

**REFRAMING, TRANSFORMING AND DEEPENING FAITH: JOHN'S PASTORAL
RESPONSE TO A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS**

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

Claire Gabrielle Nye Hunter.

Grahamstown

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DEDICATION

The success of one is the success of all, so I dedicate this thesis to the people of God in the Anglican Diocese of Grahamstown.

Claire Gabrielle Nye Hunter

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SUMMARY

This thesis begins with the observation that the Fourth Gospel presents a markedly different picture of Jesus compared to the one found in the Synoptic Gospels. This is clearly seen in the evangelist's selection of material, unique use of language and imagery, and his particular presentation of the Jesus tradition. How do we account for these differences?

I begin by looking at what scholars have said concerning the community behind the Gospel, and highlight reasons to suggest that this was a **community in crisis**. The hypothesis I propose is that the Fourth Gospel is different to the Synoptics because the evangelist has reshaped the Jesus tradition in such a way as to address the spiritual and pastoral needs of this community in crisis.

The core of this thesis is an exploration of the evangelist's strategic pastoral response to the Johannine community in crisis. Referring to the work done by the U S Department of Justice in their online publication of *The Community Crisis Response Team Training Manual* (Young 1998), I reflect on the effects of crises on spiritual beliefs. Young suggests that crises can serve as an attack on meaning systems and cause people to re-examine their beliefs. As a result, a person's faith can remain unchanged, or may be rejected, or it may become transformed (1998b).

Applying these and other insights from the field of Social Work, Pastoral Counselling and Sociology, I show how we can use some of these concepts to understand something of what the evangelist is doing in the writing of John's Gospel. I present a simple three part model to demonstrate the evangelist's strategic pastoral response to the community in crisis – namely the reframing, transforming and deepening of faith. I select and exegete specific passages from the Gospel of John which I believe best illustrate these concepts. I end with what in my view is the glue that holds the evangelists three-fold pastoral response together – namely his presentation of 'the other Paraclete'. This, I suggest, is the evangelist's ultimate, unique and special contribution to the Jesus tradition. He (the Paraclete) is given as the rhetorical

fulcrum of John's strategic pastoral intervention to address the needs of his community in crisis.

I conclude that one of the possible reasons for John's Gospel being so different to the Synoptics is because at the heart of the Gospel we hear the voice of a pastor – his Gospel is fundamentally a pastoral document. He has reshaped the Jesus tradition and written a strategic response to the pastoral and spiritual needs of his community in crisis. In this way the Gospel itself fulfills the pastoral commission given to the early church in its concluding chapter: "Feed my lambs"; "Tend my sheep"; "Feed my sheep" (Jn. 21:15-17).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 A Unique Gospel

John's Gospel contains some of the most beautiful and powerful stories we know about Jesus, some of his best known sayings, and some of the most profound and mystical teaching we find in the Christian scriptures. It offers a strikingly different picture of Jesus from the one found in the Synoptics (Wenham & Walton 2001:243)

1.1.1 *The 'Spiritual Gospel'*

The Gospel of John clearly stands apart from the Synoptic Gospels as giving a very different presentation of the Jesus story. In a phrase now famous, Clement of Alexandria (C.E. 150-215) referred to the Fourth Gospel as 'the Spiritual Gospel'. He argued that John was a supplement to the Synoptics – in providing both content omitted by the other Gospels, as well as being “a sort of theological supplement to the others, revealing the deep spiritual/christological truth behind the events of history” (Thatcher 2006:xii). According to Thatcher, Clement's claim that John is a 'spiritual gospel' remarkably stands as the majority view even to this day (2006: xii). Augustine of Hippo likens John to the eagle who can soar higher than any other bird, because John's “spiritual understanding compared to the eagle, has elevated his preaching higher, and far more sublimely, than the other three” (in his *Harmony of the Gospels* 1.6.9).

1.1.2 *The Maverick Gospel*

In previous centuries, the popular approach to the interpretation of the Gospels was to emphasize the similarities between the canonical Gospels creating the so-called “harmonies of the Gospels” (Kysar 1976:2). However, scholars encountered difficulties when trying to fit the account of Jesus' ministry as found in the Fourth Gospel, with the other three. Furthermore, this tendency to try and harmonize the four Gospels ran the risk of overlooking the uniqueness of each Gospel. This was

particularly true of the Fourth Gospel, where “To make it conform to the first three Gospels is to rob it of its vitality and its contribution to our understanding of the origins of the Christian movement” (Kysar 1976:2). Acknowledging the many differences in the presentation of the Jesus story in John, compared to the Synoptics, Kysar appropriately referred to the Fourth Gospel as “maverick among the Gospels” describing it as “the non-conformist Gospel of the bunch” (1976:2).

1.2 The relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels.

Might labeling the Fourth Gospel as the ‘spiritual gospel’, as Clement of Alexandria suggested, provide a possible explanation as to why it is so difficult to compare to the Synoptic Gospels?

Much has been written about the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels including highlighting the similarities and differences between them (Barrett 1974:228-233; Kysar 1976:3-14; Martyn 1979:20-21; Lindars 1981:287-294; du Rand 1991:125-137; Ringe 1999:23-26; Blomberg 2001:46-56; Kieffer 2001:960; Keener 2003a). Did the author of John have the Synoptic Gospels in front of him but made changes based on his dissatisfaction with some aspects of what they did (or did not) contain? A widespread conviction among scholars is that John is in fact completely independent of the Synoptics (Morris 1971:35).

1.2.1 *Why the differences?*

Martyn (1979:19) acknowledges that in presenting the Jesus story in the Fourth Gospel, the author would not merely have repeated the tradition. As with other New Testament writers, he would have heard it in the context of his present reality and interpreted it from his own perspective. He would have shaped it, moulded it, made selections from it and even added to it. Therefore when we read this gospel, it is important to bear in mind that “we are listening both to tradition and to a new interpretation of that tradition” (1979:19).

Noting the Fourth Gospel is “at once so markedly different from the three Synoptic Gospels in the shape of the narrative and in its constituent details, and yet it claims the same Jesus of Nazareth as its foundation” (Ringe 1999:10), raises many questions. What has shaped the many differences? If the same Jesus is common to all four Gospels, why do we encounter so many different features of the Jesus story in these pages? Why does John¹ select and include material from the Jesus tradition not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels? What might some of the reasons be to explain why John writes as he does in terms of style and content? Why is it that in this Gospel we find a unique and rich variety of vivid imagery and amazing metaphors to describe Jesus’ relationship with his followers? Why does the author recall in great detail conversations with individuals (eg. Nicodemus; the Samaritan woman) and present lengthy discourses of Jesus’ teachings and final prayer (Farewell Discourse)? Why is John the only Gospel writer to introduce the Paraclete who will play such a significant role in the lives of the believers once Jesus has left?

1.3The ‘Johannine Problem’

These many questions lead to even ‘bigger’ questions. What was John trying to accomplish in the writing of his gospel – what was his specific purpose in writing? Who was his intended audience, and in what social context did he write? Was there a distinct ‘Johannine community’ or did John write for all Christians? These and other issues (including that of authorship, sources, date, historicity) have formed the basis of what scholars have termed the ‘Johannine Problem’ and produced “an unusually wide spectrum of opinion, ancient as well as modern” (Martyn 1978:17). There are no definitive answers to these issues. Thatcher (2006:3) notes that “The proliferation

¹ Note that for convenience alone, in the writing of this thesis, I shall use the title ‘John’ to signify the actual author of the Gospel in its final form. This does not imply that I have drawn conclusions concerning the complexity of the identity of the author or of the Beloved Disciple. Rather, in agreement with Kysar I acknowledge that “The evangelist responsible for the form of the Gospel as it stands in the canon is lost in the darkness of anonymity” (Kysar 1984:12).

of proposals on these problems is sustained by the vagueness of the available historical data”.

1.4 The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel

1.4.1 The final Gospel

There seems to be widespread agreement that John’s Gospel was the last gospel to be written. This is evident from the writings of The Muratorian Fragment dated 200 AD written in Rome, which was found by Ludovico Antonio Muratori and published in 1740 AD. Concerning the Fourth Gospel, it states (the numerals indicate the lines of the original text):

(9) The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, [one] of the disciples. (10) To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him [to write], (11) he said, ‘Fast with me from today for three days, and what (12) will be revealed to each one (13) let us tell it to one another.’ In the same night it was revealed (14) to Andrew, [one] of the apostles, (15-16) that John should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it (Metzger 1987:306).

The Fourth Gospel appears to be the latest and final Gospel to be written, as stated in the Muratorian Fragment “The list bears testimony that the collection of Gospels was closed by the Gospel according to John, which formed an explicit conclusion to it” (Metzger 1987:195). According to Keener, it seems that “most scholars now concur that John was written by the end of the first century” (Keener 2003a:141), around 90-100 C.E. in Ephesus (Kieffer 2001:961; discussion in Hengel 1993).

If the three Synoptic Gospels were already in existence, why was it considered necessary for yet another gospel to be written?

1.4.2 John’s purpose statement

The question concerning the purpose of the Fourth Gospel is a simple one, as the writer himself apparently gives an explicit ‘purpose statement’ at the conclusion of

his gospel. John makes it clear that believing in Jesus Christ is the ultimate goal of his gospel, which leads to new life. “But these are written so that you might believe/ may come to believe/ may continue to believe (πιστεύ[σ]ητε note that textual variants affect the tense of the verb) that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” ²(Jn. 20:31).

What does this ‘purpose statement’ actually mean? The Greek is more ambiguous than might initially appear. Blomberg sums up the reason for this,

Textual criticism reveals two different tenses used with the subjunctive mood for the verb ‘believe’. John is writing either that people might ‘keep on believing’ (*pisteuēte* – present tense), and hopefully grow in their faith, or that they simply might ‘believe’ (*pisteusēte* – aorist tense). (2001:62).

The textual tradition is equally divided between the two tenses of the verb – present active and aorist active (Beasley-Murray 1987:387; Scott 2003:1210) because “the textual evidence is fairly evenly balanced” (Blomberg 2001:62) and “the best ancient manuscripts pretty evenly support each reading” (Bruner 2012:1198). The aorist tense implies non-Christians coming to believe for the first time (evangelistic purpose), whereas the present tense implies that those who are already Christians should continue to believe (Bruner 2012:1198). Thus based on this text alone, the purpose of John could either have been purely evangelistic, presenting Jesus in a way that leads non-Christians to faith in Jesus, or alternatively to strengthen the faith of those who already believe and encourage them to remain as on-going believers.

1.4.3 Missionary/ Evangelistic purpose?

As a result of the ambiguity in John’s purpose statement, a range of possibilities have been suggested by scholars over the years in answer to the question concerning John’s purpose in writing. Many have found an apologetic or missionary

² Unless otherwise stated, all English scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version* 1989

motif in the Fourth Gospel, directed towards groups including “the sectarians of John the Baptist, ‘the Jews’, and various heretical, Gnostic, or Docetic groups” (Brown 1966). Smith (1959), Van Unnik (1959:382-411) and Robinson (1959:117-131) were the first to suggest that the Fourth Gospel aimed to serve as a missionary document among the Jews living in dispersion. Culpepper suggested that this Gospel was written to evangelise those hostile to the Christian faith, to “bring the reader into an intimate confrontation with Jesus, to which the reader will [hopefully] respond with faith” (1998:88-89). Morris takes a universal evangelistic view in understanding the purpose being to bring John’s readers “to a place of faith and accordingly to new life in Christ’s name” (1971:40). However, as Keener rightly notes, “But by what means would John get the Gospel into the hands of unbelievers except through the preaching of believers?” (Keener 2003b:1216). Hence he concludes that it seems more probable that John writes primarily for believers.

1.4.4 Encouraging believers to continuing in the faith?

Many scholars have favoured the present subjunctive of the verb ‘believe’ suggesting it makes more sense as an encouragement for believers to persevere in their faith (Johnson 1986:472; Moody Smith 1999:386-387; Scott 2003:1210; Keener 2003b:1216). Brown strongly believes that this Gospel “is designed to root the believer deeper in his faith” (Brown 1966:LXXVIII) and suggests that a strong case can be made for understanding John’s purpose statement in the sense of the reader continuing to have faith that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (1966: LXXVIII). Keener believes John’s goal as “not simply initial faith but persevering faith, discipleship (8:30-32; 15:4-7)” (2003b:1216). Suggit suggests John wrote to “show Christians the strength of their claim to be the true successors of the people of the Torah and to confirm them in the faith (20:31)” (1993:17).

1.4.5 Other possible purposes

A variety of other possible purposes have been advocated for the writing of the Fourth Gospel, based on the content of the Gospel as a whole rather than directly linked to John’s purpose statement. These include the following: Cullmann suggests

a purpose might be to give greater attention to teaching about the sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist (noting the symbolism of water and wine in Jn. 2:1-11; the Bread of Life discourse in 6:1-5, 22-40) (1953;1975). Suggit affirms that there is “good reason to recognize the liturgical background of the fourth gospel” (1993:17) as it clearly has a strong liturgical character (1993:11-32). Cullmann (1953: 33-34); Guilding (1960); and du Rand (1993:15) point to its beneficial liturgical use and value in presenting Jesus as the fulfilment of Jewish feasts while acting as a Christian commentary on the Old Testament lectionary in the synagogue. Malina and Rohrbaugh more recently have added the perspective that John’s Gospel serves as a ‘Resocializing Story’ to emphasize new core values for an alternative society (the Johannine community) and attempt to create standards and structures to implement those values(1998:11-14).

Given all the scholarly views concerning John’s purpose, perhaps Brown is wise in suggesting that “there should be a caution against exaggerating the need for finding specific aims in the Gospel” and believes it is “perfectly legitimate to speak of the several aims of the Gospel” (Brown 1966:LXVII).

1.6 An additional purpose

Could it be that the differences in John’s presentation of the Jesus story compared to that of the Synoptic Gospels was due to his sources as some have suggested? (for example (Bultmann et al. 1971;Fortna 1970a & b). Was it because he prepared a new and improved life of Jesus that helped Christians remember the Synoptics accounts in a more favourable form, as suggested by Dowell (1990:19-37)? Was it to challenge and evangelise non-believers to come to faith in Jesus, or to encourage existing believers in their faith?

