably with verbs for seeing (John 14.7-9, 17, 19f.; 1 John 3.6; 4.14). Making such a link, the FE is obviously opposed to those who allege a non-historical

vision and knowledge of God. (2) The content of Jesus' teaching holds a dogma of the divine sonship of Jesus (7.26; 10.38; 14.20; 16.3; 17.7f.; 23, 25 etc). This dogmatic knowledge has become a source of serious controversy between Jesus and his opponents. (3) Obedience is called the criterion of *γινώσκειν*, yet the author does not identify it with *γινώσκειν*, but the later is actualized in obedience. (4) In the distinctive interrelating of *πιστεύειν* and *γινώσκειν*, one should notice that *γινώσκειν* denotes a full and true relationship to the object. It is not surprising to see that *γινώσκειν*, and not *πιστεύειν*, is used to describe the mutual relationship of the Father and the Son. There is an interrelatedness between *γινώσκειν* and *πιστεύειν* since the former is impossible where the word is not heard (8.43), that is where faith is refused (cf. John 5.24; 6.60 with 6.64, 69; 12.46-8; 17.8). To hear or to receive the word is to believe (for further details, consult Kittel 1964:711-3; Bultmann 1933:57-61).

To put it in its true perspective, De la Potterie argues that *γινώσκειν* must be translated as 'acknowledge' or 'understand'. All the texts De la Potterie refers to help to give one a glimpse of the progressive character of the disciples' knowledge (see John 12.16; 13.12, 28; 14.7a, 9; 8.28; 14, 6, 7, 20; 17.8 and 25) through Jesus' teaching. In order to reach knowledge, faith is initial insofar as it entertains a relation of anteriority to knowledge (De la Potterie 1959:720 note 1b). De la Potterie rightly points out that to be a disciple of Jesus is an ideal that is gradually realized in the deepening of the word of faith. To be a disciple of Jesus implies to penetrate truth.

The consideration of *γινώσκειν* as a higher stage of development of faith is very problematic since the act of 'to believe' is nothing other than an intermediary or preparatory step that will progressively be replaced by 'knowledge' does not make sense. Even Bultmann (1955), who conceives knowing in the FG as referring to the 'structural' quality of believing, does not sort out the problem. Kysar (1976:91) thinks that scholars who make fine distinctions between faith and knowing in the FG hold arguments that do not strain the evidence. The best analysis can be achieved by dividing some passage into two groups: In John 10.38 we read, 'But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, *believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.*' In this instance, 'to believe' precedes 'to know.' In John 17.8, the two actions are reversed: 'For the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and *know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me*' (see also 16.30 where 'to know' precedes 'to believe'. Following Kysar (1976:91-2), instead of trying to discover whether it is faith or knowing that comes first, other instances like John 6.69; 14.7 and 17.3, in which knowing and believing are used synonymously, have to be mentioned. John's usage does not follow a philosophical or epistemological perspective, but rather finds its background in the Hebraic sense of *yada* (the subject enters into personal and trusting relationship with another subject). Kysar (1976:92) concludes: 'Faith is the trusting personal relationship between two subjects. It is an interchange on a most intimate level. Belief must not then mean merely the intellectual acceptance of doctrine (...).' Faith is a personal relationship with God. It is in the person of the incarnate Christ that God makes himself known and visible.

The verb *οἶδα*, whose root *id-* means to see, entertains a character of vision, for the verb designates acknowledgement of an intuitive order, a direct understanding by means of thought, which Taylor calls 'acknowledgment by insight or intuition'

[see De la Potterie, (1959:711). Moulton (2002:109) attributes the same sense to οἶδα, which derivates from the root *weido* (discover, descry). In his opinion, the primitive perfect οἶδα might have the sense of ‘I discovered (εἶδον) and still enjoy the results’. It holds the same radical (εἶδ- οἶδ- ἰδ-) with the aorist 2 εἶδον of the verb ὁράω ‘I saw’. ὁράω, and especially εἶδον, are the most common verbs used for seeing. In that sense, the perfect tenses used in this chapter bear the sense of vision of things the Jewish authorities strived to reach. The analysis made by De la Potterie is very interesting insofar as he went further than his predecessors [Dodd 1953:152; Schnackenburg 1980:135 note 4], who treated γινώσκειν and οἶδα as being synonymous. The weakness of his analysis is that he indicates the different uses of οἶδα without adding depth from the text. He rightly points out the use of οἶδα with ὅτι, preceded by ἐν and with the negative οὐκ (De la Potterie 1959:712). Whenever οἶδα in John 9 is used with ὅτι, it refers to something universally known and admitted by all. In reading John 9.24, 29 and 31, one might ensure on the one hand that in the Jewish religious framework it was commonly held that Jesus, by healing on the Sabbath, was nothing other than a sinner or a law-breaker (v.24). Moses was proudly held up as an agent of God through whom God spoke to Israel (v.29). Yet on the other hand, the blind man, as a Jew, proposed to them another religious argument, likewise commonly known, that while God does not listen to sinners, he *does* listen to one who worships him and obeys him (v. 31). There are, in John, other occurrences of οἶδα along with ὅτι (John 3.2; 4.42; 16.30; 21, 24 and 19.10). When οἶδα is preceded by ἐν (v.25b), the blind man is expressing absolute certainty, as it would be if οἶδα appeared with its direct complement (6.42) in order to assert a perfect knowledge without any doubt. Here οἶδα is used in the negative form – οὐκ οἶδα – which bears an absolute character. The blind man finds it difficult to accept the ‘knowledge’ of ‘the Jews’.

7.5.3.3 Summary on the theological meaning couched in the use of οἶδα

In light of De la Potterie and Kittel’s analysis, the verb γινώσκειν reinforces the process of the acquisition of knowledge. Moreover, οἶδα bears a sense of possessing certainty about which one may feel confident. This is valuable in both for the Jews holding Moses to be θεῖος ἀνὴρ and for the blind man’s experience of the divine. Each of them represents a group, and each of them is aware of possessing certainty. The absoluteness of Jewish convictions must have lead to ideology. As for the blind man, his conviction is grounded upon an intuition, the experience with the divine that constructs his unshakeable faith, putting him on the Church’s side: ‘We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will’ (v31). The choice of οἶδα underscores the tension between the Synagogue overbidding its certainties by means of the repeated ‘we know’ (v24, 29), and the Church through the man born blind opposing his detractors with knowledge

more radical (Léon-Dufour 1990:344) that cannot be challenged. This will be more thoroughly discussed in the section consecrated to ‘the disciples of Moses versus disciples of Jesus’ towards the end of this study.

The second perfect οἶδα stemming from the radical *eid/oid/id* might signify ‘to see with a best insight’, that is, to make a best representation of something or to sketch its exact image. When the ‘Jews’ and even the healed man say οἶδαμεν, it implies that all of them are comforted in knowledge attained with a great clarity (when something is known since it is seen as it is). On the grammatical plane, the verb is used for both in the same sense. However, the contrast between the two might be theological since behind any claimed knowledge is indubitably the perception of the divine. The ‘Jews’ are unshakably convinced by their insight that Moses is the one to come from God, and the man born blind, representing the church, is convinced by the experience of the divine through his healing. The conflict, I am tempted to assert, becomes an ‘epistemological’ conflict, as we shall endeavour to show later on.

7.5.4 Common social and cultural topics in John 9

This section deals with the common social and cultural topics that characterize the first-century Mediterranean world as they are evident in Chapter 9. Common social and cultural topics (honour and shame; patron and client) have to be described here in accordance with the social and cultural world in which the text functions and which John 9 hints at in relating to discipleship. This is helpful to our understanding of a world very different from ours, from which the text comes, and in which the followers of Jesus, in those days, while being shamefully treated in that they were excluded from the synagogue, thought and acted as clients showing honour to their master, thus disputing, so to speak, the honour granted to Moses who was conceived as God’s broker.

7.5.4.1 Honour and shame

Honour relates to a person’s rightful place in society. Both honour and shame were major elements in the first-century Mediterranean world, as Malina puts it: ‘An honor status is ascribed the day one is born, is derived from the social standing that

one's family has, and has always had, in the village or city' (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:121, 123). Everyone is supposed to act in his/her appropriate social roles. When people do not, they are then either labelled as deviants or prominents, depending upon the point of view of the audience. Wherever honour is appropriated without the public's recognition, it turns into a shameful or foolish act.

The debate that often takes place between Jesus and the 'Jews' revolves around honour and shame. In John 9 and in related texts as well, the honour-shame concept is present in connection with Jesus and the disciples represented by the blind man. The conflict that arises in Chapter 9 takes place against the background of Chapter 5 and is developed in Chapter 10. In the light of John 5.18, 'the Jews rightly understand that Jesus makes himself equal to God in these words, and so for their ears it is an insane blasphemy (...)' (Bultmann 1971:244). Convinced of his blasphemy, the Jews sought to kill Jesus, not only because he was breaking the Sabbath, but also he was calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God (5.18). Furthermore, in Chapter 10, the Jews almost stone Jesus for blasphemy, telling him: 'because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God' (vv31-4). Given the hostility apparent in these chapters, it is no surprise that the Jews vividly oppose Jesus by taking his dignity as a shameful and blasphemous perception of his own. Jesus responds that he does not honour himself, but is honoured by the Father/the one who sent him.

It is arguable that the evangelist's concern is to emphasize that Jesus' honour originates from his relationship to God and that he works in total dependence upon the Father (5.19) and on behalf of God, who gives him the right and the power to execute his work (Beasley-Murray 1987:75). The evangelist's refutation of the shamefulness of Jesus' own consideration lies in Chapter 5. *First and foremost*, Jesus has a greater witness than of that of John the Baptist, that is, the works the Father gave him to do (v.36). *Second*, quite a number of God's traits are not only mentioned, but are also extended to Jesus, more specifically, the power to raise the dead and to give them life to the extent that the Father has given the judgment to the Son (5.19, 21-2; cf. Tolmie 1998:65-6), 'so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father' (5.23). It seems that Jesus' δόξα needed to be 'seen' through his incarnation and works (1.14; 11.40; 12.41; 17.24). The openness to the δόξα

manifested through Jesus' mighty work implies faith. However, the failure to believe is explained as originating from the 'competition for 'honor' on a purely human level' (Piper 2001:284) in light of Jesus' saying, 'how can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God' (5.44; cf also 7.18; 12.43). The terminology of competition for 'honour' may be detected throughout the Book of Signs where some figureheads of Jewish religious imagery are indicated. Among them may be cited Abraham, held as greater than Jesus (8.52-58), a group of Baptist sectarians insisted on giving undue preeminence to this master instead of to Jesus to the extent that the FE stresses his role as witness (and not the light) through whom all might believe (1.-8), and that John is not the Messiah (1.19f.; 3.28) or the bridegroom, but the bridegroom's friend (3.29). In John 9, the 'Jews' proudly assert that they know that God has spoken to Moses, but they do not know where Jesus comes from (9.28). The Pharisaic group, struggling for the survival of Judaism under threat from this new faith, makes an agreement to expel from the synagogue whoever confesses Jesus to be the Messiah (9.22).

The evangelist's purpose is to transform the shameful act of being 'cast out of the synagogue' (9.22; 12.42; 16.2-3) into a way of 'being selected out of the world' (15.19; 17.6) [Piper 2001:301]. That is the case of the blind man in John 9. Toward the end of the chapter, Jesus, after having heard that they had driven him out (v.34), finds him and calls him to believe in him as the Son of Man (v.35). As Piper (2001:301) pointedly notes: 'a potential badge of shame is being portrayed as an exclusive privilege'. A privilege for Jesus' disciples insofar as the Father will honour whoever serves the one he sent (12.26), and at the same time Jesus, who used the metaphor of a grain of wheat that must fall into the earth and die, or it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit (12.24). In this pericope (12.20-6), where the Greeks make a request to see Jesus,¹⁹⁷ it is amazing that Jesus, to whom

¹⁹⁷ These Greeks who have come to Jerusalem are definitely the so-called proselytes that enjoyed attending Jewish feasts. Their request to see Jesus stems from their desire to become acquainted with him (cf. Bultmann 1971:422). In Schnackenburg's opinion (1980b:381), the Greeks are not Greek-speaking Jews, but Greeks by birth (cf. 7.35) who have adopted Judaism as full or semi-proselytes. Presented as ones who went to worship God at the feast, this implies that they are 'God-fearers' who were not allowed to share in the Passover meal. Considering the preceding verse: 'The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, you can

the request is addressed by both Philip and Andrew, instead of answering the question, takes the opportunity to emphasize that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. The evangelist, with outstanding artistry, found a suitable conclusion for Jesus' public activity by looking ahead to Jesus' crucifixion (vv 24, 32) treated as the hour of the Son of Man's 'lifting up' (vv 23, 32) and therefore of Jesus' glorification (vv 31-2; cf. Schnackenburg 1980b:380). The irony surrounding Jesus' death, despite the whole commitment of the 'Jewish authorities,' is not the termination of his activity. Death, to be understood through the chosen image of the grain of wheat that falls onto the earth, dies, and at the end bears much fruit (v.24), brings life not only for Jesus but also for all those who follow and serve (v.26) him. The FE does his best to depict the shame of the cross as Jesus' 'glorification' and 'lifting up'. While the world (the Jews) thinks that it is dishonouring Jesus by putting him on the cross, paradoxically, his death becomes the way back to the Father who sent him and who will glorify him (16.4b, 14).

In John 9, while worship had to take place in the Temple, the man, surprisingly, is shown worshipping Jesus where he encounters him. Three passages are helpful in showing the measure in which Jesus has become the recipient of honour reserved for the Father (John 9.38 deals with the worship of Jesus, while 12.42 with 'confessing' and 16.2 with 'offering service to God'). According to Thompson (2001:223), 'these verses speak of belief in and confession, and perhaps worship, of Jesus, practices that lead to expulsion from the synagogue'. Martyn and Dunn point out that Johannine Christology, particularly worship of Jesus, consecrates a 'parting of the ways' between the church and the synagogue (Thompson 2001:223).

7.5.4.2 Patron and client

During the last two decades, the patron-client relationship has received more attention since the social structure of patronage, present in antiquity,¹⁹⁸ is evoked in

do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!" ' (12.19), one understands that the Greeks represent the Gentile world desiring to follow Jesus and who are not excluded from being honoured by the Father if they follow and serve the Son (12.26).

¹⁹⁸ For a full investigation of the patron-broker-client model, cf. A Wallace-Hadrill (1989), *Patronage in Ancient Society*; JH Elliott, 'Patronage and Clientelism in Early Christian Society: A Short Reading Guide.' In *Forum* (1987), 3.4, 39-48; BJ Malina, 'Patron and

NT literature. While Elliott and Malina confidently argue that God as benefactor-patron and Jesus as broker are central themes in the synoptic gospels (Elliott 1987:3, 4, 39-48; Malina (1996:143-75), Malina's social-scientific commentary opens a window on the FG. Jesus serves clearly as a broker between God and those who become 'children of God' by believing in him (2.12; 1 John 3.1), and receive the gift of eternal life/abundant life or simply life (John 3.16; 10.10; 17.2; 20.31; 1 John 5.13). Jesus is also broker giving access to the Father (14.6). Likewise Jesus is the broker for the sending of the Holy Spirit (14.26; 15.26). Patron-client relationships are so prevalent throughout the world at all times and may be summarized in these terms:

Patronage is a model or analytical construct which the social scientist applies in order to understand and explain a range of apparent different social relationships: father-son, God-man, saint-devotee, godfather-godchild, lord-vassal, landlord-tenant, politician-voter, professor-assistant, and so forth. All these different sets of social relationships can thus be considered from one particular point of view which may render them comprehensible.¹⁹⁹

In Malina's view (1998:118), patrons are powerful individuals who control resources and are expected to use their position to hand out favours to inferiors, the clients whose survival depends on the largesse of patrons.²⁰⁰ Brokers mediate between patrons above and clients below (1998:118).²⁰¹ Clients owe, in return, loyalty and public honour to the patron or the broker mediating the goods and services the patron intends to offer (1998:119).

In the Graeco-Roman world, holy men or prophets could also act as brokers. In John 6, when the people saw what Jesus had done, they proclaimed that he was

Client. The Analogy behind Synoptic Theology.' in *Forum* 4.1 (1988), 2-32; Halvor Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom*, 22-47, and *Id.*, 'Patron-client Relations and the New Community of Luke-Acts, in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 241-68.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. A Block, as quoted by H Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom*, 41.

²⁰⁰ Benefactor-patrons were expected to generously support city, village or client. The Roman emperor related to major public officials inasmuch as cities related to towns and towns to villages in the same way. Throughout New Testament writings, God is seen as the ultimate patron.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* First-order resources like land, jobs, goods, funds, power, are all controlled by patrons. Second-order resources like strategic contact with brokers who mediate the goods and services a patron has to offer will control access to the patron. This is clearly a role in which John casts Jesus 'You are from below, I am from above' (John 8.23). He also makes clear that the Patron (God, Father) has given his resources to the Son and has placed all things in his hands' (3.35).

indeed the Prophet who has to come into the world, and wished forcibly to make him king of Israel (vv.14-5). The people's reaction in 6.14 not only depicts them as clients (as we said elsewhere) but also their reaction is motivated by the divine signs and wonders performed by Jesus, which are 'legitimizers of a prophet's divine commission' (Anderson 1996:176). In John's view, Jesus' signs serve the function of confirming the divine origin of his mission, and yet the signs serve the eventual kingship of popular conception. All four evangelists present Jesus as willing to distance himself from the contemporary Zealots and revolutionaries. Anderson (1996:179) contends:

The Johannine version of Jesus' fleeing into the hills to escape the crowds in John 6.15 may even be more accurate historically than the more pietistic Marcan version (Mk 6.46), where he does so in order to pray. Politically, Jesus may have wanted to distance himself from the likes of Judas the Galilean, and other Mosaic or Davidic pretenders to kingship. As the 'One sent from Yahweh', in keeping with the Prophet-like-Moses tradition, the Johannine Jesus is portrayed as restoring the spokesman Moses, and his successors. Therefore, not only is the Prophet-like-Moses motif understandable as a central way in which Jesus' ministry would have been interpreted messianically by Galilean and Samaritan audiences, but it may also represent the early Christological posture of the evangelist and is also at least partially responsible for the evangelist's ambivalence toward the signs and the lack of any Davidic allusions within John's Christology.

As Prophet, he should be taken as broker, but the attempt to make him King makes Jesus more than that. Malina and Rohrbaugh point out that king were not simply the political equivalent of 'presidents', but had total control of and responsibility for their subjects; they were expected to provide them with fertility, peace and abundance (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:126). When Jesus supplied them with bread, the people were ready to believe that he was not only the Prophet, but the expected King; thus Jesus was taken as a Prophet-King. The Johannine language, in this context, is a 'patronage language applied to Jesus forty-three times' (1998:118). Jesus is not only the miracle worker, but the one 'sent' by God the Father whose role is indeed that of the heavenly patron, the provider of bread. By acclaiming Jesus as prophet-king, people confirm themselves as clients²⁰² of the heavenly patron.

²⁰² Clients are those dependent on the largesse of patrons or brokers to survive well in their society. They owe loyalty and public acknowledgment of honour in return (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:119).

In John 9, we see the Pharisees' concern for safeguarding the unity and identity of the Judaism of Diaspora by conceiving Moses as broker, the only one acting on the heavenly patron's behalf since God spoke to him (v.29). While the Pharisees treat Jesus with contempt, ἄμαρτωλός (v.25), the blind man takes another way since the experience of recovering his sight is irrefutable. Then he asserts εἰ ἄμαρτωλος ἐστίν οὐκ οἶδα· ἐν οἶδα ὅτι τυφλὸς ὦν ἄρτι βλέπω (whether he is a sinner I do not know; one thing I know: I was blind but now I see!). Yet the Johannine community that the blind man represents takes Jesus to be the broker through whom God is at work (v.33).

The agreement to expel Christians from the synagogue was a test of loyalty for both groups. The conflict that takes place is nothing other than 'a competition between brokers'²⁰³ for God the heavenly patron. Piper, although aware of its different meanings, skillfully applies the term κόσμος (world) to the society of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι or the synagogue (7.1 compared to 7.7 and 16.2), notes that both the community of believers and the synagogue make claims to possess God's favour. All of them are clients in competition for such patronage (Piper 2001:299). Unfortunately Piper fails to demonstrate, in the light of John 9, how the conflict within the synagogue could be connected with brokerage. The *Sitz-im-Leben* of the FG is the context of monotheistic belief, unlike a polytheistic one, where various deities may compete among themselves for clients who may be seeking their patronage (Piper 2001:302). The social system that John 9 evokes, on the contrary, is not upset by any one individual or group's claim to favour from any one deity, but both groups (Judaism and Christianity) are competing for only one patron. The FE tries his best to set Jesus beyond all the brokers, especially Moses, and all Jewish institutions, namely the Temple and the synagogue.

The readiness to worship Jesus makes the man aware that he is in the presence of the deity. In Jewish tradition, it was 'unconscionable to ascribe the traits of deity to a man and to worship him' (Koester 2003:109). In the Mediterranean world, the patron was called lord by the client who offers a traditional gesture of

²⁰³ I owe this expression to Piper (2001:297) who sees a competition between brokers, namely Moses (1.17, 45; 5.46; 6.32, 49), John the Baptist (1.8, 15, 20-23, 27, 30ff; 3.28-30; 4.1; 5.36), other heavenly ascents (3.13), the angels (1.51), Abraham (8.52f, 56-8), the prophets (1.45; 8.52f), including Isaiah (12.41), and the religious leaders (3.10; 10.1ff; 12.19).

worship associated with patronage.²⁰⁴

At the end of Chapter 9, the blind man acknowledges Jesus as the Son of Man and worships him. Jesus is presented as the *locus* of the worship of God, as a palliative to the need for a temple which no longer existed. By believing in and adoring Jesus the Son of Man (9.38), the blind man fulfils one of the primary duties of a client, which is to praise the patron in public (Malina 1998:173), since public and proper credit was to be given wherever it was due.

7.5.4.3 Conclusion: common social and cultural topics

Chapter 9 depicts, on the one hand, the relationship between Jesus and his followers and, on the other hand, between Moses and his admirers by the honour-shame and patron-client schema that was preponderant in the first-century Mediterranean world. While the Jewish authorities give public acknowledgement to Moses, aware that God spoke to him (v.29), but ignore Jesus' origin, the Christian church represented by the blind man shows him public honour. The unheard-fact of healing a man born blind confirms that Jesus is from God or God's envoy. The evangelist's genius transforms the act of expulsion from the synagogue as a privilege and an opportunity to take a step further in publicly honouring Jesus as the Son of Man and Lord. From the backdrop of the conflict around the question about who really is God's broker, Moses or Jesus, the FE sets Jesus beyond all (Moses included). The blind man fulfils the primary duties of a client by praising the patron in public.

7.6 Final culture categories in connection with discipleship

In this section, the focus will be on how the community of disciples saw themselves in relation to the larger society, and how they 'bought into' the imperium language and transformed it within their own language. Three features may be identified in John 9, namely (i) how the Johannine Community challenged the

²⁰⁴ The gesture of falling down before a person and kissing the hem of his garment, his feet, or the ground on which he walks. This posture was a means for the clients to ask favours of a patron (Malina 1998:174).

dominant culture towards the end of the First Century; (ii) how the anti-language in the FG functions; and (iii) the rhetoric projected into Christological titles given to Jesus.

7.6.1 How did, towards the end of the first century, the Johannine community challenge the dominant culture?

Christology appears in the titles associated with Jesus, which find their origin in the historical context of the polemical social interaction. It is not possible to read John 9 without being struck by the writer's reconstruction of contemporary history, and the consequent reflection on the way Jesus was spoken about and of the nature of first-century Jewish religion, mythmaking²⁰⁵ and social formation.²⁰⁶ The Johannine community was living amidst the discontinuities of life. The author, as representative

²⁰⁵ It should be remembered that mythmaking, in McCutcheon's understanding (2000:206), is the preeminent means for creating cognitive and social continuity amidst the discontinuities of life. Mack and other scholars like Smith see religion as a 'social construct' belonging to all the people of a certain culture. In its expression, religion encompasses the myths, rituals, symbols, beliefs and patterns of thinking shared by them. *Myths* stimulate people to think critically about the present state of a group's life when re-reading the past. Through myths people define their group and identify themselves in relation to a larger world. *Rituals* are social occasions or events through which the group is structured, i.e. certain activities or events that give significance to the group. Religion, by definition, refers to systems of belief and patterns of ritual that enable individuals to experience contact with a transcendent order of spiritual reality. Religion is not to be regarded primarily as an attempt of human beings to attain the divine, but rather as a human creation on equal footing with the other systems of signs and patterns of practices that humans have invented to structure their societies. The role of religion is to structure the society and to give significance to people living at a specific place at a given time and situated in a given context. In order to understand early Christianity, it is necessary to analyze how its various myths in the light of New Testament texts, have been constituted and for which purpose. Jesus is to be viewed as an agent of the past whose image has been manipulated in a mythic way. Thinking critically about the present state of opposition and persecution of Christian groups, they imagined the way to survive.

²⁰⁶ Social formation, observes Mack (2001:68-70), deals with the human enterprise of seeking to survive within the many tensions or discontinuities of their existence. Mack and other scholars like Smith view religion as a 'social construct' belonging to all the people of a certain culture, sharing the myths, rituals, symbols, beliefs and patterns of thinking. It is important to recall that by myths people define their group and identify themselves in relation to a larger world; and through rituals which are social occasions or events that give significance to the group. That is why myths and rituals are seen as phenomena of the social and cultural constructs called 'religion.' And the world projected by religious myth and ritual is imagined as the location of divine agents capable of influencing human life in ways not matched by a human capacity to influence the divine. Mythmaking and social formation are the human enterprise of seeking to survive in the context of crises.

of the community, reconstructs the history of the Church to manipulate the image of Jesus, an agent of the past and the historical event of the healing of the blind man, in order to attribute a specific significance to the drama that the Church is facing. The Gospel, as other Gospels, is a literary work rhetorically constructed in order to resist the rigid hierarchies of Jewish leaders in the Graeco-Roman world.

The evangelist ingeniously shows how people, living in a context of persecution, came to think critically about the present state of things when thinking about how the past gives significance to the present. One needs to investigate the text's language to see how the evangelist constructed the social and cultural world exhibited to the reader. How then does John 9 reflect the world from which it originates?

The type of world projected and constructed in this text can be understood primarily through the concept of sin that appears at the beginning (v.2-3) and at the end (v. 41) of the story of John 9. The first-century Mediterranean culture was dominated by the question of 'who' or 'what' was behind disease (Crosby 2000:88-9). People believed that blindness was caused by some kind of separation from God or by sin (see Gen 19.11; Deut 28.28; II Kings 6.18) or by demonic powers. All the Mediterranean contemporaries of Jesus and his followers believed in the commonly shared explanations about the origins of sickness, of the body and of the spirit, and the proper way to deal with sickness (Malina, & Rohrbauch 1998:176). It is this culturally defined ideology that reflected the question of Jesus' disciples, an ideology identifying sickness with sin. Jesus makes a clear break from the prevailing religiously legitimated view. From that time (towards the end of the first century), the Johannine community was convinced that sin was not an ontological reality, but rather a reality deeply rooted in unbelief. Sin is not natural, but rather it is unbelief displayed in the rejection of the revelation brought to earth by the Son of Man. Pretending to be able to see or to be illuminated with the light of the Law, as interpreted by Jewish tradition and grounded on Moses, is the real sin that calls forth judgment. I will refer once again to this issue of sin and judgment at the end of the present work.

The world projected by the text can also be understood in terms of the concepts used in the text (synagogues, the Jews and Pharisees), which refer to the

Mediterranean world. The power to open the eyes of the blind, in the Mediterranean world, was attributed to various deities. Vespasian, for instance, was not expected to become emperor as he belonged to an undistinguished family and attained his imperial position by an indirect route, and therefore lacked authority. It is testified that he worked miracles, including the healing of a blind man and a man with a lame leg, who had appeared together before him from among the people. Both miracles exalted Vespasian above normal human stature (Klauck 2000:308) and served to ideologically legitimate him and his power while it was still fragile.²⁰⁷ It is indispensable to the interpretation of the story of the paralyzed man (John 5) and the miracle of the man born blind (John 9), to keep in mind the reputation of Vespasian as a miracle-worker. Jesus is likewise presented as a miracle-worker. Jesus' power was not fragile like Vespasian's, but I believe his legitimacy was very much at stake in the Graeco-Roman world of the Johannine Church at the end of the first century. The community of the disciples, as a counter-cultural group, successfully endeavoured to legitimate Jesus as God's agent. The theme of Christology is also a means to see how the different titles attributed to Jesus throughout the narrative of John 9 stem from the social and cultural context.

7.6.2 John's antilanguage

The members of the community adopted their own language, described as the 'insider antilanguage' of the gospel (Kysar 2007:4; cf Duling 2003:417). This is a sort of esoteric jargon which some readers are not supposed to understand, a transcendental language within which is encased the secret of life (Kysar 2007:5). The members of the community used a language opposed to that of outsiders, referred to

²⁰⁷ The same witness is given by Suetonius (see Wendy Cotter 1999:42) in these words: 'Vespasian as yet lacked prestige and a certain divinity, so to speak, since he was an unexpected and still new-made emperor; but these also were given him. A man of the people [i.e. in Alexandria] who was blind, and another who was lame, came to him together as he sat on the tribunal, begging for help for their disorders which Serapis had promised in a dream; for the god declared that Vespasian would restore the eyes, if he would spit upon them, and give strength to the leg, if he would deign to touch it with his heel. Though he had hardly any faith that this could possibly succeed, and therefore shrank even from making the attempt, he was at last prevailed upon by his friends and tried both things in public before a large crowd; and with success.'

by Brown as (1) ‘the world,’ holding the values of Mediterranean society; (2) the ‘Jews’ grounded on traditional religious values; and (3) the followers of the Baptizer who are competitors (Brown 2003:69-78). In that sense, John’s community developed as an antisociety or an alternative society using the insider language conceived by sociolinguists as antilanguage.

Any study of the FG has more to do with its language, for ‘[the] language is an effective and descriptive kind of social interaction. Hence, it is possible to construct a socio-historical context from the way in which people in a specific location at a particular point of time in history used language.’²⁰⁸ Malina (1994:178) points out that the language of the FG is an antilanguage, otherwise apologetic jargon, which led to the perception of the Johannine community as an *antisocietal* group (Petersen 1993:5; cfr. Also Onuki 1984:26; Halliday 1978:164-182), an alternative community embedded in a larger society designated as ‘this world of the Judeans’ (Lombard 1998:499, referring to Lombard 1995:260ff).²⁰⁹ The so-called ‘antilanguage’ is a mode of resistance to a larger society, the Johannine community being aware of the necessity to find in it an alternative to express its social experience within the world where they were labelled deviants, sinners, unbelievers and even atheists. Seeking to know how the antilanguage functions in the FG one notices, according to Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:10-1) that:

John’s Gospel points to people being socialized, for antilanguage exists solely in a social context of resocialisation. Like any other language, it is a means of realizing meanings from the social system of the society in question. It is a means of expressing perceptions of reality as interpreted by persons socialized in that social system (...) but antilanguage creates and expresses an interpretation of reality that is inherently an alternative reality, one that emerges precisely in order to function as an alternative to society at large.

208 According to Botha (1996:257), ‘any literary text, such as John’s Gospel, reflects or displays an authentic hard core image of the spirit, face and dealings of the community it represents and endeavours to serve. This means that, in terms of the dynamics of language and its use as a creative social event for intelligible communication, sociolinguistics justify the following observation. The social structures and groupings, value systems, preferences in life, and profound creedal sentiments or convictions which direct and guide the conduct of everyday life, are demonstrably apparent in ancient and modern literary documents. These social dimensions are usually expressed in the form and idiosyncrasies (semantic idiom) best suited for successful communication with a particular community.’

209 For Malina, ‘the Gospel does not present the beliefs and attitudes of group members that led to their expulsion by others. Rather John’s Gospel reflects the alternate reality John’s group set up in opposition to its opponents, notably “this world” and “the Judeans” ’ (1994:175).

From that point of view, the antilanguage, as the bearer of social reality, serves to maintain inner solidarity in the face of pressure from the wider society from which group members stem, and in which they are to a large extent still embedded (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:11). In this sense, antilanguage goes hand in hand with antisociety. That is why, as Petersen notes, the language used by the FE serves as a way to convey the message about Jesus to the original audience of the FG. He concludes that such a language is a blend of everyday, ordinary language and a 'special language' suitable to the Johannine community (Petersen 1993:89; see also Lombard 1998:503). The FE uses his 'special language', an ordinary one transformed into an antilanguage that served to distinguish Johannine believers from their opponents. It is not 'antilanguage' unless it derives its terms from the 'language' of their persecutors. To be sure, one can look at John 18.33 and 36 where Pilate asked Jesus: 'Are you the King of the Jews?' and Jesus answered: 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' The token 'king of the Jews', Petersen (1993:89) notes, makes concrete reference to Pilate's everyday language, but Jesus' reply is nothing other than an antilanguage, since though Jesus accepts Pilate's notion of 'King of the Jews', he denies its everyday referent by opposing to it: 'My kingship is not of this world.'

Jesus' kingship is clearly not an earthly kingship. In the light of his confrontation with Pilate (see John 18.33 – 19.11), the conversation in 18.33-8 turns around two contrasting empires and two contrasting emperors (Cassidy 1992:44-50). Moreover, in 19.14-5, when the chief priests claim 'we have no king but the emperor', they are seemingly telling Pilate that Jesus has claimed for himself a position that rightly belongs to Caesar who, in imperial mythology, is referred to by the title 'Son of God' (Reed 2006:97). Jesus states that his kingdom is not of this world, and adds that if he were an earthly king, his followers would have fought for him. This is an implicit reference to revolutionary messianic movements.²¹⁰ Several

²¹⁰ Around Jesus' time, within Jewish popular movements, could be found some 'charismatic kings' who attracted peasants committed to the struggles against social-economically difficult conditions. Those Jewish peasants could abandon their homes to follow a prophet into the wilderness, or rise in rebellion against either Jewish or Roman overlords when the

popular Jewish leaders, in Josephus' terms, 'laid claim to the kingdom', 'donned the diadem' or 'were proclaimed king' by their followers. Among them must be cited Judas,²¹¹ Simon²¹² and Athronges.²¹³ All of those popular messianic movements and royal pretenders, at their head, have some shared characteristics (For details, see Hosley and Hanson 1985:114-5).

The principle goal of these movements was to overthrow Herodian and Roman domination and to restore the traditional ideals of a free and egalitarian society. The popular leaders recognized as kings by their followers led armed revolts, in the line of the long Israelite-Jewish tradition of popular anointed kingship, against the Romans and even their upper-class Jewish collaborators. Jesus' refusal to be viewed as a king of that kind may be found in his reply to Pilate in John 18-19, where he presents himself as King of another world and not an earthly king such as those mentioned above. Jesus, by insisting that his kingship is not 'of this world' demonstrates that his kingship is not of Israelite origin (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:257).

Jesus refers to himself as a king of another kind, a witness to the truth, God's supreme and final envoy (De Jonge 2000:219). Jesus' reply to Pilate is full of meaning for the Johannine group, for Jesus was born and came 'into the world' – in the dominant society – to bear truthful witness. Therefore, people who are 'of the truth', believers, hear and understand what he means (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:257). The Jewish unwillingness to believe in him excludes them from the group

signal was given by the charismatic 'king'. Cf. Horsley & Hanson 1985:50.

²¹¹ Judas was the son of the brigand-chief Ezechias, who had been a man of great power. He was captured by Herod, only with great difficulty, after he had organised at Sephoris in Galilee a large number of desperate men and raided the palace. Taking all the weapons that were stored there, he armed all of his followers and made off with all the goods that had been seized there. He caused fear in everyone by plundering those he encountered in his craving for greater power and in his zealous pursuit of royal rank. He did not expect to acquire this prize by being virtuous, but by the advantage of his superior strength. (see *Ant* 17.271-72 as quoted by Horsley & Hanson 1985:112).

²¹² He was a servant of King Herod, but otherwise an imposing man in both size and bodily strength, and he was confident of distinguishing himself. Spurred on by chaotic social conditions, he dared to don the diadem. When he had organised some men, he was also proclaimed king by them in their fanaticism, and he thought himself more worthy of this than anyone else. He set fire to numerous other royal residences in many parts of the country and destroyed them, after allowing his followers to take the confiscated goods (see *Ant* 17.273-76 as quoted by Horsley & Hanson 1985:112).

²¹³ He was a man whose eminence derived neither from the renown of his forefathers, nor from the superiority of his character, nor the extent of his means. He was an obscure shepherd, yet remarkable for his stature and strength.

for whom he is the king, coming 'into the world' dominated by 'the Jews' and Pilate, the representative of Roman power.

In so doing, Jesus does not point to a new kingship, Petersen pursues, but rather to its difference from the referent Pilate had in mind.

The idea of believing 'into' Jesus in 9.35, in John's anti-language or a characteristic Johannine idiom, implies loyalty of a high order (Malina 1998:173), unlike a purely intellectual belief. Jesus' question is a challenge to the healed man as to whether he is prepared to be 'a part of his anti-society'. Here stands the collectivist character of relationships in ancient Mediterranean societies, where collectivist persons become embedded in one another (Malina 1998:130). The loyalty that has to characterize the believer was this kind of long-term solidarity with Jesus in the deepest of relationships. Through its own language, the Johannine community sets itself ideologically against the 'Jews'.

The community of the Beloved Disciple used its own language set against the larger Israelite, and especially the Judean society in which it remained and yet was in conflict with.

7.6.3 The rhetoric projected into Christological titles given to Jesus

In order to be understood, the FG should be situated in 'the setting of a large Graeco-Roman city and then in Western Asia Minor' (Van den Heever 1999:356). The imperium language that the author uses is to be seen as a reference to the first-century Graeco-Roman world. Referring to it, the FE transforms it into his own language which should be viewed as the foundation of the dominant world view. Very recently, Reed, rethinking John's social setting, finds a plausible explanation to the expulsion from the synagogue. He strives to demonstrate how, in using 'anti-language' in a 'hidden transcript', John's community members relexicalised the titles (Father, Saviour of the World, Son of God, Lord and God) reserved for the Roman emperor (2006:94-99). Jesus is depicted as an alternative to Caesar. The Gospel of John, as indicated above, ought to be read as a direct conversation with his Ephesian audience. All the names and titles given to Jesus (King, Son of God, Lord or *kyrios*, Saviour and God), as will be indicated in one of the following sections (Sacred texture of John 9), are given to supply answers to the question of Jesus' identity. In

the study of the FG, it goes without saying that the FE incorporates his own social context into the story of Jesus' life. The text of the Gospel of John, all in all, reflects the socio-political context of Ephesus (Van Tilborg 1996:26). The privileged approach of the present study has to rethink those many names in the light of the cult of emperor. The Gospel of John appropriates the language of imperium, in a polemical and utopian view, by portraying Jesus as anti-emperor. The title '*kyrios*,' 'Lord' applied to Jesus in John 9.38, in its usage throughout the first century, becomes an important indication of the divine character of the one so named (Tilborg 1996:41). The ingeniousness of John is notable. His language borrows from imperial discourse and yet, at the same time, he dissociates himself from the social reality of the ideology of his time. John's language enables one to look at the ideology of the Johannine community, aware of its alienation from the world that turned away from God's self-revelation through Jesus.

7.6.4 Conclusion: Final culture categories

The story of the blind man in Chapter 9 is a reconstruction of the history of the Church living amidst the discontinuities of life where sin is misinterpreted and Vespasian, as a miracle-worker, is thought to be a contender to Jesus. In order to resist, the community of disciples finds an alternative to express its social experience by using its own language in the environment where they are labelled sinners, deviants, unbelievers and/or atheists.

In maintaining their solidarity, they set themselves apart by expressing their experience by means of a suitable language giving significance to sin, not as an anthropological reality, but rather as lying in unbelief. They attribute such significance to Jesus' act of healing the man born blind that to them it proves beyond any doubt that Jesus is indeed God's agent, more than any divine man of Graeco-Roman world (be it miracle-worker or emperor). The imperium language perceptible in the titles given to Jesus seems to have been borrowed by the evangelist in order to rethink them, not in accordance with the epoch's social ideology, but by dissociating himself from it, aware that God's unrivalled revelation takes place in Jesus.

7.7 Conclusions: Social and cultural texture

Social and cultural categories are reflected in John 9, the text that evokes two different worlds – that of the ‘Jews’ and of the Christian Church – each with a particular world view that excludes the other. Dealing with discipleship in John has much to do with (i) *specific social topics* where ‘Jews’ and Pharisees do not constitute two different groups, but rather hint at an authoritative body struggling against Christians, towards the end of the first century in the Jewish era, as well as in the Diaspora. Concerned by the question of unity and self-definition, as well as the survival of Judaism, the Pharisees reached a formal decision regarding messianic faith in Jesus. The expulsion from the synagogue holds in social implications. The Johannine Christians who enjoyed fellowship with God and with other Jews within the synagogue, have been made ‘synagogueless’. They paid the price of social dislocation and alienation from their social and theological womb. Meanwhile, others were killed as heretics by their fellow Jews. The unacceptability of the Christian confession was due to the threat to, or violation of monotheism. Discipleship is related to *common social and cultural topics*. The debate shaped in Chapter 9, and elsewhere in the rest of the Book of signs, between Jesus and the ‘Jews’ is construed around honour and shame. While they see the dignity accorded to Jesus as shameful, the Johannine Jesus knows that he has been honoured by the Father. Reading John 9 in connection with discipleship, the shameful act of being ‘cast out of the synagogue’ (v.22; see also 12.42; 16.2-3) becomes an exclusive privilege. The healed man gives public honour to the Son of Man in worshipping him. While the Pharisees had unduly conceived Moses to be the broker, acting on the heavenly patron’s behalf, the blind man, through his experience of the divine through the recovery of his sight, fulfils the main duty of a client by making public acknowledgement to Jesus, the broker sharing equal dignity with the heavenly patron. Finally, *discipleship has to do with cultural categories*. The text of Chapter 9 is helpful in revealing how the community of disciples, living amidst the discontinuities of life, used what scholarship calls its ‘anti-language’ or ‘insider anti-language’ as a mode to resist the larger society while maintaining inner solidarity in the face of pressure from without. The special Johannine language transformed into ‘anti-language’, in connection with

some concepts (sin, Jews, Pharisees, synagogue, titles given to Jesus) set the community ideologically against the 'Jews'.

8 Ideological Texture of John 9

The ideological analysis of a text is simply an agreement by various people that they will conduct dialogue and disagree with one another with a text as a guest in the conversation (Robbins 1996a:95). Unlike inner texture, which deals with the words, phrases and clauses of the text itself, ideological texture investigates people, the author and previous interpreters. In other words, it investigates the biases, opinions, preferences and stereotypes of a particular writer and a particular reader.

First and foremost, it is important to understand ideology itself (cf. Van den Heever & Van Heerden 2001:125-7). Davies defines ideology as 'an integrated system of beliefs, assumptions, and values' that reflects 'the needs and interests of a group or class at a particular time in history'. Elliot, quoted by Robbins (1996a:96), underscores the so-called 'integrated system' as proceeding from the need to understand, to interpret to self and others, to justify, and to control one's place in the world. Five steps are dealt with in the process of ideological texture: ideological texture of the researcher, ideological voice of the implied author, relation to groups, modes of intellectual discourse and spheres of ideology.

8.1 Ideological texture of the researcher

The ideological texture of a text, as opposed to the inner texture, which deals with words, phrases, and clauses of the text itself, has to do with the researcher's biases, opinions, preferences and stereotypes (see Robbins 1996a:95). In the subsequent lines, I shall try to use myself as the subject of the analysis, referring to my own presuppositions, dispositions and values related to the issue of discipleship. I was born in Bukavu in the Eastern part of Zaire, currently called the Democratic Republic of Congo. The family within which I was raised made a good choice to direct me to the Catholic Church and school. During the past four decades, I had two important experiences alongside ideological response related to utopian view. In the course of my primary school education, through early childhood and the first

communion, I felt brought to the utopia of living without committing sin. Towards the end of primary school, having learned that some evil fellow pupils decided to beat up our teacher, the latter came to me, as the model pupil of his class, to confirm the truth of the report that he had heard. The internal conflict that this enquiry created in me was complicated by the consequences I incurred, even though I chose to testify to the truth, and it brought me to the despair to realize that to live in accordance with the principle of self-discipline is not possible.

After basic schooling, I enrolled for literary studies and later, specialized in secretaryship and accountancy studies, during which I was very committed to the youth ministry in the Jesuit College, yet no longer committed to a life without sin. The many problems that I encountered in my life during secondary school, such as the death of both my parents and problems with finding employment, created in me a need for security and stability. I decided to embark on independent Bible reading to find answers to my many questions. I joined an independent Protestant group, but found no real help there. Subsequently I joined a Baptist group with sectarian perception as well as a conversionist ideological response. The dominant world view was to change the life of people by preaching the Gospel, to encourage people to decide to follow Jesus and become involved in Bible study. Family life, success in studies or business, leading groups like a church or a public political party cannot be managed unless one is firstly converted. Faith in Jesus Christ was considered to be the core of a correct way of life or for transforming society. The conversionist world view was related to another utopia of striving to be different from the larger group in the church living in sin when, at the same time, they confess Jesus to be their Lord. The unique way to confirm the conversion was to live daily life in accord with the word of God/Jesus. The verses preferred were Rom 6.3-11 and 1 John 2.1, 6, etc. The core of the message was to live a holy life.

The group, although participating in the activities of the Baptist church, held introversionist elements, since the world around the church was conceived as irredeemably evil. Salvation came from distancing oneself from the evil in the world by concentrating on one's own purity and holiness. People used to adopt the group's specific language without experiencing holiness. This led to hypocrisy. Thaumaturgical elements had been felt through the emphasis set on a personal

reading of other Christian literature, besides the Bible. To demonstrate it, in a village, a young boy passed away and in the course of the day the group, continuing with their prayers, asked the family to expect the miracle of resurrection that unfortunately did not take place. The result was that the group was discredited.

It should be noted that my earlier experience with the utopian world view was shaped by an ideological response, mainly conversionist. Since the religious and social world is evil, transformation was possible only in preaching the Gospel (conversionist view) and in separating oneself from the evil world (holiness in the introversionist view). The reform expected in the larger society is to be attained when all the members are changed. The ideology is that ‘only men or women that have been changed can contribute to the transformation of the society’. Over more than ten years,²¹⁴ I still support the importance of personal conversion and the need of the transcendent being to experience everyday life. However, my ideology has been qualitatively transformed by multiple overseas contacts with other Christians (Pentecostals, Reformists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Anglicans, etc.) as well as approaches towards the study of the Bible. The independent reading of the scriptures, without applying the hermeneutical approach, is no longer helpful. By emphasizing literary criticism, the rhetorical biblical approach, and the historical-critical approach during my basic theological studies, my own reading of the Bible was enriched. For me personally the best and most rewarding way of reading the Bible, which I recently discovered, is the socio-rhetorical approach, because of its multidisciplinary view. The challenge of the social-rhetorical method invites, notes Robbins (1996a:15), a wide range of historical, social, cultural, ideological and psychological phenomena into the project of theological reflection and construction. The socio-rhetorical approach is more useful than previous traditions of interpretation since it generates multiple strategies for reading and rereading texts in an environment, and in a spirit of, integration (1996a:9), by making words interact with words in a

²¹⁴ They can be summarized as follows: 5 years (1989-94) as a theological student in the capital city of the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.), in Kinshasa, as Junior Lecturer in the Faculty of Theology in Goma (1996-2002), while at the same time ministering as Pastor in a heterogeneous francophone Baptist Church with members of different origins and experiences, and 5 years (2003-8) as full-time master’s and doctoral student at the University of South Africa, interrupted by a one-year period of research at the University of Geneva (2005-2006).

particular text and at the same time interact with phenomena outside the texts. The usefulness of this approach led to my decisions to undertake this independent study on discipleship, so that I can redefine what it means to be a disciple and expand on what I thought to be the only way some years ago.

8.2 Ideological voice of the (implied) author in John 9

John 9 contains a narrative of the healing of the blind man at Siloam and a dialogue in the form of a trial scene. Panackel argues that ‘John 9 is undoubtedly a masterpiece of dramatic art and Christological doctrines fused into one single narrative’ (1988:145). In it, Jesus reveals himself to be the Light of the world (v.5) and in confirmation thereof gives sight to a poor man blind from birth (v. 6-7). The ensuing part of the chapter is divided into ‘dialogic scenes’ with the form of a trial.²¹⁵ The well-known story of healing the blind man, as it already stands in the synoptic tradition,²¹⁶ is theologically reworked in order to emphasize the conflict existing between early Christianity and Judaism in the first century. The author skillfully uses a traditional story in order to bring out ‘the conflict of interpretation’ raised by such healing, in Zumstein’s point of view (for details, see 2003:167-78). Analysing John 9, Zumstein points out that the *intrigue* of the Johannine story must not be viewed as dramatic, but rather as thematic, since the implicit (implied) author does not focus on

²¹⁵ The story starts with the mentioning of the encounter between Jesus and the man born blind (v.1) and end with Jesus’ judgment on the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees (v.39-41). The miracle of healing in itself is a symbolic action. The episode of the man born blind being given sight (9.1-7) is followed by a debate around Jesus’ origin and his status as preexistent Son (vv.8-41). In structuring this chapter, one may note that verses 8-41, as they are construed following the simple healing narrative, have three of the major characters [the blind man’s neighbours (vv.8-12), the Pharisees in council to whom they brought the healed man (vv.13-17), the Jews who did not believe the previous state of the blind man who interrogate his parents (vv.18-23), the Pharisees before whom the healed appear for the second time (vv.24-34), Jesus who was absent from v.8-34) meets the healed man driven out and asks him to believe in the Son of Man (vv.35-38), the Pharisees are judged to be blind (vv.39-41).

²¹⁶ In Mk 10.46-52, parallel to Mt 20.29-34 and Lk 18.35-43, Jesus and his disciples meet Bartimaeus a blind beggar sitting by the roadside who shouts out, saying ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ While many of the crowd who were in front sternly order him to be quiet, Jesus calls him and asks him what he wants him to do. The blind man says to him, ‘My teacher, let me see again’, and immediately he regained his sight. In this parallel story of healing the blind man was summoned to answer what he wanted Jesus to do, and here Jesus does not use spittle for the healing as told in Mk 8.22-28, in which a nameless blind person recovered sight. This text shall be compared to that of John 9 and analysed latter.

the logical sequence of situations lived by Jesus, the hero, to the extent that he could be transformed in order to reach his enquiry (Zumstein 2003:168). The fundamental issue of the story is 'to believe'.

Jesus, the incarnate Logos, has come to reveal God the Father. That is why, in the depth of John's narrative, the conflict that takes place is a conflict between '*le croire*' and '*le non-croire*'. (Zumstein 1991:240). The conflict is figured in the whole Gospel, as Culpepper (1990:106) puts it:

L'intrigue de l'évangile développe le conflit entre la révélation et le rejet de la révélation, ou plus précisément le conflit entre la foi et l'incrédulité en tant que réponses face à Jésus. Scène après scène, on voit Jésus mettre les hommes au défi de comprendre la révélation et d'y répondre par la foi. Dans chaque scène, le lecteur est amené à passer en revue les diverses réponses possibles face à Jésus et les raisons qui motivent chacune de ces réponses. A chaque fois, le lecteur a l'occasion de répéter la vraie réponse, celle de foi.²¹⁷

Reworking the traditional story of healing, the evangelist is aware of the possible responses provoked by Jesus' act through which a man born blind recovers his sight. The episode, as recounted in John 9, demonstrates the effect of Christological revelation insofar as the blind man is depicted as following the way leading to faith. Whereas he moves from obscurity to light, his parents and the Pharisees follow the reverse route. In interpreting John 9, the second point to take into account in Zumstein's standpoint is the *symbolic language* of John that articulates a second sense with a first one (Zumstein 2003 :169), as Paul Ricoeur quoted by Zumstein puts it : 'Il y a symbole lorsque le langage produit des signes de degré composé où le sens, non content de désigner quelque chose, désigne un autre sens qui en saurait être atteint que dans et par sa visée.' Therefore, the symbolic language expresses a double meaning, namely the immediate meaning has to be bridged to reach the real and second meaning to which the first refers. The Greek term *συμβολον* and the verb *συμβάλλω*, which means 'to put together' attributes to the term 'symbol' two joined entities, one meaning something that is perceptible by the senses (touch or sight for instance), and the other meaning that which is invisible. In Léon-Dufour's terms, the first is called '*signifiant*', while the second is '*signifié*' (1990:126). Culpepper (1983:182) observes that in the FG, a symbol is consistently

²¹⁷ In order to understand how John writes down a *highly episodic* intrigue, one needs to read all the details in Culpepper 1983:86-98.

‘a connecting link between two different spheres’. Whereas the tenor and the vehicle are given in a metaphor where the reader must discern the relationship, a symbol presents the vehicle. In the process of understanding, the reader has to find out the meaning, which is something more or something else than the plain or superficial meaning (see Léon-Dufour 1990:121-34; Culpepper 1983:180-98 for details). In the Gospel of John the narrative episodes must be interpreted symbolically on different levels.

Léon-Dufour pointedly groups them as follows: *firstly* Jesus’ miracles are called σημεῖα inasmuch as they are to be interpreted symbolically, for instance, the changing of water into wine in Cana (2.1-11) and the healing of an official’s son at Cana (4.46-54). *Secondly*, in John we find some symbolic actions whose significance is given in the discourses following them, for instance the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves in John 6.1-13, along with the long discourse of vv.22-59.²¹⁸ In both chapters the reason for evoking John 6 seems to be the reference to Moses as the leader who played such an important role in Jewish religious imagery. Another linkage stems from the symbolic language that the FE employs in both chapters. Talbert (1992:162) observes that in the FG the signs exist in order to teach about Christology in a tangible way. The multiplication of the loaves in John 6 teaches us that Jesus is the bread of life, while in John 9 the giving of sight to the

²¹⁸ The story of the multiplication of the loaves ends with the indication of the crowds dominating the story of feeding, whereas the disciples dominate in the second story of walking on the Sea. As it is stated, people kept following Jesus because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick, but unfortunately they misunderstood the sign of feeding and wrongly assumed him to be a Prophet-king, and because of that Jesus withdrew to the mountain (vv.14-15). Subsequently the disciples assist in a special revelation of who Jesus is. It seems obvious that John refers to the well-known tradition of Mark and the other Evangelists but, as he commonly did, he reworked the tradition by attributing special meaning to the tradition.

By narrating the multiplication of loaves and the walking on the Sea, John marks the passage from the inadequate conceptions of the status and the messianic functions of Christ to the exact conceptions (see Dodd (1953:437). While people are expecting to find in Jesus the second Moses through whom the gift of manna is reestablished, the Christ gives the bread of life, and he is the bread of life. Such a new perception of Jesus leads to a crisis among Jesus’s followers and to their breaking up into two separate groups (see John 6.60-71). While the crowds acknowledge Jesus as ‘the prophet who is to come in the world’ (v.14), and consequently seek to make him king by force, Jesus not only rejects such an inexact conception of his status, but also separates the disciples from the crowds in order to show them that Jesus is greater than Moses. While throughout John 6, Jesus is rendered present, in contrast to John 9, Jesus is judged *in absentia* and the man born blind experiences a trial where Jesus is the principal accused, and the ‘Jews’ are his detractors.

man born blind instructs people that Jesus is the light of the world. Léon-Dufour (1990:329-30) explains the symbolical language in John 9 in these terms:

L'épisode du Chapter 9 rappelle les guérisons d'aveugle transmises par la tradition synoptique, dont la fonction est de montrer qu'avec Jésus sont arrivés les temps messianiques (...) Chez Jean, la symbolique de l'illumination prend tout son relief du fait qu'il s'agit d'un aveugle de naissance, situation sans parallèle dans la tradition synoptique. Plutôt que d'un acte de puissance (*dynamis*) réalisant l'annonce prophétique, ce don de la vue est présenté comme un « signe » (*semeion* : cf.9,16), dont Jésus donne le sens avant même de l'accomplir : il affirme aux disciples être la lumière du monde (9,5). Or la symbolique de la lumière joue aussi dans le sens opposé : les pharisiens clairvoyants qui, mis en présence du miraculé, ont nié le signe deviennent des 'aveugles'. La perspective johannique embrasse ainsi le mystère en sa totalité : venant dans le monde, la lumière illumine ou bien éblouit selon les dispositions subjectives des hommes. Le récit, de fait, est encadré par deux paroles de Jésus concernant sa mission (9,3-5 et 9,39) : la première la définit comme œuvre de révélation, la seconde la relie au 'jugement.'

The healing of the man born blind is an unparalleled event that the author uses as a symbolic event with a symbolic language signifying the blindness of the Pharisees. By their unbelief, they reject the illumination brought by the Light of the world. The Pharisees are proud to hold on to their own inconsequent light. The man born blind is contrasted with them through his belief and his witness to the operation of the Light of the world in his own life.

The healing of the blind man is *ideologically conceived as a sign of the triumph of light over darkness*. Jesus' coming into the world divides people into two separate groups: those allow let themselves to be illuminated by the light – those who believe in him – and those who reject Jesus, taking the way of judgment (John 3.19-21). The expression *φῶς ἐἴμι τοῦ κόσμου* in John 9.5 is the keyword that establishes a link with Chapters 7 and 8, where Jesus, 'manifested to the world' as life and light, is rejected by the world (the Jews) who do evil in hating the light' (3.20).

John 9 is a masterly narrative that combines theological and historical strands with the dramatic skills of the writer (Schnakenburg 1980b:239). The question of the Messiah, at the centre of the debate (v.22), brought out the conflict that took place between Judaism and Christianity towards the end of the first century (for details, see Martyn 1979). The narrative attains its 'turning point' in vv.24-34, where the

disciples of Moses are in conflict with the disciples of Jesus, represented by the healed man. This plays an important role in the vigorous debate opposing Jesus' messiahship or his divine status. To be a disciple of Jesus implied to fight with external measures as well as to incur social sanctions (v. 34). Throughout John's narrative, *the man whom Christ enlightened is an example that pleads the cause of the Light in the sphere of darkness*. Through the author as a genius in rhetoric, Jesus, who is present at the beginning of the story (John 9.1-7), is, as the story goes on, 'judged *in absentia*' and reappears at the end, playing a double role.²¹⁹ Jesus is, simultaneously, the eschatological bringer of salvation and judgment. He dispenses salvation to those who are open to God's revelation taking place through his agent, and judgment in the present to those obstinately opposed to the revealer.

Another *ideological view of the author is in connection with the locus of worship*. Previously, the worship had to take place in the Temple, but the blind man surprisingly worships Jesus where he encounters him (v.38). The author strives to demonstrate how, in the Son of Man, a delocalisation of 'divine reality' operates away from the temple or other sacred places such as the synagogue, finding a *new ideological localisation in the person of Jesus himself*. The Johannine community saw Jesus as the ideological answer to the catastrophic fall of the temple in 70 CE. He is not only the place of encounter between God and human beings, but also 'the new Temple'. That is to say, as it was for the holy men of the Graeco-Roman world, Jesus is 'the conduit for the transmission of the divine'.²²⁰ In portraying Jesus, without fixed address, John is aware that he depicts him as a holy man, an entrepreneur from God who mediates the divine and makes any place the locus of the holy encounter and of the worship of God. The following subsection intends to establish how intellectual discourse is applied to the FG.

²¹⁹ Panackel notes: 'In this chapter, wherein John shows his rare artistic talent and theological genius, surprisingly enough, Jesus plays a direct active role only in the beginning (v.1-7) and in the end (v.35-41).'

²²⁰ In Smith's point of view, access to the divine can no longer be imagined through the sacred place that does not exist, but rather through the new centre which is a divine man, a magician, and an entrepreneur without fixed office (see 1977:238).

8.3 Modes of intellectual discourse

New Testament scholarship has to be divided into seven main approaches.²²¹ Since there is no space to deal with all of them, only three hermeneutical categories are here indicated in the study of the FG: (1) historical-critical, (2) social-scientific and (3) literary-critical.²²² While historical criticism seeks to interpret the NT text in the context of the first-century Mediterranean world,²²³ socio-scientific criticism is best understood as a development of historical criticism (cf. Barton 1995). This approach is a ‘part of the overall task of interpreting the New Testament texts in the context of the first-century Mediterranean world from which they come’ (Barton 1997:277). It asks questions of a different kind,²²⁴ dealing with the typical social patterns and taken-for-granted cultural conditions which have mostly characterized the NT world (Barton 1997:277). The difference between both is that whereas historical criticism focuses diachronically on relations of cause and effect over time, social-scientific criticism focuses synchronically on the way meaning is generated by social actors related to one another by a complex web of culturally determined social systems and patterns of communication.

In the field of the interpretative framework of the FG, *the first group* deals with historical criticism. Historical-critical scholars [Dodd (1953), Brown²²⁵, Bultmann,²²⁶ Martyn (1979) and Schnackenburg²²⁷], are interested in textual,

²²¹ Gowler lists these seven approaches as: historical-critical approach, literary approach which includes structuralism, reader-response criticism and deconstruction, ideological criticism, feminist approaches, rhetorical approaches, socio-rhetorical approach and socio-scientific approaches (for details, cf Gowler 2000:1-14 <http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~dgowler/REarticle.htm>).

²²² RP Tuppurainen (2006), *The Role (s) of the Spirit-Paraclete in John 16.4b-15: A Socio-Rhetorical Investigation*, doctoral dissertation, Unisa, 163.

²²³ It focuses on questions of dating, authorship, language, genre, historical background, the history of tradition and the particularity of historical events narrated in the texts.

²²⁴ Howard Kee (1989:65-69), as quoted by Barton (1997:277) has grouped these social-scientific questions in seven categories: boundary questions, authority questions, status and role questions, ritual questions, literary questions with social implications, questions about group functions, and questions concerning the symbolic universe and the social construction of reality.