While I recognize the importance and validity of each of these possible reasons for the writing of the Fourth Gospel, I want to add a further purpose which will be explored in this thesis – namely, a pastoral purpose. Could it be that rather than describing the Fourth Gospel as Clement of Alexandria’s ‘spiritual gospel’, it might be more helpful to understand it as a ‘pastoral gospel’, responding to the spiritual needs

of the particular community for whom it was written – a community which I believe was in crisis? Could it be that in choosing to read this Gospel through the lens of a deeply compassionate and caring pastor, such an approach might perhaps shed more light on the meaning of John’s statement of purpose and explain more clearly his unique selection of material and choice of rich imagery?

Towards the conclusion of the Gospel, we find John’s inclusion of a unique pericope containing Jesus’ post-resurrection conversation with Peter (Jn. 21:15-19). Following Peter’s previous three denials of Jesus (18: 17, 25, 27), three times Jesus gives Peter the opportunity to re-affirm his love for and commitment to him when he asks “Simon, son of John, do you love me? (21:15, 16 ἀγαπᾷς; 21:17 φιλεῖς). Peter consistently replies in the affirmative, and following each response, Jesus proceeds to entrust Peter with the specific responsibility to: “Feed my lambs” (vs. 15); “Tend my sheep” (vs. 16); “Feed my sheep” (vs. 17). Could this pastoral commission in some way represent the heart of the Gospel? Could this unmistakable and clear pastoral mandate placed strategically towards the close of the Gospel be far from coincidental and have something very significant to suggest in terms of the intention of the author and the overall purpose of the Fourth Gospel?

1.7 Motivation for undertaking this study

As both a Social Worker and an ordained Anglican priest, much of my time involves ministering pastorally to those in crisis. These crises – whether resulting from violence, crime, abuse, unemployment or bereavement, to name but a few – most often have spiritual implications. I have seen time and time again that crises have the potential to cause people to cry out in desperation, seeking God; or to turn their backs on God and abandon their faith; or to grapple and engage with issues of faith and come to a deeper knowledge of God and a more mature faith as a result.

What insights can be found in the scriptures to guide those of us who exercise a pastoral ministry to those in crisis? What wisdom is found in the scriptures concerning how we can point people in crisis towards Jesus so they can establish a personal relationship with him and find comfort, hope and encouragement; grapple

with hard issues of life and faith; and allow their crises to become opportunities to facilitate a deepening and maturing of their faith?

1.8 Methodology

I have decided to explore these issues by using an eclectic mixture of a variety of methodologies, which are mainly pastoral but set within the context of conventional New Testament scholarship. I have chosen the Gospel of John as my field of study. At the heart of this thesis is my hypothesis that John's Gospel can be read through the lens of a pastor responding to the spiritual needs of **a community in crisis**. I believe that such an approach might reveal further insights concerning reasons for the uniqueness of John's Gospel and shed light on his purpose in writing.

The debate surrounding the uniqueness of John's Gospel could be set within the context of the move from Source and Form Criticism (identifying the historical context behind the literary pattern) to Redaction Criticism (how the author edited the sources) and then to Modern Literary Theory. In previous generations, Source Critical methods were popular amongst biblical scholars because it was assumed that biblical books were "conglomerates of several different sources" (Asumang 2014:73), hence the focus on comparisons between John and the Synoptics. Later scholarship changed to a focus on the final product and this led to the wave of Redaction-Critical studies (how the author edited the sources). Most recently, scholarship has made use of literary methods, treating the text as a unity. These methods include Narrative Criticism (studying the text as a narrative); Social Scientific (employing ideas from the Social Sciences to examine the text); Rhetorical Criticism (outlining how the text was designed to persuade) (Asumang 1994:74) and other similar methodologies.

In this thesis, I will not be employing methods which simply focus on examining pieces of the text as isolated units as I am more concerned with the final version of John's Gospel as a whole – a unity. I aim to look at the overall intention of the final author, in the writing of his Gospel. My methodology will include a Socio-Historical approach (examining the socio-historical background of the Gospel text) and other

Social Scientific/ Socio-Linguistic methods, and shift towards a form of Redaction Criticism (how John edits or reinterprets the Jesus tradition to suit his purpose), in that I work from the full text but recognize particular characteristics of John's Gospel. While using a form of Redaction Criticism, my emphasis is not on an editor but rather on the writer of the Gospel. Exegetical work on selected texts that illustrate key themes will be done using traditional exegetical methods. I shall work from the Greek text and make use of commentaries based on the original Greek as well. Adding another dimension, I shall make use of Malina and Rohrbaugh's *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (1998) with their insights from the social and cultural context of the Ancient Mediterranean world.

Combining my Biblical and Social Work interests, I shall incorporate a Pastoral approach with these conventional methods of New Testament scholarship. I shall apply ideas drawn from the broad literary theory of Reader-Response Criticism. This is a school of literary criticism which focuses on the reader or audience and their experience of a literary work. It recognizes the importance of the reader's response to the text as an active agent who completes the meaning of a text through their interpretation. It acknowledges that the interpretation given to the text will often depend on the time or occasion when the work is read, and so be influenced by the reader's own life experience ("Reader-Response Criticism" 2015).

Modern reader-response criticism was founded in the 1960s and 1970s in the USA and Germany, in the work of Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, Roland Barthes and others ("Reader-Response Criticism" 2015). There are multiple approaches within the theoretical branch of reader-response criticism, but common to all is the belief that the meaning of a text is derived from the reader (Cahill 1996:89-97). For the purposes of my study, of particular relevance is Psychological reader-response theory, employed by Norman Holland, who suggests that a reader's motives heavily affect how they read (Tyson 2006); and Social reader-response theory presented by Stanley Fish, who states that any individual interpretation of a text is created in an interpretive community of minds who share a specific reading and interpretation strategy (Tyson 2006).

Within this broad framework of reader-response criticism, I shall employ a form of reader-response criticism which I suggest is a 'pastoral-response approach' to engage the Fourth Gospel. This Pastoral approach draws on insights from the fields of Social Work, Psychology, Pastoral Counseling and Sociology. In particular, I utilize Social Work concepts and insights relating to Crisis Intervention methods as found in *Direct Social Work Practice* (Hepworth et al 2010), and research done by the U S Department of Justice presented in *The Community Crisis Response Team Training Manual* which was published in 1998. In particular, I will focus on their insights pertaining to the way communities and individuals respond in the aftermath of a crisis, and their pastoral approach to addressing spiritual needs arising from a crisis. Finally, I shall refer to techniques from the Pastoral Care and Counselling movement; with special attention to the work of Donald Capps in his book *Reframing: A New Method in Pastoral Care* (1990). This technique is especially effective in assisting people gain a new and more positive perspective on the crises they might be facing.

This multi-faceted approach using both conventional methods of New Testament scholarship as well as pastoral models shall be applied directly to the Gospel of John. In particular, my focus will be on the way the Evangelist functions as a pastor to what I believe was a community in crisis, as well as how the readers might have interpreted the text from the perspective of their own life experience and situation of crisis. Based on M.T. Mannion's work (quoted in Young 1998b), I propose a three-fold pastoral model as a spiritual response to a crisis: namely *Reframing* a belief system; *Transforming* faith, and *Deepening* faith.

Examining this ancient sacred text through this (pastoral) lens I believe provides a unique vantage point – one that complements yet remains somewhat distinct from other historic and contemporary treatments of the Fourth Gospel.

Chapter 2: The life-situation and audience of the Fourth Gospel

2.1 Behind the Gospel – The significance of the historical situation

Perhaps clues to discerning whether or not the Fourth Gospel was intended to be primarily evangelistic, for the benefit of unbelievers, or as an encouragement for believers to continue in the faith, lie in considering social and historical context of the community behind the Fourth Gospel. Clement of Alexandria's label, 'the spiritual gospel' could suggest that the Fourth Gospel is devoid of a historical context or cause some to question the historical reliability of the Gospel. However, Craig L. Blomberg in his book *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (2001) argues convincingly in support of his conclusion that "John, no less than the Synoptics, was writing in a historical and biographical genre" (2001:57). Although in some ways John's Gospel might appear detached from its ancient setting making it possible to read it without concerning oneself with the world of the first century (Martyn1979:15), Martyn highlights the obvious fact that this Gospel did not drop out of heaven into our present world, so "we must go further and exegetically seek to define the particular circumstances in response to which the Fourth Gospel was written" (1979:17).

Thatcher suggests "it is entirely reasonable to argue that John, like every other early Christian, developed the contours of his thinking and preaching about Jesus in response to some historical situation" (2006:6). Blomberg adds that "We can nevertheless affirm a priori that John's distinctive audience and its unique circumstances certainly account for a major portion of his *selection* of narratives and the emphases they contain" (2001:62). Domeris puts it more simply, when he writes "The Fourth Gospel is different because the community in which it was created was different" (1988:51-52).

Raising the issue of the pastoral nature of John, Ringe suggests that the author "pays attention to the traditions about Jesus that the community has inherited and, at the same time, to the pastoral needs for which those traditions are being recast

(1999:10). These pastoral needs emerge in the context of the life-situation of his readers. “[T]he memory of what happened in Jesus’ lifetime was affected by the life-situations of local Christian Communities” (Brown 1986:11). If Brown and Ringe are correct, the implication is that John shaped the purpose of his gospel in a way in which he considered important to meet the needs of the particular community of faith being addressed – over and above any general intention to articulate the kerygma of the faith (Kysar 1975:147). As Kysar recognised, “It has come to be acknowledged that the *Sitz im Leben*, the actual situation in the lived world, of the evangelists is an indispensable bit of knowledge in the on-going quest for understanding the New Testament writings” (1975:147-148).

One of the keys, I believe, to understanding the particular selection and unique presentation of the Jesus tradition in the Fourth Gospel, lies precisely in appreciating the specific issues or circumstances faced by the community for whom the Gospel was written. The author did not write his Gospel in a vacuum. The life-situation of the readers would surely have been significant in influencing his approach and have direct bearing on the way he wrote his Gospel. As stated by Culpepper “the evangelist is writing for a particular believing community facing a specific set of historical conditions (1998:14). If Brown (1979:18), Blomberg (2001:62) and Thatcher (2006:6) together with Culpepper (1998:14) are correct in concluding that the evangelist developed his thinking and writing in response to some historical situation, and selected narratives and the emphases they contain because he considered them useful to his distinctive audience and its unique circumstances, then this might provide a key to understanding why the Gospel of John is so different in its selection of material and use of images, compared to the Synoptic Gospels.

Was the context into which John wrote different to that of other New Testament writings? The focus of this literary review will be to consider what scholars are saying concerning the life-situation and audience of the Fourth Gospel. Although the New Testament writings are all rooted in the first century Mediterranean world, “the situation of the Gospel of John stands above the rest” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:2). This is further emphasised by Ringe, who writes

The question of the community of origin looms especially large in the case of the Fourth Gospel, because it is at once so markedly different from the three Synoptic Gospels in the shape of the narrative and in its constituent details, and yet it claims the same Jesus of Nazareth as its foundation (1999:10).

Much has been written in pursuit of the historical situation behind the Gospel of John (Scobie 1976; Culpepper 1983:211). If it can be shown that it is reasonable to suggest the existence of a specific community to and for whom the author of the Fourth Gospel wrote, the implication is that the Fourth Gospel might be a very contextual document, addressing the needs of a particular audience living in a specific social and historical context rather than to a general audience.

What concrete historical realities (events, circumstances) which existed at the time of John's writing might have been formative in shaping his new interpretation and unique presentation of his gospel story? What particular issues might the community behind the Gospel have been grappling with? What effect did these have on the members of the community – in particular, what might the spiritual impact of these events have had on John's readers and how does he address them? These are some of the key questions I wish to explore.

2.2 Summary of Johannine Scholarship

Kysar (1975) presented an examination of Johannine scholarship between 1957 and 1971 which highlighted key themes under discussion during that period as being: the Evangelist and his tradition (Signs source analysis, theories of the composition of the Gospel, Redaction Criticism of the Fourth Gospel); the Evangelist and his situation (the identity of the Evangelist, his intellectual milieu, the situation and purpose of writing, the dating of the gospel) and the Evangelist and his thought (Christology, Eschatology, Johannine dualism, Signs and faith, the Paraclete, the Church). In surveying this material, Culpepper notes that a major share of the energies of Johannine scholars in the 1960s -1980s was spent on the effort to define the setting, purpose and audience of the Fourth Gospel (1983:211).

2.2.1 Historical setting of the Gospel: Conflict with ‘the Jews’

What have scholars said concerning the historical situation behind the Fourth Gospel?

K.L. Carroll was the first to propose that the Christians’ exclusion from the synagogue comprises a significant element in the historical situation of the fourth Gospel (1957:19-32). Erich Grässer (1964) built on this foundation when he embarked on a study of the polemic quality of the fourth evangelist’s treatment of the Jews. Grässer proposed that the use of the Johannine expression “the Jews” (about 70 times in this Gospel) was “a stylized type that represented those who reject the Christian gospel on the basis of Torah” (Kysar 1975:152). He suggests that Torah stands for the synagogue’s opposition to the messiahship of Jesus. In the fourth Gospel, the issue at stake in the disputes with the Jewish opponents did not revolve so much around obeying the law (as in Paul), but rather concerned the identity of Jesus as Messiah and the decision for or against the truth as revealed in Jesus. In the words of Kysar,

‘The Jews’ represent one extreme of the Johannine dualism – the opposite to those who accept the truth of the revelation of Jesus Christ as Messiah as claimed by the Christians – hence they are used as examples of unbelief (1975:152-153).

Moloney supports this view, making it clear that ‘The Jews’ do not represent the Jewish people but rather “They are one side of a Christological debate, and this language was forged within the Johannine community, that formed the other side of the debate” (1998:10). The Jews were passionately committed to the belief that Jesus was NOT the Messiah. Suggit (1993:17), quoting Brown, concludes John uses the term ‘the Jews’ as “a technical title for the religious authorities, particularly those in Jerusalem, who were hostile to Jesus” (Brown 1966:1xxi).