²²⁵ Brown proposes a wide range of influences on the religious thought of the FG (Brown 1966:lii-lxiv), specifically Gnosticism and Hellenistic Thought (Greek Philosophy, Philo and the Hermetica), and Palestinian Judaism (OT itself, Rabbinic Judaism and Qumran).

²²⁶ Bultmann (1971:7-8) draws a relationship between John and Gnosticism as found in their content, style, sources and strict cosmic dualism.

historical and religious background. While most of them address these questions (When was the text written? Who wrote the text? Who are the addressees and what are the circumstances that surround the writing? Within what kind of social system did the text originate?), some of them should be taken from the backdrop. A conservative group, including Morris (1971), Barrett (1978) and Carson (1991), in focusing on theological meaning, failed to take into account the community as significant in the interpretation of the Gospel. Brown and Martyn move from the history of the formation of the text (the reality behind the text) to the history of the community that shaped the writing of the gospel (toward the world *contemporaneous with* the text). The text comes to be viewed as a ‘window’ of the life, struggles and crises of the community. Although Martyn’s conception of John’s narrative as a two-level drama influenced scholarship in the readings of the gospel, the ideological point of view was lacking. The ideological mode of intellectual discourse of the historical-critical approach is that the text, as it stands, does not say all that is needed; its meaning must be sought outside/behind it.

Martyn, as mentioned elsewhere, is the most significant and influential contributor. His proposal of a two-level drama that determines the composition of the Gospel has indeed impacted on current Johannine scholarship. What renders the interpretation quite passionate is the perception that the Gospel is ‘anti-Semitic’ and ‘anti-Judaism’. It has been demonstrated that the Gospel is neither an anti-Jewish (Semitic) document, nor the work of a sectarian group.

The *second group* in the hermeneutic category lies in social-scientific criticism. Malina’s social-scientific commentary opens a window in the interpretative framework of the FG. The major strength of the social-scientific criticism is not only to revitalize historical criticism of the NT, but specifically to enlarge the agenda of interpretation. It emphasizes new questions that aid in giving the text to acquire both a social and political and an individual and religious dimension (Barton 1997:279). This approach, which uses the sociology of early Christianity instead of limiting reductionally the reality of Christianity to a social dynamic, is an effort to put body

²²⁷ Schnackenburg (1980a:119-49), though interested in the issue of authorship, language, style and the author’s movement of thought, examined the spiritual setting and origin of the FG that he compares to Hellenistic Judaism, Pharisaic and Rabbinic Judaism, Heterodox Judaism [Qumran] as well as Hermetism and Gnosticism (Hermetic, Mandeian, Christian literature) [Schnackenburg 1980a:119-49].

and soul together (Scroggs quoted by Porter 1997:279). While historical criticism deals with the world behind the text, social-scientific criticism enlarges the understanding of both the world behind the text and the narrative world within the text, as well as our culturally-embedded interpretation of the text. Meeks (1986) rightly conceives such a method as ‘a hermeneutics of social embodiment.’ Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998) and Piper (2001), in portraying ‘Jews’ and Christians as opposing each other on God’s behalf, forget to tackle the ideology couched behind the conflict.

The *third group* is represented by Culpepper and Zumstein, who interpret John 9 using the narratological approach. While both contribute to the understanding of the conflict figured in the whole Gospel as either a ‘conflict between faith and incredulity’ or in terms of ‘conflict between believing and not believing, they did not produce a commentary of the whole FG. Only Brodie (1993a) and Talbert (1992) endeavoured to write using a literary and theological approach. Finally, it should be noted that although Culpepper (1983) and Zumstein (2003) pinpoint the conflict between both groups, and even though Malina (1998) and Piper (2001) depict them as conflicting on God’s behalf, the ideology that constructs the conflict has not been set out.

Neither historical, nor social-scientific, nor literary critical commentators manage to demonstrate what kind of ideology is raised by the two groups. This will be determined by the use of the concept ‘to know’ as an expression carrying the weight of official Pharisaic ideology and, at the same time, used by the church to assert the experience. The FE, on behalf of the community that he represents, ideologically recounts the healing of the blind man by conceiving it as a sign of the triumph of light over darkness. Another ideological view, perceptible in Chapter 9, relates to the locus of worship that is no longer the Temple or the synagogue, but rather Jesus himself as the locus of revelation and adoration. The believer did not need to go to the Temple or synagogue to worship God. This act has been redefined by the FE in terms of following Jesus or coming to faith in him.

8.4 Conclusion: Ideological texture

To discover the ideology of Chapter 9, two aspects need to be brought to the fore: the ideological voice of the implied author and the language of the community in its relation to other groups. The implied author's voice is apparent in Chapter 9, where he skilfully uses a traditional narrative style to highlight the 'conflict of interpretation' of the miracle.

The healing of physical blindness becomes symbolical of the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees. The healing in itself is ideologically conceived as a sign of the triumph of light over darkness. Jesus' coming into the world divides people into two separate groups: the believers who are illuminated by the light (represented by the blind man) and those who reject him (the Pharisees). Another ideological view of the author relates to the locus of worship that finds its locality in the person of Jesus, and no longer in the Temple or the synagogue.

9 Sacred texture of John 9

This section deals with the sacred texture of John 9, that is, the relationship between human life and the divine and/or the transcendent, and how the text speaks of God or the gods, or about the domain of religious life (Van den Heever and Van Heerden 2001:132). The scope of this section is to develop an argument about the intimate relationship between the Father/the Sender and the Son/the One sent (from above), depicted within the first division of the FG. All the themes tackled in this section are interwoven since it is not possible, for instance, to talk about the Father without the Son and vice versa. The way John 9 tackles different themes (the issue of divine beings, holy person, divine history, human redemption, human commitment and the issue of sin) sensitively influences our understanding of the Johannine perspective of discipleship.

9.1 Divine beings

The Gospel's fundamental question has nothing to do with the existence of God, which is presupposed, as is evident from the Jewish scriptures, but with who

God is and how he is revealed. The nature of revelation is the central theme of the Gospel (Ashton 1991:62f. cf also Bultmann 1971:111²²⁸). The NT as a whole, as Painter points out (2001:234), has little teaching about God and marks new directions in understanding of God's purpose. Johannine Christology needs to be viewed as the expression of the transformation that took place in the understanding of God. Painter (2000:234; cf also 1991:234-5) rightly contends:

Almost everything John says about God is in relation to Jesus, especially focused on the Father-Son relationship. Christology is John's way of speaking of God at those points where the understanding of God is being transformed. The transformation introduces nothing absolutely new so that all the parts of the view can be found already in the Jewish scriptures (...) John's Christology constitutes the new centre for understanding God, the purpose of God, the destiny of the creation and the meaning of faith.

Christology is without doubt one of the main themes of the FG. In reading the first division of the Gospel, one discovers that misunderstandings about Jesus' origin and identity, along with the conflict with the synagogue, were transformed by the evangelist into an opportunity to clarify the relevant Christological issues. The depiction of Jesus as Son of the Father, instead of the Messiah of Jewish expectation, finds its origin in that concern. Therefore, the understanding of discipleship in John 9 is related to Christology.

9.1.1 God the Father: the 'envoy motif' in John 9 – semantic relations 'g'

3.1 [...] ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῆ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.

16.1 [...] Οὐκ ἔστιν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος,
ὅτι τὸ σάββατον οὐ τηρεῖ.

31 οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτωλῶν ὁ θεὸς οὐκ ἀκούει,
ἀλλ' ἐάν τις θεοσεβῆς ἦ καὶ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιῆ τούτου
ἀκούει.

33 εἰ μὴ ἦν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ, οὐκ ἠδύνατο ποιεῖν οὐδέν.

²²⁸ Bultmann entitles Chapters 2-12 'the Revelation of the δόξα to the world', or the struggle between light and darkness illustrating 1.5 and 9-11. Chapters 13-17 constitute 'the Revelation of the δόξα to the believers', signifying the victory of the light.

In these phrases the term θεός occurs four times (vv.3.1; 16.1; 31; 33). In three of them, the term occurs in genitive phrases: once in connection with Jesus' works that signify God's epiphany (ἵνα φανερωθῆ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ) through the healing of the man born blind (3.1), and in the other two instances the term θεός is used to express the dispute around the miracle of the recovery of sight. In one instance, the Pharisees' hypothesis lies in the fact that since Jesus does not keep the Sabbath, οὐκ ἔστιν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ: (he is not a man not from God, cf. v.16.1) or otherwise a sinner (v.24). Another instance is a contra-argument of the blind man. Acting on behalf of the community, he asserts 'we know that God does not listen to the sinner' (v.31: οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτωλῶν ὁ θεὸς οὐκ ἀκούει, see v.31). For the healed man, the fact that Jesus opened his eyes is a certain indication that he came from God (εἰ μὴ ἦν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ, οὐκ ἠδύνατο ποιεῖν οὐδέεν see v.33). The purpose of Chapter 9 is not to teach about God, but to show how God is at work through his envoy Jesus.

The verb φαίνει is used to signify God's epiphany through Jesus. Although Jesus holds the credentials to work the works of the one who sent him (ἐργάζεσθαι τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πέμψαντός με; see v.4) so that the works of God can be manifested, the Pharisees deny the reality of the miracle, adopting the stance that the healer is not from God (Οὐκ ἔστιν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος; see v.16). They reject all Jesus' credentials, based upon what they know.

The FG, more than any other Gospel, uses the epithet 'the Father' to qualify God (for details, cf. Tolmie 1995:57-75; Thompson 2001:57-100). Jesus asserts that he has come in his Father's name (5.43), that he works in 'his Father's name' (10.25), and he prays to the Father to glorify his name (12.28). John uses ὁ θεός with adjectives and descriptions, for instance, the only God (5.44), God the Father (6.27; cf. 8.41, 42), the only true God (17.3), my Father and your Father, my God and your God (20.17), my Lord and my God (20.28).

The consistent repetition of God's designation as 'the Father who sent me' plays a twofold role: firstly, to identify Jesus in relation to God and secondly, God is characteristically named in relation to Jesus. Thompson (2001:51) explains the mutual Father-Son relationship as follows:

(...) the virtual limitation of 'the Father' to the relationship of God to Jesus as Son moves toward a reshaping of the content of the word 'God'. What it

means to know God is to know him as the Father of the Son, and this inevitably implies a reconceptualisation of the identity of God. Hence, the Father-Son language of the Gospel of John is a prime example of the point that NT Christology is formulated primarily in relational terms.

The title ‘Father’ occurs approximately 120 times throughout in the FG but this is not to separate the Father from the Son. The fact that Jesus claimed to hold a close and filial relationship with the God of Israel must be understood against both the Jewish and the Roman imperial mythological backgrounds. In the latter, the title *pater patriae* was among the imperial title granted to Augustus (see Reed 2006:94-5). Jesus’ use of the name Father is unique to John’s overall ‘special’ Christology (D’Angello 1992:617), and in an imperial setting toward the end of the first century, it declares that neither Augustus nor any of the Caesars could be ‘Father’. The title belongs only to Jesus’ Father, the God of Israel (Reed 2006:95). If God is the Father of Jesus the Son, he is known, according to John, by the act of sending the Son. The theme of the Father sending his Son from the ‘world above’ to the ‘world below’ occurs throughout the FG (3.13; 6.33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, 58; 7.28; 8.14, 42; 13.3). This recurrent formula is often construed in the aorist participle to signify it as unique.²²⁹ The curious change of the verb from ἀπεσταλκεν, in some passages, relating to the Father’s sending of the Son to πέμπω, relating to the Son’s sending of the apostles, is without importance insofar as ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω are both used for Jesus. Moreover, the difference is to be found in the perfect tense of ἀποστέλλω, used for the Father’s sending of the Son, meaning that his mission on earth is now completed and the present tense of πέμπω is used for the Son’s sending of his followers (Morris 1995:746-7).

²²⁹ The meaning conveyed by the aorist tense is that the envoy of the Son by the Father is unique and does not have to be repeated. The formula ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ (the Father who sent me) is used in John 5.37; 8.16, 18; 12, 49; 14, 24, and in 6.44 we see a similar formula ὁ πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με. Moreover, in some other ensuing passages the verb πέμπω is diversely used; for instance in 4.34 (πέμψαντος); 5.23 (πέμπαντα), v.24 (πέμψαντί με), v.30 (πέμψαντός με); in 6.38 and 39 (πέμπψαντός με), in 7.16 (πέμψαντός με), in v.18 (πέμψαντός αὐτόν), in v.28 (ὁ πέμψας με), in v.33 (πέμπψαντά με); in 16.5 (πέμπψαντά με). The verb ἀποστέλλω which is employed for Jesus in 3.17 and 34; 5.36 and 38; 6.29; 7.29; 8.42; 9.7; 10.36; 11.42; 17.3, 8, 18ab, 21, 23, 25 and finally 20.21 where ἀπέσταλκεν and πέμπω are concurrently used.

In that sense, the fundamental thesis of the FE is to assert that Jesus is the envoy of the Father. Specific to John is the Christology of the envoy. Moreover, the formula of the envoy is a theological assertion in the strict sense for:

- All the formulations that qualify Jesus as the envoy simultaneously and unceasingly qualify God as the one who sent Jesus.
- Jesus, as the One who is sent, is essentially portrayed as having his origin in God.
- John often uses the Greek participle aorist in order to describe the action of God. In so doing, the envoy of Jesus is a unique event that does not need to be repeated.
- The assertion according to which God is the Father implies that the envoy is the Son. The Father-Son relationship plays a preponderant role in the conception of the envoy (see Becker, Miranda, Loader, Bühner). Johannine references to the work of Jesus (τὸ ἔργον) fit into the setting (4.34; 5.36; 7.3; 9.4; 10.25; 14.10-2). The envoy of God has a mission to perform on earth, which is the accomplishment of the work of God. Jesus as ambassador is the authentic representative of the sovereign God. As such, he does not have to perform his own works but those of the Father (4.34; 5.17 etc); he does not realize his own will, but the Father's will (3.34; 7.16; 8.26,38, 40; etc.).

From the passages mentioned above, it is arguable that the Christological formula of the envoy in the FG originated from the cultural prefiguration of the envoy in the Near-Eastern World of Antiquity (Zumstein 1993:69-72, 77ff.).²³⁰ Jesus, as the Transcendent God's envoy, has an exclusive mission to carry out. As the delegate or representative of God, his mission goes through the three stages typical in Antiquity (cf. Zumstein 1993:77-85). *Firstly*, when sent on a mission, the system of transmission of information was based on loyalty and confidence on the envoy's part. *Secondly*, the realization of the mission, the stage at which the envoy holds the same status as the person represented, but for a limited time. Jesus' divinity

²³⁰ For details, see Becker J., 'Ich bin die Auferstehung und das Leben. Eine Skizze der johanneischen Christologie', *ThZ* 39 (1983), pp.138-51; Becker, J., 'Exkurs (a: Grundzüge joh Christologie', in: *Ibid.*, Joh II, pp.484-94; *Ibid.*, Johanneisches Christentum 2004), pp.135-40; Bühner, J.-A., *Der Gesandte*; Miranda, J.p., *Die Sendung Jesu im vierten Evangelium*.

is to be connected to this. Such an identity is functional or representative. *Thirdly*, the return of the envoy, at the end of the mission, is in order to give an account of his mission. Therefore, the three stages of the envoy coincide with the global structure of the FG inasmuch as Jesus is sent by the Father (1.1-18) in order to perform the mission of revelation and salvation (John 1.19 – 12.50), the outcome of which is death and resurrection, conceived as the return of the envoy to the Father (John 13.1-3; 16.28; etc.).

In a recent publication McIlhone, citing Borgen,²³¹ makes a connection between the notion of sending in the FG and the six rabbinic principles of agency: (i) the sent is like the Sender; (ii) the sender is greater than the sent; (iii) the sent is obedient to the Sender by acting according to the wishes of the sender; (iv) the action takes place in the legal context; (v) the agent returns to the Sender at the completion of the mission; (vi) the sent may extend his mission by appointing others (see McIlhone 2005:298-300). It should be noted that the thought that the Father has sent the Son into the world is one of the master thoughts throughout the FG (Morris 1995:746) and when the FE, at the end of the story of the Passion, shows Jesus sending out his followers, the change of meaning which is heightened by the use of *καθὼς* and *κἀγὼ*; implies that Jesus integrates his followers into the mission he had received from the Father, which he has accomplished and which is pursued through them. Jesus as the One sent becomes, in other words, the apostle of God. By appointing the apostles for the continuation of his mission, he is none other than ‘the apostle of apostles’.

To understand how the *halakhic* principles of agency that developed around the institution of the *shaliach* (agent, agency) of later Judaism are reflected in the FG (see McIlhone 2005:300-5), one has to examine John 1-12, where Jesus is presented as the ‘Apostle’ of the Father. Jesus is the Son, that is, an agent with a special relationship with the sender. More than that, the agent is ‘I am’ (8.24, 58; 9.5), so he is equal to the Father (5.18) and one with the Father (10.30).

The concept of the envoy is thus John’s appropriate term to describe Christ within his function of revealer of the transcendent God. One of the fundamental

²³¹ P Borgen ‘God’s Agent in the Fourth Gospel. In J Neusner (1968),’ *Religions in Antiquity: Festschrift E. Goodenough*, [Leiden: Brill].

conceptions of John is that Christ is God's true representative in the world. The paradigm of the envoy has a twofold role: it accentuates the [radical] transcendence of God and, at the same time, his revelation through his Son. The conclusion of the Prologue clearly states that 'no one has ever seen God. It is the One and Only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known' (1.18). Access to God, in human experience, is severed, and Jesus is the only one who is from God and has seen the Father (6.46). He fills the gap that lies between God and human beings. The portrayal of Jesus as the envoy of God sorts out the paradox lying at the centre of the Johannine faith. In this regard Zumstein (1993:72) notes:

Grâce à cette représentation, le mystère de la révélation pouvait être formulé. Jésus Christ est la représentation incarnée d'un Dieu qui n'appartient pas à notre monde, qui n'y est ni visible, ni perceptible. Il est la Présence de l'Insaissable. Il est à la fois un homme de chair et de sang et donc différent de Dieu, et pourtant sa parfaite expression pour tous les hommes. Tel est le paradoxe qui est au centre de la foi johannique.

Indeed, the Jews resisted Jesus' self-revelation because they could not understand how Jesus Christ, a man of flesh and blood, different from God, could be at the same time the incarnate representation of God, who does not pertain to this world. The evangelist's purpose is to emphasize the reality that Jesus has been sent from above by the Father to bring about a possible concrete contact between heavenly and earthly realities. Through him, the 'above' comes in an audible, sensible and experimental sense to exist in the 'below' (Van der Merwe 1997:342). Jesus' mission stems from his pre-existence with God and coincides with his coming from God (see 7.29; 8.42 and 17.8) to the extent that his mission cannot be paralleled with the mission of any one else. While John the Baptist is said to have been 'sent from God' and calls God 'the one who sent me to baptize in water' (1.33; 3.28), the special commission he received from God was to bear witness to the light (1.7-8) and to make Jesus known to Israel (1.31; see Menken 2005:165). Only Jesus is depicted as the 'true light, which enlightens everyone ...' (1.9), whereas the Baptist is granted the role of a witness to testify to the light. The status of the light was disputed as having been given to John the Baptist (1.8).

The cultural representation of the Sent can be qualified as being of a dialectical nature, since the ambassador is identical to the sovereign, for he is the perfect representative of the invisible God in the world. Jesus claims that 'whoever

believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me' (12.44-5). As an individual person, he differs from God. That is why the FE tries his best to sort out the enigma of the unity and difference between God and the Envoy by dealing with the Christology of the FG as 'functional'. The uniqueness of the Book of Signs where the agency Christology is found is highlighted by Harvey (1987:241) as follows:

Again and again, the Johannine Father-Son terminology is illumined by his agent-model; in particular, the 'one-ness' predicated of the Father-Son relationship is convincingly (in my view) explained in terms of a functional identity of authority, rather than of a personal or mystical relationship; and through it is recognized that the origins of this emphasis on Father and Son may well lie further back in the tradition represented by the Synoptics, the presentation of the Son as the Father's agent par excellence (which was empirically the case in ancient Middle Eastern commerce) is like to be the product of the evangelist's innovative mind.

Although the idea of agency is of paramount importance in John's Christology it is not, strictly speaking, a Johannine idea. In order to reconstruct how far God's glory is revealed through Jesus, two concepts have to be examined, namely 'works' and 'signs'.

9.1.2 Jesus the Son: God's glory revealed in the (works of the) envoy – semantic relations 'h'

3.1 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς,
 Οὐτε οὗτος ἡμαρτεν
 οὔτε οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ,
 ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.
 4 ἡμᾶς δεῖ ἐργάζεσθαι τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πέμψαντός με ἕως
 ἡμέρα ἐστίν· ἔρχεται νύξ ὅτε οὐδεὶς δύναται ἐργάζεσθαι.
 5 ὅταν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ᾧ, φῶς εἶμι τοῦ κόσμου.
 24.2 καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ,
 Δὸς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ·
 ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐστίν.

The term *δόξα* is used only once in Chapter 9, in v. 24.2, where the Pharisees strive to summon the blind man to support their testimony in order to earn their

approval δὸς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ. It seems that the FE hints at God's glory ironically since the theme of glory is very foundational in the perspective of belief. In the light of the conclusion of the Book of signs (12.43), it is unthinkable for the unbelievers to evoke God's glory, for they love praise from men more than praise from God. In these phrases, God's glory is manifested through the works he assigns to the Son. This appears to be why ἐργάζεσθαι is used twice in v.4 to announce the healing of the man born blind through the light of the world (v.5), who operates while it is still day, i.e. in the light.

The FE uses two concepts, namely 'sign' and 'work' (for details, cf. De Jonge 1977:117-36; Johns & Miller 1994:525-33) in the perspective of the Christology of mission through which God's glory is attributed to the Son. In the light of Miller's estimation (1994:525-6)²³² and De Jonge's recapitulation (1977:131-4) of the use of σημεῖον²³³ and the concept 'ἔργον',²³⁴ one may argue that both are important witnesses for Jesus' legitimacy. Following Schnackenburg, the special use of both these words 'leads us to the heart of Johannine theology', since Johannine 'signs' in the full and deepest sense are wholly the work of Jesus, indissolubly linked

²³² The works designated as works of Jesus are (i) in several cases Jesus' miraculous acts (5.20; see also 7.3, 21; 9.3; 15.24 possibly 14.2); (ii) Jesus introduces his works as important witnesses to his own identity (5.36; see also 10.25, 37-8) and (iii) finally, the works that the Father has given him to complete are critical elements that condemn those who did not believe (15.24; see also 14.10-1; Ex 34.10; Num 16.23-35).

²³³ The noun σημεῖον is employed (i) seven times by the Jews; twice in requesting Jesus' legitimation (2.18; 6.30) and five times (7.31; 9.36; 10.41; 11.47); (ii) in 2.23; 6.2, 12; 12.18 where his legitimation is disputed by Jews; (iii) in the context where Jesus' signs could elicit true faith (2.11; 4.54; 12.37; 20.30), and (iv) the term is used by Jesus with a critical connotation in reaction to the people in Galilee (4.48; 6.26).

²³⁴ The use of 'ἔργον' could be recapitulated in these terms: (i) it is used in 4.34 and 17.4 in the meaning to signify that all that Jesus did and said on earth is one work done on the initiative of God and is in obedience to the Father. (ii) Jesus' obedience is expressed by ποιεῖν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με (cf. 4.34; 5.30 and 6.38-9). This emphasizes that the Son is completely dependent on the Father in the fulfillment of the mission. (iii) Since Jesus' works are the works of the Father they can be said to provide convincing evidence with regard to Jesus' relation to God (5.36; 10.25; cf. 10.37; 14.11; 15.24). The identification of Jesus' works with God's works is only possible and convincing with the insiders (disciples) meanwhile for the outsiders (those who do not have faith), it remains impossible (5.18; 8.13-19, 26-9, 40-2 and 10.31-9). (iv) It should be noted that Jesus' work, although said to be completed at his return to the Father (17.4; 4.34), is still continued since the disciples will do greater things so that the Father may be glorified in the Son (14.12-13). This term makes some connection with Jesus himself by giving expression to his unity in intention and action with God. The words 'Son' and 'Father' are cumulatively used to emphasize the inner meaning of Jesus' actions as God's works performed in such a unity of intention and obedience.

with his work of revelation under his Father's mandate, and can be accepted and understood in faith' (Schnackenburg 1980a:517-8). The FG refers Jesus' task in terms of 'works' (ἔργα) or signs (σημεῖα), and both comprise the revelation of God and the salvation of mankind (Van der Merwe 2001:140-1). Therefore, in John, Christology is 'functional' as well as theological (Thompson 2001:52). The story of the blind man in John 9 is an aid to ensure that Jesus' works are always related to the will of the Father; the mission of the Son has to be completed in accordance with the Father's plan.

To put it differently, 'in the Fourth Gospel the "Christology of mission" occupies a very important place' (De Jonge 1992:184; *Ibid.*, 144-7). The verbs 'send' and 'work' are utilized in close relationship to the sending of Jesus and 'working' through Jesus and are key to identifying characteristically the God about whom Johns talks (Thompson 2001:52).

The dignity of Jesus as God's agent is clearly stated at the outset of the story of John 9. Jesus states that he was born so that God's works might be revealed in him. 'We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day ...' (vv.3b-4). God is at work in the healing of the man born blind, which is not only an act of physical healing but a work of revelation. It is in that context that Jesus reveals himself as the 'Light of the world' (9.5) and so refers back to 8.12 where the '*I am* statement', a formula functioning as a revelation formula comparable to those found in Deutero-Isaiah (43.10) [De Jonge 1996:235], reveals the way in which God reveals himself. The work Jesus was sent to do on earth is to reveal God to humanity. The motif of 'the envoy' (v.4) is to be taken as a real evangelist's denouncement of the conflict and prepares the reader for the debate that will take place between the man born blind and the Jewish authorities throughout the story. The healing of the man born blind, as an exceptional work, is one of the Son's works on behalf of the Father. This miracle alone suffices to reveal Jesus' true identity.

The miracle, of the healing the man born blind, hints at the unity between the Father and the Son, which serves to strengthen people's belief when they see God's glory. Verse 4 raises a serious grammatical problem. The difficulty perceived in v.4a, ἡμᾶς δεῖ ἐργάζεσθαι τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πέμφαντός με is, *first and foremost*, the grammatical incongruity introduced by the pronouns ἡμᾶς and με, to be balanced

with the φῶς εἶμι τοῦ κόσμου of v.5.²³⁵ The preference of ἡμᾶς δεῖ is justified (i) by its somewhat superior external support, and (ii) because it is slightly more probable that copyists could have altered ἡμᾶς τοῦ ἐμέ and vice versa. The proposal of reading πέμφαντός ἡμᾶς at the end of the sentence has nothing to do with Johannine theology (Metzger 1994:194). The disciples are identified by the pronoun ‘we’ as participating in the mission of Jesus, the one ‘sent by the Father.’ That is an implicit allusion to the post-Easter experience of Christian community (Devilliers 2005:134; Martyn 1979:28).²³⁶ Thus the grammatical incongruity may be explained by the theological basis compelling us to read the Gospel at two levels; on the one hand a witness to Jesus’ earthly lifetime which was *einmalig*,²³⁷ and on the other hand a witness to Jesus’ powerful presence in actual events experienced by the Johannine church (Martyn 1979:30).²³⁸ Jesus, who *was* the Light of the world during his earthly lifetime, *is* still the Light beyond his death, which could not terminate the revelation’s mission. In this sense, Jesus’ mission holds a theological aspect ‘which is important for the understanding of where discipleship fits into God’s revelatory-salvific plan. Jesus came from the ‘above’ into the ‘below’ to live for a while among us (καὶ ἐσκήνοσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, 1:14’ (cf. Van der Merwe 1997:342). The author

²³⁵ The miracle of recovered sight for which the narrator prepares the readers is to be perceived as having a decisive and positive role in the process of faith. One should notice that, as John & Miller put it, in the FG the works and signs are witnesses of Jesus’ identity. Both authors listed three points to note about works in the FG: (i) in several cases, the works of Jesus are clearly his miraculous acts (5.20; 7.3, 21; 9.3; 13.24; 14.21); (ii) Jesus introduces his works as important witnesses which give testimony about his identity as it is in John 5.36; 10.25, 37-8; (iii) the works are critical elements which condemn those who do not believe in him (15.24; 14.10-11). The opportunity to do God’s works is, neither for Jesus nor for the community, permanently granted. The healing of the man born blind is nothing other than an epiphanic event, since through this act God reveals not only himself, but also who Jesus is to the world.

²³⁶ The first plural in John 9.4, ‘we must work the works of him who sent me’, represents the voice of the Johannine church committed in struggles against Judaism, but the coming night is nothing other than a writer’s reference to the future.

²³⁷ This German term is used simply because a suitable English equivalent term had not been found. Martyn uses it to indicate something like ‘back there’ as opposed to ‘now and here’. It must be clear that the term ‘at all’ cannot be related to the neo-orthodox ‘once for all’. The use of the term is to distinguish two levels in John’s way of presenting certain parts of his Gospel. The reader will not go far wrong if he renders the use of *einmalig* by the expression ‘once upon a time’. (see Martyn 1979:29 note 22).

²³⁸ For the community, though living in a dark night caused by Jesus’ departure from the world, the void is filled in by the awareness to work the works of the One sent by the Father or to witnessing, that the participation to the earthly work of Jesus. It is not an advisable or expedient matter but one of compelling necessity (Morris 1995:426).

intends to show that Jesus' physical presence on the earth was permanent, but only temporary. This then means that the revelatory-salvific work which he came to initialize on earth should be continued through his disciples.

Secondly, besides the pronouns so cumulated, the writer uses the verb ἐργάζεσθαι,²³⁹ which reflects his awareness of the conflict that took place between Jesus and the 'Jews' after he had healed a paralytic man on the Sabbath day (Chapter 5). The way in which the Pharisees issue the theory that Jesus is not οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι τὸ σάββατον οὐ τηρεῖ (9.16a) recalls the persecution of Jesus by the 'Jews' for the same reason, but more precisely because Jesus was claiming a divine prerogative.²⁴⁰ While the weight of Jesus' offence, in Chapter 5, is his claim to be equal to God, the FE in Chapter 9, makes a clear breakthrough in portraying Jesus as being aware that he is doing the work of the One who sent him (v.3) to be the Light of the world (v.5). Jesus, as the Light of the World, is visibly evident in the unique healing of the man blind from birth. Such an extraordinary miracle legitimates Jesus' divine origin and reveals him as a miracle-worker sent by God (see John 9.7c; 16.33; Schnelle 1992:124). The miracle (shmei;on) manifests this worldly visibility of Jesus' activity and the reality of his incarnation. The miracle is so marvelous as to demonstrate the healer as God's agent.²⁴¹ The sign of healing a man born blind discloses the Messianic function of Jesus on the one hand, and on the other hand the deeper purpose of the sign is to establish the unity of being and action between God and his Son and to make God known.

The miracle in John 9 plays a Christological and theological role²⁴² insofar as

²³⁹ The verb occurs two times in v.4 as it is in another short verse: ὁ πατήρ μου ἔως ἄρτι ἐργάζεται καὶ γὰρ ἐργάζομαι (5.17), linking both Chapter 9 to 5 together.

²⁴⁰ The Jews persecute him because he did such things on the Sabbath (v.16), and Jesus replies: 'My Father is still working, and I also am working' (v17). This accusation, notes Morris, recalls Mk 2.27-28 where Jesus, accused by the Pharisees, claims his authority over even the divinely instituted Sabbath as the Son of Man. In John 5, however, the authority claimed by Jesus is grounded on his personal close relationship with the Father since God works unceasingly and the Sabbath cannot interfere with his work (Morris 1995:273-4; Brown 1966:217; see also Kysar 1986:79).

²⁴¹ Marrow points out that 'a wonder like this is God's alone to perform, and to perform solely through his own chosen agent' (Marrow 1995:156). The miracle *per se* is indisputable evidence that Jesus is a man from God as the healed man asserts him to be (v. 33). While the theoretical expertise of the leaders does not enable them to understand God's way of revelation, yet the narrator shows the formerly blind man open to God's revelation through Jesus.

²⁴² For more details about the theological significance of the 'signs', I refer to

it glorifies the Son, as it serves to disclose *who Jesus is*. That is to say that the signs and the works serve God's revelation. Yet when the Pharisees say to the healed man 'Δὸς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ (give glory to God), one should not misled to think that it is indeed God they want to see glorified. Quite the reverse: the object of the Pharisees' tactic is to convince the man 'to repudiate Jesus and give glory to God'.²⁴³ The Pharisees seek to compel the man to withdraw his support from Jesus and to take up their skeptical view that Jesus is simply human being. While they claim that Moses is greater than Jesus, the open-minded formerly blind man has discovered the divine origin of Jesus. His understanding of Jesus develops into his understanding of Jesus' identity as the Son of Man and revitalizes his willingness to be a paradigmatic figure in discipleship.

9.1.3 The Identity of Jesus: Semantic relations 'i'

This section deals with Jesus' identity. While the disciples understand that Jesus is a 'Rabbi', the healed man's understanding goes further. He recognizes him firstly as 'the man called Jesus', then he acknowledges him as 'prophet', and later as the '[man] from God', another way of confirming Jesus' messiahship to the extent that the blind man is moved to confess Jesus as the Son of Man. The selected phrases below relate to this:

- 2.1 καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες,
*Ῥαββί, τίς ἤμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα τυφλὸς
 γεννηθῆ;*
- 5 ὅταν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ᾧ, *φῶς εἶμι τοῦ κόσμου.*

Schnackenburg's Excursus (190a), p.521-5.

²⁴³ Witherington (1995:184; see also Kysar (1986:153) disputes that all consideration of this must be taken as an injunction to the man to attribute his healing to God and not to Jesus. For him, 'Give God the praise' could mean the formal oath required before offering testimony (cf. Jos 7.19 and *I Esdr* 9.8). The oath 'Give glory to God' is an OT formula used to stress Yahweh's unique claim to worship in order to induce people to admit their guilt before God (see Josh 7.19; 1 Sam 6.5; Jer 13.16). According to Talmudic literature (*bSanhedrin* 6.2), a condemned criminal, like Achan, (Joshua 7.19) gives praise by making a confession of sin. For the Pharisees, Jesus, by healing on the Sabbath, was indeed a sinner and thus the blind taking the part of a sinner is making him guilty. I am not convinced by Beasley-Murray (1989:158) assertion that this is the command to the man to confess his sin related to his blindness and subsequent healing by Jesus.

- 17.2 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν ὅτι *Προφήτης* ἐστίν.
- 22.1 ταῦτα εἶπαν οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἐφοβοῦντο τοὺς Ἰουδαίους·
ἤδη γὰρ συνετέθειντο οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι
ἵνα ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ *Χριστόν*,
ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται.
- 33 εἰ μὴ ἦν *οὗτος* *παρὰ θεοῦ*, οὐκ ἠδύνατο ποιεῖν οὐδέν.
- 35.2 καὶ εὐρὼν αὐτὸν εἶπεν, *Σὺ πιστεύεις εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ*
ἀνθρώπου;
- 36.1 ἀπεκρίθη ἐκεῖνος καὶ εἶπεν, *Καὶ τίς ἐστιν, κύριε, ἵνα πιστεύσω*
εἰς αὐτόν;

9.1.3.1 Orientation of the semantic relations

In the above-mentioned phrases, some titles are granted to Jesus (Rabbi, prophet, Messiah, man from God, Son of Man and Lord). Most of them are Christological titles from which, with one exception,²⁴⁴ the man makes remarkable progress from his initial confession of Jesus as prophet to his acknowledgement of Jesus as the Son of Man, even Lord, deserving of worship. Although the title ‘Messiah’ would lead to the expulsion from the synagogue of those who confess Jesus as the Messiah (v.22.1), the blind man courageously stands his ground when he confesses that Jesus is the ‘one from God’. However, he suffers the same fate as the One to whom he is committed, for the Pharisees see him as born entirely in sin and arrogantly trying to instruct the experts. That is why they drove him out (v.34.1-2). The obvious progress of the formerly blind man needs to be examined by way of an analysis of each title.

9.1.3.2 Jesus as Rabbi

Although the title ‘Rabbi’ is often used in the rest of the NT, it appears only eight times in the FG²⁴⁵. Rabbi literally means ‘my great one’ (cf. Brown 1966:74;

²⁴⁴ The way the blind man tries to recognize the healer as ‘the man called Jesus’ does not make sense since this is not Christological title.

²⁴⁵ Mt 23.7, 8; 26.25, 49; Mk 9.5; 10.51; 11.21; 14.45; John 1.38, 49; 3.2, 26; 4.31; 6.25; 9.2; 11.8.

Morris 1971:157; Bruce 1983:56), and implies ‘lord’ or ‘master’. As for the title Messiah, it is translated, in John, for the benefit of his Greek readers. Some commentators, such as Morris and Brown, argue that the title was not in use before 70 CE and is applied to Jesus anachronistically. It is a courtesy title and, in the strict sense, designated a ‘teacher’ (Davies quoted by Morris 1971:157). While the title was not applied to any other sage, the first person to bear the title ‘*rabban*’ was Gamaliel (about the middle of the first century), and it was at the academy of Jamnia that the title took on its meaning of ‘ordained’ scholar (Brown 1966:74).²⁴⁶ By calling Jesus Rabbi,²⁴⁷ the evangelist attributes to him the role of a teacher.²⁴⁸ There is then a combination of two titles (rabbi and teacher). Van Tilborg (1996:120) maintains that the ‘narrator’ creates a ‘historicizing model of a rabbi who gathers

²⁴⁶ Two tendencies developed on the dating of the use of the term: according to one, the term came in use after 70 CE, while the other holds that Jesus was recognized as rabbi before 70 CE. Bruce (1983:56) asserts that ‘in the course of the first century AD it came to be applied in a rather technical sense to one ordained as a teacher after an appropriate course of rabbinical training, but it was given to Jesus as a courtesy title by those who recognized in him a teacher sent by God, as Nicodemus did (see John 3.1).

²⁴⁷ Jesus is never directly called *didaskalos*, but several times ‘*Rabbi*’ (in John 1.49 by Nathanael; in 6.26 by the people; in 20.16 *rabbouni* by Mary Magdalene). Jesus is indirectly referred to as *didaskalos* by Nicodemus in John 3.2, in 11.28 by Martha, and in 13.14 by Jesus about himself.

²⁴⁸ In the FG Jesus is presented as a ‘travelling teacher’ who does not stay in any one place for a long time and teaches not only in the synagogue, but also in the temple (see John 18.19-20). In acting as a teacher, Jesus finds both acceptance and resistance among the various peoples and in the different cities that he visits. Among those who experience his teaching are the population of Palestine, people from Judea, Samaria and Galilee, men and women, rich and poor. Jesus’s teachings hold certain characteristics. His discourse is seldom a monologue and almost always takes the form of a dialogue. Jesus may be viewed as a teacher who enters into dialogue with the people and who, via misunderstandings and irony, brings them to insight and awareness, or fails to do so. Misunderstanding is a characteristic of an inner and an outer group while irony is a means to distinguish between the good and the bad listener. According to Van Tilborg, there are, in John, also polemical undertones and overtones with the Judeans as the expression of a contemporary polemic between Christians and (absent) Jews towards the end of the First Century. The dialogue technique used by John strives to challenge the believer to make a journey. The reader, by solving the misunderstanding, is brought to a better understanding of the narrator’s ideological point of view. Culpepper is right in arguing that ‘the misunderstanding leads the readers to feel a judgmental distance between themselves as ‘insiders’ who understand the elusive implication of Jesus’ revelatory discourses and those who have rejected Jesus.’ Misunderstanding, so to speak, remains a challenge to find a solution and, through it, to receive a revelation of God in Jesus. Jesus’s words are linked with a number of extraordinary activities called *semeia*, through which Jesus’s deeds are bound with the deeds of the prophets of Israel. By calling Jesus’s miracles *semeia*, according to Tilborg (1996:118), John ensures that they are understood as signs of Jesus’s origin. They confirm what Jesus says about himself.

disciples', a rabbi who introduces his disciples in words and deeds to heavenly realities and who prepares them for the mission which they will have to fulfill in his name, which is to make other disciples in order to create the unity of the children of God. Jesus is viewed as a teacher in the light of a dual model: (i) the model of a rabbi who gathers disciples; and (ii) the hellenistically orientated image of a teacher who forms an '*oikos* of friends' (Van Tilborg 1996:120-1). Jesus also calls the disciples *teknia*,²⁴⁹ because Jesus is a wisdom teacher who relates as a father-teacher to his children-disciples. Jesus was a teacher joined by the disciples who wanted to learn from him how they should live a life focused on attachment to him (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:48) as the revealer of God. This was the task of the various philosophers of the Hellenistic world²⁵⁰ who sought to teach human beings how to live a meaningful existence, like the scribes who instructed people on the distinctive appropriations of Israel's Torah (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:48). As a teacher Jesus fulfils the role of a scribe or philosopher for a distinctive and purpose to teach them how to live a meaningful human existence.

9.1.3.3 Jesus as a prophet

The title 'prophet' is attributed to Jesus by the healed blind man in a context where he ends a dispute between two groups of Pharisees. Some claim Jesus cannot be from God for he does not keep the Sabbath, whereas others argue that he cannot be a sinner if he performs such signs (v.16). The division among the Pharisees anticipated his confession. The blind man is, at this stage, ironically depicted as an arbiter of religious matters that the specialists are unable to solve. He has already and ironically attained a level of understanding beyond that of his detractors. Though the acknowledgement of Jesus as 'a prophet' is still in itself one step closer to confession than the simpler conventional religious statement, it is not yet a Christian confession

²⁴⁹ John 13.33.

²⁵⁰ As a teacher Jesus fits into a framework of schools in Ephesus, namely Platonists, eclectics, practitioners of dialectics and cynics (Van Tilborg 1996:132). The disciples are followers of a teacher, joining him in order to learn a way of living (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998: 48). Jesus no longer calls his disciples slaves, but friends (John 15.14-5), and seeks to teach human beings how to live a meaningful human existence.

(Meyer 2004:258). This is the first level of faith for the blind man whose religious adventure will make evident progress as the narrative unfolds. The title granted to Jesus needs to be analyzed in relation to the title 'Christ', as well as the concept of the 'sign' associated with it.

John 1.21 is the first occurrence where the title 'the prophet' alternates with 'the Christ'. In another reference (John 7.40-3) some people hail Jesus as 'the prophet', while others declare that he is 'the Christ'. Moreover, in John 6.14-5, the concept of the 'sign' is linked to that of 'prophet'. The people's attempt to make Jesus king by force, because of the multiplication of the loaves, requires the evangelist to clarify the false and inadequate messianic expectations which come to the fore in the recognition of Jesus as the Prophet. Jesus is portrayed by the people as 'Prophet-King'. However, John moves to the portrayal of Jesus as Mosaic-Prophet-Messiah, in referring to Deut 18.15-22, the foundational text for Messiah-Prophet expectations.²⁵¹

Early Christian tradition found the promise of the Messiah-Prophet to be fulfilled in Jesus (cf. Act 3.22; 7.37; Mt 17.5; Mk 9.7; Lk 9.35). The FE goes a step further by depicting Jesus as 'God's agent'.²⁵² The miracle of the multiplication of bread²⁵³ is in dialogue with Jewish tradition since four heroes – Moses, Elijah, Elisha and the god-hero Jesus – are all credited with such a miracle (Wendy-Cotter 1999:133). All of them are prophets and heroes serving God. John, by recounting the

²⁵¹ The 'Prophet coming into the world' motif is an explicit reference to the Moses typology implied as such in John 5.19-47; behind this motif is Deut 18.15-22 in which it is asserted that the Lord God will raise up a prophet like Moses from among their brothers, and the children of Israel are called to listen attentively to, or to listen to him (verse 15). Jesus' reception among the brothers in accordance with this Johannine theme (John 1.11; 7.3, 5; 20.17) and those who believed in him by hearing his words (see John 3.29; 4.42; 5.24, 25, 28, 37; 6.45; 8.47; 9.27; 10.3, 8, 16, 27; 12.47; 18.37) are responding to God, who promised to send a prophet like Moses, into whose mouth he will put his words (Deut 18.17-20), and who likely sent Jesus. It is those messianic motifs that are characteristic in John's Christology (see Anderson's view 1996:174, 175; Martyn 1969:93-103).

²⁵² Wendy Cotter (1999:47), talking about ancient heroes from the Jewish Scriptures, considers Moses (among others) as the advocate of people, for they do not see God but they do see Moses, designated as leader of these people, better playing the role of God's agent.

²⁵³ The word 'bread' meant both bread and food in general. Bread constituted half of the calorie intake in much of the ancient Mediterranean region. Wheat was considered much superior to barley, hence the taste and indigestibility of barley bread left it the staple of the poor in Roman times (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:127). Both the Old Testament (1 Kings 17.8-16) and the Mishnah authors (Ket 5.8) assume that wheat is less sensitive to soil salinity. Therefore, it became the major crop in arid parts of the Mediterranean world. The husband who provided an estranged wife with barley bread was required to provide her twice the ration of wheat. Sorghum was less common than either wheat or barley and likewise was considered an inferior product. Bread could be taken to the village baker in the morning while in the cities and towns, bread could be purchased, so those who could afford it avoided the difficult labour of daily milling.

miracle, is interested in finding its meaning within the tradition. The construction of his story is an attempt to solve the misunderstanding around the identity of Jesus as the prophet, as announced by Moses in Deut 18.15-22. De Jonge (2000:218) says: ‘(...) anyone who interprets Jesus’ words and actions along the lines of Moses’ “signs”, particularly his giving of manna, “the bread from heaven” (6.31), does not really understand who Jesus is. He himself is the bread from heaven, given by his Father.’ The understanding of Jesus as simply God’s earthly agent does not make sense.

Thus, through the signs he performs, Jesus is a Prophet, but he is more than this: according to the healed man who attains insight because of his unique experience of the gift of sight, he is the Man from God.

9.1.3.4 The man of God (vv.30-3)

The title ‘[the man] from God’ is another claim for Jesus’ messiahship²⁵⁴ given by a man confident with his own experience of recovered sight (v.30).²⁵⁵ He is sensitive to the manifestation of God through the healer.

In the debate that originates with the Pharisees, the blind man did not negate Moses, but he was concerned with the incontestable reality of God in the person of Jesus (Brodie 1993:352). Despite Moses’ greatness, the manifestation of God experienced by the man was never known in the time of Moses, since the miracle was an unparalleled event. Although the tradition surrounding Moses was not without its miracles, there was no healing of congenital blindness in the past.²⁵⁶ The

²⁵⁴ The title ‘Messiah’ has been discussed elsewhere in the form of a brief survey (see excursus, pp.210-214).

²⁵⁵ The adjective θαυμαστός in v.30 means ‘wonderful’ or ‘marvel’ or ‘remarkable’. The use of that adjective is problematic. Before trying to sort out the enigma, one has to ensure that θαυμαστός occurs elsewhere in the NT (Mt 21.42; Mk 12.11; 1 Peter 2.9; Rev 15.1, 3). John, it seems, buys into the tradition. The use of θαυμαστός takes us to the heart of the problem of present manifestations of the divine (Brodie 1993:352). For the formerly blind man, the experience of the gift of sight is nothing less than a manifestation of the divine, supported all the more by the knowledge that ‘never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind’ (v. 32). Nevertheless, it is amazing that the leaders are so comfortable in their unbelief despite the evidence of healing (Morris 1995:437).

²⁵⁶ *Epid. Inscr.* 9, cf. Graant, *Religions*, p.58, as quoted by Keener 2003a:792. This hyperbole seems excused since there were pagan pilgrims to cult sanctuaries, where it was told that Asclepius healed during the night a man with no eyes in his eye sockets. Probably the

FE is aware of the fact that in the Palestinian Jewish tradition healings of the blind were reported on rare occasions (Tob 11.11-2), however, there are no reports of the healing of a person born blind. In the light of the OT,²⁵⁷ the giving of sight to the blind would be a sign of the messianic age. The synoptic Gospels incorporated the view that ‘the restoring of sight to the blind is a token that the new age has dawned’, but in the FG, the emphasis is on the authority and character of the one who performs the miracle (Bruce 1983:218). The blind man’s reply, more precisely a rabbinical maxim,²⁵⁸ is stated in these terms: οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀμαρτωλῶν ὁ θεὸς οὐκ ἀκούει ἀλλ’ ἐάν τις θεοσεβῆς ἢ καὶ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιῆ τούτου ἀκούει (‘we know that God does not listen to sinners but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will’), shows him moving from a defensive to an offensive posture (Keener 2003a:792). The blind man with an enlightened eye is enabled to see beyond the miracle, and he sees that the healer must be ‘from God’.

For him, the experience of recovering his sight was unique and unparalleled in history. The term θεοσεβῆς evokes the piety of the Hellenistic world, while the expression τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιῆ ‘doing his will’ is used by the Hebrew religious world to describe piety (Brown 1966:375). The understanding of God in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish world implies some kind of attitude from the worshipper. This term cannot be found elsewhere in the NT.²⁵⁹ In the Graeco-Roman world, θεοσεβῆς may mean, as Trebilco says ‘a group of pagans who attended the synagogue regularly and adopted some Jewish customs such as Sabbath observance and food laws, but who were not circumcised and so were not full members of the Jewish community in the way that proselytes were’ (1991:145). Therefore, the term refers to the Gentiles who were in a relationship with the synagogues as attractive places. ‘The Jews’ gained a significant degree of influence among local pagans to whom their practices appealed (Trebilco 1991:141). Literary sources exist that mention

members of John’s Diaspora audience who heard such stories, in the Graeco-Roman context for instance, would nevertheless excuse the hyperbole.

²⁵⁷ Isaiah 35.4-5: ‘Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.”’ And Isaiah 42.1, 7: ‘Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights ... to open the eyes that are blind ...’

²⁵⁸ ‘Every one in whom is the fear of heaven, his words are heard.’

²⁵⁹ The term that is used in 1 Timothy 2.10 is *theosebeia*, meaning ‘reverence for God’.

God-worshippers as a well-known group in Rome, Iconium, Thessalonica, Beroea, Corinth, Athens and elsewhere in Asia Minor. In spite of the diversity of Judaism in Asia Minor, and the fact that the term could mean different things in different communities, there *was* a common practice that included attendance at the synagogue and observance of certain Jewish customs.

Obviously the combination of these two terms ('worshippers of God' and 'those who do God's will') is significant and very characteristic of John's theology and linguistic workmanship (Barrett 1978:364). It does not refer to two different groups, namely Gentiles and Jews, as the term is applied to devout Gentiles (Lindars 1972:349) who were members of the synagogues without being proselytes. The use of θεοσεβῆς reveals the influence of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. John's concern, in 9.31, we think, is to emphasize the contrast between such 'a lack of knowledge' and the evidence of the miracle 'with the knowledge of believing Jews' (Schnackenburg 1980b:252), according to which God does not listen to sinners. It was commonly held that God hears only those who fear him and do his will. Keener (2003a:793) puts it as follows:

The man reasons that Jesus cannot be a sinner, a Sabbath-breaker; he must be a doer of God's will, that is, of the law. Diaspora Judaism often praised those who were 'pious' (θεοσεβῆς and related terms; 9:30); the term could apply to Israelites, and often was used also for Gentile sympathizers (e.g., Acts 10:2; 13:16; *Josephus Ant.* 20.195; synonym in *T.Jos.*4:6), as has come to be widely recognized, despite some earlier questions. Various Jewish traditions also emphasized that God heard only the righteous; at the least they had a special position of favour before God (e.g., Ps 34:10, 15-18), a general principle most Jews and Christians would have affirmed. Even many exclusivist early Christians acknowledged that God noticed the good deeds of those who were not yet believers (Acts 10:4, 31, 35); John 3:21 may also imply this, though it could well depict those in the process of becoming persevering believers, as in many of John's narratives.

As a matter of fact, in Judaism, miracles were regarded as answers to prayer (Schnackenburg 1980b:252). With reference to that Hellenistic and Jewish belief, Brodie (1993:352) notes: 'thorough acceptance of God induces God's communication, God's manifestation'. The opening of the eyes of a person born blind is not an everyday occurrence of divine manifestation. The blind man begins to think about the theological implications of such a miracle. Jesus cannot be a Sabbath breaker and a sinner, he reasons, since God would not listen to such a person, and his

extraordinary act of healing would be inconceivable (v. 31-32). By this reasoning, he reaches the conviction that εἰ μὴ ἦν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ, οὐκ ἠδύνατο ποιεῖν οὐδέν of v. 33, (if this man were not from God, he could do nothing). The man is depicted as constrained by the logic of his own experience to move to a deeper understanding of Jesus. He moves from a literal understanding to the illumination of Jesus in symbolic meaning (Lee 1994:176-7). In McGrath's contention, 'the point is that, whereas Moses' credentials are indisputable, the Jewish authorities regard Jesus as a lawbreaker, and take this as definitive evidence against his claim to reveal God and speak authoritatively on God's behalf' (2001:183-4). Rightly, Lieu (1988:83) counterbalances the Jewish opinions with that of the man born blind in contending that: 'The 'Johannine' theme of the origin of Jesus is another thread (16, 29, 33), with the blind man as *the only person in the Gospel other than Jesus himself to describe Jesus 'as from God.'* The evangelist is concerned with the strangeness of the knowledge of Jesus' identity, which can only be explained through the revelation he brings through his work of healing, and to make him the paradigm of the disciple throughout the Gospel. The man born blind, through the experience of recovering his sight, becomes able to acknowledge Jesus' dignity as the man coming from God as well as the Son of Man, as we are now going to discover.

9.1.3.5 The concept of the 'Son of Man' in the Fourth Gospel

The concept of the Son of Man is a very important issue in NT studies and Christological terminology (cf. Charlesworth 1985:88). Two methodologies commonly adopted in the study of the concept Son of Man divide Johannine scholarship. One group adopts the diachronic approach which strives to find the roots of the Johannine use of 'the Son of Man' in Jewish apocalyptic writing, the historical Jesus, the Gnostic heavenly man, the Philonic perfect man or an eschatological, divine or some form of 'man' to be found in the ancient world. They accept the hypothesis that 'background determines meaning'. Another group advocates the synchronic approach, which takes the text at face value since 'the best interpreter of the Johannine text is the Johannine text' itself (cf. Moloney 2005a:182-3). From this point of view, the best way to interpret a text is to take it as it stands now. Brown (2003:110-1) pointedly states:

Even though I think there were both an evangelist and a redactor, the duty of the commentator is not to decide what was composed by whom, or in what order it originally stood, nor whether these composers drew on a written source or an oral tradition. One should deal with the Gospel as it now stands, for that is the only form that we are certain has ever existed.

Taking into account such a warning, the discussion around the Son of Man must start with John's text, only indicating the background of the term at the end. This approach is an inclusive (yet not exclusive) effort to reach an understanding of the issue.

A brief overview of the thirteen Johannine Son of Man sayings within the Gospel²⁶⁰ reveals three elements in the Johannine use of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου that have influenced scholarly discussion (Moloney 2005a:185). The first element is the association of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου with the verbs ἀναβαίνω and καταβαίνω (1.51; 3.13; 6.62); the second lies in its association with ὑφώω (3.14; 8.28; 12.32-4); and the third element lies in its association with δοξάζω (12.23; 13.31-2). This grouping develops an argument from the gospel itself. The first occurrence of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in John is found in the first chapter. While others argue that the expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου affirms Jesus' humanity, Ashton (1991:340) points out that 'it is an error to take the Christology of the incarnate Logos as a kind of axiom *from which everything else derives*' (see also Moloney 2005a:184 note 33). Disputing such a stand, Moloney (2005a:185) notes: 'Although the incarnation of the logos should not be used as an axiom "from which everything else derives", it is one of several fundamental axioms that must be used for an understanding of the Johannine Christology.' That is why we have to start with the enigmatic promise made to the disciples by Jesus in 1.51,²⁶¹ which is drawn into the ascent-descent motif. Jesus' promise in vv.50-1 does not sanction the attractive or magnificent

²⁶⁰ Cf. 1.51; 3.13, 14; 5.27; 6.27, 53, 62; 8.28; 9.35; 12.23, 34 [twice]; 13.31.

²⁶¹ The mention of the 'Son of Man' has been regarded as a strange intrusion, it is not a series of initial confessions or a series of enthusiastic testimonies depicting Jesus as 'Rabbi', 'Messiah', and 'the one who fulfills the Law and the Prophets,' 'the Son of God', 'the King of Israel'. Those who advocate an intrusion take Nathanael's confession (v.49) as the climax, putting vv.50-1 aside, so to speak. For For Brown (1966-70:88), Schnackenburg (1980a:320), Fortna (1970:179-189), the originally Nathanael's confession led directly to 2.1-11. Moloney (2005a:188) advocates for a synchronic reading of John 1.19-2.11, which is a Christian re-reading of Ex 19.7-19, and the midrashic commentary on Ex 19 in the Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael, of the celebration of the Sinaitic gift of the δόξα of the Law at Pentecost.

confessions made to his person. Sevrin (2003:345) states:

En fait, la confession de Nathanaël va être marquée par Jésus d'un coefficient d'inadéquation, en étant dépassée par une énigme: 'tu verras plus grand que cela'. Le signe qui semble fonder la foi de Nathanaël sera dépassé par un autre ; et Jésus, s'adressant à l'ensemble des disciples, voire aux lecteurs, pointe vers cet autre signe de façon voilée : 'vous verrez le ciel ouvert et les anges montant et descendant sur le Fils de l'Homme.' Il introduit un nouveau titre, celui de 'Fils de l'Homme' qui sera toujours associé dans l'évangile à la croix glorieuse et salutaire (à l'exception de 5,27). C'est l'annonce d'un événement futur que verront les disciples et, par la référence à Gn 28,12.16-17, la présentation du Fils de l'Homme, dans cet événement, comme le lieu de la présence divine.

The greatness of the figure of the Son of Man is that he is the contact point on earth with the myriads of heavenly messengers (Sloyan 1988:25-6). At the outset of the Gospel, the Son of Man is referred to along with the pair of verbs *ἀναβαίνειν/καταβαίνειν* (ascend/descend). This draws attention to the perception of the Son of Man as a transcendent or preexistent figure. John 1.51 is a promise of the revelation of God, as Moloney (2005a:188-9) explains:

Following a Jewish tradition that shifted the ascent and the descent of the angels in Gn 28,12 from the ladder to Jacob,²⁶² the apocalyptic opening of the heavens promises the revelation of God, and the ascent and descent of the angels upon (ἐπί) the Son of Man indicates that this revelation will be seen (cf. v.50: ὄψη vv.51: ὄωσθε). The Son of Man is firmly upon earth, and the angels ascend and descend upon him, communicating the revelation of the heavenly.

By recalling Jacob's dream, the FE, moving from Jewish belief in the angels' role and all the traditions related to Jacob about God's revelation, point out emphatically that Jesus, the Son of Man, is the one in whom God reveals himself to human beings. In John 1.51, the Son of Man is depicted as the way of angelic traffic between heaven and earth making God present on earth and binding heaven and earth together.

The pairing of the verbs 'ascend-descend' also occurs in 3.13: 'καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.' 'No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from

²⁶² On the theological plane, this Jewish text emphasizes that God is Lord of the world, and he authoritatively stands atop the world (Charlesworth 1985:405) from where he can send angels, celestial beings that link earth and heaven together by way of ascending and descending movements.

heaven, the Son of Man.’ The *εἰ μὴ* has been interpreted either as ‘but’ or ‘except’ (For the discussion, cf Moloney 1996:54-7 and *id.* (2005:190-1). The words ‘ascending’ and ‘descending’ highlight the exclusive properties of the Son of Man (Meeks 1986:15). The grammatical construct with *οὐδεὶς* is reinforced by *εἰ μὴ* to make a polemic against Jewish speculation about the figures thought to have been ascended to heaven, from where they bring God’s revelation. The particle *οὐδεὶς* is a strong contradiction. The force of the argument is to reject any validity that may be attached to the claims that ‘the great revealers of Israel had been to heaven to learn the secrets they eventually revealed ...’ (Moloney 1993:117). By adding the emphatic positive *εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐράνοῦ καταβάς*, ‘except the one who descended from heaven’, the FE underscores the point with an exegetical clarification ‘ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.’²⁶³ The FE astonishingly adds the identity and title of the individual Son of Man figure.

These are the patriarchs, like Jacob and Moses,²⁶⁴ and all the seers in Jewish religious tradition, like Enoch, who claimed to have received revelations through ‘heavenly journeys’.²⁶⁵ The Son of Man is presented as a figure contrasting with them for he descended, as the exclusive revealer, from heaven. As McGrath (2001:171) puts it:

John draws the conclusion that Jesus’ revelation was not based on an ascent to heaven, but on the descent of one who has pre-existed in heaven. John goes so far as to claim that no one had in fact ascended to heaven in order to bring back knowledge of heavenly things, except for the one whose revelation was based not on the ascent of a human being into heaven, but on the descent of one who pre-existed in heaven to tell of what he was and experienced there.

John’s rhetorical construct fits with the medium of revelation, according to Collins (1999:157), who argues that the heavenly journey was considered, at the time

²⁶³ See EM Sidebottom (1961), *The Christ of the Fourth Gospel*. London: SPCK; E Ruckstuhl, ‘Die johanneische Menschensohnforschung, 1957-1969’, *Theologische Berichte*, edited by J Pfammatter and F Furger 1972 (Einsiedeln: Benziger), p.171-284; Ruckstuhl, *Jesus in Horizont der Evangelien* (1988) (Stuttgarter Biblische Aufsatzbande 3; Stuttgart: Verlag katholisches Bibelwerk), p.288-90; FJ Moloney, *The Son of Man* (1976), Rome: Las; Hare, *The Son of Man tradition*, pp.86-87.

²⁶⁴ Moses was just as much enabled to bring back the revelation from the Mountain, through which he went up into heaven.