Grässer maintains that the historical reality that gave rise to this anti-Jewish polemic is the persecution of Christians by the Jews, the condemnation of them as heretics by Rabbi Gamaliel II in about C.E. 90, and the expulsion of Christians from the synagogues (Grässer 1964:74-90). After the destruction of the temple and the split

between church and synagogue, the term 'Jew' in the fourth Gospel was used primarily to describe hostility against the Christians. 'The Jews' become representative of the world which rejects the Messiahship of Jesus (cf Jn. 8:21-47) just as previously the Jewish authorities had done.

A further dimension to the Christian-Jewish hostility is suggested by Wayne Meeks in his study of the *prophet-king* motif in John's gospel. He writes:

Johannine traditions were shaped, at least in part, by interaction between a Christian community and a hostile Jewish community whose piety accorded a very great importance to Moses and the Sinai theophany (1967:318).

Du Rand suggests that the polemic against the Jews could certainly be seen as an important part of the aim of the Gospel in re-orientating Judaism to Jesus the Messiah (1991:52). Reading the text itself, he points out that John seems to launch an attack on Judaism, in spite of the fact that Jesus is clearly Jewish. He is the Messiah (Jn. 1:41; 4:25) and is identified with Old Testament figures and with Jewish apocalyptic expectations such as the apocalyptic Lamb (1:29), the King of Israel (1:49) and the Holy One of God (6:69). Jesus is presented as being superior to the Jewish institutions (such as the temple and worship in Jerusalem in chapters 2-4; the Jewish feasts in chapters 5-10). He is a greater prophet than Moses (1:17) whose miracles way exceed those of Moses (see chapter 6 Bread of Life discourse). There was overt friction and hostility between the disciples of Jesus and those of Moses (9:28). There are many incidents recorded in the fourth gospel indicating that all was not well between Jesus and 'The Jews' (cf. 1:19; 2:13-22; 9:22; 11:45-53; 12:42; 16:2; 18:28-19:16; 19:17-22; 20:19). On occasion the dispute with Judaism is portrayed as being particularly vehement (8:12-59) (du Rand 1991:52). "The impression created by the gospel is that Jewish traditions are replaced by Jesus. In this way Judaism relinquished its exclusive importance to Jesus, the Messiah, the revelation of God" (du Rand1991:52).

Based on Grässer's conclusions concerning the antagonistic and hostile relationship between the Christian community and non-believing Jews, Grässer proposed that the purpose of the gospel was not a missionary one as previous scholars had

suggested (such as Smith 1959; van Unnik 1959; and Robinson 1959), but rather was “the effort to strengthen the community in the face of opposition of the world, especially the Jews, and articulate the community’s claim that the Christians are the true Israel” (quoted in Kyser 1975:153). Brown interprets the language of John used in relation to the Jews to be more apologetical and polemical, rather than specifically evangelical (Kysar 1975:154).

2.2.1.1 *The contribution of J. L. Martyn*

These initial proposals concerning the historical context of the Fourth Gospel, in the context of conflict with the Jews, were later developed and expanded in great depth by Martyn (1968).

While Martyn is not the first to propose that the Christians’ exclusion from the synagogue comprises a vital element in the concrete situation of the evangelist of the fourth gospel, his is certainly the most thorough and influential presentation in recent years of such a hypothesis (Kysar 1975:150).

Martyn’s book, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1968; 2nd ed.1979; 3rd ed. 2003) was seen to be a “ground-breaking book” that drastically affected Johannine scholarship in the high point of redactional activity (Kysar 2002). Ashton suggests that this book “for all its brevity is probably the most single important work on the Gospel since Bultmann’s commentary” (1991:107).

Martyn developed the thesis that John’s Gospel gives us more than a particular Christology but also tells us about the life and struggles of the Johannine community in the last third of the first century. He attempted an elaborate reconstruction of Johannine church origins based on the principle that

The literary history behind the Fourth Gospel reflects to a large degree the history of a single community which maintained over a period of some duration its particular and somewhat peculiar identity (Brown 1979:172).

Using Redaction-Critical methods, Martyn’s thesis argued that the evangelist was writing in the context of a community of Jewish Christian believers who were

involved in a serious and violent dialogue with a synagogue. This proposed historical setting has thrown considerable light on various portions of the gospel. Martyn's study received positive reviews amongst scholars of the Fourth Gospel at the time (Brown 1968:392-394; Burkill 1968:439-442; Moody Smith 1969: 220-223) and soon gained wide acceptance (Fortna 1970b:151-166; Schnackenburg 1970:7-9; Meeks 1972:42-72; Brown 1979). This has continued to be the case in recent decades (Painter 1980; Barrett 1982; Neyrey 1988; Culpepper 1998; Ringe 1999; Menken 2000; Koester 2003). Nevertheless, I acknowledge that very recently discussions have begun "concerning the nature of the Gospel communities, as well as the overall methods for reading Gospels" (Klink III 2004:60) which include critiquing several aspects of Martyn's hypothesis concerning the historical context of the community behind the Gospel of John. However it is an open debate which continues among scholars of the New Testament (see Klink 2004:60-85).

Martyn is the most diligent and clearest proponent of this thesis that places the Fourth Gospel in a context of conflict with the 'Jews', and so it is necessary to outline his argument in some detail. Martyn's starting point is to contend that John presents his gospel as a formal drama with its actors performing on a two level stage so that each person is actually a pair of actors playing identical roles on two stages simultaneously (1979:37). The text presents its witness on two levels: On the one level, it is a witness to an *einmalig* event during Jesus earthly lifetime (meaning something like 'back there' as opposed to 'here and now' or 'once upon a time') (1979:30) thus telling the 'Jesus story' by capturing elements of Christian tradition concerning the historical life of Jesus of Nazareth. On another level, the text is also a witness to Jesus' powerful presence in actual events experienced by the Johannine church and so reflects their contemporary experiences (1979:30). Kyser summarises Martyn as follows,

This second level of the drama presents in a slightly disguised fashion the conflict going on between the church and the synagogue in the evangelist's own day. The result is a complex intermingling of two time periods and historical situations. The Johannine Christ is at once the traditional Jesus of the Christian community's heritage and the contemporary Christian missionary; the

opponents of Christ are the Jewish leaders of Palestine in the early third of the first century and the Jewish protagonists of the evangelist's own day (1975:149).

In highlighting selected portions of the gospel, Martyn (1979:21) distinguishes between those drawn from the Jesus-tradition and those which reflect the *Sitz im Leben* of the evangelist. He argues convincingly that chapters 3,5,6,7 and 9 in particular reveal more about John's contemporary situation than about that of the traditional Jesus (Kysar 1975:149).

The key text for Martyn in demonstrating the 'two level drama' is John chapter nine, verses one to forty-one – the miracle of the healing of the man born blind; the ensuing investigation by the Pharisees and the resulting expulsion of the 'no-longer blind man' from the synagogue (Martyn 1979:24-62). He chooses this passage because the original healing miracle story during Jesus' earthly lifetime clearly rests on Christian tradition, because similar stories are found in the Synoptic Gospels. Two stories of Jesus restoring sight to the blind are found in the Synoptics: firstly, the narrative about blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52 with parallels in Matt 9:27-31, Matt 20:29-34 and Luke 18:35-43), and secondly the story of Jesus healing a blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26). Each of these accounts follow a basic oral form of tradition termed a 'miracle story' (Martyn 1979:24). By comparing the Synoptic accounts with John's account in chapter nine, Martyn observes it is possible to distinguish traditional elements from those that reveal John's new and unique interpretation of the tradition (1979:24). In doing so, one can begin to hear the author's voice who writes in response to contemporary events and issues which concern the members of the Christian community in which he lives (Martyn 1979:18).

In John's account of the healing of the man born blind, Martyn shows how these two levels – "an *einmalig* event during Jesus earthly lifetime" and "an event experienced by the Johannine church" – can be found in the text. Martyn (1979:25) observes that the first seven verses of John chapter nine follow the literary form of the miracle story (a description of the sickness; the person is healed). However from verse eight, new characters are introduced – the neighbours, the Pharisees and the blind man's parents – in a "dramatic expansion of the miracle story" (Martyn 1979:26). Instead of

confirming the miracle (as in the traditional miracle story form), these new characters interrogate the 'now healed man born blind' about what had happened. Very quickly the focus shifts from the healing miracle to the identity of Jesus, the lack of observance of the Sabbath, discipleship of Jesus versus Moses, and faith in the Son of Man. Martyn concludes that "It scarcely needs to be further argued that verses 8-41 present material which someone composed as an addition to the simple healing narrative of verses 1-7" (1979:26).

Martyn argues that the first part of this miracle story, verses one to seven, presents its witness on the first level, "It is a witness to an *einmalig* event during Jesus' earthly lifetime" (1979:30). Yet the remainder of the text (Jn.9:8-41) presents its witness on the second level, bearing witness to "Jesus' powerful presence in actual events experienced by the Johannine Church" (1979:30). The works of Jesus did not end at his death, but in going to his Father he inaugurated the time in which his followers would do his works. This makes sense in the light of verse four which reads, "**We** (my emphasis) must work the works of him who sent **me** (my emphasis) while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (9:4). The different use of the pronoun 'we' and 'I' "leads us to see this continuation of Jesus' works as an activity of the Risen Lord in the deeds of Christian witness" (Martyn1979:28). Martyn concludes that

In the material which follows verse 7 the Evangelist has extended the *Einmalig*, not because he discovered additional information about what the Earthly Jesus did on this occasion, but rather because he wishes to show how the Risen Lord continues his earthly ministry in the work of his servant, the Christian preacher...[and] Through a faithful witness in the Johannine church (1979:29-30)

If Martyn's hypothesis concerning the two level drama in the writing of John's Gospel is correct, as I believe it is, then not only does the text tell us something of the continued witness in the life of the Johannine community, but also reveals something of the historical realities facing the Community.

Central to Martyn's thesis concerning the historical reality behind the Gospel of John involving severe conflict with the Jews, is his thorough analysis of the texts that

speak of expulsion from the Synagogue. In this way, he “links the origins of the Johannine community with an expulsion from the synagogue” (Kysar 2002). Here I shall focus on key elements in his discussion (Martyn 1979:37-62).

Martyn points out that the word *ἄποσυνάγωγος* is only found in the fourth gospel, and only in these three verses (Jn. 9:22; 12:42 and 16:1, 2) (1979:39). The Greek-English Lexicon’s full definition reads: “expelled from the synagogue, excommunicated, put under the curse or ban” (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:100).

An examination of John 9:22 by Martyn reveals the following: For the Jews (referring to the Jewish authorities) / had already agreed (past tense) / that if anyone should confess him to be the Messiah (the Messianic confession of Jesus) / he would become an excommunicate from the Synagogue (1979:39).

The use of the past tense (‘had already agreed’) indicates that some kind of formal agreement or decision – a curse or ban by some authoritative Jewish group – had been reached prior to John’s writing (Martyn 1979:39). He suggests that this decision concerned Jewish people who openly confessed Jesus as Messiah – something which clearly was not compatible with continued membership of the Synagogue. The purpose behind it must have been the formal separation of the Jewish disciples of Jesus from the synagogue, on the basis that the Christian movement was being perceived as a threat and a rival group. Anyone who made the messianic confession of Jesus was from then on to be excommunicated. Martyn finds no evidence suggesting such a decision was taken in Jesus’ lifetime, hence this reveals something of the ‘level two’ historical setting of the readers (1979:39).

What formal decision, curse or ban was being referred to in these passages? Martyn (1979:50-62) expands on the early work by Carroll (1957:19-32), Grässer (1964-65:74-90) and (Forkman 1972) in arguing that the formal separation between church and synagogue had been accomplished by the time of John’s writing, as a result of the Jewish Benediction Against Heretics (a section of the Shemoneh Esre from the Council of Jamnia). Kysar affirms “We know that some of the Jews who were converted to Christianity were formally banned from the synagogue late in the first century (the Council of Jamnia, C.E. 90)” (1976:15). In Barrett’s view Martyn

presents a far stronger case for locating John's Gospel in the diaspora synagogue than any of his predecessors (Barrett 1982:123).

Martyn argues that the Christians of John's time and locale who were members of the synagogue were put to the test concerning their faithfulness to the Jewish religion in the light of increasing concern of apostasy in favour of Christianity (1979:59). Was their allegiance to Moses or to Jesus as Messiah? (1979:61-62). In order to detect heretics, those arousing suspicion concerning orthodoxy were put to a public test in which they were required to recite the "Benediction Against Heretics" (The Birkat-ha-minim) which had been revised by Samuel the Small under the direction of Rabban Gamaliel to encompass those who adhered to the Christian faith (1979:54). Modern investigation of the Jewish ban apparently began with Elias Levita (who died in 1549) (Martyn 1979:156). A very early form of the revised prayer was discovered in 1896, and the Twelfth Benediction reads as follows:

1. For the apostates let there be no hope
2. And let the arrogant government
3. be speedily uprooted in our days.
4. Let the Nazarenes [Christians] and the Minum [heretics] be destroyed in a moment
5. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous.
6. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the proud!
(Martyn 1979:58)

The original Benediction, written in the first century B.C.E. comprised lines one to three, and six. The revised version was expanded to include lines four and five. Most scholars date the rewording of the Benediction Against Heretics at about C.E.85 (Davies 1964:275; Barrett 1975:47; Martyn 1979:56). Schnackenburg believes that such bans may date back as early as C.E. 70 but were only made official in this declaration of Gamaliel II which he dates at about C.E. 90 (1968 vol 1:165-167). The later inclusion of lines four and five in the revised version identify new sources of danger, namely Christian Jews and other heretics. Domeris affirms that the

expulsion from the synagogue (Jn.9:22; 12:42) reflects the steps taken by the Council at Jamnia to “prevent the growing swing towards heretical movements of which Johannine Christianity was just one group” (1988:56). Martyn emphasises that “The formulation is an official and authoritative decision, and it is directly related to the Christian movement” (1979:59). In this revision, there is the petition that God would ensure that Christian Jews be destroyed and excluded from the Book of Life (line five). Sloyan concludes that this was a trap calculated to make believers in Jesus curse themselves (2006:23). Du Rand notes that “Once the Eighteen Benedictions had been included in the synagogue prayers, the twelfth of theses (against heretics) caused many Christians to be ejected from the synagogues because of their public confession that Jesus is the Messiah” (1993:16).