²⁶⁵ Through his journey to heaven, Enoch was seen as qualified to disclose the mysteries of the heavenly world.

of crisis, as the standard medium of apocalyptic revelation. The supernatural revelation brought by intermediary agents was grounded in the world view that 'human affairs are determined to a great degree by supernatural agents; and the belief that human life is subject to divine judgment, culminating in reward or punishment after death' (Collins 1999:157).

With reference to 6.62, where it is said: ἐὰν οὖν θεωρῆτε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀναβαίνοντα ὅπου ἦν τὸ πρῶτον (If then you were to see the Son of Man going up where he was before?), this verse, despite the agreement and disagreement over it, emphasizes descent of the Son of Man much more than his ascent. When Jesus asks the disciples if they would like him to ascend to where he was before (6.62), does he refer to his ascent or his descent? Moloney (2005:195) points out:

There is no reason for Jesus to ascend, as other revealers are acclaimed as having done. He comes from above. He has been there before, and it is this that gives authority to his words as spirit and life (v.63). Again, as with 3,13, the information provided for the reader in the prologue (1,1-18) lies behind the question that Jesus poses to the disciples, the question of 6,62 is not about the ascension of the Son of Man, but the rejection of any such possibility. The earthly Son of Man has no need to ascend into heaven; he has been there before, and he came from there.

All of the references (1.51; 3.13 and 6.62) that suggest an association of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου with the verbs ἀναβαίνω and καταβαίνω, analyzed so far, portray the Son of Man as present on earth in order to make God known. The *second group* is constituted from the verses that associate ὑψόω (3.14; 8.28; 12.32-4) with the thought that the ὑψωσις did not take place in heaven but on earth, since the Son will be glorified on the cross. The *last group* has to be associated with the preceding group. In 12.23, Jesus' saying is ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ('the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified'). Jesus' announcement of his death takes place when the Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival came to Philip wishing to see (ἰδεῖν) Jesus (v.21). The event of Jesus' death is, at the same time, the hour of glorification. In the midst of prophecies of betrayal and denial (vv.2, 10-11, 18, 21-30, 36-38) lies another announcement made to prepare his disciples ἵνα πιστεύσητε ὅταν γένηται ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι (so that you may believe when it comes that [ἐγώ εἰμι] I am he). Judas'

departure to betray Jesus (v.31a) gives a way to announce that now ἐδοξάσθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐδοξάσθη ἐν αὐτῷ (now the Son of Man has been glorified and God has been glorified in him). Jesus' death is the means by which Jesus is glorified since it is an opportunity for the disciples to recognize the revelation of God. Moloney (2005a:196-200) concludes that 'the Son of Man glorifies God, and is himself glorified in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth' (2.22; 3.14; 7.39; 12.16, 23, 32-4; 13.31-2; 17.1-5; 19.5?).

The current analysis must also deal with the use of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in the Synoptic tradition (Mk 8.38 par. Mt 10.33 and 12.39; 13.24-7 par. Mt 24.29-31 and Lk 21.25-8; 14.62), where the Son of Man is the figure expected in the future. While Ashton (1991:368-73) points to the Son of Man as a figure whose true home is heaven, Moloney takes another stand drawing a link between the use of the Son of Man in synoptic tradition and John in connection with Dan 7.

For him, the 'one like a Son of Man' in Dan 7.13 is to be identified with the holy ones of the Most High of vv.21-5. The figure who is 'like a human being' is identified explicitly with 'the people of the saints of the Most High' (Dan 7.27), that is, with the true and final People of God to whom ultimate dominion is promised. The experience of suffering even death at the hands of the enemies of Israel (thus enemies of God) will lead to final vindication. Moloney pointedly concludes that the historical Jesus used an Aramaic expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, more precisely, he applied to himself and his listeners the danielic 'one like a Son of Man' as 'the Son of Man,' corresponding, so to speak, to 'the holy ones of the most high' in order to demonstrate that 'openness to God, cost what it may, would lead to his vindication' (see Moloney 2005a:181).

The collective understanding of the Son of Man that exists in Daniel is lacking in 2 *Ezra* 13 and the *Parables (or Similitudes of Enoch)*, where the Son of Man is an individual figure. In Dan 7, the Son of Man is a collective figure while in *1 Enoch*, he is an eschatological figure (the Elect One). The Book of the *Parables of Enoch* (37-71) provokes interest as it draws a relationship between the Son of Man and Enoch himself. The *Parables (or 'Similitudes') of Enoch (1 En 37-71)* constitute a Book set apart in which an unnamed heavenly figure approaches the seer and gives him some startling news: 'You are the Son of the man who is born to righteousness,

and righteousness rests upon you' (1 En 71.14). Charlesworth is amazed by the fact that 'while the Son of Man is not associated with Enoch in the chapters prior to 71.14, the *Parables of Enoch* conclude with the elevation and declaration that none other than Enoch is the Son of Man' (Charlesworth 2004:223f.). Scholars generally used to take 1 En.71.14 at face value, as notes Olson (1998:27-8), inasmuch as Enoch, the seventh from Adam, is identified with the heavenly 'Son of Man'. There is no space here to deal with the issue of the identification of Enoch as the Son of Man.²⁶⁶ The main concern of the present study is to see whether the term Son of Man, as used in the FG, relates in any way to the Book of Daniel, and especially to 1 En 70-71.

Hahn's (1963:20) interesting study argues, from the philological perspective, that the expression '*ben hanasha*' is a description of the individual man. The pre-existent and descending/ascending aspect of the Johannine Son of Man can be derived from the Jewish apocalyptic background (Brown 2003:257-8). Viewed from that perspective, the FG should be seen as sharing its background with some of the synoptic usages, even though some scholars do not readily admit it. One such scholar is Wink who observes that the expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (Son of Man), translated from the Hebrew *ben hadam* and the Aramaic *bar enasha*, should not be related to the Jewish apocalyptic tradition (cf. 2002:21).

Recently Moloney (2005:181) demonstrates that the tradition found in the FG began with the suffering Son of Man, as it stands in Dan 7, and Jesus' consciousness of his own mission which was shaped in both the Christian preaching and the Jewish apocalyptic material into a heavenly or eschatological figure. That is to say that the Synoptic and the Johannine Son of Man sayings find their origins in Jesus' pointing to the danielic 'one like a Son of Man' and his suffering and death as 'the son of the man'.²⁶⁷ Unlike Ashton, Moloney (2005:182) comes to the conclusion that the Son of Man points to a figure whose true home is among suffering human beings.'

The FE reacts against the Jewish belief according to which Enoch ascended

²⁶⁶ For this question, I refer to the interesting study by Olson 1998:27-38.

²⁶⁷ Consult AJB Higgs (1964), *Jesus and the Son of Man*. London: Lutterworth; R Maddox, The Function of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John. In RJ Banks (ed.) [1974], *Reconciliation and Hope. NT Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to LL Morris on his 60th Birthday*. Exeter: Paternoster Press, 186-204. R Schnackenburg (1980), *The Gospel according to John*, 529-42; L Moloney (1996:214-30).

into heaven and was named Son of the Man, as we read in *1 En* 48.2-3: ‘And at that hour that the Son of Man was named in the presence of the Lord of Spirits, and his name (was named) before the Head of days. Even before the sun and the constellations were created, before the stars of heaven were made, his name was named before the Lord of Spirits.’ Charlesworth lists four reasons for making Enoch a good choice above Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon and others: (i) he was ‘seventh’ after Adam; (ii) he was perfect because ‘he walked with God’; (iii) he did not die, but ‘God took him’; (iv) these cryptic words in Gen 5.24 probably suggest that Enoch’s group thought Enoch was still alive (perhaps in heaven) to inspire and guide the elect ones on the earth (cf. Gen 5.21-4; Charlesworth 2004:229). The link between *1 Enoch* and John 9 is the use of the title ‘Son of Man’, since in *1 En* 71.14 Enoch is hailed as the Son of Man and in John 9.35-8 Jesus announces that he is the Son of Man.

The so-elaborated text of John 9 alludes inclusively to Jesus as the sent One of the Father (v.4) as well as the Son of Man (v.35) to clarify Jesus’ heavenly origin. Kysar (1991:41) points out that while the origin of the Messiah was an important credential for Jewish thought in the first century, the FE uses that concern to point out that the Son of Man is not of worldly origin. Jesus is more than a prophet and a messiah. He is the Son of Man. This title is attributed to him at the end of the story, while the title ‘Light of the world’ appears at the outset. Both titles play a role in constructing the chapter.

9.1.3.6 Jesus as Light

The statements made by Jesus in both 8.12 and 9.5 hint at the necessity for a symbolic interpretation of the revelation that takes place in history. The image of light, with Jesus as the new point of reference, is used in the context of conflict regarding his true identity. The evangelist’s use of the symbol is not gratuitous since he intends to place Jesus in opposition to the Jewish understanding of the knowledge of God (Painter 1991:27). By asserting that the true light has to be found in Jesus, the evangelist takes a symbol from the world of common experience of Jewish tradition and interprets it in a new way by giving it a new point of reference in Jesus, questioning, so to speak, the ‘traditional’ understanding (Painter 1991:283). One

should note that all the symbols (water, bread, light, etc.) are shaped in the struggle with the synagogue where the Law was the point of reference.

From such a point of view, the story of John 9 develops the significance of light after depicting the ‘Jews’ as being opposed to the light in Chapter 8. Jesus’ announcement that he is the the Light of the world (8.12), which opens the chapter, is discussed by Ball (1996:82) as follows:

Jesus’ claim to be the Light of the World is shown to be valid by the sign which follows (9.5ff.) in the same way that the feeding of the five thousand was a sign to indicate Jesus’ identity (cf.6.26, 27). Both the ἐγώ εἰμι and accompanying theme of light are resumed in Chapter 9. The same offer of light that the Jews in the temple rejected, because they claimed that Jesus’ testimony was invalid (8.13), is accepted by the blind man outside the temple. People such as he are in turn put out of the synagogue for accepting the significance of both the sign and the claim (9.22). The conclusion of Chapter 8 (i.e., Jesus’ rejection in the temple) is paralleled in the subject matter of Chapter 9 (i.e., the blind man’s rejection by the leaders of the synagogue) and so leads into the next chapter thematically as well as structurally.

Jesus’ impressive opening words ‘I am the light of the world’ raise a good deal of speculation about their origin.²⁶⁸ Obviously the title ‘light of the world,’ with its background in the OT, has many applications in Judaism (to the Torah, or to the

²⁶⁸ The first writer to take up this theme is Barrett, who discusses the complexity of the background of the saying, which is found in the ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles, in pagan religions, notable in the Hermetic literature, in Judaism, and in the Synoptic Gospels. He concludes as follows: ‘John stands within the primitive Christian tradition... Nevertheless, it remains very probable that in the formulation of his statement he was influenced both by Hellenistic religion and by Jewish thought about Wisdom and the Law... Yet for John “the light of the world” describes what is essentially a soteriological function rather than a cosmological status’ (Barrett 1978:335-7). Léon-Dufour (1990b:261-2) regards the ceremonies that used to take place during the Feast of Tabernacles as demonstrating that the vesperal rite of light expressed the Jewish expectation of light promised to Israel on the day of the Messiah. When Jesus presents himself as the light of the world, he reveals what was unknown and hidden, for their salvation was plainly manifested in him. That is to say that when Jesus indicates in the Temple that he is the light of the world, he asserts that the Jewish expectation of definite light has been accomplished in his person, light prepared as such by the Law (Pr 6.23; Ps 119.105; *Test. Levi* 14.4; cf. SB II.521f.), by Wisdom (Pr 8.22; Sg 7.26), in who is the messianic light (Is 42.6; 49.6). Koester (2003:108) maintains that one should agree that Jesus’ statements in John 8.12 and 9.4 (which echo Isaiah 42.6-7, I *Enoch* 48.4, 10 and 2 *Baruch* 70.10) where the opening of a blind man’s eyes is a sign that Jesus is God’s messianic servant. Through the expression of ‘light of the world,’ Jesus is depicted as God’s agent for salvation and revelation. In applying the metaphor to Jesus, Jesus definitely ‘gathers up all of the various meanings of light into his person and fulfills all of them’ (Kysar 1986:135). One should realize that in applying this metaphor ‘light of the world’ to Jesus (8.12), the brilliant candelabra employed during the Jewish feast of Tabernacles, become mere symbolic lights preparing for the true light.

Temple, for instance). The statement in 9.5 reveals the evangelist's intention to underscore the universal aspect of Jesus' mission to provide illumination for all (John 1.9; 3.19). As it stands in Is 49.6, the Lord is appointed as a light to the nations, for his salvation may extend to the end of the earth. Equating him with the light, which came into the world on the first day of creation (Genesis 1.3), Jesus is portrayed as the Light-Word. When he comes into the world, it is to do the works of God, primarily to give human beings the light of life. Jesus' depiction as 'the Light of the world' (9.5), set at the outset of the narrative, is taken to a climax, towards the end of the chapter, he uses the title 'the Son of Man' (9.35). The miracle is interpreted up to reveal Jesus as the Son of Man, who is the light that functions to give sight (life) and, at the same time, to make blind (Painter 1991:275) those who do not believe.

The whole of Chapter 9 portrays the blind man as a paradigm of someone walking in light, moving away from the darkness created by the Jewish authorities' many claims throughout the chapter. He follows Jesus 'step by step'²⁶⁹ in order to attain the life God offers (Léon-Dufour 1990b:263). More precisely he shows himself as abandoning the life he is familiar with in order to step over the threshold into a new world (Theissen 2002:305). *In John, discipleship is such as it signifies an attachment in faith to Jesus, the light of the world, but it includes a willingness to follow him on his journey (8.12) through death into glory (12.26) and, if necessary, on the path of martyrdom (13.36-7; cf 21.19, 22; Schnackenburg 1980b:190-1).* Once he has recovered his sight,²⁷⁰ we see the man born blind no longer walking in darkness, but following Jesus, the divine Light of God. The whole narrative of John 9 is so constructed as to give to the healing its theological significance as an instance of light coming into darkness. The title "Light of the world" is used in conjunction with the "I am" sayings which we will now investigate.

²⁶⁹ This is my own expression.

²⁷⁰ According to Martyn (2003:40), the work of Jesus, who is the Light of the World (John 8.12), is not terminated in that deed. Through a faithful witness in the Johannine church, the healing power of Jesus touches a poor Jew, afflicted for many years with blindness.

9.1.3.7 The 'I am' sayings in John 9.5 (and 8.12)

5 ὅταν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ᾧ, φῶς εἰμι τοῦ κόσμου.

Attention has already been paid to how Jesus' confirmation of his identity in 9.5, 'I am the light of the world' echoes the emphatic statement of John 8.12 and links Chapter 8 with Chapter 9. The manner in which the expression 'ἐγὼ εἰμι' lies in Jesus' self-revelation (8.12) and at the end the chapter (v.58) 'Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am [ἐγὼ εἰμι],' makes the words constitute an *inclusio* (Kern quoted by Ball 1996:81). Although the expression ἐγὼ εἰμι, which the man born blind uses to identify himself (v.9) is, in Kysar's opinion (1986:150), a warning that the expression does not bear an absolutely revelatory meaning, it should be argued that John (8.12 and 9.5 included) the expression has to be interpreted in that perspective.²⁷¹ The metaphor of light is connected to both expressions in both passages.

The combinations of ἐγὼ εἰμι with various symbols (Jesus as the bread of life (6.35, 48), the bread coming down from heaven (6.41); the living bread that came down from heaven (6.51); the light of the world (8.12) and in 9.5 without ἐγὼ; the door (of the sheep) in 10.7, 9; the good shepherd (10.11, 14); the resurrection and the life (11.25); the way, the truth and the life (14.6); the (true) vine (15.1, 5)) may be said to summarize his role in revelation and in salvation. The metaphoric language employed to present Jesus as bread, water, shepherd, vine, light of the world, life and door shows that such symbols were familiar to a Palestinian, even though they held theological significance in Judaism (Schnackenburg 1980b:80). The FE symbolically adopts an existing tradition in the christological and soteriological (see 6.35; 8.12; 10.9, 11; 11.25; 14.6), and in the ecclesiological perspective (15.1). In Chapters 6, 11.25 and 14.6, the metaphors are used in connection with life.²⁷²

²⁷¹ For details, consult Schnackenburg's Excursus (1980b:79-89); Dodd (1976:127-31); Bultmann 1978:225-6. Besides the complete expression – combined with metaphorical images – Ashton (1991:184 note 50) lists the absolute sayings found in 8.24, 28, 58; 13.19, which are in a different category and have to be taken as the apparently straightforward cases of self-identification. Devilliers (2005:150), on the contrary, contends that the absolute usages (8.24, 28, 58; 13.19) are to be viewed as strong theological assertions.

²⁷² According to Ashton (1991:186), the 'I am statements' hold some resemblance, so all of them contain a promise of life. For him, these 'I am statements' are all *miniature Gospels*

While the metaphor is understood as a diversion from common usage, the extravagant use of terms does make sense as the metaphor itself creates a surplus of sense. In that way, the metaphor attains a cognitive aspect. The tension created enables one to find out something new; it is helpful to offer a new look at the world in which we live. To use Ricoeur's expression, the metaphor offers a kind of 'redescription of reality', for it invites us to see reality in a different way. In the Gospel of John, the use of metaphorical language is Jesus' offering of what human beings yearn for. The 'I am' sayings in the FG hold a theological and existential dimension. The images mentioned above contain explosive potential. What is at stake is no less than human existence. The search for life is utterly rooted within the heart of everyone. Everybody, as Zumstein (1993:84) observes, knows the 'aspiration to authentic and fulfilled life'. The Johannine Christ claims to be the answer to the human search to live authentically and truly as such:

L'évangéliste constate que les hommes sont animés par la soif de vivre. L'aspiration qui rassemble tous les hommes, c'est non seulement de conserver la vie qu'ils ont, mais d'accéder à une vie qui soit plus intense, qui soit plus pleine, qui soit plus achevée [cf. Jn 10,10]. Les personnages qui rencontrent Jésus dans l'évangile sont en quête de vie, de plus de vie [...] Cette énorme soif d'une vie qui soit plénitude, liberté, paix, joie, amour, circule inlassablement dans le monde et le fait vibrer des entreprises les plus contradictoires (see Zumstein 1993 :94).

In a posthumous publication, Van Tilborg (2005:498), argues:

[...] Just as the signs of Jesus show an alternative world, in the same way these 'I am' statements transmit and express this other world: about eating and drinking in plenty, about life in eternity, about the light that is from God; about security (sheepfold) and being mutually involved with each other (the vine). They are all realities that belong in the heavenly sphere. They are the offer of God to this world. The sayings of Jesus, which have just been discussed, bring up a number of characteristics of the two worlds. Against the existing world, which is marked by lack, hate, deception and darkness stands the heavenly world where life is in abundance, in truth, in peace, in security and mutual love.

Indeed the 'I am' statements transmit the life of the heavenly world. When Jesus applies them to his person, God offers himself through the sent one. The

inasmuch as they affirm simply and graphically the purpose for which the Gospel was written, '[...] that you may come to believe, [...]and that through believing, you may have life in his name' (20.31).

metaphor of light applied to Jesus along with ἐγώ εἰμι in John 8.12, even though without ἐγώ in 9.5 is of capital importance in the examination of Christology in the FG. However, Theissen (2002:304-5) pointedly argues that Jesus' sayings that start with ἐγώ εἰμι demonstrate that the Christology tied to titles (Rabbi, king of Israel, Son of God, Messiah, etc.) is being overtaken by metaphorical Christology with images such as bread of life, light of the world, gate of the sheep, good shepherd and resurrection and life. The Revealer, referring to such images, defines himself as transcending all traditional roles applied to the Saviour and the Revealer.

9.1.4 Conclusion: Divine Beings

The FE, showing the blind man's spiritual progress, realizes that the traditional understanding of Jesus as Rabbi, prophet, messiah or man from God is not sufficient in the Johannine perspective of discipleship. The story of Chapter 9 is construed as a debate surrounding Jesus' identity. The inclusive construct of the story sets Jesus' self-revelation at the beginning of the chapter as 'the light of the world,' along with the so-called 'I am saying' and as Son of Man, at the end, and so demonstrates that Jesus' legitimacy is beyond any traditional legitimacy. Jesus is more than the agent through whom God is revealed. He is the Son sharing God's privilege and authority. This title does not belong to the traditional perception of Jesus found in John 1, where Jesus is acclaimed as king of Israel and Son of God. Jesus uses it as the content of the second stage of '*herméneutique à degré,*' in Theissen's terms (2002:304), proclaiming that through the Son of Man the union with the heavenly world is achieved without mediation.

The richness of the story of Chapter 9 lies in its depiction of the blind man progressing to the story's climax, which is the unreserved acknowledgment of Jesus as Son of Man. Jesus' self-revelation at the beginning of the narrative as the 'light of the world', along with the shortened ἐγώ εἰμι, is the right way to portray the revealer as transcending all traditional understanding of the Messiah. While the shortened ἐγώ is used along with Jesus' self-revelation as the 'Light of the world', the Christology of the titles is overtaken by the metaphorical one in order to portray the Revealer as transcending all traditional roles.

The understanding of discipleship relates to Christology. In that community,

discipleship is conceived as an attachment in faith to Jesus as Son of Man. It includes bold devotion and willingness to follow the Light of world on his journey (8.12) despite persecution even unto death (12.26). The inclusive construct of the narrative through Jesus' self-revelation as 'the Light of the world' and Son of Man is not gratuitous. The healed man, whose progress is obvious in the understanding of Jesus' identity, is portrayed as a paradigm of walking in the light, away from the darkness of the Jewish world. In believing, he abandons the world he is familiar with in order to step over the threshold and into a new world mediated by the Johannine Community.

9.2 Holy Persons: those who follow Jesus

Sacred text often features one or more people who have a special relationship to God or to divine powers (Robbins 1996a:121). Jesus is the holy man par excellence through his depiction as Messiah. It is applied to the person appointed by God to bring humanity into a saving relationship with God, who is able to enact judgment upon evil people (Robbins 1996a:121). The issue of Jesus' messiahship stands at the centre of the synagogue-church discussion in Chapters 5, 7 and 9. It has been explained how, in John 7, the FE reconstructs the Jewish ideology around the image of the Messiah. Having failed to fulfil all of the expectations, Jesus finds himself disqualified from being the Messiah. Yet for John, Jesus is the Messiah whose true origin is even more mysterious and august than that of the Messiah of Jewish expectation (Dodd 1953:89). The FE refers to and reworks traditional beliefs in order to clarify that, through the signs, he is the Messiah, yet of another nature. While the synagogue is engaged in deflating messianic claims on the basis of the Mosaic Law, the evangelist operates a transformation in depicting Jesus as functioning as God's chief agent against the backdrop of Jewish religious imagery.

In Jewish tradition, the agents of divine activity have been thought to be transcendent agents,²⁷³ since God, though transcendentally distanced from the world, has turned his rule of the world over to the angels and other intermediaries (Hurtado 1988:23). Crossley puts it this way:

²⁷³ For instance holy watchers, as attendants and agents of the Heavenly King.

It is now widely recognized that Jewish monotheism around the time of Christian origins involved the idea of one God who ruled the universe and is distinct from all other beings in the cosmic hierarchy. Yet at the same time it is also recognized that there were figures which can be generally described as ‘divine,’ ‘supernatural,’ exalted human beings, or some-one or – thing holding a significant role in the cosmic hierarchy, often dwelling on the heavenly side of things, these figures include angels and archangels or named figures such as Melchizedek, Metraton, Moses, Michael, messiah, and Enoch. Wisdom and the Word of God have roles which sometimes appear distinct from God (e.g. Sir. 24.1-7; Wisd.18; Philo, *On Dreams* 1.227ff.; *Qu. in Gen.*2.62; 4.97; *De Conf.*49; *Det.*116).²⁷⁴

Ancient Jews provided ample room for the involvement of various figures from God’s entourage²⁷⁵ in the operation of God’s sovereignty over the world and God’s redemptive purposes (Bietenhard quoted by Hurtado 2003:35). All of these mediators in God’s activity culminate in two major transcendent figures, Wisdom and the Enochic Son of Man.

While Wisdom was generally depicted as a female figure in the heavenly court, Jesus as God’s wisdom is portrayed as Logos. In John’s understanding, he is the historical figure revealing the knowledge of God to men. The depiction of Jesus as Son of Man holds its influence from the Enochic Son of Man pertaining to Jewish apocalypticism. The Enochic Son of Man is the transcendent figure who dominates the narrative in *1 Enoch* 37-71, where he is identified as ‘a figure who carries out messianic tasks in connection with the manifestation of eschatological redemption and judgment’ (Hurtado 1988:53).²⁷⁶ From the survey of Jewish texts relating to the agents of God’s activity, one may understand that Judaism, in the Graeco-Roman period, greatly expanded the notion that God operates through agents and placed

²⁷⁴ See Moses and Pagan Monotheism, Colloquium (2006), University of Geneva-Lausanne-, pp.1-2.

²⁷⁵ God is seen as the heavenly king, enthroned in a palace, which is the heavenly temple, surrounded by myriad courtiers, e.g. the ‘holy ones’ praising ‘the Great Holy One.’ As mediators, they receive and relay petitions from the sovereign’s subjects and they serve as messengers. Among the myriads of holy ones, they form the heavenly entourage (see Deut 33.2; *1 En* 14.22; Dan 7.10). To understand the nature and role of these heavenly beings (*1 En* 12-16), according to Nickelsburg, the elaborate description of Enoch’s heavenly ascent and prophetic commissioning offers a good starting point (for details, see Nickelsburg 2003:99-103).

²⁷⁶ This is one of two variations that took place describing Enoch as God’s chief agent to which would be added the second tradition in *3 En* that Enoch was transformed into a glorious heavenly being like an angel, which reached its zenith in the identification of Enoch with Metraton, the heavenly prince.

special emphasis on the role played by them (Nickelsburg 2003:108).

Then, if the FE formulates his own perspective of Messiahship, would he be taken as dependent upon the Judaism of the turn of the Christian era? If so, why is the issue of messiahship not only at the centre of the debate, but also implies conflict and struggles between two groups, namely the disciples of Jesus and the so-called disciples of Moses, as mentioned in John 9?

A discussion of these questions involves two things: in light of the titles granted to Jesus in the FG, the title of the Son of Man is especially noteworthy since Jesus is portrayed as 'the unique agent of God's activity' (Nickelsburg 2003:89). The attribution of the title 'Son of Man' serves to set him above all others as God's principal agent. Jesus is a divine being and incarnated God. While the Jews thought the church's confession of Jesus as Messiah was a threat to God's uniqueness, the FE portrays him as the Son of Man present on earth (and not in heaven) who comes from above to mediate God's revelation. The accumulation of the titles in John 9 [the Prophet (v.17), the Messiah (v.22), the man from God (v.33)], all pointing to the identification of Jesus as Son of Man (9.35), means that the FE, in order to achieve his Christological purpose, moves from traditional messianic titles to the one by which Jesus must ultimately be identified. That is why, in the same chapter, he highlights Jesus' unity with God and the Son's cooperation with the Father in the healing of the blind man. This does not violate the Jewish exclusive monotheism. Such a unity is uncontested in the light of the basic theme that 'God sent his Son' (See Hurtado 1988:1847; cf. also De Jonge 1977:141-68). Jesus' divine significance is characteristically expressed in terms of his relationship to the one God as his own Father.

According to 9.38, Jesus, as holy man, is made a sacred place for an encounter with the divine. He is worshiped as the one he represents has to be worshipped. Although Jesus is depicted in Chapter 9 as a divine being, there is no suggestion that the disciples would be divine or holy persons. The insertion at the outset of the narrative of the unnamed disciples (vv.2-3), who were influenced by the widespread Jewish conception of sin, is an aid to demonstrate their unfortunate position. The disciple is called to take a leap from misunderstanding, false understanding and/or misinterpretation, be it a widespread cultural perception, to the

understanding proposed by Jesus, the One who was sent.

Chapter 9 outlines the Early Christians' appropriation of Jewish heritage, according to which some agents were believed to mediate God's activity. Whereas the Pharisees, who are disciples of Moses, cling to the traditional view of Moses as the mediator, the blind man, after having been healed and given sight, proclaims Jesus as the one through whom God operates, the Son of Man. Seen in this light, he is a holy man separated from those mentioned at the outset of the narrative and the unbelieving Jews. Disciple requires the courage to stand alone, distancing oneself from the widespread and traditional perception or misunderstanding, since the theory of *vox populi vox dei* can be misleading.

9.2.1 Conclusion: Holy person

The Jewish expectation of the Messiah brought to the construct the image of the one through whom God works at the end time. Without revisiting the debate that stands at the centre of the synagogue-church (cf. Chapters 5, 7 and 9), Jesus functions as God's chief agent. Jesus cannot be viewed as one of the divine, supernatural or exalted human beings who used to mediate God's activity. He is the unique agent of God's activity and, at the same time, the Son acting in close cooperation with the Father in the healing of the man born blind. Although this act is perceived as a threat to the Jewish exclusive monotheism, the FE depicts Jesus as the one through whom God works in the process of revelation.

While the disciples cannot be regarded as functioning at the same level as the divine beings, they do have a special status through their understanding of the true identity and mission of their master. The disciples mentioned at the outset of the chapter who fail to recognize Jesus for who he really is, and the parents of the blind man, as disciples in secret, do not make the grade and are not afforded special status in relation to the unbelieving world and divine beings. Only the man born blind comes to discover through his unrivalled healing that Jesus is 'from God' and experiences a remarkable adventure of faith when he acknowledges the healer as the one set over all God's agents. By challenging the Jewish authorities, he set distances himself from them and the rest of people who do not believe. Through his understanding he qualifies as a 'holy person'.

9.3 Divine history: 'I have come into this world ...'

Jesus' mission is stated in the assertion 'For judgement, I have come into the world ...' (John 9.39). This verse should be read back in the light of 3.19-21 in order to ensure that the judgement has much to do with the light that has come into the world. According to Lincoln (2005:155-156), the verb ἐλέγκω used in v.21 holds juridical connotation 'to convict' so that those who come to the light have their deeds exposed as having been accomplished in God. In that sense, Jesus' mission constitutes the trial exposing whether one's deeds are in conformity to its true judgment, and thus those who do the truth are revealed to be on God's side rather than on the world's side opposed to the divine verdict (Lincoln 2005:156). People are divided into two groups: those who do not see (and acknowledge their blindness) and who might be made to see, and those that claim to see (by rejecting Jesus as the plenary and ultimate manifestation of God) and might become blind.

In v.39, which introduces the epilogue, Jesus' statement seems to contradict the earlier assertion of 3.17 (see also 12.47) that God sent the Son, not to condemn but to save the world. The clarification given in 3.19 and 9.39 defines the judgment as relating to the way people received or rejected the light that had come into the world. Therefore, the judgment here is to divide people into two groups, those who believe in the light and those who reject it (Keener 2003a:795; cf. Ridderbos 1997:350).

The analysis made so far demonstrates that God is at work through Jesus in the healing of the man born blind. The way in which the history ended casts light on why the story, as recounted, is more than simply the story of the man born blind. Rather, it is the story of Jesus, the revealer of God whose status is reversed and transformed into that of the eschatological judge. The special language is so inversed that the judges of everyday life come to be judged (see Petersen 1993:84) by the accused, who becomes the judge. John's understanding of the function of the Son of Man is reformulated in this chapter. According to 5.26-7, the authority to execute judgment has been granted to the Son, but this pronouncement of judgment, a characteristic messianic mission, is executed in Chapter 9.