In summary, in the account of the Man born Blind, Martyn concludes that the expression ἀποσυνάγωγος in John 9:22 (as well as in 12:42; 16:2) most likely refers to the experience of Jewish Christians being expelled from their synagogue home due to their alliance with the Christians. For this reason the man’s parents were afraid of the Jewish authorities, so would not answer their question concerning how their son came to see. This, according to Martyn, gives us a likely picture of the historical context into which John was writing.

Returning to the two-level drama of John nine, Martyn concludes that the man born blind is an actor playing two roles simultaneously. On one level, he plays the part of a blind Jewish man who was healed by Jesus of Nazareth – an *einmalig* event from the Jesus tradition. On another level, he represents Jews known to John who have become members of a separated church because of their Messianic faith – those who under cross examination have faltered on the 12th Benediction (1979:62). This second level gives us a window into the circumstances facing John’s audience – a group of Jewish Christians facing hostility and persecution by the parent Jewish community.

Martyn suggests that the threat of excommunication most likely would have had the effect of reducing the stream of converts to Christianity (1979:66). There is evidence in the text of so-called ‘secret’ or ‘Crypto’ Christians (Brown 1979:71-73) who held a

private faith in order to remain in fellowship with the Jewish community (Jn. 3:1,2; 12:42,43), and presumably to avoid persecution and rejection. Yet it seems that intimidating synagogue members with the threat of excommunication was not enough to put a complete stop to Jewish converts making the forbidden confession (1979:66). Furthermore, more drastic measures than excommunication were required on the part of the Jewish authorities in order to try and prevent Jewish Christians evangelizing among their own people – severe persecution resulting even in death. This is indicated in the following verse: “They will put you out of the synagogues; indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God” (16:2). In the light of this verse Martyn argues “we have no alternative but to conclude that this step was the imposition of the death penalty on at least some of the Jews who espoused the messianic faith” (1979:66).

Martyn suggests that it is probable the death penalty may not have been taken against converts per se, but rather against Jewish Christian preachers who evangelized their own people. In persuading them to worship Jesus as a god alongside God (Jn. 5:18), they were (in a technical and legal sense), leading people astray. This was an accusation levelled at Jesus himself (7:12). These people were identified as *mesithim* (Beguilers, leading people astray) and so according to the law (see Deuteronomy 13:6ff) they could be legally punished by being arrested, tried, executed (Martyn 1979:81). There is corroborating evidence in support of this view in the Pseudo-Clementine literature (Martyn 1978:57-63).

Kysar (1975:150) sums up Martyn’s hypothesis concerning the historical situation behind the Fourth Gospel as one wherein a threatened and defensive Jewish community is desperately trying to preserve its monotheistic faith while losing membership resulting from Christian evangelism. This Jewish community struggled with an increasing number of apostates and encompassed ‘crypto-Christians’ (Jn. 3:1,2; 12:42,43) who had converted to Christianity but for fear of persecution wished to keep a foot in both camps and so kept their Christian faith a private matter (1975:150). Alongside this defensive Jewish community, we find a group of Jewish Christians who had been expelled from the synagogue because of their Messianic confession and were subjected to on-going conflict, hostility, persecution. Some of

these Jewish Christians who evangelized others were accused of and found guilty of being “beguilers” or “deceivers”, leading people astray, resulted in them being put to death as martyrs. Martyn refers to this group of people as “John’s Jewish-Christian community” (1979:90).

2.2.1.2 Responses to Martyn’s hypothesis

Martyn’s hypothesis concerning the historical context of extreme hostility with the synagogue received considerable support by other scholars of the Fourth Gospel at the time – in the 1970s-1980s (Leroy 1968:191-193; Pancaro 1975:247ff; Meeks 1975:163-186; Fortna 1970b:159; de Jonge 1971:338-358) – and became “a paradigm” (Moody Smith 1990:293). Ringe (1999:20) comments that the link between the persecution and expulsion of the Jewish Christians from the synagogue to the Benediction against Heretics (*Birkath haMinim*) has been recognised as a landmark study of great significance in the setting of the Fourth Gospel.

Herbert Leroy (1968), in his form critical study of the use of misunderstanding in the Fourth Gospel, shows that a great number of Old Testament and Jewish themes are evident especially when confusing statements are made and misunderstanding results (eg. Jn. 7:33-36; 8:51-53, 56-58). From his analysis, he concludes that the community of the Fourth Gospel understood itself as the true Israel and suffered from the opposition of the synagogue. He argues that by the time of the final redaction of the gospel, the community stood banned from the synagogue (Leroy 1968:191-193). Thus he concurs with Martyn’s conclusion concerning the historical realities that gave rise to the existence of a separate Johannine community of Christians.

Meeks strongly believes it is beyond doubt that John’s Gospel reflects the break of the synagogue and the church. He argues that the church’s missionary efforts among the Jews had failed, resulting in polemic qualities in the symbols (particularly that of ‘the Jews’ in the gospel) being clearly evident (Meeks 1975:163-186).

Robert Fortna, in his studies in Redaction Criticism, offers further support for Martyn’s hypothesis. He understands that John’s “use of his source evidences that

the relationship between the church and the synagogue had significantly changed since the writing of the 'Signs Gospel'" (Fortna 1970b:159). Whereas John's source (the 'signs Gospel') was written in a context where the church and synagogue still enjoyed a relatively positive relationship, his later redaction of the source emerged in a context of increasing hostility between the two (Fortna 1970b:159).

De Jonge explicitly endorses Martyn's position concerning the historical situation of John's Gospel as being the most obvious explanation for features he found in his research concerning Nicodemus and the 'secret disciples' (1971:338-358). Johannes Beutler (1972) in his study of the History of Traditions further confirms Martyn's general hypothesis concerning the historical setting of the Fourth Gospel (quoted in Kysar 1975:152). Kysar concludes that the evidence in favour of a background of hostile relationships between the Johannine church and the Jewish synagogue is, in his view, decisive (1975:156). John "writes for readers who are now excluded from the synagogue whose experience includes this traumatic rupture. Church and synagogue are now separate" (Moody Smith 2002:4).

Whereas there is widespread consensus concerning the historical setting of John's Gospel involving persecution and expulsion of Jewish Christians from the synagogue, some scholars have challenged specific details of Martyn's hypothesis (Ringe 1999:20-23; Keener 2003a:195). Ringe summarizes some of the details challenged by scholars as follows: firstly, the date when the *Birkath haMinim* was revised to target Christians is unclear (1999:20). Secondly "whether that liturgical expression actually carried with it a formal institutional or community ban is also a matter of debate" (Ringe 1999:21). In this regard, Douglas R.A. Hare argues against relating John 9:22 to the Benediction on the grounds that excommunication from the synagogue was not specified in the Benediction (1967:54). However, Martyn does not find Hare's argument convincing, as line five cannot be understood as an internal source of discipline within the synagogue as clearly the intention of the Benediction is to 'cull out' those elements which do not conform to the Pharisaic image of orthodoxy (Martyn 1979:60). Thirdly, Ringe acknowledges that some scholars question whether any central group within Judaism would have had enough authority to impose such an act upon Jews (1999:21). A fourth problem relates to "the set of

unknowns surrounding the reference to the Synagogue” (1999:21) including how negatively the threat of separation from the synagogue was viewed by the Johannine community. Nevertheless, in spite of disagreement surrounding these details in Martyn’s hypothesis, conflict with the Jews and expulsion from the synagogues seems to be for the most part, the agreed context of the community behind John’s Gospel.

More recently, Richard Bauckham (1998a) has challenged the previously held understanding of the Gospel’s origin and audience, calling for a “paradigm shift in reading the Gospels” (Klink III 2004:60-61). This has led to new critiques and discussions concerning Martyn’s widely supported thesis. At the annual Conference for the *Society of Biblical Literature* held in Toronto (23-26 November 2002), a session was held in the Johannine Literature section with the theme: “Current issues in the Gospel of John”. Klink III outlines the nature of the discussions in his article, *The Gospel Community Debate: State of the Question* (Klink III 2004:70-73). Kysar presented a paper entitled *The Expulsion from the Synagogue: A Tale of a Theory* (2002). He sketched the tale of the past thirty-five years of Johannine scholarship around issues of origin, dating, and community. In particular, he raised the ‘state of question’ of scholarly work that links the origins of the Johannine community with an expulsion from the synagogue, with particular reference to the work of Martyn. In his paper, he not only looked at “Christian expulsion from the synagogue in a historical sense, but the entire hermeneutical matrix in which such a theory has grown to encompass, specifically the ability to reconstruct a ‘community’ behind the Gospel of John” (Klink III 2004:61). Kysar ended by stating, “Maybe we are just learning that the testing of any hypothesis is an on-going necessity and that working hypotheses do not always ‘work’ without flaw” (2002:15).

In response, Moody Smith acknowledged that whereas “reconstructions concerning the Gospel of John can go astray” (Klink III 2004:72), the exercise is not useless. He concluded, “I do not... think that the investigation of the Gospel’s Christian setting need be entirely abandoned, or that Martyn would want exegesis to abandon it” (Moody Smith 2002:6).

In O'Day's response, she concluded that even with its strengths and weaknesses, Martyn's theory "should not lead us to reject all hypotheses based on data as an act of 'abstract speculative construction', for that never really happens. Public scholarly conversation keeps theories grounded in reality" (O'Day 2002:7). She emphasised the importance of scholarly conversations needing to ask questions about history and the construction of hypotheses, while "keeping our work public and therefore available for scrutiny" (2002:7)

Since this conference (Toronto 2002), Klink III has added his voice in challenging Martyn's hypothesis concerning both his methodology and his findings regarding the context of Christian-Jewish hostility and expulsion from the synagogue has emerged. This has sparked a new debate amongst New Testament scholars. In his book, *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John* (Klink III 2007) has challenged Martyn's "two level reading" of John as a drama ³. Kysar, in his review of Klink III's book (Kysar 2009:133-135), summarizes Klink's argument as follows: "Since such a reading merges bios and apocalyptic forms, Klink believes it would be entirely foreign to the first-century reader" (Kysar 2009:133). Kysar continues,

"Moreover, against Martyn's declaration that 9:22 would have been utterly anachronistic if its setting was later than the early part of the century, Klink suggests that it simply describes the conflict between Jews and Christians and in this case is read back into the story in chapter 9" (2009:133).

In a later review by Köstenberger (2012), he points out that Klink contends that John's Gospel is "best read with, and was read by its first readers with, a 'realistic' – i.e. 'literal' – literal reading strategy (Köstenberger 2012), rather than "an allegorical interpretation , such as Martyn proposes" (Kysar 2009:133-134). Klink explains that literal explications of the Gospels "read[s] them according to their 'surface-level' subject matter" (2007:147) and that this kind of reading suggests we assume the text

³ For a full discussion on Klink's critique of Martyn's hypothesis concerning the 'two level drama', see Klink 2007:ch 3)

“...intends to refer to persons, events, and places in the world outside the text, and that the individual pericopae are not isolated entities but are embedded in a narrative continuum” (Klink III 2007:148). Klink concludes that whereas John *could* (my emphasis) have written in a context of Jewish-Christian conflict, “the text does not *require* such an assumption” (Kysar 2009:134); likewise a literal reading of John nine “does *not necessarily* (my emphasis) evidence a situation in which Christians had been expelled from the synagogue but only a local conflict between Jews and Christians” (Kysar 2009:134). Hence Klink believes that references to ‘expulsion from the synagogue’ have been overplayed (Köstenberger 2012), and suggests that we may “consider the possibility that the Fourth Gospel was written not for a local community caught up in a conflict with Judaism” (Kysar 2009:133).

Even though Klink stresses the ‘literal’ reading of a text focussing on the ‘surface level’ subject matter (Klink III 2007:147), Kysar argues that this “does not mean readers are not invited into the symbolic and metaphorical meaning of Johannine language” (2009:135). Kysar concludes that if we were to take Klink seriously, scholars would need to re-think and question many long-held views of the Gospel – which certainly is not a bad thing (2009:135). Klink’s views at this stage have raised an important topic in Johannine scholarship and set the scene for future discussions.

Nevertheless, even though Keener (2003) pre-dates Klink (2007), he writes after the *Society of Biblical Literature* annual Conference of 2002, and affirms that “Most contemporary commentators find in the expulsion of the Jewish Christians the experience of the Johannine community” (Keener 2003b:1025).

2.2.2 John’s audience – a specific ‘Johannine community’ or a ‘General audience’?

Over the past few decades there has been widespread support pointing to a historical context for John’s Gospel involving conflict between Jewish Christians and the Jewish (synagogue) authorities (Keener 2003b:1025). In agreement with this consensus, I will now turn my attention to consider what scholars are saying with regards to the actual audience being addressed in the Fourth Gospel. Charles

Scobie (1976) noted that amongst scholars “the quest for the Johannine community has become central in Fourth Gospel studies”.

Was John writing to a specific community of people, or to a more general audience? Most of the discussion concerning the quest for the Johannine community takes place in the 1960 – 1980s, with the exception of fresh insights contributed in the field of Socio-Linguistics (for example Halliday 1978). Klink III acknowledges that for decades a consensus amongst New Testament scholars has prevailed, believing that each of the four Gospels was written for a single Christian community. “Elaborate reconstructions of the four Gospel communities have been proposed using technical reading techniques that attempt to ‘get behind the text’ of each Gospel” (2004:60). This implies that as with the other Gospels, John’s Gospel in turn was also intended for a specific community, commonly referred to as ‘the Johannine community’. This presupposition among scholars that such a community actually existed, seems currently to be widely accepted (see Ringe 1999; Menken 2000; Kealy 2002; Koester 2003; Keener 2003; Stefan 2005; Reed 2006; Matthews 2007) and this consensus is in line with the original conclusions of the 1960s to 1980s.

What then should we make of Klink III’s article, *The Gospel Community Debate: State of the Question* (2004:60-85), in which he highlights “a recent trend that has developed in Gospels study that challenges this understanding of the Gospels origin and audience”? (2004:60). The questioning of this assumption began with the work of Bauckham who proposes that “Their implied readership is not specific but indefinite: any and every Christian community in the late-first-century Roman Empire” (Bauckham 1998b:1-2). Klink III summarizes the main thrust of Bauckham’s thesis as follows⁴: the consensus viewing early Christian communities as segregated, separate groups having little contact with other Christian groups is an “unrealistic depiction” (Klink III 2004:63). Rather, Bauckham contends that they were a “network of communities with constant, close communication among themselves” (Bauckham 1998c:30) being aware they were part of a larger Christian movement.

⁴ For a more detailed summary of Bauckham’s thesis, see Klink III 2004:61-63

Klink III (2004:66) mentions several scholars who have criticised Bauckham's ideas. These include Philip Esler (1998:237-238), Joel Marcus (2000:26) and David C. Sim (2001:9).

Bauckham has certainly re-opened a discussion that has been lying dormant for decades, through challenging long held assumptions concerning the nature of Gospel communities and proposing a broad, general audience hypothesis. Klink III suggests that "While the new paradigm has created a stir, not all are convinced that the paradigm needs to be as extreme as Bauckham has argued (for 'all Christians')" (2004:77). In my view, perhaps Craig Blomberg holds the 'all Christians' verses 'specific community' tension together most helpfully. Blomberg "agrees that all four Gospels would have circulated quite widely quite quickly but doubts that they were specifically written with a broad or general audience in mind" (Klink III 2004:77). Instead, Blomberg suggests "it is entirely plausible to combine the two approaches: the Evangelists had specific communities foremost in view, but expected their writings to be copied and passed on, and eventually to be read widely" (Blomberg 2001:47).

For the purpose of this thesis I will continue with the current consensus that supports the idea of a specific Johannine community behind the Fourth Gospel. I believe John reshaped the Jesus tradition in such a way as to address the spiritual needs of his particular community even if, as Blomberg (2001) suggests, the expectation might have been that his Gospel would later be passed on and shared with a wider Christian audience.

2.2.3 Definition of a Community

Before considering what scholars have suggested concerning the nature of the community behind the Gospel of John, the question of "community" needs to be addressed. What do we mean when we use the term 'community'? The Sociologist, P. Bartle recognises that "Like most things in social sciences, community does not fit into a nice neat package" (2007). He states that a Community is "a construct, a model" (2007). He suggests that from a Sociological perspective, a 'Community' "in

some senses may not even have a physical location, but may be demarcated by being a group of people with a common interest...shared expectations, values, beliefs and meanings between individuals”(Bartle 2007).

There are many types of communities and multiple definitions, nevertheless one enduring definition given in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A Users guide to Sociological Language* is as follows, “the idea of community includes a fairly strong feeling of belonging and mutual commitment based on a homogeneous culture, shared experience, and close interdependency” (Johnson 1995:49).

The working definition of ‘community’ employed by the U S Department of Justice is as follows:

A group of individuals who are interconnected through emotional, intellectual or physical bonds...Natural communities: Communities bound together through time by common attributes, affiliations, activities, experiences and values. The bonds may be established through geographical proximity, profession, employment, education, religion and so forth (Young 1998a).

Summarizing these Sociological definitions and ideas concerning ‘community’, the concern is not so much on a geographical or physical location but rather on bonds of interconnectedness between people sharing common beliefs, values, experiences.

Kysar notes that the notion of ‘community’ is deeply embedded in contemporary Biblical scholarship (2009:135). The assumption held for decades has been that a ‘community’ refers to a particular group of people, and that the four Gospels were each written specifically for a single Christian community (church or group of churches). Martyn defined ‘community’ as “a community of people who had a shared history” (1978:91). Klink III believes that a more appropriate definition of community is needed (2004:78). He suggests that “Only by defining the contours of a community will the use of ‘community’ terminology become helpful” (2004:78). In his most recent work, Klink III (2007) argued for a broader definition of community, and suggested a “relational model of community regardless of the author’s geographical positioning” (Kysar 2009:133). This idea is certainly consistent with the Sociological understanding of community, which describes a group of people not necessarily

connected because of geography but rather in sharing common beliefs, values and/or experiences. The discussion continues.

2.2.4 The nature of the Johannine community

Given these general definitions of 'community', how might they apply to the context of the Fourth Gospel? What are scholars suggesting concerning the existence and nature of a Johannine community behind the writing of this Gospel?

At a recent conference entitled *Life in Abundance: An International Conference on the Gospel of John* (October 2003), Kyser in his paper (2003) noted that the community concept is "now common in Johannine research" (Klink III 2004:73). Kyser presented a brief overview of some of the key scholars who contributed to the development of Johannine community reconstructions, and established the concept of a Johannine community as a key hermeneutical tool (Klink III 2004:73). In particular he made reference to the work of Brown (1966, 1970, 1979, 1982 and 1984) and Martyn (1968, 2003) (Klink III 2004:73). In addition Kysar acknowledged the work of Meeks (1972) whose use of sociological methods "did much to fashion a view of the 'sectarian' Johannine community for years to come" (2003:4).

What did these founders of the concept of the Johannine community write concerning the origin and nature of the community behind the Fourth Gospel? I shall now present a brief discussion of the significant contribution of these scholars.

2.2.4.1. J. Louis Martyn and Raymond E. Brown

J.L. Martyn was the first to develop an elaborate reconstruction of Johannine church origins, and distinguished three periods of Johannine community history: Early, Middle and Late (Martyn 1978). The scholar who has built and expanded most closely on the work of Martyn is R.E. Brown. Like Martyn, he argued that

Primarily, the Gospels tell us how an evangelist conceived of and presented Jesus to a Christian community in the last third of the first century, a presentation that indirectly

gives us an insight into that community's life at the time when the gospel was written (1979:17).

Brown presented a detailed reconstruction of Johannine community History in four phases (1979:25-162), which can be summarized as follows (1979:166-167):

Phase One: Before the Gospel was written (mid-50s to late 80s)

Brown (1979:25-58; 166) proposed that the originating group lived in or near Palestine, and comprised Jews, including followers of John the Baptist (who constitute the main followers of Jesus from Jn.1:35-51 until 4:4-42 when Samaritans are converted) who accepted Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. They saw him as one who fulfilled the Messianic prophecies, confirmed by his miracles or signs. In this group was a person who had known Jesus during his earthly ministry and became known as the 'Beloved Disciple' (1979:27-34, 166).

These Jews were later joined by a second group of Jews of an anti-temple bias, who believed in Jesus and made converts in Samaria. They understood Jesus to be a Mosaic rather than Davidic Messiah (Brown 1979:166).

The acceptance of the second group, including Samaritan converts (Jn. 4), "is probably what brought upon the whole Johannine community the suspicion and hostility of the synagogue leaders" (Brown 1979:37). The accusation made by the Jews at Jesus "Aren't we right, after all, in saying that you are a Samaritan?" (8:48) suggests that the Jews regarded the Johannine community as having Samaritan elements (Brown 1979:37). Following the conversion of Samaritans, the gospel begins to focus on the rejection of Jesus by the Jews.

Brown advocates that in this phase, a high Christology was developed. Jesus was presented as God's equal (Jn. 5:18) – a claim that the Jews were not willing to tolerate. This claim resulted in the leaders of the Jews expelling the Johannine Christians from the synagogues, because it seemed that the Johannine Christians were abandoning monotheism by advocating that Jesus was also a God, which was blasphemy (10:33; 8:58-59; 19:7) (Brown 1979:47, 166).

Scholars such as Martyn (see Brown 1979:171-174) and Richter (see Brown 1979:174-176) end their reconstruction of Johannine community history at this point, with its membership consisting of the originating group of Jewish Christians (including disciples of John the Baptist), a later group of Jewish Christians of anti-temple persuasion and their Samaritan converts. However Brown sees clear signs of a Gentile component (the author stops explaining Jewish terms such as 'Messiah', 'Rabbi') and notes the arrival of "some Greeks" (Jn. 12:20-23) (1979:55). The failure of the Jews to accept Jesus (12:37-40), associated with the expulsion from the synagogues (12:42) leads Brown to suspect that

[I]t was particularly when the Johannine Christians of Jewish descent were rejected by Judaism and no longer thought of themselves as 'Jews' that they received numbers of Gentiles into the community (1979:55).

In this phase of 'pre-Gospel' history, Brown finds no evidence of internal struggles within the Johannine community, but rather the conflict and struggles are with the 'outside world'. This gives a sense of 'us' and 'them' (1979:56), indicating a closely knit group of people interconnected and united by common religious beliefs (as per the definitions of community noted previously), and standing together against the opposition from 'the world' around them.

Phase Two: When the Gospel was written ca. AD 90.

Brown (1979:59-91, 166-167) refers to John chapter twelve where we read that "some Greeks" arrived (Jn.12:20-23), after which the Johannine Jesus comments on the unbelief of the Jews and cites Isaiah (12:37-40) who speaks of God blinding their eyes and hardening their hearts. Brown notes that this is the "classic OT passage used by Christians as an explanation for the Jewish failure to accept Jesus and as the rationale for turning to the Gentiles (Acts 28:25-28)"(1979:55).He suggests that considering the expulsion from the synagogues is referred to in this context (12:42), "we may suspect that it was particularly when the Johannine Jews of Jewish descent were rejected by Judaism and no longer thought of themselves as 'Jews' that they received a number of Gentiles into the community" (1979:55). Since 'the Jews' were

blinded to the truth about the identity of Jesus, Brown views the coming of the Greeks and other Gentile converts as God's plan of fulfilment (1979:166).

The inclusion of Gentiles in the community is based on the observation that the author finds it necessary to explain terms like "Rabbi" (see Jn. 20:16) and "Messiah" (see 4:25) even though all Jews would have fully understood their meaning (Brown 1979:55). These explanations were necessary adaptations of Johannine language "so that it could appeal more widely" (Brown 1979:57). With the inclusion of these Gentiles into the Johannine community, Brown notes that inevitably a degree of modification of Johannine thought became necessary so as to be more widely acceptable and intelligible for those of other (non-Jewish) backgrounds. Hence we find a universal theology including the much loved verse: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life" (Jn.3:16). At the same time, Brown notes that "as we see in the following verses (3:18-21), dualism is an important modifying factor in this universalistic outlook" (1979:60). Much of the gospel divides the human race into believers (the Johannine community who prefer light, and already have eternal life) and non-believers (who prefer darkness and are already condemned). The language of the Gospel implies people are either "insiders" (believers, within the community) or "outsiders" (non-believers, in opposition to the community) (Brown 1979:60). (For a more detailed discussion on "insiders" and "outsiders", see Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:238-240)

As a result of persecution and excommunication from the synagogue, the Johannine community understood "the Jews" and "the world" (under the power of Satan) as being in opposition to Jesus and living in unbelief (1979:166). This led to a belief that whereas they lived 'in the world', they did not 'belong to the world' (Jn.17:16-18).

The Johannine Church according to Brown's hypothesis (1979:60) was a close knit community at the time of the writing of the Gospel, united by their common belief in Jesus as well as a shared experience of opposition and persecution. Brown adds that there was a strong sense of family, because the members of the Johannine community were all 'children of God' (Jn.1:12-13). He underlines that the most

important commandment was to “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn.13:34-35; 15:12), as a sign for outsiders to know that they (the insiders of the Johannine community) are Jesus’ disciples (1979:60). I believe that this commandment, together with the exhortation to wash one another’s feet (13:14-17) places strong emphasis on the importance of community living.

Phases Three and Four

Although for the purposes of this study my focus is on the Johannine community at the time of the writing of the Gospels, Brown writes of a Phase three which he dates at ca.100 – when the Epistles were written (1979:93-144; 167). This period was characterised by Johannine internal struggles over issues such as Christology (1979:109-123), Ethics (the implications of Christology for Christian behaviour) (1979:123-135), Eschatology (1979:135-138), Pneumatology (1979:138-144). These disputes led to a split within the Johannine community. The final phase, which Brown dates as the 2nd century, after the Epistles, sees the dissolution of the Johannine community and its union with the “church catholic” (1979:145-164; 167).

2.2.4.2 Other reconstructions of Johannine history

In his Appendix, Brown summarizes and critiques further reconstructions of Johannine history that appeared in the 1970s. Georg Richter’s principle is diametrically opposed to that of Martyn’s, in that he doesn’t trace the history of only one community adapting to changing circumstances but rather finds theological views of four different communities, namely Mosaic-Prophet Christians, Son-Of-God Christians, Docetist Christians and Revisionist Christians (Richter 1975 see Brown 1979:174-176). Oscar Cullmann (1976) sums up his thesis about a Johannine circle which incorporates several writers and a community with a special tradition (Brown 1979:176-177). Marie-Emile Boismard (1977) presents a detailed reconstruction of Johannine literary history, divided into four hypothetical stages of composition. Although there are aspects of importance in his theory, Brown doubts that this view will gain much acceptance (Brown 1979:178-180). Lastly Brown mentions the work of Wolfgang Landbrandtner (1977) whose reconstruction brings Gnosticism into the

heart of Johannine development. He distinguishes three community stages, namely Grundschrift, Redaction and Epistles (Brown 1979:180-182).

According to Sloyan, Brown's theory of the phases of John's composition "has proved durable over the last forty-plus years" (2006:19). In spite of Klink III's argument that the 'community concept' in the historical depiction of the Gospel audiences should be abandoned (2007), Köstenberger concludes his review of Klink III (2007) in this way:

[W]hile I agree that the 'Johannine community hypothesis' in its various permutations has serious defects..., I believe the way forward is not by positing rather nebulous general alternatives but by providing more plausible historical reconstructions that offer concrete alternatives to the Martyn-Brown style 'Johannine community hypothesis' (Köstenberger 2012).

2.2.4.3 Meeks' contribution: The Sectarian Nature of the Johannine community

Already Meeks (1972) in his research had anticipated the idea of a separate Johannine community. He was the first to engage in an initial sociological analysis of the function of the symbol of the descending and ascending Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel. He sees in John's Jesus a stranger "from above", "not of this world". He understood the symbolism of the gospel as being that of a sectarian group which understands itself primarily in terms of in-group and out-group language. Keener (2003a:149) defines a 'sect' as "an exclusive movement defined in part by its separation from the larger world", and in this sense there is some truth in the sectarian claim. Rensberger takes John's sectarianism to mean "a minority counterculture consciously opposed to much of the status quo in its environment" (1988:136).