While in the Jewish dualism everything is viewed from the perspectives of the past and the future (Culmann 1967:81) in the sense that the Messianic time of

salvation as an act from God has not yet arrived for them but is expected in the future, Early Christianity holds the positive conviction that Christ-event has given a new centre to time rooted in the faith and that the fulfilment has already taken place.

The FE, with an unrivalled radicality, reinterprets the traditional expectation in such a way that the judgment and salvation expected at the end time (cf. Mc 13.24-7; Mt 24.31-2; 25.31-46; Lk 21.25-8) had already taken place in the act of faith (3.18; 5.24-5). The Johannine conception of time is specific. The FE personalizes time; by making the past, the present and the future converging or emerging, he telescopes time (see also Malina 1989:9-31). In the Jesus event, the judgment expected on the last day takes place *hic et nunc* in the present to the extent that whoever believes is not condemned, whereas whoever does not believe is already condemned (3.18). Furthermore, the FE does not merely anticipate the judgment at the last day, but another central event at the end time, namely the resurrection of the dead (John 5.24-5) which, according to the Jewish apocalyptic movement, must take place at the last day. That conception was shared by Jesus and many movements of Early Christianity.

It is no longer the end time, but rather the cross and resurrection of Christ that constitute the middle point and meaning of all that occurs (Culmann 1967:86). The Johannine work of reinterpretation of eschatology is an integral part of the Christology.

This influences the conception of discipleship in Chapter 9. Köstenberger reminds us that 'Jesus' mission is seen as the focal point of the struggle between light and darkness and the whole process of judgement is provoked by Jesus as the light coming into the darkness of the world' (2005:155). Note that in Chapter 9, Jesus' mission is construed as having both positive and negative outcomes. The positive aspect, Lincoln observes (2005:287), is clearly demonstrated in the gift of sight received by the blind man, whereas the negative is demonstrated by the religious authorities who regard their own illumination as sufficient. When the true light shines, they refuse to look closely (Barrett 1978:366).

Only those whose faith is based on enlightened vision may be able to understand that Jesus' coming into the world is a unique, irreplaceable and definitive eschatological event that leads those who see or walk into light to salvation,

whereas those who claim to see but do not are led to judgment. In 9.39, to see becomes a figurative expression pointing to the ability to know and recognize the truth, that is, the plenary and eschatological manifestation of God in the persona of Jesus. The blind man, with an enlightened vision of faith, not only joins the ranks of believers who are called to see (cf. 1.50-1; 16.16-22), but also shows his ability to know and recognize the eschatological truth, which makes him an example of one who will escape the judgment that will fall upon the unbelieving world. The Pharisees are on the side of the unbelievers who refuse to see and consequently are condemned (cf. 3.36; 5.37-38; 6.36; 9.41; 15.24).

9.3.1 Conclusion: Divine history

Jesus' coming into the world, referred to scholarship as the 'Jesus or Christ-event,' is perceived in a significant way in the FG, where time (past – present – future) merges or converges together. The FE, by telescoping time in the Christ-event, situated himself after Easter, where he reinterprets Jesus' incarnation, earthly ministry, death and resurrection in connection with salvation and judgment. The FE displaces the salvation and judgment expected at the last day (conception of the Synoptic Gospels) by attributing to it a present value. The reinterpretation of the eschatology has to do with discipleship, since those with penetrating faith discover that Jesus' coming into the world is a definitive eschatological event and thus escape the judgement that falls upon those who do not believe.

9.4 Human redemption

9.4.1 Introduction

Human redemption deals with religious texts by seeking to look at how they mediate the advantages or benefits that are transmitted from God to humans through their relationship. Prior to discussing the benefits enjoyed by believers as a result of their relationship with God through the Revealer (through seeing and hearing), we will focus on the issue of sin and sinner.

9.4.2 Sin and sinner

One needs to read the whole chapter to discover how the issue of sin (2.1-3.1, 34.1 & 41.1) and sinner (v.16.2, 24.2b2) is crucial to the debate between Jesus and the unnamed disciples on the one hand and the Pharisees on the other, as well as the interview between the blind man and the Pharisees. The issue has to do with the understanding of discipleship in the Chapter.

9.4.2.1 Semantic relations ‘k’

- 2.1 Ῥαββί, τίς ἤμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα τυφλὸς γεννηθῆ;
- 3.1 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς,
Οὐτε οὗτος ἤμαρτεν
- 16.2 ἄλλοι [δὲ] ἔλεγον, Πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλὸς τοιαῦτα σημεῖα ποιεῖν; καὶ
- 24.2b ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐστίν.
- 34.1 ἀπεκρίθησαν καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ,
Ἐν ἁμαρτίαις σὺ ἐγεννήθης ὅλος
καὶ σὺ διδάσκεις ἡμᾶς;
- 40.1 Ἦκουσαν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων ταῦτα οἱ μετ’ αὐτοῦ ὄντες
- 40.2 καὶ εἶπον αὐτῷ, Μὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς τυφλοὶ ἐσμεν;
- 41.1 εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς,
Εἰ τυφλοὶ ἦτε, οὐκ ἂν εἴχετε ἁμαρτίαν
νῦν δὲ λέγετε ὅτι βλέπομεν,
ἢ ἁμαρτία ὑμῶν μένει.

In the above-mentioned verses the noun ἁμαρτία (sin) occurs three times (vv.34.1, 41.1ab), the adjective ἁμαρτωλὸς (sinner) occurs twice (vv.16.2 and 24.2b), and the verb ἁμαρτάνω is conjugated in aorist (see vv.2.1 and 3.1). The question asked to Jesus at the outset of the narrative, is intentionally introduced by the narrator to explain the condition of the man born blind and becomes an opportunity for Jesus to fulfill God’s mission. The disciples express a concern: ‘τίς ἤμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα τυφλὸς γεννηθῆ’; (v.2.1), ‘Rabbi, who

sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered: ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him’ (v. 2-3). In the middle of the narrative, Jesus is condemned as a sinner – one not from God – for he does not observe the Sabbath (see vv. 16, 24). At the end, the issue reappears: ‘Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sinned. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains”’ (v. 41). It is obvious that the whole chapter 9 is inclusively constructed by the issue of sin. Sin, as seen by the evangelist, is not congenital for it lies in the unbelief. The very passage anticipates the climatic conclusion of the Book of Signs in 12.37-40.

9.4.2.2 Orientation of the semantic relations

In this section an attempt will be made to find the definition of sin, which is implicit throughout the chapter. Carson (1991:377-78) and Beasley-Murray (1999:160) state that John 9.39-41 ‘serves as a kind of interpretive epilogue, transforming the preceding narrative into an acted parable with a message about sight and blindness in the spiritual realm’. By mentioning the attitude of the Pharisees, who deny their blindness (v.40), which is conceived as a sin that leads to straightforward judgment (v.41), John epitomizes and makes more explicit the irony that dominates the whole of Chapter 9 (Duke 1975:124). The criterion for judgment, notes Neyrey (2007:176), is one of reversed status: those who do not see are enabled to see (the blind man as a paradigm) and those who see become blind (the Pharisees claim to know or attempt to suppress the truth). The verdict issued by the judge, Jesus the Son of Man, is: ‘your sin remains’.

At the beginning of the chapter, Jesus’ disciples question Jesus about the widespread Jewish perception that there is a causal connection between illness and sin (Schnackenburg 1980b:240). Köstenberger (2004:281) observes that Jewish rabbis saw a direct cause-and-effect relationship between suffering and sin (cf. Job 4.7; *b.Sabb.55a*).²⁷⁷ The questioners and those who stand behind Jesus’ interlocutors

²⁷⁷A Pythagorean dogma of the Metempsychosis (Van Doren 1981:791) also linked suffering to sin. It was widely held that suffering, and especially such a disaster as blindness was due to sin and the general principle was laid down by R Ammi in these words: ‘There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity’ (Morris 1995:424-5). OT references to the punishment of children for the sins of their parents (Ex 20.5; 34.7; Num 14.18; Deut

sketch early Christian disciples as oppressed by a problem about which they do not know enough or about which they are still seeking a satisfactory answer. The introduction to the disciples' question (v.2.1) is the literary device used by the narrator to clarify the enigmatic relation drawn between sin and sickness or suffering. However, Jesus' reaction (vv.3-5) follows another direction and demonstrates that God made this man blind so that his work may be manifested through his healing. That central idea in v.3, constructed by using the second *ἵνα* with the conjunction *ἀλλὰ* (thus *ἀλλ' ἵνα*), gives to the whole sentence a consecutive sense or simply expresses the clause of result (Witherington 1995:182; Bruce 1983:209; Newman 2004:321). Jesus' response raises the problem of theodicy formulated to ensure that God's justice is understood in the light of human suffering (Kysar 1986:148). In so doing, he portrays God as sometimes manipulating the history of people so as to heighten the glory of his name (Brown 1966:371; Kysar 1986:149).²⁷⁸ Yet the result of the blindness or the infirmity of the man is God's occasion to reveal his work in his life. In this sense, the expression *ἀλλ' ἵνα* introduces us in John's purpose which is to reveal that God is at work through Jesus (Schnackenburg 1980b:241). Jesus' ability to heal a man born blind, as an extraordinary miracle, provides irrefutable evidence of his origin from above.

In the unfolding of the story, the Pharisees do not reject the reality of the

5.9; Jer 31.29-30; Ezek 28.2; Tobit 3.3-4) were probably grounded on a foundational story of Jacob and Esau (see Genesis 25.22), which shows that it was held that a child could sin in the mother's womb, an alternative emphasizing the pre-existence of soul, 'which made its entry into Judaism from Hellenism' (Schnackenburg 1980b:241). To the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, there was an opposition to the idea according to which children have to pay for the sins of their parents. The question asked by Jesus' disciples is grounded on the rabbinical view, according to which there is no death without sin and no suffering without guilt (see Ps 89.33).

²⁷⁸ A good example for this has to be found in Ex 9.16 where God tells Pharaoh: 'But this is why I have let you live: to show my power, and to make my name resound through all the earth.' The same passage is taken up in Rom 9.17: 'For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth"'. Paul does not seek to draw a comparison between Israël's suffering in Egypt and Pharaoh's causality, but he interprets the whole history of suffering and incredulity as a means to show the purpose of God's power and redemptive work. In John, as elsewhere in Lk 13.2, 'He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?"', Jesus rejects any attempt to draw a comparison between human suffering and human causality, for nothing can limit God's power, not even blindness from birth. As Sloyan (1988:115) comments, 'God is greater than all suffering because (...) God will overcome the man's impairment in a way and at a time known to God'.

healing, but they are absolutely opposed to acknowledging the healer's divine identity (vv.16, 24.1). Rather, they condemn Jesus as a sinner because he does not keep the Sabbath (v.16), and the healed man as born in utter sin (v.34). The story that starts with the disciples' question about sin and ends with the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees, defined as sin that remains, makes sin an inclusive concept of the whole chapter.

The irony in the story of Chapter 9 lies in that inclusive concept of sin that the FE tries to define. In a very recent publication, Zumstein (2007:118; *my own translation*) lists four aspects that should be taken into account when considering the meaning of sin throughout the Gospel: (1) sin is not a general anthropological phenomenon, but must be thought of in a strictly Christological setting through close ties of the human being with Christ ; (2) as the first part of the Gospel shows, sin characterizes human existence before receiving the Christ (cf. 1.29; 9.49-41); only that meeting reveals the reality of sin and renders it manifest; (3) sin is not first and foremost a breach of morals nor a contravention of the law. That conception is defended by the Pharisees in Chapter 9, and (4) sin in (as one sees in 15.22) consists in the determined and obstinate refusal of Christological revelation in the light of Chapter 9. Sin is neither an ontological reality nor a contravention of the law, but the unbelief couched in the rejection of the church's claim that Jesus' person is the plenary and ultimate manifestation of God. Any obstinate refusal to believe in him is nothing other than sin.

From the evangelist's outlook, sin cannot be taken as an ontological reality, even less a contravention of the law according to the Pharisees' conception, but is rather a reality deeply rooted in unbelief. The Pharisees are found failing and are condemned. The verdict pronounced in 3.19, 'And this is the judgment, that light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil', is implemented for the Pharisees who, by rejecting the light coming into the world, fail to distance themselves from darkness. The narrative irony in Chapter 9 is that the Pharisees who subject Jesus to trial (vv.8-34) are, in turn, subjected to judgment.

9.4.3. From seeing through hearing to believing

The way in which the noun ὄφθαλμός is abundantly used in the phrases mentioned below makes sense if spiritual sight is understood to entail the recovery of physical sight. In John's outlook, according to the construct of the story, seeing alone, without hearing, does not lead to faith.

9.4.3.1 Semantic relations 'b'

- 6.3 καὶ ἐπέχρισεν αὐτοῦ τὸν πηλὸν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς
- 7.4 καὶ ἦλθεν βλέπω.
- 10.1 ἔλεγον οὖν αὐτῷ· πῶς [οὖν] ἠνεώχθησάν σου οἱ ὀφθαλμοί ;
- 11.1b καὶ ἐπέχρισέν μου τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς
καὶ εἶπέν μοι ὅτι Ὑπαγε εἰς τὸν Σιλωὰμ καὶ νίψαι·
ἀπελθὼν οὖν καὶ νιψάμενος ἀνέβλεψα.
- 12.1 καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ, Ποῦ ἐστὶν ἐκεῖνος;
- 14.1 ἦν δὲ σάββατον ἐν ἡ ἡμέρα τὸν πηλὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς
καὶ ἀνέωξεν αὐτοῦ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς.
- 15.2 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖ, Πηλὸν ἐπέθηκέν μου ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦς,
καὶ ἐνιψάμην καὶ βλέπω.
- 17.1 λέγουσιν οὖν τῷ τυφλῷ πάλιν,
Τί σὺ λέγεις περὶ αὐτοῦ,
ὅτι ἠνέωξέν σου τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς;
- 18.1 Οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι περὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι
ἦν τυφλὸς καὶ ἀνέβλεψεν ἕως ὅτου ἐφώνησαν
τοὺς γονεῖς αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀναβλέψαντος
19. ὃν ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι τυφλὸς ἐγεννήθη; πῶς οὖν βλέπει ἄρτι;
- 21.2 (...) ἢ τίς ἤνοιξεν αὐτοῦ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς
- 26.1 πῶς ἤνοιξέν σου τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς
- 32 ὅτι ἠνέωξέν τις ὀφθαλμοὺς τυφλοῦ γεγεννημένου·
- 37.1 εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς,
Καὶ ἑώρακας αὐτὸν
- 39.1 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Εἰς κρίμα ἐγὼ εἰς τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον ἦλθον,
ἵνα οἱ μὴ βλέποντες βλέπωσιν καὶ οἱ βλέποντες τυφλοὶ γένωνται.

9.4.3.2 Orientation of the semantic relations

In the above selected phrases, the verb ‘seeing’ is involved with the semantic field constructed on the one hand by the noun ὀφθαλμός with 10 occurrences (vv.6.3; 10.1; 11.1; 15.2; 17.1; 20.2; 26.1; 32) and, on the other hand, the fact of ‘seeing’ that finds its expression in the verb βλέπω [βλέπων (vv.7.4), βλέπω (v.15.2)] and ἀναβλέπω [ἀνέβλεψα (v.11b), ἀνέβλεψεν ἀνδ ἀναβλέψαντος (v.18.1)]. The way ἤνοιξεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς is used with the personal pronoun αὐτοῦ and αὐτοῦ and σου produces another semantic field where the man’s parents avoid pointing to the healer (v.21.2) and the Pharisees’ investigation is grounded on the fact of opening eyes (v.26.1). In v.32, the man’s assertion makes him ready to cross the bridge towards full faith taken in: ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἠκούσθη ὅτι ἠνέωξέν τι ὀφθαλμοὶ τυφλοῦ γεγεννημένου· (never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind). When the healed man states his belief that Jesus is indeed from God (v.33), the authorities feel offended by the fact that a man born entirely in sin is trying to teach them (v.34). However, this provides a springboard for his acknowledgement of Jesus as Son of Man.

Two other striking elements occur in Jesus’ conversation with the healed man. After having the man had been thrown out of the synagogue, Jesus met and challenged him: ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ (v.35.2). The man’s ignorance of who he is referring to (see v.36.1) leads Jesus to answer: καὶ ἑώρακας αὐτὸν καὶ ὁ λαλῶν μετὰ σοῦ ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν (v.37.1). Throughout the Gospel, seeing is diversely expressed through the verb ὁράω (3.11, 32; 9.37; 14.7, 9; 19.35; 20.8, 25, 29 [2 times]), βλέπω (5.19b; 9.39), θεωρέω (1.14; 6.40; 17.24) [for details upon different ways of ‘seeing’ in John, cf. Crosby 2000:100-105]. What is the meaning of each of these verbs?

βλέπω, which occurs 15 times (1.29; 5.19; 9.7, 15, 19, 21, 25, 39, 41; 11.9; 13.22; 20.1, 5; 21.9, 20) is, according to Miller (2006:135, referring to Phillips 1957:83; see also Crosby 2000:101), the most basic kind of seeing, for it refers to ‘eyesight’. One could say that it is the simple act of perceiving through the eyes. In this sense, βλέπω is adequate for negotiating the everyday reality of life, but not for the apprehension of deep spiritual truth (Phillips 1957:83). The second form, θεωρέω, is used 22 times (2.23; 4.19; 6.2, 19, 40, 62; 7.3; 8.51; 9.8; 10.12; 12.19, 45; 14.17,

19; 17.24; 20.6, 12, 14) and holds the meaning of ‘to look at with concentration’ but without ‘a very high perception of the significance of what is contemplated’ (Philipps 1957:87). Wherever the verb occurs, it relates to those who witness Jesus’ signs without grasping the deeper meaning to which they point. The verb ὁράω, as a critical and pivotal term in the FG, suggests that ‘the intellectual content of what has been seen has come to dominate the physical act of seeing’ (cf. 1.18, 34, 39, 50, 51; 3.11, 32, 36; 4.45; 5.37; 6.36, 46; 8.38, 57; 9.37; 11.40; 14.7, 9; 15.24; 16.16, 17, 19, 22; 19.35, 37; 20.18, 25, 29; cf. Philipps 1957:83).

Analysing the way the FE uses these terms, Miller (2006:136) argues that, in John, terms related to seeing resist a rigid one-to-one correspondence. Even though there are different levels of seeing resulting in different degrees of knowledge, the pinnacle is faith or belief.

From these different levels of seeing, one may notice that, while in the biblical tradition God cannot be physically seen (Ex 33.20; John 1.18a, 5.37), but through the angels (Gn 18.1-3, 16f.), the FE portrays Jesus as the one who has seen the Father and through him he has to be seen (John 6.46; 14.7, 9-10; 20.29). In these sentences, the verb ὁράω is used to demonstrate that the only way God can be seen is with the eyes of faith (cf. Crosby 2000:104). One understands the unique use of ὁράω throughout Chapter 9. This verb is positioned towards the end of the story, and reinforces the climax surrounding the use of the title Son of Man. Ὅραω definitely suggests a discernment of the Ultimate Reality in the person of Jesus (Kysar 1993:86-7). Since sight, as an integral part of the process of faith, must go beyond the sensory experience (Kysar 1993:87),²⁷⁹ there is a clear-sightedness that results from the experience of the divine through Jesus’ healing work. In 9.37, two things must be noted: the verb ὁράω is conjugated in the perfect tense (καὶ ἐώρακας αὐτον), and in the second part of the verse, we find λάλεω.²⁸⁰ The enigmatic

²⁷⁹ Kysar lists some passages (John 3.32; 5.24-6, 30, 37; 6.45, 60; 8.26, 40-7; 10.3, 8, 26-7; 12.45-7; 15.15; 18.37) in which the Greek verb is used as either meaning ‘to hear’ or ‘to listen.’ The hearing of Jesus’ words as a purely sensory act without inner perception of their meaning can lead to failure to believe. The proper way to believe is faith-seeing and faith-hearing which, according to Kysar (1993:88), involves physical perception and the apprehension of its meaning.

²⁸⁰ Elsewhere in 4.26, Jesus’ self-revelation is constructed by means of the first person: ἐγὼ εἶμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι, whereas in 9.37 Jesus reverts to the third person (ὁ λαλῶν μετὰ σοῦ ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν : he is the one speaking with you), directly revealing his identity to the blind

problem of v.37: ‘You have *seen* (ἑώρακας) him and the one *speaking* (λαλῶν) with you is he’ finds its solution at the outset of the chapter. Both statements made by Jesus makes when debating the issue of sin with his disciples, in 9.3 and 9.5, are linked together and relate to ‘light’ and ‘seeing’ (Van der Watt 2000:252) inasmuch as the recovery of sight enables the man to see or simply to know who Jesus is. This is further substantiated in the use of βλέπω by the FE. The fact that ἀναβλέπω does not occur elsewhere in John, except in Chapter 9 (vv.11, 15 and 18), gives some significance to the act of gaining or receiving sight. βλέπω (to see with one’s eyes) in v.39 refers to physical sight. However, the link that the FE draws between sight and light, and between blindness and darkness, demonstrates the evangelist using βλέπω in a double sense (physical sight and the seeing of faith), suggesting that, as Painter points out (1991:275), the seeing of faith is rooted in physical sight. In the physical healing, as an observable event, the Father is at work through Jesus, the Light of the world. In the context of giving sight, the portrayal of Jesus as ‘the Light of the world’ (9.5) is not really haphazardous. *Only those who are blind cannot see the light.*

The man is invited to believe not only in the one he has seen through the miracle, but the one speaking with him (cf. v.37). Jesus, as the Light of the world, can make the blind really ‘see’ and ‘understand’ the acts of Jesus.²⁸¹ The blind man has already experienced the revelation at the restoration of his sight; he has been in contact with revelation. The expulsion from the synagogue is unexpectedly not an occasion of consolation but rather an opportunity for revelation. Jesus’ identification of himself as the Son of Man is a means to bring the healed man to see and hear the revelation of God, and this is the outcome of the revelation already *en route* (Schnackenburg 1980b:321). The use of the perfect tense ἑώρακας in 9.37 could serve to underline the fact that the man born blind is already a believer (Muller 1991:293). How then is he challenged to believe in the Son of Man? The use of

man. The difference between the two verses lies in the fact that the saying of Jesus is the final revelation that makes the Samaritan woman identify the man speaking with her as the Messiah (Muller 1991:293).

²⁸¹ In the Excursus made by Van der Watt (2000:252-3), the following words draw one’s attention: ‘The narrative in Chapter 9 relates blindness to light. In the programmatic expression in 8.12, Jesus is described as the Light of the world. This theme is again taken up in 9.5. Following this the narrative is related about a blind man who is at first physically healed. In 9.35-39, he sees who Jesus really is and is thus healed from his spiritual blindness too. The Pharisees, however, are described as being blind in 9.40-41”.

perfect tense hints at the fact that, from the the time of his healing up to the end of the narrative the healed man shows himself making progress. Such progress is in itself not yet faith, but it is a preparation for the fulfilment of faith. The story of the man born blind culminates in his acknowledgement of Jesus as the Son of Man, worthy of worship (see John 9.36-8). His tenacious insistence that Jesus is ‘from God’ leads the Pharisees to put him out of the synagogue.

By indirectly using the verbs ὁραω and λαλεω in the same context, the narrator seems to dispute any faith construed upon a miracle unless it includes the hearing of Jesus’ words. The fact that the verb λαλεω is spoken by Jesus is by no means accidental. Faith might be grounded on *seeing* the miracle and at the same time upon *hearing* Jesus’ word. This is because Jesus, as the revealer *par excellence*, makes known what *he* has seen (1.34; 3.11, 22; 6.46; 8.38) and heard from the Father who sent him (3.32; 8.26; 15.15b; cf. Anderson 1996:175). Jesus, as God’s agent, is the one through whom God may be seen and heard.

The supreme revelation of God takes place in the persona of Jesus the Son of Man, who should be believed and worshiped.

9.4.3.3 Faith in the Son of Man (open eyes, the signs, to see)

John 9.35 is ‘the most intriguing of the Johannine Son of Man references, with the direct claim of Jesus for faith in the Son of Man and with the blind man’s subsequent worship of him’ (Pryor 2001:345). The intriguing problem of textual criticism has already been tackled in the first chapter of this study. It is important to indicate once again that John 9.35 is the only passage in the NT in which we read about someone being asked to believe in the Son of Man.

The dialogue between Jesus and the formerly blind man is framed by the issue of ‘to believe in the Son of Man’ (see v.35-37). Jesus is notably absent from the blind man’s examination (vv.13-34), and he comes to fill the void after the authorities have driven healed man from the synagogue. Jesus’ question in v.35 is ‘vital to a correct understanding of the whole chapter, as it forms the climax of the man born blind’s gradual progress to true faith’ (Moloney 1976:150). The ‘you’ is emphatic (Lindars 1972:350; Morris 1995:439; Keener 2003a:794), for the blind man, unlike his disparagers, has to take a stand in believing in the Son of Man. The

immediate context suggests that the blind man is being contrasted with the Pharisees, but in the larger context, the contrast is between the blind man and the paralytic man of John 5.14-6 who failed to persevere to discipleship after he had been healed (Keener 2003a:794-5). The former is an able defender of Jesus to the religious leaders (Howard 2006:73), but his character was developed through his growth in faith. However, little attempt was made in the case of the lame man (Resseguie 1993:116).

According to Moloney, the reader who follows the admirable journey of the man born blind from darkness to light realizes that he has come to a crisis point when he is invited to make a commitment (1996:128). It should be noticed that, as Crosby points out (2000:105), to believe in Jesus constitutes the highest form of ‘seeing’ possible.

In this paragraph, as Lindars (1972:349) contends, the reader is enabled to identify with the blind man who, through his confession of faith as a true disciple is prepared for the final revelation about Jesus’ unity with the Father (see John 10.30).

The way the miracle is recounted, as the story unfolds, ‘evokes faith and rejection’ (Schnelle 1992:124). The miracle not only divides the Pharisees into two groups (see v. 16), but also separates the man born blind from his parents who choose to refrain from confession so that they may remain in the synagogue. The blind man, through progressive stages, courageously arrives at the recognition of Jesus’ divine origin and this culminates in a public confession to Jesus: ‘I believe, Lord,’ and he worships him (v.38).

Has Jesus become a figure worshipped alongside God or in addition to him?

While in John 5 a distinction is made between the Father and the Son, Jesus warns, in v.23, that the danger of failing to honour the Son is that it equals failure to honour the Father. ὁ μὴ τιμῶν τὸν υἱὸν οὐ τιμᾷ τὸν πατέρα τὸν πέμψαντα αὐτόν. The verb τιμάω is a cultic honour (Moxnes 1980:71), and Jesus is a recipient of the same honour accorded to the Father. Through the act of worshipping Jesus outside the synagogue, a ‘delocalisation’ of ‘divine reality’ seems to have been operated *away* from the Temple or other sacred places, to find a new localisation in Jesus’ persona. For as Thompson puts it: ‘John intends to show how Jesus ‘replaces’ or ‘supersedes’ Jewish festivals and rites by focusing on the Christological significance of Jesus’

actions in relationship to various acts and practices of Jewish worship and ritual (...) Jesus mediates worship of God (2001:224).’ Jesus is, so to speak, the answer to the catastrophe of the fall of the Temple. That is to say Jesus is depicted as an alternative to the temple, the site of the encounter between God and human beings where the sacred place no longer exists and is no longer needed. As for the entrepreneur who does not require a formal place of worship, Jesus is worshiped where the blind man met him.

9.5 Human commitment: ‘Do you want to become his disciples ...?’

9.5.1 Introduction

The man born blind is summoned to appear in front of the Pharisees for a second interrogation. First of all, they assert that the healer must be a sinner (v.24), to which the man responds from his uncontested experience (cf. v.25). Asked, for the second time how the healer opened his eyes (v.26), the man’s response is steeped in Johannine irony. Despite the embarrassment caused by the fact that he had already answered that same question (cf. v.15), the man replies, ‘Do you also want to become his disciples? (v.27). The conjunction *καὶ* underlines implicitly that the man considers himself to be Jesus’ disciple (Köstenberg 2004:290, referring to Morris 1995:437; Michaels 1989:169; Talbert 1992:160).

9.5.2 Disciples of Moses versus disciples of Jesus (John 9.27-9): semantic relations ‘m’

- 27.1 ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς,
 Εἶπον ὑμῖν ἤδη
 καὶ οὐκ ἠκούσατε·
 τί πάλιν θέλετε ἀκούειν;
 μὴ καὶ ὑμεῖς θέλετε αὐτοῦ μαθηταὶ γενέσθαι;
- 28.1 καὶ ἐλοιδόρησαν αὐτὸν καὶ εἶπον,
 Σὺ μαθητῆς εἶ ἐκείνου,
 ἡμεῖς δὲ τοῦ Μωϋσέως ἐσμέν μαθηταί·
- 29 ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι Μωϋσεὶ λελάληκεν ὁ θεός,

τοῦτον δὲ οὐκ οἶδαμεν πόθεν ἐστίν.

The expression ‘Disciples of Moses,’ which does not occur anywhere else in the NT could be, in all probability, John’s own creation. As we tried to demonstrate above, there is no commitment to men in the OT tradition along the lines of a master-disciple relation; commitment is to God alone. The expression occurs in the scene where the blind man offers his defence, for the second time, before the Pharisees who, ‘acting in a judicial capacity’ (Petersen 1993:83), turn the interrogation into a legal debate (Keener 2003a:789). This leads them to judge Jesus as a sinner (v.24b). The discussion that rises between the Jews and the blind man revolves around the issue of *what* the healer did and *how* the healing took place (v.26), rather than *who* is the healer.

Their repeated question, Keener (2003a:790) notes, probably ‘reflects traditional Jewish procedures for cross-examining witnesses (e.g. *Sus* 48-62; *m. Abot* 1:9; cf. Mark 14:56). The Pharisees who are acting in their judicial capacity identify themselves as ‘disciples of Moses’ to whom God spoke. They do not reveal the slightest interest in becoming disciples of ‘that fellow’. It seems, however, that here the issue of discipleship is closely related to the perception of the divine, with Moses being preferred over Jesus. Moses had become ‘a legendary figure or the religious authority who gave the law to Israel and who mediates between God and Israel’ (Harstine 2002:73). This passage encapsulates the heart of the opposition of Judaism, grounded upon Moses and the Law, to Christianity, grounded upon Jesus and his teaching. (Beasley-Murray 1980:158; see also Carson 1991:374). Moses’ authority emulates that of Jesus. The contrast (Keener 2003a:791)²⁸² between these two figures is signified by a weight of emphasis in v.28 (‘you are his disciples’ and ‘we are disciples of Moses’).