Meeks suggests that the reason for the sectarian nature of the community, as reflected in its use of language, is as a result of "the actual trauma of the Johannine community's separation from the synagogue and its continuing hostile relationship with the synagogue...coming to faith in Jesus is for the Johannine group a change in social location" (Meeks 1972:44-72, quote 69). So in this way Meeks anticipates

Martyn's thesis that the Johannine community experienced social isolation from the Jewish community and became part of a group attacked by that community.

Kyser suggests that "Meeks' use of sociology was the spark that ignited a wide range of social-scientific investigations of the reconstructed Johannine community" (2003:4). Sloyan refers to Meeks' "seminal contribution" and identifies his article as "perhaps the most frequently cited article of the past two decades" (2006:65).

Studies in sociolinguistics have confirmed and expanded on these early findings. Sociolinguists point out that the wording people use is the way humans express meaning. However the meanings that languages express are not in the wording level but always derive from some social system. Social context can be inferred from the language people use (Halliday 1978:164-182). In examining features of the language of John, in particular the linguistic dimensions of how Jesus speaks (textual component) and with whom he speaks (interpersonal component) Malina and Rohrbaugh note that this is very different to what is found in the Synoptic Gospels. 'This consistent relexicalization and overlexicalization, along with the focus on the interpersonal and modal aspects of language, point to what Halliday has labelled as "antilanguage"' (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:7). Halliday defines 'antilanguage' as "the language of an 'antisociety', which is "a society that is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it. It is a mode of resistance; resistance which may take the form either of passive symbiosis or of active hostility and even destruction"(1978:171). Hence antilanguage and antisociety go hand in hand: "There can be no society without language, and no antisociety without antilanguage (Giblett 1991:1).

Even though there seems to be particularly clear evidence of 'anti-language' in John's Gospel, Halliday suggests "the early Christian community was an anti-society, [viewed as a sect within Judaism] and its language was in this sense an anti-language" (1978:171).

Studies in Sociolinguistics conclude, therefore, that John's gospel reflects an alternative antisocietal group – the Johannine community – which was set up in opposition to its opponents, notably "this world" (79 times in John) and the "Judeans"

(71 times in John). They were “an oppressed minority community marginalized by a powerful elite” (Rensberger 1988:110). Their opponents refuse to believe in Jesus as Israel’s Messiah, and therefore the Johannine group stands against them (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:9-10). In addition to these two groups of opponents (the world and the Judeans), Brown adds a group consisting of some adherents of John the Baptist who have not yet come to believe in Jesus – more because of misunderstanding rather than hating him (1979:69-71). He also identifies three other groups that do claim belief in Jesus, yet are not part of the Johannine community. These are: “Crypto-Christians” referring to Christian Jews who held their faith secretly so as not to break away from their Jewish heritage (Brown 1979:71-73); Jewish Christians – meaning those who had left the synagogue but whose faith in Jesus was seen as inferior or inadequate by Johannine standards (Brown 1979:73-81); and Christians of Apostolic Churches – being mixed communities of Jews and Gentiles who were converted through the ministry of Peter and the Twelve (Brown 1979:81-88). Brown suggests that this last group of believers are the ones referred to as “the other sheep, who do not belong to this fold” (John 10:16) but with whom the Johannine Christians prayed to be united (John 17) (1979:169).

In summary, Brown, Meeks, Malina and Rohrbaugh argue convincingly that the Johannine community functioned as an isolated alternative antisocietal group, surrounded by other groups – some of which did not believe in Jesus and were opposed to them, and others that shared a belief in Jesus but were not part of the Johannine community.

2.2.5 Composition of the Johannine community

Although the literary history of the text and the social history of the Johannine community cannot be reconstructed with absolute certainty, there is currently agreement among scholars that the audience of the completed gospel most likely included various types of people including Christian believers of different backgrounds (Culpepper 1983:221,225; Ringe 1999:15; Koester 2003:19). However, the originating and core group appears to have been uniform, consisting of ethnically and religiously Jewish Christians (Brown 1979:27; Ringe 1999:14; Koester 2003:19:

Keener 2003a:150) who remained the dominant group both “socially and ideologically” (Keener 2003a:159). Later they were joined by Samaritans (Jn. 4:4-42; 8:48) (Meeks 1967:318-319; Meeks 1972:44-72; Brown 1979:36-40; Koester 2003:20-21) and Greeks (Brown 1979:55-58; Ringe 1999: 14-15; Koester 2003:21-22).

2.2.6 The marks of the Johannine community

Gottwald wrote that “Israel thought they were different, because they were different” (1979:693), and Domeris believes that this is also true of the Johannine community (1988:51). He continues by advocating that “The Fourth Gospel is different because the community in which it was created was different” (1988:51-52). Domeris suggests that the prime indication of the uniqueness of the community “is the Christology found in the pages of the Gospel, which is without direct parallel either inside or outside the New Testament” (1988:51).

What was it about this community that made it unique and set it apart as distinct from other communities? Domeris highlights three marks of the Johannine community as firstly, their markedly different social system; secondly their unique form of leadership; and thirdly their unique message (1988:51-56). These features are evident from the text of the Fourth Gospel. They can be summarized as follows:

2.2.6.1 A different social system

Käsemann notices that in John’s Gospel, there is a marked absence of hierarchical structures. There is no mention of the inner group of three (Peter, James, John) and the group of twelve disciples is only mentioned to emphasise that Judas was one of them, and heighten his guilt (Käsemann 1968:27-34). In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus celebrates his last supper with his disciples, and speaks of the bread and wine as symbols of his body and blood (Matt. 26:17-30; Mk.14:12-25; Lk.22:7-23). However John’s Gospel describes Jesus behaving like a servant, and using his action as an object lesson to teach his disciples how they are to live in relation to one another (Jn.13:14) – as “servants of their servant-lord” (Domeris 1988:52).

Domeris highlights the importance of women in John. Women play a far more significant role in John's Gospel compared to elsewhere in the New Testament, and enjoy affirmation as inclusion as disciples of Jesus. It is Martha (not Peter as in the Synoptic Gospels) who makes the key confession of faith (Jn.11:27). The risen Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene in the garden (20:10-18), making her the first witness to the resurrection. This "speaks clearly about the concern of the writer with the role of women" (1988:52).

Whereas the Synoptic Gospels address issues relating to rich and poor (reflecting a class situation), by contrast John's Gospel is mostly silent on the matter, with only one mention of 'the poor' (Jn.12:5-8). This is Jesus' rebuke of Judas' pseudo concern for the poor to cover up his dishonesty, when he says "You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me" (12:8). Domeris suggests that this apparent lack of concern for the poor is "Clearly because these were not issues in the Johannine community" (1988:52). He adds that given the "comparative isolation of the community, the injustices of the world appear rather distant" (1988:52) and he concludes that within the Johannine community a considerable degree of social equality was obtained. Hence Domeris aptly describes the community as living "an egalitarian communal life" (1988:52).

Perhaps the most convincing reason to believe that the Johannine community stood in stark contrast to other social systems prevalent at the time, writes Domeris, is found in the "oneness motif, and the emphasis on sacrificial love" (1988:52). Arising out of their emphasis on the unity which characterized the relationship between the Father and the Son, as disciples of Jesus "they are to strive after oneness with each other and to seek to emulate the unity between Jesus and God. Jesus prays, 'That they may be one even as we are one' (Jn.17:22b)" (1988:53). This oneness was "a projection of their own social system" (1988:52). Domeris highlights that we also find in the Johannine community a new ethic, different to the ethical teaching of Jesus common to other Christian groups. The new commandment Jesus gives is that the disciples are to love one another in the same way that Jesus loved them (15:12). This means even being willing to die for one another (15:13) (1988:53).

In Domeris' view, Ernst Troeltsch's (1981) profile of a sect provides a helpful model for constructing the social profile of the Johannine community (quoted in Domeris 1988:53). Features of a sect, according to Troeltsch, include

Membership is voluntary, personal experience is rated very highly, there is an absence of emphasis on institutionalised features like liturgy or sacraments, and bureaucracy and hierarchy is abandoned in favour of an egalitarian structure. Strong primary group bonds among the members sustain the sect's orientation against persecution and the temptation to return to the 'world' (quoted by Domeris 1988:53).

As Domeris correctly observes, all these features are found in John's Gospel.

Brown acknowledges that there is evidence in the Gospel of tendencies towards sectarianism, in particular he highlights John's sense of alienation and superiority (1979:89-90). He explains by saying that like the Johannine Jesus, the community members are strangers who are not understood by their own people and rejected, persecuted and not of this world. They believe themselves to be superior, having a more profound or 'higher' Christology to other believers, and are sure they are guardians of the truth because they are guided by the indwelling Paraclete (Brown 1979:89). Yet Brown contends that the Johannine community, as reflected in the Fourth Gospel, had not become a sect in that they had not broken communion with other Apostolic Christian groups. He suggests that the attitude reflected in Jesus' prayer for unity (17:20-21), which he interprets to mean the oneness of the Apostolic and Johannine Christians, is "just the opposite outlook of a sect" (1979:90).

2.2.6.2 A unique form of leadership

In an antisociety that is committed to an egalitarian structure, one would expect to find a style of leadership favouring a charismatic leader figure (Domeris 1988:54). According to scholars such as Aune (1972), Brown (1979) and Woll (1981) this is precisely what is found in the Johannine community with the Beloved Disciple filling such a role. He apparently was the one person in the community who had known Jesus personally. According to Joachim Wach the most traumatic event for a cult is

the death of its founder (1967:137). It appears that the death of the Beloved Disciple (as implied in Jn.21:22-23) who was their founder and leader, threw the community into deep distress (Brown 1979:31).

It raised the question of access to Jesus and the need to find a legitimate successor (Woll 1981:66). In the Farewell Discourses, the vacuum left by both Jesus and the Beloved Disciple is to be filled by the coming of the Paraclete, who will be the on-going presence of Jesus. However, Domeris goes beyond that in suggesting that John himself, in the writing of his Gospel, also fulfils that role. He writes,

Jesus is seen to forecast the coming of another comforter, beyond himself or the Beloved Disciple, who would remind the community of his words, and judge the world about its system of values. This is precisely the function taken upon himself by the Evangelist (1988:55).

In conclusion, the leadership style found in the Johannine community – centred around the Beloved Disciple, and later continued in the work of the Paraclete and the Evangelist, makes it unique in comparison with other groups of its time.

2.2.6.3 A unique message

A particular emphasis found in the Johannine community was the stress on ‘personal religion’ (Domeris 1988:56). The message throughout this gospel is that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; this must be believed; those who believe become children of God and receive the gift of eternal life (Coetzee 1993:41). This personal faith in Jesus is another mark of the Johannine community that separated them from other groups or communities around them. Marginalised from the broader Jewish community and the world around them, “they would feel at home within the world of the Gospel” (Domeris 1988:56).

Much has been written about the unique ‘High Christology’ of the Fourth Gospel (Barrett 1978:70-75; Brown 1979:43-47; Coetzee 1993:56-64; Keener 2003a:280-320). In competition with Judaism, the pre-existence of Jesus in particular was a vital part of Johannine theology (Jn.1:1-2). The Johannine Jesus’ claim “Before Abraham was, I am” (8:58) served to “counter the rival claims of orthodox Judaism and to

reinforce the Johannine community's own sense of election, even predestination, as the chosen agent of God" (Domeris 1988:56).

2.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review has been to examine what scholars have said concerning the audience and situation behind the Fourth Gospel. In spite of recent challenges, this review has shown the emergence of a strong position favouring the existence of a separate church group of primarily Jewish Christians – referred to as 'The Johannine community' – who had been expelled from the synagogue because of their Messianic faith. This community emerged in a historical context in which Jewish Christians were suffering severely at the hands of an aggressive and hostile Jewish leadership. Its membership consisted of primarily Jewish converts, but included a later addition of Samaritans and Greeks (Gentiles). This community was a unique community, different to other Christian groups, because the situation in which it was created was different. As noted, some of these presuppositions regarding the nature and origins of the Gospel communities have recently been questioned, and the "Gospel community debate" (Klink III 2004:60-85) might well dominate Johannine scholarship in the foreseeable future.

In what way did the historical context resulting in the formation of this unique Johannine community influence the faith experience of John's specific audience? In the next chapter, I will highlight specific factors in the life situation of the community that I believe affected the faith and spirituality of the community members and therefore influenced John's presentation of the Jesus material in his Gospel.

Chapter 3: A Community in Crisis

The literature review pointed to the prevailing consensus of the existence of a group of Christians which had emerged as a separate community, referred to by scholars as 'The Johannine community' or 'the community behind the Fourth Gospel'. Furthermore, arising out of this literature review, having examined the life situation (and readership) of the Fourth Gospel, we have noted that there is widespread agreement among scholars (on the basis of evidence both within and without the Gospel) suggesting that the Johannine community was born in a context of hostility and conflict with Judaism, including expulsion from the synagogue and persecution (Carroll 1957:19-32; Grässer 1964:74-90; Meeks 1967:318-319; Martyn 1968; 1979; Fortna 1970:151-166; Kyser 1976:16; Brown 1979:25-91; Culpepper 1986:1-20; du Rand 1991:61; Ringe 1999:18-23; Menken 2000; Koester 2003:20; Keener 2003b:1025-1027), and even martyrdom for some – probably those identified as evangelists or preachers who were seen as being guilty of leading others astray (Martyn 1979:67). Members of this community lived under constant threat, trauma, persecution, fear for their lives - being despised and rejected by the Jewish community and 'the world' (du Rand 1991:64; Ringe 1999: 22).

For these (and other reasons, to be discussed later) certain scholars have suggested that this community was perceived by the evangelist as experiencing an on-going state of **crisis** (for example Yarbrow Collins 1980:196-204; Tite 1996:77-100; Kealy 2002; Holloway 2005:1-34). This I believe is the defining feature of John's community.

In this chapter, I intend to define what constitutes such a crisis, and what range of circumstances - 'critical events'- potentially led the Johannine community to experience an on-going state of crisis. Thereafter I shall consider in particular the potential spiritual impact that this crisis may have had on the beliefs and faith of the community.

3.1 Definitions and causes of a Crisis

What constitutes 'a crisis'? Several definitions of crises, drawn from the wider context of community responses are relevant when examining the life situation of the Johannine community. These include the following:

The Eight Edition of *Direct Social Work Practice; Theory and Skills* (Hepworth, Rooney, Dewberry Rooney, Strom-Gottfried, Larsen 2010) deals extensively with models and intervention approaches to Crisis Intervention (2010:379-389). It states that a crisis may be: "A challenge, loss, threat or traumatic event". A crisis as defined by James (2008:3) is "a perception of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the resources or coping mechanism of the person." Hepworth (et al) add that "Prolonged, crisis-related stress has the potential to severely affect cognitive, behavioural, and physical functioning" (2010:380).

Hoy (2007) defines a crisis as "a highly volatile or dangerous situation/emergency requiring immediate remedial action. A crisis is usually something you can do nothing about". Everly and Mitchell(1999) (quoted in Everly Jr. 2007:2) write: "A crisis may be thought of as a response to an event, or critical incident, wherein one's usual coping mechanisms have failed and there is evidence of significant distress or dysfunction". Everly suggests that this is usually triggered by a stressor event, called a "critical incident", examples of which include "terrorism, violence, the loss of loved ones, and any events wherein human actions result in injury, destruction, and/or death"(2007:8). Hepworth (et al) identify a range of critical incidents that may cause individuals or communities to experience crises varying from death, job loss, divorce, crime, violence and relocation, to more extreme situations such as natural disasters, riots or war (2010:380). However Hepworth (et al) point out that not every such event will automatically precipitate a crisis, as there is inevitably a subjective element that comes into play due to the fact that people's perceptions of an event, their resources and capacity to cope vary from person to person (2010:380). Okun proposes six categories of crisis, however the one that seems most applicable for the purpose of this study is: "Traumatic stress: Situations that are imposed on an individual by

circumstances or events out of his or her control, and that emotionally overwhelms the individual” (2002:245).

In conclusion, acknowledging that “Crises such as threats, loss, or transitions that are severely stressful and overwhelming for one client, may be manageable for another” (Hepworth et al 2010:380), I would nevertheless identify the following situations or critical incidents as those having the potential to result in the first century, Johannine community experiencing a state of on-going crisis.

3.2 Critical Incidents potentially leading to a crisis

3.2.1 *Conflict with Judaism*

The major threat feared by the Johannine community was “the Jews” literally “the Judeans” (Domeris 1988:55). There is widespread agreement among scholars that the Johannine community was born in a context of hostility and conflict with the Jewish synagogue (see Tite 1996:77-100; Kim 2001:209-222; Koester 2003:20) where they confronted severe rejection by local Jews (Blomberg 2001:62). Keener concludes that “most scholars today recognize conflict with the synagogue as part of the Fourth Gospel’s setting, usually (though not always) including an expulsion of Johannine Christians from the synagogues” (2003a:195).

The fact that in John’s Gospel, Jesus often speaks of the ‘Jews’ as if he were not one, for the most part has been interpreted as part of the struggle of the Johannine community with its separation from its roots in Judaism (Stibbe 1994:107-131). Du Rand notes that “The Christian struggle in the Johannine community often emerges in the gospel narrative”, and that hostility and rejection by the Jewish community is an on-going theme (cf. Jn. 1:11; 2:13-22; 5:16-18, 30-47; 7:25-31, 40-42; 8:12-30, 48-59; 9:22; 10:22-39; 11:45-53; 12:37-50; 16:2; 18:28-19:16; 19:17-22; 20:19) (1991:61).

Keener highlights that the major point of division between the Jewish Christians and the synagogue authorities clearly was the identity of the Messiah. He writes:

Differences concerning the *nature* of the Messiah were also bound to create conflict: if Jesus were God, to dishonour him would be to dishonour God (1 John 2:23); conversely, if he were not, 'the Jews' in John would be right: worshipping him would be blasphemy (2003a:202).

Clearly the verdict of the synagogue authorities was that they were right, whereas the Jewish Christians were guilty of blasphemy. This resulted in "the dominant force in the Jewish community finding it necessary to insulate the synagogue as effectively as possible from John's church" (Martyn 1978:90).

Both Jews and Christians clearly were threatened by one another, as stated by Kysar "Jewish opposition was threatening the Christian community, just as the Christian evangelistic efforts among the Jews were threatening the stability of the Jewish synagogue" (1976:16). Jewish people belonging to the Johannine community were regarded by the Jewish religious leaders as heretics who had committed apostasy. Furthermore, Martyn notes that that persecution and even the death penalty (Jn.16:2) was imposed on some Jewish Christian preachers who evangelised their own people, persuading them to worship Jesus as a god alongside God (5:18), thus leading people astray from the firm Jewish belief in the one true God. This was a violation of monotheism (Martyn 1978:104-105). These evangelists were identified as *mesithim* and according to the law (see Deut. 13:6ff) they could be arrested, tried and executed (Martyn 1979:81). It seems inevitable, therefore, that a direct consequence of living out their Christian faith and belief in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God and by being faithful witnesses to Him, was that members of the Johannine community lived under constant religious and political threat and fear for their lives and those of their leaders. No wonder Martyn observes that to say the relationship between the Johannine community and the Synagogue was filled with tension, is a huge understatement (1978:90). Moody Smith, in summarizing Martyn, agrees that John "writes for readers who are now excluded from synagogues whose experience includes this traumatic rupture. Church and synagogue are now separate" (2002:4).

In the light of these factors, I would argue that this situation of extreme conflict and hostility between the Johannine community and the parent synagogue clearly fits the various descriptions of a crisis as being a “highly volatile or dangerous situation” (Hoy 2007); “a challenge, loss, threat or traumatic event” (Hepworth et al 2010); and incorporates the critical incidents described as “violence...any events wherein human actions result in injury, destruction, and/or death...” (Everly 2007:8). Not unlike communities and countries in various parts of the world today, which experience the daily trauma of political or armed conflicts and instability, the threat of terrorist activity, violent crime – the Johannine community was also in its own way facing a similar situation of on-going crisis. Although within the community perceptions of the crisis and capacities to cope may have varied, I would argue that the strong possibility exists that members of this community may have felt particularly vulnerable and experienced “prolonged anxiety, physical, emotional and cognitive distress, as well as an overall sense of grief and diminished coping capacity” (Hepworth et al 2010:380). Even though their faith and commitment to Jesus was both the cause of the antagonism and persecution they encountered, as well as their source of strength and served to deepen their convictions, the fact that some found it necessary to live as ‘secret Christians’ (see Jn. 3:1, 2; 12:42, 43) implies that the very real threat of persecution and being ostracized must have had a profoundly traumatic effect on members of the Johannine community.

In summary, I suggest that probably the most significant ‘critical incident’ facing the Johannine community, having the potential to lead the community into a state of crisis, was this continual conflict with Judaism including in particular the expulsion and excommunication from the synagogues of those who confess Jesus as Messiah (Jn. 9:22; 12:42; 15:1-16:4), as well as persecution and the threat of martyrdom.

3.2.2 Persecution by the Romans

The fear of Roman persecution is particularly evident in the Gospel of Matthew (10:18) and the book of Revelation (Domeris 1988:56). Although Lindars points out that by contrast the major threat feared by the Johannine community was the Jews

rather than the Romans (1981b:48-69), Yarbrow Collins (1980:196-204) has demonstrated that there also existed for them the threat of denunciation before the local Roman Magistrate. Persecution and provocation on behalf of Rome were an ever present reality and a continuous source of conflict for the Johannine community (du Rand 1991:60; Chennattu 1998:93-105; Kim 2001:209-222; Reed 2006:93-106). Cassidy (1992) considers the broader context of Roman rule and the challenges the Christian communities behind the Gospels faced because of their loyalty to Christ. He notes that the major offense and principal charge levelled against Christians by the Roman rulers (Pliny the younger; Emperor Trajan) was simply that they were 'Christians'. "To put this matter from the standpoint of the Christians, an *accusatio nominis*, an 'accusation of the name', was being made against them" (Cassidy 1992:18).

Christians were banished from Rome and severe action was taken against the Christians by Emperor Nero from 55 C.E. (du Rand 1991:64). Tacitus, the second-century Roman historian, writes that "Nero launched a persecution against the Christians of Rome in the aftermath of the great fire in 65 C.E." (Cassidy 1992:19). Cassidy continues that there is "also some basis for attributing a significant persecution against Christians to Domitian" (1992:19). This would have applied to both Jews and later Gentiles who joined the community. Even though not as fierce as with the Jews, the hostile relationship with and persecution by the Romans was nevertheless an additional threat to the Johannine community.

Therefore, the conflict and persecution under Rome could, I believe, also be viewed as an additional 'critical incident' or 'stressor event', compounding the situation of an on-going crisis and adding further weight to the argument that the Johannine community was a community in crisis.

3.2.3 Rejection by 'the world'

Not only was the Johannine community in conflict with the Jews and the Romans, they were also at odds with 'the world', experiencing 'alienation', 'separation', 'hatred'

and 'rejection' (Yarbro Collins 1980:196-204; McPolin 1982:262-272). Jesus, according to John, had warned and prepared his disciples for this inevitability (Jn. 15:18-24; 16:1-4a). The greatest temptation for Jesus' followers would become being ashamed of Jesus and renouncing their faith when facing great persecution, hatred and rejection on account of their faith in him (Bruner 2012:906). 'The world', in John's Gospel, is in opposition to the Johannine community, but who does 'the world' represent?

3.2.3.1 *To whom or to what does the term 'the world' refer?*

"World" is the usual translation of the Greek word "κόσμος". The same word is used in several ways throughout the Gospel. Firstly, it refers to the physical world in which we live. "By the Hellenistic period, the term *world* referred to the universe created by God, the earth as opposed to the sky, the inhabited earth, the location of human society, and finally humanity" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:245). In John's Gospel 'world' refers initially to God's creation (including Jn. 1:10; 11:9; 17:5; 17:24; 21:25).

Apart from these, in all other usages in John, 'world' refers to human beings (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:246). However, given the "conflictual and antisocietal character of the John's community" with its resulting antilanguage (1998:46), Malina and Rohrbaugh argue that the understanding of 'world' as 'human beings' needs to be confined even further. In John's historical circumstances, given John's antagonism to 'the Jews', and reading the word *κόσμος* as it appears in its literary contexts within the text, 'the world' more accurately refers to *this* people, *this* humanity – that is, Judeans. An example of this can be seen in John 18:20, "Jesus answered him, 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple where all Judeans come together; I have said nothing in secret.'" Here the world refers specifically to Judeans, who constitute the world of John (see also 8:23; 9:39; 12:25, 31; 13:1; 14:30; 16:11; 18:36). Furthermore, an examination of the literary context of passages that deal specifically with the fate of Jesus' disciples in 'the world' (see for example John 15:18-16:4a) reveals that 'the world' here refers

specifically to Israel (see 15:25 “It was to fulfil the word that is written in **their** law, ‘They hated me without a cause’”). Malina and Rohrbaugh add that

Those in Israel who reject Jesus as coming from God really do not know God at all. This is the radical theological indictment that John’s group presents to Israel. Israel’s continued persecution of the group proves the correctness of the indictment (1998:237).

Malina and Rohrbaugh conclude convincingly that the word κόσμος as used specifically in John’s Gospel refers only to these three specific entities, namely: “the physical world, Israel as God’s chosen humanity, and Judeans as enemies of John’s community” (1998:246). What then is the relationship between ‘the world’ and the Johannine community?

3.2.3.2 The relationship between the Johannine community and ‘the world’.

‘The world’ hates the Johannine community (referring to those in Israel who refuse to believe in Jesus, who do not know him and so are not viewed as being children of God (Jn. 1:10-13)). According to John, this antipathy is explicitly described by Jesus (15:18-25). If Israel, the dominant society, shows hatred for the Johannine community, the reason is because they first hated Jesus (15:18). They will be persecuted, like Jesus, because “they do not know him who sent me” (15:21).... “[t]he unpopularity of Christians in the world is due ultimately to the attitude of the world to God” (Barrett 1978:479). Luther was convinced “that from the persecution texts in the New Testament as a whole, and from his experience in the Reformation in part, that it is Christocentricity more than anything else that evokes the world’s hatred” (LW 24:279 quoted in Bruner 2012:909).

3.2.3.3 Love and hate in Mediterranean culture

What is meant by the world’s hatred of the Johannine community? To answer this question, it is helpful to consider some aspects of first-century Mediterranean culture and usage of particular words. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:86-88) note that, as a

culture, people at that time were strongly group-orientated. Any sense of meaningful human existence was to be found only in being firmly rooted in the social group (whether it be the family, village neighbourhood). It was here that people found their sense of self, worth, and identity. “Such first-century Mediterranean person always needed others to know who they were and to support or restrain their choices or behaviour” (1998:87).

In a culture that stresses the importance of the group orientation, the words ‘love’ and ‘hate’ take on a new meaning – especially in as seen the passages under discussion concerning the relationship of the Johannine community to ‘the world’ (Jn.18-25). Malina and Rohrbaugh show that in first century Mediterranean culture the term *love* is best translated as ‘group attachment’ or ‘attachment to some person’. This would involve personal loyalty and enduring trust in the group.

There may or may not be affection, but it is the inward feeling of attachment, along with the outward behaviour bound up with such attachment, that love entails. So naturally those who love or are attached to the group do what the group values (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:87).

From a social and historical point of view, in the ancient Mediterranean world, love extended only to the other members of the group, and not further afield. The opposite of love, is hate, therefore this would imply “disattachment”, “nonattachment”, or “indifference”. Corresponding to this understanding of love, hate does not necessarily mean repulsion but refers to “the inward feeling of nonattachment” together with the “outward behaviour” that follows when not attached to that group (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:87).

Therefore when John speaks of the world hating believers, we may understand this to mean that the world has ‘disattached’ itself from the believing Johannine community and is indifferent towards it (or at least, this is the perception of the community). Malina and Rohrbaugh point out that “Indifference is perhaps the strongest negative attitude that one can entertain in Mediterranean interpersonal relations” (1998:87). The believers are viewed as having been disloyal to the dominant group (Jewish community) and so they are cut off from them do not belong

to them anymore (Jn. 15:19). This shows the extent of the breach that has been created between the Johannine group and the society at large. They are no longer considered part of the 'in-group' (Israel, the dominant society) but instead are rejected as outsiders. They did not fit in; they were no longer welcomed and in fact were despised. "Hard boundaries are thus being drawn between those with loyalty to the group and those with none" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:238). Hence the Johannine community, like Jesus, does not "belong to the world" (17:14-16). Malina and Rohrbaugh conclude that "This is as clear a statement of the antisocietal character of the John group as exists in the Gospel" (1998:237).