²⁸² For him the claim to be ‘disciples of Moses’ might be a means to echo genuine Pharisaic tradition (as this had been indicated above), since later rabbis came to speak of ultimately receiving tradition from Moses on Sinai (*M. Abot* 1.1; *Ed* 8.7; *Abot R. Nat* 25A; *b. Qidd.* 30a; *Meg.* 19b; *Moed. Qat.* 3b; *Naz.* 56b; *Pesah.* 110; *Sabb.* 108a; *Eccl. Rab.* 1.10; cf. perhaps 1 Cor 11.23). Moses was thought of as ‘father of the prophets’, and also their teacher and master (*Abot R. Nat.* 1A. For Moses as the greatest prophet and teacher, cf. also *T.Mos.* 11.16. He was also viewed as the one who has saved his people (*Josephus Ag.Ap.* 2.157; *Acts* 7.35). A later rabbi claimed that Moses his teacher is his teacher’s teacher, the one who taught all the prophets (*Pesiq. Rab.* 31.3).

The expression ‘the disciples of Moses’, proudly used by the ‘Jews’ to describe themselves, is problematic as a subject for exegetical study. The famous classical commentators consulted on the FG did not deal much with this.²⁸³ Moreover, the weakness of some of their comments is that they fail to highlight the strangeness of the expression, and to relate its meaning to the struggles between the synagogue and the church at the end of first century. It is helpful to grasp the social and historical circumstances within which the expression is used. Barrett (1978:362) argues that the formulation ‘disciples of Moses’ was not a regular term for rabbinic scholars. It is ‘a typical phrase of Pharisaic scribes’ (Schnackenburg 1980b:251), used as the self-designation of the Pharisees found in later rabbinic sources (*baraitah in Yoma 4a*) to distinguish Pharisaic from Sadducean teachers (Lincoln 2005:285). It also appears in rabbinic sources, for instance in *P. Abot* 5:19, ‘How do the disciples of Abraham our father (the Jews) differ from the disciples (Christians) of ‘Balaam the wicked’ (cf. Barrett 1978:363). Jesus is viewed as Balaam (*Str-B* 2:535; cf. Beasley-Murray 1989:158). Through the formulation, John underscores the opposition, already revealed in the Sabbath healing, between Jesus and the law, and why Jesus was considered to be a law-breaker. Another later principle of thought to which this term refers may be found in the *Midrash Rabbah* 8.6, grounded on Deut

²⁸³ One could consult, for instance, Brown (1966) cf. supra; for Molla (1977:133). The evangelist employs irony when he gives account of the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah and God’s envoy. their ignorance regarding his origin does not refer to the village from which he came, but to the origin of his authority; Barrett (1978) cf. supra; Schnackenburg (1980b:251), like many others, view this clear opposition between ‘disciples of Moses’ and ‘disciples of Jesus’ is another clear reference to the opposition between Jews and Christians in the evangelist’s period. Morris (1995:438) sates that the Pharisees, speaking out of certainty, think that this gives them a sure basis, for God has spoken to Moses. The perfect tense used implies that God’s word stands. Bruce (1983:219) notes that ‘the tradition of oral law thought having transmitted in the rabbinical schools was held to stem from Moses, who they believed had received it on Sinai together with the written law’. Kysar (1986:154), being more precise, states that: ‘With this declaration they have made their decision falsely between Moses and Jesus, and in this case against Jesus. The decision posed here is the tragic situation of the Christians and Jews in John’s city, where embracing Christ was taken erroneously to be a rejection of Moses.’; Talbert (1992:161) sees in the rhetorical question of the man an implied declaration of discipleship by the man who moved from regarding Jesus as a man to speaking of him as a prophet, and Witherington III (1995:184) thinks that the fact that the Pharisees do not know Jesus’ origin and destiny must have led to the misunderstanding of Jesus and his work. By using the question ‘Do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?’ (v. 27b), the evangelist reverts to his habitual irony (see Hobbs 1968:162; Lindars 1972:348).

30.11-14,²⁸⁴ where the Jews are warned that there is only one Law, namely the law revealed by Moses. The positive picture of the so-called ‘disciples of Moses’ that Van der Watt draws (2005:105-106) is twofold: (i) from a religious point of view, *the identity of the opponents seems to be solid* since they are aware of having received manna from God (6.31) and the Law from Moses (1.17; 5.45; 9.28-29). In addition, they trace their ancestry back to Abraham (8.33, 37, 39-40) and even to God (8.41). (ii) *their religious activities point to a zealous devotion to God in the ways they knew and believed to be the best*: they are pictured as active in Jerusalem and around the temple (2.14-16) where God is supposed to be worshipped (2.13; 4.20; 5.1; 10.22; 11.55); the scriptures were conceived as a cornerstone of their religious endeavours (5.39) and their devotion shows their wish to honour and serve God (9.24; 16.2). That is why they were strict about their purity laws (2.6; 11.55; 18.28; 19.42) and kept their religious feasts (2.13; 5.1; 7.2, 10; 11.55; 12.1, 20; cf Ashton 1994:39-40). One should understand why they persecuted the blind man who clung to Jesus. In conjunction with this, the leaders thought it only right to fight any revealer who claimed to come from heaven, since ‘there is not going to be another Moses who will come down from heaven with a different law’ (Brown 1966:374). The claim to be ‘disciples of Moses’ (9.28) is nothing less than a Johannine literary invention to ironically refute Jewish pretensions developed around the figure of Moses, who is one of the five witnesses to Jesus listed in Chapter 5 (cf. vv. 30-47).²⁸⁵ This passage is set in a longer section (5.1-47) dealing with Jesus who, after having healed a paralysed man on the Sabbath, is persecuted by ‘the Jews’ for violating the Sabbath and for blasphemy (5.18). The dominant theme of the whole chapter, notes Miller (2006:144), is testimony (μαρτυρία), since Jesus’ words and actions are validated by the testimony of God himself (5.32). The figure of Moses links Chapter 9 to Chapters 1 and 5. According to Harstine (2002:59), the theme of glory revealed unifies all. When Jesus says (5.41): ‘δόξαν ἀνθρώπων οὐ λαμβάνω’ (I do not receive glory

²⁸⁴ ‘Moses said to them (the Israelites), ‘Lest you should say, “Another Moses is to arise and to bring us another Law from heaven,” I make known to you at once that it is not in heaven; there is none of it left in heaven.’ It was commonly admitted, in Jewish and perhaps also in Christian understanding, that only a God-worshipper (θεοσεβής) and the one who does his will, can be sensitive to God or be able to communicate with God.

²⁸⁵ For instance: (i) the Father himself (vv.32, 37); (ii) the Baptist (v.33), (iii) the works that the Father has given him to complete (v.36); (iv) the scriptures (v.39) and (v) Moses (v.46).

from humans), the earlier portrayal of Jesus as $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta\varsigma$ $\Theta\epsilon\delta\varsigma$ (1.18) makes him greater than these. Referring to the witness of the Father and the works he gives the Son to complete (5.36), the evangelist makes implicit reference to Jesus' glory, which puts into perspective the Baptist's testimony (5.33-4) which, like the testimony of other messengers who have pointed the way to Jesus, is derivative and their light merely reflective (cf. 5.35; Miller 2006:137-144).

If the evangelist shows suspicion regarding the reverence due to Moses, it is because the rejection of Jesus implies, at the same time, the rejection of God's glory, for Jesus coming in the Father's name means that he has come as the Father's representative (Keener 2003a:660) His testimony is greater than the testimony of those listed above. In accordance with the widespread principle of agency Neyrey (2007:115; see also Hurst & Wright 1987:239-50) argues that refusal to receive the king's agent is an insult to the king himself, for 'an agent is like the one who sent him' and 'the agent of the ruler is like the ruler himself' (Borgen 1968:138-44). It is questionable whether belief in Moses is possible if, at the same time, Jesus as the One sent and the Sender are rejected. The chiasmic structure in vv.38-47 (see Keener 2003:658) demonstrates that the failure to have God's word abiding in them (v.38) originates from the fact that they have never heard the Father's voice or seen his form (v.37bc). While the OT testifies that Moses saw God and spoke with him face to face (Ex 33.11; Num 12.8) and heard his voice (Num 7.89), in the evangelist's perspective, to Moses, in the light of Ex 33.11, 18-28, was 'granted privileged insight into the nature of the divine glory' (Miller 2006:146). He was a witness to the signs and wonders that pointed to God's power. Jesus' greatness is underlined since, more than any other, he is God's word (John 1.1-18) and the Father's image (14.7-9; cf. 2 Cor 4.4; Col 1.15; Heb 1.3). According to Lincoln (2005:285), it is arguable that whereas the Pharisees make their clear allegiance to Moses to whom God spoke, *the evangelist's rivalry is to assert not only that God has spoken to Jesus (8.26, 28) but also that Jesus embodies God's word as Logos (cf. 1.1, 2,14) and speaks God's words (cf. 3.34; 7.16; 12.49-50).*

The Jews' lack of belief in both Moses and Jesus is explained by the FE's use of the verb $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\epsilon\iota\nu$, preceded by the particle $\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ in 5.46-7. The grammatical construct of this verse sets the *protasis* of unreal condition on one side ($\epsilon\acute{\iota}$...

(ἐπιστεύετε Μωυσεῖ ‘if you believed Moses’) and the *apodosis* on the other (ἐπιστεύετε ἂν ἐμοὶ signifying ‘you would believe in me’). The Jews who oppose both Moses and Jesus are nevertheless invited to bear in mind that Moses’ witness should have prepared the Jews for Jesus’ coming. The ironic overtone in this passage is that the Jews believed that Moses would be their defender (Talbert 1992:129-30), while in Jesus’ understanding Moses no longer represented them (Barrett 1978:225; Morris 1995:334). The defendant will paradoxically become the accuser and Jesus, who is accused, finds in Moses and the writings his own witness to judge them. The foundational irony here, and throughout the FG, is that ‘the Jews rejected the Messiah they eagerly expected’ (Culpepper 1983:169).

When the Pharisees oppose Jesus against Moses, in John 9, the alleged ‘disciples of Moses’,²⁸⁶ the guardians of the Torah, are unable to explain the divine revealer about whom Moses wrote. Harstine (2002:71) argues that the Pharisees’ passion for Moses’ teaching and their obstinate refusal to look at the evidence force them to dismiss summarily the signs and teachings of Jesus without granting them proper consideration. The FE is familiar with the ideology construed around the figure of Moses and disputes it by granting him the status of witness, as it is done for John the Baptist in Chapters 1, 3 and 5. To what extent was their ideology constructed by Jewish imagery from the Pentateuch to later Jewish literature?

9.5.3 Moses’ status in Jewish religious imagery

In the Pentateuch, Moses plays the role of king, prophet and priest and is portrayed, so to speak, as mediating God’s affairs with Israel (Martin-Achard 1978:17-29). Romer (2002:34, 37; *my own translation*) points out that Moses, as a character, had become an emblematic figure to the extent that during the exilic period the scribes, nowadays known as ‘*Deuteronomists*,’ composed a chronicle of Israel’s origins in which Moses plays a central role, not only as prophet and

²⁸⁶ Moses was their teacher. The addition of oral law transmitted in the rabbinic schools was held to stem from Moses, who, they believed, had received it on Sinai, together with the written law. There was a belief according to which ‘Moses received the law, i.e. the oral law, from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets delivered it to the men of the great synagogue’ – and so it was transmitted to one generation of teachers after another.

legislator, but as the mediator *par excellence* between Yahweh and his people. During the period of crisis, Moses, who inaugurated the long series of the prophets mandated by Yahweh, would remain the reference for the reconstruction of Israel's ideology.

The data given in Jewish literature regarding Moses as a type either of the Messiah or of some other eschatological figure must now be addressed. Jewish hopes for the Prophet may be found in three passages, namely (i) Deut 18.15, 18; (ii) Ps 74.9 and (iii) 1 Macc 4.46, where reference is made to the expectation of the prophet. Moreover, referring to the scrolls of the Qumran community, two references (iv) determine the hope for a prophet like Moses, who is a definite eschatological figure distinct from the Messiah: 'They [the members of the community] shall be judged by the first regulations in which in the beginning the men of the community were instructed until the coming of a prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel' (1 QS 9.10f.). This theory of two Messiahs clearly marked the priestly character of the religious party familiar with the Qumran texts in which the descendant of David presented as being subjected to the eschatological Priest. It is not surprising that the Essenians, strongly marked by their priestly adherence and their hierarchical structure, radically contested the cult of the Temple and the priesthood which came to be reorganized under Asmonean leadership.

If these passages are combined, Jewish hopes should be summarized in three eschatological figures: the Prophet like Moses alluded to in Deut 18.15, the Messiah of Aaron (or Priestly Messiah) and the Messiah of Israel (Kingly or Davidic Messiah), and it is in the Qumran community that it is stated that the prophet like Moses is a definite eschatological figure distinct from the Messiah. The token of the Messiah invites not only a projection into the future of the unfulfilled present claim, but also a memory taken from the past. The expected eschatological prophet refers to the survival of the figure of Moses, who remains the paradigm of the figure that has to precede the coming of the two anointed figures of Messiah. According to the paradigm idealized by primitive Israel, these are the leaders of two sectors of the community.

In the Qumran literature, for instance, the men of that community were to be instructed until the "coming of a prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel."

Various eschatological figures are mentioned: a Jacob's star or the Messiah of Israel; a Redeemer like Moses, expected by the Samaritans – a Moses come back to life, called Taheb (Martyn 1979:108); and the Priestly Messiah or the Messiah of Aaron. Moses was considered as “a type either of the Messiah or of some other eschatological figure” (Martyn 1979:106). The Samaritan Redeemer called Taheb was expected to repeat the great deeds of Moses, that is, he would perform Mosaic signs.

How did Moses become such an emblematic figure in Jewish imagery? To address this question one needs to turn back to 1 Mac 14.41, which alludes to Simon Maccabean, who became national king and high priest at the same time – a conditional arrangement ‘until a trustworthy prophet should arise’. Jewish hope was constructed on the expectation of the Prophet who had to play the role of king. Here one should refer to the people's reaction after the miracle of the multiplication of loaves in John 6.14-5, where the willingness to appoint Jesus as king proves that the Jews expected the fulfilment of the promise of a future ‘David’ who would reign as king and deal wisely and righteously with God's people. That is to say that the coming Messiah or ‘an anointed one’ was thought of as a future anointed agent of Yahweh to be sent on behalf of his people (Fitzmyer 2000:79-80). Moses was perceived as ‘mediator’ *par excellence* among those who ministered in Israel, the only one worthy of such a title under the influence of Hellenism. However, as Meeks (1976:53) points out, ‘there is no hint of any political office or leader in the Jewish community that could be identified with the idealized portrait of Moses’, therefore the idea of Moses as ‘mediator’ could have emanated from the Hellenistic world where mediation has to do with divinization.

The Greeks imagined their gods in human form, and believed that they manifested their presence in human conduct. These divine men, in the Hellenistic world, were seen as ligaments connecting the divine and human worlds (Van den Heever & Scheffler 2001:30). They were ‘mediators’ who mediated between the world of the divine and the world of humans. In Philo's writings, not only Moses, but also Noah and Abraham are depicted at times as having intermediary status between the human and the divine. Moses remains the primary example to whom God said

‘Stand here with me’ (Deut 5.5).²⁸⁷ Without thorough study of what Philo wrote about Moses, one might note that ‘while Philo can use Moses, like Aaron, as a mere cipher for the philosopher’s ultimate goal of perfection, he remains fascinated by the scriptural and traditional account of the Sinai ascent and of Moses having received the title *theos*, so that the legendary figure of Moses himself keeps breaking through the allegories’ (Meeks 1976:47). The conception of Moses as a divine man was not far from the pagan Hellenistic conception of heroes. The *cult of heroes* stems from the fact that the Greeks imagined human beings as having divine abilities. Heroes were men of an earlier age who performed exceptional deeds in their lifetime, and it was believed that they still possessed some power after their death (Klauck 2000:262). A human being could be declared a ‘hero’ after death and could ascend to become a kind of demigod, in individual cases to the status of a ‘*daimôn*’, and ultimately to the status of a god. It seems that the ‘Jews’ living in the Diaspora came to be influenced by this perception of things and imagined Moses, after his death, as a demi-god.

The Pharisees’ attachment to Moses, in the light of John 9.28f, is based on the belief that he is the Mediator between God and Israel, the only one to mediate God’s affairs since the saving knowledge of God was attained and life might be found through him (Barrett 1978:270). The greatness of Moses should not be challenged by the greatness of any other, not even by Jesus.

The Jews maintained an attitude of obstinacy because of the status attributed to Moses as ‘*θεῖος ἀνὴρ*’. At some point in history, Moses became a divine figure. As already emphasized, Moses was regarded as both a king and a prophet (Kealy 1997:733). It was believed that he was enthroned in heaven, where he received the Torah (Ex 19.3 – 20.21; 34.2-9) and, with or within it, all truth (Meeks 1967:286). In the apologetic view, Moses was considered as God’s emissary, agent or vice-regent on earth. From such a standpoint, Moses was exalted to the centre of religious concerns, the intermediary, in some sense, between them and God in Jewish traditions (Meeks 1976:286). The ascent of Moses to the mountain was an ascent to heaven to receive the Torah. In Jewish tradition, Enoch was believed to be exalted and worthy of the authority on heavenly mysteries, since he had been taken up to

²⁸⁷ Som. 2.226-228 quoted by Meeks 1976:46.

heaven before the flood (Genesis 5.24). Therefore, he was preeminently qualified to disclose the mysteries of the heavenly world (Collins 1999:141).

The opposition shaped between Moses and Jesus stems from the exaltation of Moses as a transcendent figure. In the light of John 3, the FE disputes that exaltation in a polemic stance. The statement in John 3.13, ‘No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man’, is a polemic addressed against the ascent of figures, among whom may be cited Moses, who was thought to have ascended to heaven to bring back revelation (McGrath 2001:160). Jesus, as the Son of Man, is polemically presented in contrast to some ‘heroic mediators’ (Keener 2003a:563, referring to Segal) or ‘visionary mystics’. Unlike those figures, Jesus descended from above as the exclusive revealer of heavenly things. The central polemic in the FG, in Keener’s opinion (2003a:563), probably exalts Jesus above Moses for he is ‘from heaven’ (3.13, 31; 6.38, 41-2, 50-51, 58), or from God’s realm (1.32; 3.27; 6.31-3; 12.28; 17.1). The story of John 9 is the evangelist’s endeavour to give Jesus primacy and authority that exceeds that granted to Moses, who was regarded, in Jewish tradition, as both a king and a prophet. In death, it was believed, he was enthroned in heaven (Holladay 1977:67), where he received the Torah and, with or within it, all truth (Meeks 1986:286).

The discussion that arises in Chapter 9 between the leaders and the formerly blind man not only shows us two distinct groups of disciples, but also highlights the religious and mutual exclusivity construed around Jesus and Moses that took place when, at a certain moment, the authorities probably laid down a new dictum (Culpepper 1998:177). The dictum implied that *either* one is a loyal disciple of Moses, remaining true to the ancient Jewish community, *or* one has become a disciple of Jesus, thereby ceasing to be a disciple of Moses (Martyn 2003:158). The way the two groups are placed in opposition to one another in John 9, ‘disciples of Moses’ versus ‘disciples of Jesus’ (vv 27-9), features the issue of discipleship as having to do with the historical and social context from which the FG originates. To the original, inner-synagogue group of Christian Jews, who knew Jesus to be the one of whom Moses wrote, this formulation must have come as a great shock. It seems that not all the members had the same experience since ‘some managed to remain within the bosom of the synagogue by presenting themselves in public as disciples of

Moses and children of Abraham, while considering themselves in private to be *also* disciples of Jesus' (Martyn 2003:159). That double allegiance is fought by the Pharisees passing such a dictum. The FE rejects any double allegiance and refuses to allow secret believers (who avoided excommunication by refraining from making public confession), to claim that they are disciples of Jesus. Moreover, in portraying the man born blind as being clearly opposed to the Pharisees through his acknowledgement of Jesus as being from God, John contrasts him with them as a remarkable figure of discipleship.

The 'Jews' distinguish between their group, 'disciples of Moses', and the believers called 'disciples of Jesus' (vv.27-8). Yet the Pharisees' claim to be 'disciples of Moses' is refuted by the earlier statement in 5.45-7 (Keener 2003:791). If they were indeed disciples of Moses, they would believe in Jesus as the scriptures testify on his behalf (5.39-40) or he wrote about Jesus (5.46-7). To conclude, there should not be any incompatibility in a disciple of Moses being a disciple of Jesus. From the evangelist's perspective, the incompatibility lies in the allegiance to Moses when it entails a rejection of Jesus' claims (Lincoln 2005:285). The Pharisees, alleged disciples of Moses, fail to accept Jesus' claims because of the absence of God's love in them. What is happening in Chapter 9 fits into the scheme of the dispute related to Jesus' authority and origins in Chapters 7 and 8. While his authority is questioned in Chapter 5, and his origins in Chapter 6, it should be noted that in this context 'the issue at stake here is not the Jews' acceptance of Jesus, but their acceptance of their traditional God, now revealed in Jesus, his Son and agent' (Moloney 1998:242). Their denial of Jesus' origin proves their sinfulness, even though they are the leaders and guardians of Israel's faith (Neyrey 2007:115), and predisposes them to the judgment enacted by the Son of Man.

9.6 Conclusion: Sacred texture

This long section dealing with sacred texture may bring us to the following conclusion. The traditional understanding of Jesus as Rabbi, prophet, messiah or man from God, is not sufficient in the Johannine perspective of discipleship. The inclusive construct of the story places Jesus' self-revelation as the light of the world at the beginning of the chapter, along with the so-called 'I am saying', and as Son of

Man, at the end, demonstrates that Jesus' legitimacy is beyond any traditional form of legitimacy. Jesus the Son works in close cooperation with the Father, which allows him to share God's privilege and authority.

The richness of the story of Chapter 9 lies in its depiction of the blind man progressing to the story's climax, making the understanding of discipleship to relate to Christology. The healed man, whose progress is obvious in the development of his understanding of Jesus' identity, is portrayed as an example of a person walking in light, moving away from the darkness of the Jewish world. In believing, he abandons the world he is familiar with and steps over the threshold that leads to a new world of the Johannine Community.

Concerning holy persons, a distinction has been made between Jesus and his disciples. While Jesus is no longer a simple holy person, he is the divine being since, among the many agents mediating God's work, Jesus is set above all as Son of Man, the unique agent through whom God is known. The perception of Jesus as holy man par excellence is seen when the blind man worships him where he meets him. Jesus is then the mediator between God and man. The healed man, even though he is not divine, is holy since whereas the unnamed disciples failed to understand Jesus' mission, he understands both his mission and his identity. By challenging the Jewish authorities and his own parents, he becomes separated from them and the rest of people who do not believe. His understanding attributes to him a status of a holy person.

Dealing with divine history, Jesus' coming into the world is tacked, in the FE's outlook, as a transformation of the conception of time. Time after Easter becomes time of salvation and judgment, unlike the conception that placed both at the end time. The telescoping of time that the FE operates is a conception that makes the believers eschatological people who escape the judgment that falls upon those who do not believe. The blind man sets an example that should be followed.

Dealing with human redemption, we understood that sin is conceived neither anthropologically, nor morally, nor ontologically, but lies in unbelief. Therefore, the believer can benefit from faith leading to salvation and escape judgment only when he is proud of both what he has seen and what he heard as well. When the formerly blind man comes to recognize Jesus as the Man from God, he stands prepared to

make the decisive choice to believe in (πιστεύειν εἰς) the Son of Man. The sign of healed sight and Jesus' words are connected, and lead the healed man to faith. His faith became true faith, in John's view, as he faced the opposition of Jewish leaders and ran the risk of being expelled from the synagogue.

Finally, it should be pointed out that rabbinic scholars were not familiar with the concept 'human commitment', in the context of the historical circumstances in which 'disciples of Jesus' were placed in opposition to 'disciples of Moses'.

The Pharisees' attachment to Moses as seen in John 9.28f is grounded on the belief that he is the Mediator between God and Israel, the only one to mediate God's affairs. To what does the expression 'disciples of Moses' refer could be a Johannine literary invention to ironically refute Jewish pretensions developed around the figure of Moses. The evangelist asserts not only that God has spoken to Jesus, but also that Jesus embodies God's word as Logos, and especially the Son through whom God is seen and heard.

The story of John 9 is the evangelist's endeavour to give Jesus a primacy and an authority that exceeds that granted to Moses, who was regarded, in Jewish tradition, as both a king and a prophet. While the dictum issued implied that *either* one is a loyal disciple of Moses, remaining true to the ancient Jewish community, *or* one has become a disciple of Jesus, thereby ceasing to be a disciple of Moses, the FE understands that the true disciple of Moses should also be a disciple of Jesus, since the former announced the latter. The Pharisees were not at all 'disciples of Moses', as they claimed to be.

Chapter 8

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The subsections that follow provide an overview of the *modi operandi* of the entire study by presenting an outline of each chapter. The chapter that deals with exegetical study will be treated separately in order to highlight the findings of each texture helpful to discovering the contribution of the study to the understanding of discipleship. At the end of the chapter, a statement underlining the limitations of the present study will be made, followed by suggestions regarding further investigations.

1 Discipleship in the introductory chapter

In this chapter, I justified my decision to embark upon an examination of the treatment of the issue of discipleship within the first division of the FG by using specifically the socio-rhetorical method, a comprehensive and heuristic approach. John 9 was chosen firstly on account of the narrator's literary construct, which places the story between the beginning and the end of the Book of Signs. Secondly, the richness of the chapter emanates from the perspective of discipleship within the Book of Signs (2-12) related to the descent of the Son, while discipleship in Chapter 13-20 relates to the ascent of the Son. Fourthly, the text-critical problem that John 9:35 and 38 pose is helpful to look at how John's discipleship related to the Christian church's devotion towards the end of the first century.

While earlier publications on discipleship in the FG were written from theological, narrative, socio-scientific and historical perspectives, the socio-rhetorical approach, as a method of critical investigation, is helpful to dissect the notion of discipleship in Chapter 9. In this chapter, a tough debate between the man born blind and the Jewish authorities hints at the formative debate that developed between Judaism and Christianity at the end of the first century. Since Mosaic discipleship has never been investigated from the perspective of the Johannine community's understanding of Jesus' descent, the present study deals with the theological problem of the depiction of the model of discipleship presented in John 9. Implicit and explicit references to the external environment demonstrate the need to develop a

multidimensional approach the argument that the FE's discipleship relates to the Christian experience of devotion to Jesus.

2 Discipleship in the light of the previous studies

The issue of discipleship with which this study is concerned has not been comprehensively researched, as proved by the literature review. The standardized commentaries, monographs, essays and doctoral theses that assisted the present study are limited by their own concerns and the methodologies applied.

All of these commentators [Brown (1966), Martyn (1978, 1979, 2003), Schnackenburg (1980, 1982), Moody Smith (1999) and Köstenberger (2004)] approach the issue of discipleship from the perspective of the Johannine community. Brown and Martyn should be regarded as a watershed in Johannine studies that influenced scholarship. Keener's thorough recent commentary (2003) endeavoured to supply specific social data from the ancient Mediterranean world that have not been brought to bear on the Gospel before.

The second group that offered a theological perspective on Chapter 9 include Lincoln (2005), who contrasts light and darkness in two different worlds, and Schneiders (2003), who views the disciples' question in connection with original sin as related to the baptism. An earlier group of commentators (Brodie 1993, Culpepper 1998 and Beck 1998) applied the narrative perspective of reading and focus not on the *world behind* the texts, but on the *worlds created* by the texts. Culpepper (1998) and Brodie (1993) maintain that the meaning of sin is the central idea in all the scenes in Chapter 9.

It could be concluded that the previous works, concerned with their own areas of focus, failed to draw an adequate and comprehensive picture of the disciple as represented by the blind man towards the end of the first century. The results attained are limited in methodology and in scope, as will be evident from the next chapter.

3 Methodologies applied in the study of discipleship in the Fourth Gospel

Having dealt with methodologies applied in the interpretation of the FG, it is clear that they fall into four categories and may be assessed as follows:

- The historical-critical methodology seeks the meaning of the text on the other side of the window. The conception of the text as a 'window' on the life, struggles and crises of the community (see Brown, Martyn, Schnackenburg, Moody Smith and Köstenberger, even Keener) was completed (shaped) by another approach within the socio-scientific criticism.
- Socio-scientific critics focus upon reading the texts by striving to reconstruct the social and cultural aspects to which they refer, taking serious account of first-century Mediterranean language and practices.
- The narrative approach advocates focus on the text as such as the medium of communication between the implied author and the implied reader. The meaning of the text is no longer outside the text, but it is embedded in the text, which becomes the mirror.
- While narratological criticism and reader-response criticism are 'mirror-like' ways to read the text, the latter is the reader's endeavour to discover the author's skills and creativity in order to determine the meaning he attributes to the text.

Keeping in mind that the interpretative framework of the twentieth century was dominated on one side by the historical-critical method and on the other side by literary criticism, these approaches are very limited. The weakness of the former method was its neglect of the text itself, which was based on the idea that the historical, social and cultural dimensions of the text are sufficient to explain everything, thus reducing biblical texts to documents about the world around them. Moreover, narrative critics do not take the historical issues and the author's intentions seriously. For reputable literary critics, it was the cul-de-sacs of historical criticism that led them to literary criticism. This approach does not allow its practitioners to go beyond and outside the text.

Since all of these approaches failed to attain adequate and expected results regarding the understanding of discipleship in the FG, it became clear that a more comprehensive and multidimensional approach was needed. The socio-rhetorical method proved to be the most suitable way of investigating the issue of discipleship in John 9.1-41.

4 Significance of the socio-rhetorical criticism

It has been indicated that a comprehensive reading of an ancient text such as the FG requires that the literary and rhetorical nature of the texts be taken in account. Robbins' approach seems to be more useful than previous traditions of interpretation insofar as it conceives of the text as a persuasive communication without neglecting its social, historical, cultural and ideological context. Instead of considering the socio-rhetorical method as integrating simply synchronic (narrative and rhetorical) and diachronic (socio-historical, religious and cultural) ways of reading the text, we understood it as generating multiple strategies. It invites one to enter not only the world of the text, but also the world outside it.

In order to make the interpretative task more significant and to attain unexpected results, the socio-rhetorical approach, like an interdisciplinary paradigm, makes use of other sciences and other practices. It is a 'multidimensional activity' that creates meaning and touches on many aspects of the biblical text as it has been applied to Chapter 9. Robbins' model is a complex network of textures (inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture and sacred texture) that guided us into a very tough process of interpretation which led us to ask ourselves new and appropriate questions at every stage. This process enabled us to put into perspective previous ways of understanding the text in order to understand it anew, and to question our own way of reading and ideology, challenged by the ideology of the author and the first addressees.

The socio-rhetorical method is not only a comprehensive, but also a suitable approach to even a very dense text like John's narrative. It ensures awareness of all literary, social-cultural, ideological and sacred aspects that are in focus in the narrative.

5 Discipleship explained in the light of historical issues (dating, location and authorship)

A meaningful interpretation of discipleship in the FG compels one to contend that the Gospel might have been written in Syria, but was drawn up in Ephesus. The most probable date of writing is somewhere between 90 and 110. The process of

writing the Gospel, which must have been lengthy, is attributed to the BD, whose sphere of activity should be placed in the contexts of Asia Minor. He competes for the authorship as guarantor of the tradition. One of his disciples, the evangelist, is regarded as a true witness in the light of 21.24a and writes not on his own behalf, but for the sake of the community where the BD is an emblematic figure. The editor intervenes in appropriating the final touch of the Gospel (21.25).

While the BD, viewed by a group of scholars as the paradigmatic figure of the believer focused on in John 20.8, as well as the hero of the 'Book of Glory', the blind man, as he is presented in the 'Book of Signs' (Chapters 2-12) competes with him because of the BD's lack of witness throughout the narrative. Although the writing of the Gospel was an integral part of fulfilling the mission to witness, the vacuum from which our argument is construed was noticed in the final process of the redaction of the Gospel. The Johannine community attempted to fill that void with the reference in 21.7, where the BD witnesses for the very first time. The BD failed to do what the blind man did so courageously, that is, to witness in an environment of harsh conflict.

The risk of attempting to compare the BD and the healed man lies in the fact that they came from different periods. The blind man, in all likelihood, lived in the period of the conflict between Judaism and Christianity, which needed a courageous and bold witness. In addition, it seems that during that period, in the process of coming to faith, seeing needed to be completed with hearing without neglecting the necessity to acknowledge Jesus as God's chief agent, or even better, the Son in close cooperation with the Father, and then worship him. This is what the blind man did, which led to him being defined as a paradigmatic figure. He holds the status of a disciple or the full standard of discipleship.

6 Discipleship and the reconstruction of the Johannine community

To learn about discipleship in Chapter 9, it is essential to make a connection between religious belief (confession of high Christology) and social experience (the social implication of the confession viewed as a threat of monotheism). The reference to the expulsion from the synagogue in 9.22 as a threat, and the way the man's parents, fearing expulsion by the 'Jews', depict the faith of the members of the

community as vulnerable in an environment of conflict.

The conflict at which the FG hints becomes an opportunity to develop the community's understanding of Christology relating to discipleship. The conflict, as it should be reconstructed on the basis of Chapters 5-10, engages outsiders (the Jews or Pharisees) and insiders (different groups of sympathizers, the disciples in secret and those holding inadequate faith) is achieved with a view to clarifying hermeneutically the relevant Christological issues in depicting Jesus as the Son of the Father or the Son of Man. There is no way to become a disciple of Jesus unless his true identity is understood and accepted. While the blind man's parents represent the secret believers, the blind man is portrayed as the believer whose *remarkable courage challenges all the unbelieving groups mentioned in the gospel*.

The reinforcement of criteria to distinguish between believers and non-believers should not be regarded as a confirmation that the community was a 'sectarian group'. It was, in fact, an effort to protect the community against all deviation. Instead of treating the Johannine community as a 'sectarian' group, both the Jewish synagogue and the Christian church must be taken as corporate and competitive groups sharing the same interest in God and yet excluding each other in order to establish who is, or is not part of the *familia dei*.

The blind man, by overcoming his fear of the Jews and risking expulsion from the synagogue (9.22, 34), is sketched as the hero of John's narrative and a role model within the community, not only because of his audacious confession, but also because his understanding of Jesus as the Son of Man is so highly developed that he shows devotion to him despite the fact that this places him at increased risk. Full or authentic discipleship, from the backdrop of the history of the Johannine community, involves overcoming the darkness of the unbelieving world by becoming a courageous witness, regardless of the price to be paid (even if it is expulsion from the synagogue or arrest and execution).

7 Discipleship as demonstrated in the entire Chapter 9: Application of the socio-rhetorical method

In Chapter 7 the socio-rhetorical approach was used to deal with the textures that constitute the essence of the methodology. In this chapter, the investigation of the issue of discipleship focused on John 9.1-41 and the socio-rhetorical approach is

applied to its texture (inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture and sacred texture). This method was needed to explore the chapter and to ask several questions in order to get closer to the discussion with other sciences in order to reach a comprehensive understanding in the FG.

7.1 Contribution of the textures in the understanding of discipleship

7.1.1 Inner texture:

Inner textual analysis focuses on words perceived as tools of communication. The meanings of words are determined on the basis of the structure of the text, which draws semantic relations by way of repetition, from which a kind of progression emerges. The progression that takes place in Chapter 9, from the beginning to the end, is examined in the light of how arguments are structured, how the characters intervene in the arc of the story, and what kind of roles they played in the narrative where the status of the disciple is at stake.

In order to make the interpretation of Chapter 9 meaningful, it has been set in the macro- and micro-structure in order to see how it fits into the overall literary and theological framework of the Book of Signs as a whole. This chapter, set within the broader co-text (7-10) where the controversy between Jesus and the Jewish leaders plays a critical role regarding the aspect of the darkness opposed to the light, enables us to ensure that the theme of Jesus as ‘the Light of the world’ is skilfully developed in the healing of the blind man and stands in relation to the world of revelation in 8.12. The blind man is depicted as the paradigmatic figure who exemplifies the principle of 8.12 and defines discipleship in the FG as the ‘discipleship into light’. That is why the concept of light thematises the entire chapter depicting the blind man who chooses to walk in light while the Jewish authorities and his own parents choose to walk in darkness.

7.1.2 Intertexture:

This section, in which we look at how the terms (μαθητής, light, miracles) that occurs in Chapter 9 echo the phenomena outside the text. The noun μαθητής,

investigated intertextually from the extra-Johannine data or the historical and social environment, defines the absence of any commitment of a pupil to a master (be it a prophet) because of the strong awareness of commitment to God. In the philosophic schools, the evidence is that the masters' pupils who were free to develop or to modify their teachings were not following a teaching or a philosophy, but a person. That conception of discipleship is obvious in the Synoptic tradition where all the evangelists agree that a disciple follows a person and not a philosophy. From Mark to Luke, passing over Matthew, a perceptible evolution occurs in the conception of discipleship as requiring a great deal of self-sacrifice in the breaking down any encumbering conventional connections (familial and material). The manner in which the disciples are described by John in the first division of the FG, does not betray the roots of the original Christian tradition. Between the synoptic traditions and John, Zumstein points out, lies a phenomenon of 'hypertextuality' in which the relation between two texts demonstrates that the hypotext (the source) is not merely taken up, but is used in a modified way or a distanced manner. From Chapter 1 to Chapter 9, passing over Chapter 6, the manner in which the FE constructs the figure of the disciples definitely helps to conclude that being a disciple demands more than a simple attitude of enthusiasm or zeal.

In Chapters 11 and 12 of the Book of Signs discipleship is radicalized to the extent that the unique way of surviving in the context dominated by the darkness of an unbelieving attitude towards the Light of the world is to keep on following 'into light' in an environment where people are at risk of being overtaken by the darkness signified by Jesus' death, to which the Jewish authorities were committed. Out of the conflict between Christians and Jews, envisioned as a conflict that poses the forces of darkness against the forces of light, the blind man emerges as the paradigm for discipleship. The disciple of all the time is reminded to keep firm commitment, strong and courageous determination to witness and real perseverance in following Jesus, even in an environment of persecution.

Coming to the metaphor of 'Light' that the FG uses and as John's extra-terminology, it should be noted that it was a widely used concept in the ancient world (Gnosticism, Hermetic literature, Jewish background like Qumran and ideas relating to Wisdom and the Law, OT tradition, according to scholarship suggestions). In

order to find out which influences Johannine language underwent, it has to be pointed out that John used a language shared by many systems of thought within the same religious background. John was not indebted either to Qumran or to Gnosticism, but the conception that influenced the FG is the conception of the divine as 'light and life', as it stands in the OT tradition. Even when in 12.36 the FE hints at the 'children of light', he does not use the expression in the dualistic perspective that conceives outsiders as 'children of darkness' (standard description of Qumran community), but his intention is to take advantage of the conflict that places Christians and Jews on opposing sides by highlighting 'to believe in the Light' as the way to escape from darkness.

With regard to the term 'miracle', the healing by Jesus of the man born blind is found to be the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. Although the use of saliva and the spreading the mud on the man's eyes in 9.6 is decisive to pinpoint Jesus as a miracle-worker he differs from the healers in the Graeco-Roman world who were all exorcists. Jesus is not depicted as an exorcist anywhere in the Gospel. He also differs from the OT miracle-workers Elisha and Elisha, champions of Yahweh to their epoch and perceived as brokers of the God-Patron in that they also were never instrumental in the healing the blind. However, the healing of the blind can be related to Isaiah (cf. 29.18; 35.5; 42.7; 61.1-2), who indicated the restoration of sight or clarity of vision as one of the characteristics of the Messianic age. Such a perception has been included in the Synoptic tradition. A study was undertaken to compare Mark 8.22-3 and John 9.6-7 because in both instances the miracles of healing are recorded not merely as acts of physical healing, but as actions of revelation. John's account differs from that given by Mark in that it is stated that the man had been blind from birth (9.1), that the healing was of an incredible nature (9.32), and that the miracle was performed purely on Jesus' initiative – no request had been made by anyone for him to heal the man. One should conclude that John extended the account in his own appropriate manner to solve the enigma of discipleship in the harsh environment of the struggles between Judaism and Christianity towards the end of the first century. This extraordinary miracle holds a symbolic meaning in that it helps us to understand what the concept of discipleship signifies and implies.

7.1.3 Social and cultural texture

John 9 reflects two different world views – that of the ‘Jews’ and that of the Christian church – each of which excludes the other. In order to reconstruct the social and cultural world of Chapter 9, we noted the strong reference to the Pharisees and the ‘Jews’ as groups. In the evangelist’s mind, they symbolize the attitude of unbelief. The FE endeavours to contrast several groups of unbelievers (the disciples of John the Baptist, the secret disciples represented by the parents of the man born blind, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, the disciples of inadequate faith and the Jewish leaders) with the remarkable courage and faith of the man born blind.

The evangelist challenges all these groups of unbelievers around and within his community via his criticism of the so-called ‘Jews’ of his time, even though his criticism rendered the FG vulnerable to the scholarly claims that it was an anti-Jewish document. *The fact that the FG stands in (and not against) the mainstream of Jewish tradition (cf. its reference to Jewish festivals and heroes) and its theological concerns (the Jewish exclusive monotheism is not rejected but perceived anew) disparages the accusation.*

Dealing with discipleship in the FG from a social and cultural texture has much to do with:

- *Specific social topics*, where ‘Jews’ and Pharisees do not constitute two different groups, but are rather one authoritative body. A switch from the Pharisees to the ‘Jews’ in 9.18 demonstrates that the two terms are used interchangeably. In order to ensure the survival of Judaism, the “Jews”, in their struggles to contain the growth of Christianity, rejected the Christian confession and regarded it as a violation of monotheism, and so agreed to expel Christians from the synagogue where the Pharisees were powerful authorities. The Jewish synagogue and the Christian church became opposing groups. Whereas up to that time the Johannine Christians had enjoyed the fellowship with God and other Jews within the synagogue, they were now made ‘synagogueless’; the penalty implied social dislocation and alienation from their social and theological womb. Meanwhile, some followers of Christ were accused of being heretics and were killed by their fellow Jews.
- *Discipleship is related common social and cultural topics*. Common social and

cultural topics (honour and shame; patron and client) find their origin in the social and cultural world in which the text functions, as can be seen in Chapter 9. The background to the honour-shame concept, present in John 9, is found in Chapter 5 and is further developed in Chapter 10. In both chapters, Jesus is accused of making himself equal to God, or simply of making himself God. In the middle of both chapters one finds the story of the blind man who takes seriously the warning of 5.23 'He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him'. Perceiving Jesus as equally recipient of the honour simply cannot be a blasphemous perception since it is grounded on the great works, such as the healing of the man born blind, that the Father gave him to perform. Jesus does not make himself equal to God, for his glory is manifested through his works in which God's power is extended to him. The healing of the man born blind exemplifies Jesus as acting to perform God's works. While Moses is presented as one of the figureheads of Jewish religious imagery with whom Jesus has to compete, the evangelist depicts Jesus in *honorific terms* (as 'from God' as well as being the Son of Man worthy of worship). The progress in faith of the blind man attains its outcome when he gives honour by worshipping Jesus in public (v.38). In that sense, while the fate of being cast out of the synagogue is shameful, the evangelist transforms it into an exclusive privilege to be honoured by God. He privately meets with the healed man and invites him to believe in the Son of Man (9.35-7).

The other concept that the text evokes in its social and cultural world is the patron-client relationship so prevalent throughout the Mediterranean world. The blind man, confronted with his experience of the divine through the recovery of his sight, fulfils the main duty of a client by making public acknowledgement to Jesus, the broker sharing equal dignity with the heavenly patron. Brokers mediate between powerful patrons and their clients, who then owe loyalty and public honour to their patron, or otherwise to his broker. While the Pharisees had unduly conceived Moses as the broker, acting on the heavenly patron's behalf, the FE depicts Jesus as the only broker worthy of honour and loyalty.

- Finally, *discipleship has to do with cultural categories*. Three features could be identified from Chapter 9: (1) how the Johannine Community challenged the

dominant culture; (2) how its anti-language functions, and (3) the rhetoric projected into the Christological titles granted to Jesus.

Firstly, the focus lies in how the community of disciples, experiencing the discontinuities of life, for instance, their expulsion from the synagogue, thinks about the present state of things and finds a way to resist the rigid hierarchies of Jewish leaders. While Vespasian was publicly acknowledged and revered as a miracle worker, the community of disciples, as a counter-cultural group, tried in vain to convince the leaders of the legitimacy of Jesus' identity as God's agent.

Secondly, the members of the community adopt their own language in order to maintain their inner solidarity and resist the pressure to conform to the society at large. That language would be conceived as 'anti-language' unless its terms derive from the language of the community's opponents but it is a special language to find the alternative to express their social experience with the one they believe as God's agent within the world.

Thirdly, that language is specifically applied in the imperium language that the evangelist appropriates in a polemic and utopian view by portraying Jesus as anti-emperor. Jesus is not Son of God or Lord in accordance with the ideology of the imperial discourse, but all the titles express God's self-revelation through Jesus.

The study of social and cultural texture on discipleship in John 9 provides a way to understand how the text evokes social and cultural categories in which the blind man is a paradigmatic figure. The text alludes to two worlds, the dominant world of the 'Jews' with its specific world view, and the counter-cultural world of the Christian church expressed through its own language. Discipleship relates to specific social topics, to common and social topics where honour-shame and patron-client concepts find their origin in the social and cultural world evoked by the text.

7.1.4 Ideological texture:

A study of ideological texture provides another way of investigating and understanding the researcher's biases, opinions, preferences and stereotypes in connection with discipleship in John 9. The focus is firstly the ideology of the researcher, secondly that of the implied author, and thirdly, that of previous interpreters.

The examination of the researcher's ideology is an important step within the socio-rhetorical analysis that reveals the world in which the text is being interpreted. The researcher with ideological religious experience [utopian perception of Christian life (early in his childhood), conversionist view (transformation of life and society by preaching the Bible), introversionist view (awareness of separating from the evil world) and thaumaturgical elements (all the believers have the power to perform miracles)] comes to the conclusion that all of those perceptions, partially the understanding of what it means and implies to be a disciple of Jesus, sought an appropriate approach to reading, namely the socio-rhetorical approach felt as a heuristic and rewarding device to aid the evaluation the issue of discipleship in the FG.

The ideology of the (implied) author may be reconstructed from his ingenious reworking the well-known story of the miraculous healing of the man born blind in order to emphasise the conflict that took place between early Christianity and the Judaism of the first century. In analysing the entire Chapter 9, the miracle of recovery of sight, an unparalleled event, is told by the (implied) author using symbolic language to signify the blindness not only of the Pharisees, but also of those who are blinded by their determination to preserve advantage and remain in the fold of the synagogue. Through their blindness, they reject the illumination offered by the Light of the world. In sharp contrast to this we are told of the unwavering belief of the healed man and of his courageous witness. The healing of the man born blind is ideologically conceived as a sign of the triumph of light over darkness. *The blind man and those who believe in Jesus are illuminated by the light and called to plead the cause of the Light in the sphere of darkness represented by the Pharisees who reject God's self-revelation.* The man plays an important role in the vigorous debate by opposing those who refuse to acknowledge Jesus' messiahship or his divine status. The last ideological view of the (implied) author realates to the locus of worship. The delocalisation moves away from the temple or sacred places such as synagogues and finds a new ideological localisation in the person of Jesus himself, who may be worshiped wherever he is encountered. While the Pharisees worship God in the synagogue only, the Christian church feels able to worship Jesus outside the synagogue, the locus of worship being delocalised.

There are two opposite groups with two different world views; one group belongs to the sphere of light, the other to the sphere of darkness.

The ideologies of previous researchers of the FG include historic-critical, socio-scientific and narrative approaches. We noted that one of the limitations of a historical-critical approach is that this method speculates on data that lie outside the text and neglects the text as such. The text is taken ideologically at the level that it helps to reconstruct the history of the community.

The socio-scientific approach termed the conflict that prevails between the two groups as a ‘conflict of brokerage’, with Moses on one side and Jesus on the other. They failed to demonstrate to what extent the conflict that emerges from Chapter 9 is an epistemological conflict since both groups construct their ideologies around ‘knowing’ and ‘not knowing’.

The mode of intellectual discourse of the literary approach is that the text as it stands in its present form is able to convey its meaning, so that it is no longer necessary to search for meaning outside the text. While scholarship managed to term the conflict between the two groups as either ‘conflict between faith and incredulity’ or ‘conflict between “believing” and “not believing”’, they did not successfully highlight the ideology that is couched in the text. Yet the narrator constructs the story in such a way that the healing of the blind man is conceived as a sign of the triumph of light over darkness. That ideological point of view places the alleged disciples of Moses in the sphere of darkness, while the disciples of Jesus are placed in the sphere of light.

7.1.5 Sacred texture:

The final step in the process of socio-rhetorical investigation, the ‘sacred texture’, dealt with the relationship between human life and the transcendent (divine), in striving to ascertain how the text speaks of God or about the domain of religious life and tackles the issue of discipleship.

The richness of the story of Chapter 9 lies in its depiction of the blind man’s spiritual progress, which teaches us a great deal about Christology and discipleship. It is clear that the traditional understanding of Jesus as Rabbi, prophet, messiah or man from God is not sufficient in the Johannine perspective of discipleship. The

inclusive construct of Chapter 9, which places Jesus' self-revelation (I am the light of the world) at the outset of the story and his identification as the Son of Man at the end, demonstrates that Jesus' legitimacy is beyond any traditional one. Jesus is more than the agent through whom God is revealed. The Father-Son relationship becomes the new centre out of which the FE wants God to be understood. According to the 'envoy motif', God the Father will make himself known through the act of sending the Son. Jesus, as the Sent one (envoy motif), shares God's privilege and authority since he is enabled to work the works of God (functional Christology). In the perspective of the Christology of mission, two concepts, 'sign' and 'work', are privileged since they are important witnesses to Jesus' legitimacy. The breakthrough that the evangelist achieves is to depict Jesus as the Light of the world, aware that he works the works of the One who sent him (vv3. 5), making the miracle of healing the man born blind to play its Christological role in glorifying the Son. Jesus' works and glory cannot be conceived detached from the Father.

The understanding of discipleship relates to Christology. The inclusive construct of the narrative through Jesus' self-revelation as 'the Light of the world' and Son of Man is not gratuitous. The healed man, whose progress in the understanding of Jesus' identity is obvious, is portrayed as a paradigm for walking in the light and moving away from the perceptible darkness of the Jewish world. In believing, he abandons the world he is familiar with in order to step over the threshold that leads to a new world mediated by the Johannine community. In that community, discipleship is conceived as an attachment in faith to Jesus as Son of Man, or the Son acting in close cooperation with the Father. Such a faith is expressed by his bold devotion and willingness to follow the Light of the world on his journey (8.12), despite the threat of persecution, even unto death (12.26). Discipleship so radicalized defines who is a disciple and who is not.

Furthermore, although the depiction of Jesus as a divine person is seen as an undermining of the Jewish exclusive monotheism, the FE, by attributing to Jesus the title 'Son of Man', sets him above all other many agents believed to mediate God's activity in the Jewish world. Early Christianity appropriates the Jewish heritage in attributing to it a profound sense. Then the revelation that takes place in the Son defines the disciples' commitment to willingly follow the one who is God's final

agent and to face all the attendant pressures.

In connection with the divine history, it has been discovered that in the epilogue of Chapter 9, the role of the Revealer who came for salvation (3.17; 5.24; 12.47) is reversed and transformed into that of the eschatological judge (9.39). The FE, recounting the Jesus-event, reinterprets a widespread conception of Jewish traditional eschatology postponed at the last day in giving to it a 'presenteistic' dimension. The blind man, in recognizing Jesus, finds in him the definitive eschatological manifestation of the eschatological life God offers.

Dealing with human redemption, we discovered that benefits attributed to humans by God could be obstructed by misinterpretation and/or misunderstanding. The irony epitomized in the story of Chapter 9 makes the term 'sin' an inclusive concept that the FE tries to define. Sin, despite the misinterpretation that surrounded it in Jewish religious and cultural world, is not an anthropological reality but lies in the unbelief displayed in those who reject the Christological revelation brought by the Son of Man to make God known on earth. Sin is the obstinate refusal to believe in him.

The believer who comes to faith in Jesus the Son of Man is protected against walking into darkness. The story of Chapter 9 is told in such a way that it becomes clear that seeing alone, without hearing, does not lead to faith. Sight, as an integral part of the process of faith, is not a simple sensory experience; it is the discernment of the Ultimate Reality in the person of Jesus. Any faith based purely upon a miracle, without hearing Jesus' word, is disputed by the evangelist. Jesus' absence from the great part of the story (from v.7 to v.34) and his reappearance toward the end of the man's audacious adventure of faith is not gratuitous. It is an evangelist's effort to contest Jesus' quiet absence from the struggles of faith in the process of being disciple. The church's preaching, toward the end of the First Century, mediates Christ's meeting with the would-be disciple in order to lead the gradual progress of belief to its climax but also to strengthen the faith in crisis that has to keep following Jesus, despite challenges from all sides. Making Jesus the site of the encounter between God and human beings consecrates a 'parting of the ways' between the church and the synagogue. The FE dares to face the challenge of the spirits arguing over the right worship of God. The disciple is reminded to face such challenges.

The separation to which Chapter 9 alludes set the disciples of Moses against the disciples of Jesus. ‘Disciples of Moses’ is not a regular title and appears to, according to later rabbinic sources, the name given to themselves by the Pharisees acting in their judicial capacity. The evangelist, in using the expression, does not buy into the ideology, but strives to ironically refute the Jewish pretensions developed around the figure of Moses. The latter was viewed as the only one mediator between God and man. Moses was exalted as the centre of Jewish religious concerns.

The greatness of Moses, so prominent in Jewish imagery, is challenged by the evangelist, aware of the absence of real belief in the Pharisees. Being a disciple of Moses is, in fact, perfectly compatible with being a disciple of Jesus, since Moses testified about Jesus (5.39-40, 46-7).

7.2 My contribution to the study to discipleship in John 9

By now it should be clear that it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the theme of discipleship in Chapter 9 of the Fourth Gospel, where the blind man is portrayed as a paradigm of discipleship, from the various texture perspectives dealt with by this study. Interpreting its macro-micro structure, Chapter 9 fits into the overall literary and theological framework of the Book of Signs (inner texture). The controversy between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, obvious in chapters 7-10, is taken over in the chapter. From the perspective of inter-texture, the well-elaborated Chapter 9 underlines how a phenomenon of ‘hypertextuality’ is skilfully undertaken by modifying the hypotext (source such as synoptic tradition) in order to bring forth the blind man as the emerging paradigm of the disciples in the light of the first part of the Gospel.

From the backdrop of the attitudes of the nameless characters cited in Chapter 9 and elsewhere in the Book of Signs, one notes two important characteristics of discipleship of Jesus: (1) it is not just simple enthusiasm and zeal, rather, it is a matter of firm commitment and strong and courageous determination to bear witness based upon experience of the divine; (2) discipleship is nothing less than a ‘discipleship into light.’ The healed man is depicted as the paradigmatic figure who exemplifies the general principle announced in 8.12: ‘Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life’ in contrast with the Jewish

authorities and his own parents who choose to walk in darkness.

In terms of its social and cultural texture, chapter 9 brings out two different worldviews – that of the ‘Jews’ and that of the Christian church – each of which excludes the other. The ‘Jews,’ as the dominant local group, are depicted as concerned by their self-definition and the need to ensure the survival of Judaism. In their struggles to contain the growth of Christianity, they rejected the Christian confession and regarded it as a violation of monotheism, and so agreed to expel Christians from the synagogue where the Pharisees were powerful authorities. By making the Johannine Christians ‘synagogueless,’ the penalty implied social dislocation and alienation from their social and theological womb. The attitude of the healed man throughout chapter 9 relates discipleship to common and cultural topics (such as honour and shame, patron and client). The evangelist skilfully transforms the shameful fate of being cast out of the synagogue into an exclusive privilege attributed to the healed man who fulfils the narrative’s purpose when he acknowledges and worships Jesus as the Son of Man. The progress in faith of the blind man attains its outcome when he gives honour by worshipping Jesus in public (v.38) who acts on the heavenly patron’s behalf. By doing so, he fulfils the main duty of a client. Jesus is depicted as the only broker worthy of honour and loyalty. Finally, discipleship relates to cultural categories. The community, experiencing alienation from their own family, firstly finds a way to resist against the rigid hierarchy of the Jewish authorities by adopting its own language. Secondly, as a counter-cultural group, they tried in vain to convince the leaders to legitimate Jesus as God’s agent. Thirdly, they fight against the ideology of imperium language in their appropriation, but with a polemic and utopian view. Jesus is portrayed as anti-emperor; he is the Son in close cooperation with the Father.

The ideological view of the well-known story of Chapter 9 may be reconstructed in two ways: firstly, the miracle of the gift of sight, an unparalleled event, is told by the (implied) author’s use of symbolic language. The Fourth Evangelist strives to signify that the Pharisees, along with those who favour the advantage of remaining within the fold of the synagogue, are all blinded. The healing of the man born blind is ideologically conceived as a sign of the triumph of light over darkness. *The blind man and those who believe in Jesus are illuminated by the light and called to plead the cause of the Light in the sphere of darkness represented by*

the Pharisees who reject God's self-revelation. Secondly, another ideological view of the (implied) author lies in the delocalisation of the locus of worship away from the temple or other sacred places, to its new ideological localisation in the person of Jesus.

In the light of sacred texture, the understanding of discipleship relates to Christology. The inclusive construct of the narrative (Jesus' self-revelation that he is 'the Light of the world' at the outset of the chapter and that he is the Son of Man at the end) is not gratuitous. It demonstrates that Jesus' legitimacy is beyond any traditional legitimacy. Jesus, as the sent One, is not only in close cooperation with the Father, but also shares the same privilege and authority with him since he is enabled to work the works of God. The healed man's progress to understanding Jesus' identity becomes a paradigm for walking in the light and moving away from the perceptible darkness of the Jewish world. Abandoning the world he is familiar with (the synagogue and his own parents), the man born blind steps over the threshold that leads to a new world mediated by the Johannine community where discipleship is so radicalised and conceived as an attachment in faith to Jesus as Son of Man, or the Son acting in close cooperation with the Father.

The Pharisees, attempting to survive, reject the Christological revelation brought by the Son of Man to make God known on earth. Their unbelief is displayed as sin that is no longer understood as an anthropological reality following religious and cultural misinterpretation. The study of the discipleship in Chapter 9 leads us to point out that 'discipleship in Moses' which seeks to please God by upholding the Law or Torah is no longer defensible. Discipleship in Chapter 9 is to redefine the believer's covenant relationship with God that takes place in Jesus' person (the envoy motif) and work (functional Christology) in order to follow him into the light. The Pharisees' self-conception as 'disciples of Moses' is misleading firstly because it is not a regular title according to later rabbinic sources. Secondly, Moses, despite the greatness granted to him in Jewish religious imagery, should not contend against Jesus. Being a disciple of Moses is, in fact, perfectly compatible with being a disciple of Jesus, since Moses testified about Jesus (5.39-40, 46-7). The Fourth Evangelist hints at the phenomenon ('disciples of Moses' versus 'disciples of Jesus') and challenges the absence of real belief in the Pharisees.

We can conclude that it was not easy to be a disciple of Jesus in that environment of conflict, since the devastating effect of the measure of exclusion from the synagogue implies a renunciation of national, social, religious and cultural identity.

Today, as always, being a disciple of Jesus (1) is not only a matter of confession of faith; it requires that you remain and keep on following Jesus. (2) In the world dominated by many kinds of ideologies (religious, cultural, political, etc.) and crumbling ethical values, the would-be disciple should be ready to be marginalized, not only by the dominant society but also by his or her own family. Since, discipleship implies readiness for struggles, even to death, and even in one's familiar environment. (3) Being disciple of Jesus requires illumination by his light and a duty to plead everywhere and always the cause of the Light in the sphere of darkness represented by unbelievers of all kinds.

The act of following Jesus finds its energy in the revelation that God is at work in the incarnate Christ and in the encounter with the divine.

8. Limitations and recommendations for further investigations

8.1 Limitations

This study focused upon John 9, but alluded to other passages in the first division of the Gospel in order to demonstrate the healed man as a paradigm for discipleship. The comprehensiveness of the present study, undertaken to determine what being a disciple meant and implied at the end of the first century, could be achieved through the application on a broad scale of a multi-dimensional method in its different textures, and referring to the findings of other sciences. However, even the application of a comprehensive method has not yet exhausted the topic. The passages that helped us to reconstruct the figure of the disciple throughout the Book of Signs have not been analyzed in depth. Regarding the density of the FG, every passage, when situated in its literary, theological, historical and social context, could hint at specific understanding of the disciple. In addition, the Beloved Disciple is often depicted as the ideal figure of the disciple by a group of scholars. This study attempted to put that hypothesis into perspective with a view to presenting the man

born blind who was healed by Jesus as the paradigm. However, the best way would be to compare the two characters would be by using the socio-rhetorical approach. The deliberate choice of Chapter 9 oriented, but also limited our field of investigation. The spatial limitations of the present study (John 2-12) did not allow us to extend the scope to further investigate other important areas.

8.2. Recommendations

Because of the obvious limitations of this study, it is suggested that the following areas be considered for future investigation:

First, we have applied the socio-rhetorical method to John 9 in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of discipleship, and suggest that the same approach be applied to other passages, not only in the Book of Signs, but in the Gospel as a whole.

Second, a study dedicated to the Beloved Disciple and extended to cover the whole Gospel, using the socio-rhetorical approach, would complete and counterbalance the hypothesis that the BD played an important role in the Johannine Community, particularly in the writing of the Gospel, and should also be conceived as a paradigm for discipleship. In the understanding of the condition of the disciple, such a study should be of paramount importance.

Third, in order to reconstruct the traditional perception of the disciple, we reviewed the different passages the Synoptic Gospels that are of paramount importance in connection with the condition of the disciple. An exegetical comparative study from the socio-rhetorical perspective extended to the Pauline tradition would help to reconstruct the traditional view, probably and reworked by John, in order to gain insight into the challenges of the period when the Gospel was written.

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