As a result of their commitment to and belief in Jesus, the members of the Johannine community had chosen to withdraw their allegiance to 'the world' and all those living in unbelief and opposition to Jesus. As a result they were hated and persecuted in the same way that Jesus was. I suggest that this situation of hatred, indifference and alienation from 'the world' serves as a further 'critical incident' adding to the likelihood of the Johannine community experiencing a situation of on-going crisis.

3.2.4 Social ostracism leading to an identity crisis

As Christian Jews professed Jesus to be the Messiah and were subsequently banned from the synagogues, they found themselves hated by the Jewish community, alienated and no longer welcome. Martyn correctly concludes that

In this trauma the members suffered not only social dislocation but also great alienation, for the synagogue/world which had been their social and theological womb, affording nurture and security, was not only removed, but even became the enemy who persecutes (1978:104).

According to rabbinic tradition it is evident that being excommunicated from the synagogue had enormous implications leading to severe social ostracism. This is evident in very practical ways, for example

One sells them nothing and buys nothing from them. One takes nothing from them and gives them nothing. One teaches their sons no craft and one does not allow oneself to be treated by them medically, neither by

medicinal handling of an object nor by medicinal handling of persons (Wengst 2000:364, quoted in Bruner 2012:587).

Bruner concludes that for a “Jew to be removed from the synagogue was effectively ‘to become a non-person’” (2012:587).

The actual trauma of the Johannine community’s separation from the synagogue and its continuing hostile relationship with the synagogue meant that “coming to faith in Jesus is for the Johannine group a change in social location” (Meeks 1972:44-72 quote 69). In a cultural environment where a person’s sense of self and identity was found in relation to others who formed the group to which they belonged, belief in Jesus led to them being ‘in the world, but not of the world’ (Jn. 17:14-16). Du Rand (1991:64) and Tite (1996:77-100) suggest that this led to an ‘identity crisis’ wherein the Johannine community was forced to redefine its religious and cultural identity in its conflict with emerging Rabbinic Judaism. The crisis forced the community to work on “internal issues of identity by clarifying its beliefs and founding stories about Jesus” (Ringe 1999:27).

Having spent their whole lives as members of the dominant society – the people of Israel – the Jewish believers in the Johannine community, joined later by Gentile converts, had to create a new social group and establish a new identity. In responding to the call of Jesus to follow him and become his disciples (Jn. 1:35-51), one can assume that this would have meant leaving their kin group, their village, and neighbourhood (see also Matt. 19:27; Mk. 10:28; Lk.18:28 where the disciples leave everything for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel). Leaving one’s family would be understood as ‘hating’ them (Lk.14:26) – becoming “disattached” – and not leaving is synonymous to ‘loving his father or mother more than me’ (Matt. 10:37) (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:87). Furthermore, leaving everything would have included losing their sense of self- worth, and group identity.

Throughout the gospel of John, we see evidence of the Johannine community grappling with their ‘identity crisis’ and seeking to redefine themselves (Tite 1996:77-100). The language used in the Gospel to describe what takes place when a person

leaves everything to become a follower or believer and 'receives' Jesus, is that of being born anew into the family of God (see Jn. 1:12,13; 3:3-8). A family is the most important social group "Socially and psychologically, all family members were embedded in the family unit, and the main social goal in life was family integrity" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:167). Malina & Rohrbaugh emphasize that in establishing the new community of believers, a new family, they will form a new group identity. Because of the need for radical social redefinition in relation to their Jewish environment, it was necessary to show that the only true love was found in the family of God. John emphasises Jesus' exhortations to 'love one another' (15:12,17), in other words be attached to the group, and to display the outward behaviour bound up with such attachment (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:87). John (15:9-17) could be paraphrased as follows: "As the Father has loved me (been attached to me), so I have loved you (been attached to you); abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love...This is my commandment, that you love (be attached to) one another as I have loved (been attached to) you. No one has greater love (attachment) than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

This 'identity crisis', requiring the Johannine community to re-establish their new identity within the dominant society of Israel adds yet another dimension to the complexity and magnitude of the crisis experienced by the this community.

3.2.5 Grief and Loss

3.2.5.1 The departure of Jesus and delayed parousia

In keeping with the popular beliefs of the early church, it seems that the Johannine community had expected and understood Jesus to mean that he would return soon, and certainly in their lifetime (Jn. 21:22-23) (Dodd 1963:396; Moody Smith 1999:307) – yet this did not take place as expected (see Rev. 1:7; 1 Thess. 4:15-17). Du Rand notes that the return of the Lord Jesus was a problem for the early church as it was primarily understood in an apocalyptic sense, in that the "Lord Jesus would come

suddenly after his resurrection while certain Christians were still alive (cf. Mk. 9:1; Mt. 10:23)" (1991:51).

In John, there seems to be very little attention given to Jesus' return or a final day of judgement. Scholars (such as Dodd 1953; Brown 1970:1142; Kysar 1975; du Rand 1993) refer to this as John's 'realised eschatology'. "It has been argued that John lived at a time when the church was having to adjust to Jesus' failure to return (the so-called 'failure of the parousia'), and that he chose to emphasise Jesus' spiritual presence in the church through the Holy Spirit" (Wenham & Walton 2001:254).

The idea of John's realised eschatology is presented by scholars such as Brown (1970:1142) who argues that underlying the promise of the Paraclete is the concern over the loss of eyewitness contact with Jesus as well as the perceived delay of the parousia. Minear (1977:339-354) suggests that the problem of "distance from Jesus" created difficulties for the second generation of Christian believers who "imagined themselves at a distinct disadvantage in comparison with their predecessors" (1977:345). Minear highlights the "dismay of followers who no longer have access either to Jesus or the apostles, but who must rely on the hearsay of late witnesses" (1977:349). Martyn notes that "more than once Jesus announces the termination of his sojourn" and affirms the view "that the problem posed by Jesus' departure to the Father is a real one" (1968:8). The concern over Jesus departure and apparent failure to return has been widely discussed among scholars (Painter 1980:21-38; du Rand 1991:51; Moody Smith 1999:307).

Syreeni, in her article *In Memory of Jesus: Grief work in the Gospels* (2004:175-197) affirms the view that "Much of the theological development of early Christianity is due to the simple fact that the delay of the coming of Christ had to be dealt with" (2004:194). She argues that the delay of the return of Jesus was a real issue facing the church, resulting in them having to face their grief and develop coping mechanisms to deal with the crisis of his absence. She acknowledges various theories and models of phases and kinds of grief work which have been proposed (for example Elisabeth Kubler-Ross 1969; Bowlby-Parkes 1998) but finds it more

helpful to view this phenomenon as “a transition from one status and social role to another” (2004:176). She suggests that “...grief work proceeds from *denial and disorganisation* towards *acceptance and reorganisation*, or from adherence to the *past* status to reorientation towards the *new* status” (2004:177). Using Freudian-type concepts, she speaks of

[T]he *recollection* and *incorporation* of the deceased in the memory of the survivors. While they conserve elements of the past relationship, these coping mechanisms, by compensating for the loss, may function as a partial *substitute* or *replacement* for the deceased (2004:177).

Having discussed the phenomenon of grief work in general terms, Syreeni proceeds to highlight typical features of grief work found in the Gospels, noting that “there are some indisputable indications of continuing grief work in John” (2004:188) and that “the Gospel of John demonstrates a relatively advanced state of grief work” (2004:187). So for example, she points out that the *recollection* of memories of Jesus is evident – “within a grand scale salvation-historical framework that stretches from creation and incarnation (the Johannine prologue) through exaltation to the judgement of the world” (2004:187). She suggests that the Johannine high Christology and idealised presentation of Jesus could be interpreted as either a “regressive coping mechanism” or a “progressive strategy where the significance of Jesus is interpreted in a more comprehensive ideological framework” (2004:188).

Syreeni particularly draws attention to the long farewell discourse, unique to John, where “Jesus is aware that the disciples will mourn after he has gone, so he has to comfort and instruct them and to prepare them for the new situation” (2004:189).

The recorded sayings of John’s Jesus before his death include words of compassion and reassurance such as are commensurate with the departing Jesus trying to alleviate the disciples’ fears concerning his death and departure, separation and absence from them. This is evident in the following passages:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place

for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also (Jn. 14:1-3)

Jesus continues,

I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you (Jn. 14:18-20).

Jesus speaks of a divine peace,

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, "I am going away and I am coming to you (Jn.14:27,28).

Yet again Jesus seeks to allay their anxiety, resulting from mention of his departure,

A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me...Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn to joy...So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you (Jn.16:16, 19, 20, 22).

Syreeni highlights the fact that there seems to be is a strong attachment to Jesus, and a struggle to let him go (regressive responses). Jesus at times seems to give conflicting and confusing answers as to where he will go, whether or not his death/departure will be for a short or long term, or even be a final separation (see Jn. 13:33, 36; 14:3, 4-6; 16:16-22; 17:18). In her view, clearly "The absence of Jesus calls for theological reflection" (2004:188).

Addressing the fear of being abandoned by Jesus, throughout the Gospel John emphasises Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit who would be with them for ever and take his place. In this way Jesus makes provision for his absence (Jn.14:15-17, 25-26; 15:26, 27; 16:4-15). Syreeni notes that this is a sign of advanced coping mechanisms in John – notably there is a "*substitute* for Jesus so he can leave" (2004:190). Jesus explains to his disciples: "It is to your advantage that I go away,

for if I do not go away, the Counsellor (παράκλητον) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (Jn. 16:7). The Spirit/Paraclete will fulfil a *substitutional* role, so that the disciples will not feel like orphans (14:18); they will be reminded of Jesus and learn new things (16:12-14). A novel coping mechanism is that Jesus, through the Spirit, will be *incorporated* in the life of the believer (14:17) (Syreeni 2004:190).

Continuing this theme, Holloway (2005:1-34) shows how various Greco-Roman texts treated separation (whether caused by death or physical departure) as an identifiable source of grief inviting consolation. In the light of this, he identifies Jesus’ three final discourses (John 13:31-14:31; 15:1-16:4a; 16:4b-33) as well as his departure prayer (17:1-26) as being words of consolation and exhortation in the face of the grief of the disciples. This evidence of grief work in John’s Gospel clearly indicates that the community experienced a crisis resulting from the huge loss they experienced due to the absence of Jesus.

In Dodd’s discussion of the Farewell Discourses (1963: 390-423) he argues that John is reinterpreting the eschatological beliefs of the early church whose current understanding concerning the departure and return of Jesus and his disciples reunion with Him was that living Christians would be caught up to meet him (as expressed in Paul’s letter first letter to the Thessalonians 4:13-18). In addressing this crisis, John shows that the return of Christ is to be understood in a different way. After the death of Jesus,

[H]is followers will enter into union with Him as their living Lord, and through Him with the Father, and so enter into eternal life. That is what He meant when He said, ‘I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am you too may be’ (see Jn. 14:3; 17:24) (Dodd 1963:405).

Jesus’ coming again is to be understood in the sense that he will continue His works through His believing disciples (Jn.14:12); the Holy Spirit will be sent to abide in them (14:15-17); they will live by virtue of the living Christ (14:19); and through loving Jesus and the Father Jesus will reveal Himself to them (14:21) (Dodd 1963:395). In this way John is “putting forward a bold reinterpretation of what was believed to be the teaching of Jesus” (1963:406). The evangelist offers “a revision of the

eschatological teaching current in the church and embodied in the other gospels” (1963:396).

Woll (1981:32) cites several of the above mentioned scriptures (Jn. 13:33-36; 14:1-3; 14:12, 16, 17; 18-24) to highlight the recurring theme of Jesus’ absence and stress on his departure. However he does not believe that the departure of Jesus in itself is seen as a problem in the Gospel, “be it in the loss of eyewitness contact with Jesus or the delay of the Parousia” (1981:32). Instead he argues that the crisis facing the Community came about because of the issues Jesus’ absence raised concerning “authority, rank and succession” (1981:34). He suggests that the problem created by the departure of Jesus was primarily one of hierarchy and status rather than no longer having direct access to the person of Jesus. His departure could mean that in this time of separation the disciples would need to take his place as his agents on earth. “Just as the disciples are dependent on the departure and return of Jesus for their ultimate ascent to heaven, so during the interim period they are dependent on the departure and return of Jesus for their authority as his successor agents” (1981:34).

In conclusion, the departure, absence and separation of Jesus from the disciples appear to have been significant issues facing the Johannine community. As a result, the members of the community may have struggled with loss, fear and anxiety; disappointment and disillusionment; or it may have raised issues concerning rank, authority and succession. Regardless of what exactly the implications were, I believe it is reasonable to suggest that Jesus’ absence and departure was yet another ‘critical factor’ precipitating a sense of crisis for the community.

3.2.5.2 The death of the beloved disciple (John 21: 20-23)

One of the marks of the Johannine community previously discussed is that it had features similar to those found in a sect or cult (Domeris 1988:54). One of these characteristics is a style of leadership favouring a charismatic leader figure (Domeris 1988:54). According to scholars such as Aune (1972), Brown (1979) and Woll (1981)

the Beloved Disciple clearly filled such a role. According to Joachim Wach the most traumatic event for a cult is the death of its founder (1967:137). Brown observes that the death of the Beloved Disciple (as implied in Jn.21:22-23) who was their founder and leader, threw the community into deep distress (Brown 1979:31). This view is supported by Domeris who adds that "John 21 suggests that in the Johannine community a crisis was precipitated by the death of the Beloved Disciple" (1988:54). He continues, "It is probable therefore that following his death, a period of acute disillusionment threatened to engulf the community" (1988:54). The death of the Beloved Disciple left a leadership vacuum in the life of the community, raising questions of succession (Domeris 1988:55). Furthermore, since he had been the one having had personal contact with Jesus, his death also raised concerns over access to Jesus (1988:55).

Brown identifies one of the greatest crises encountered in the early church as "the gradual death of the apostolic eyewitnesses and the growing awareness of distance from the historical Jesus" (1970:1141-1142). He states that when the various apostolic eyewitnesses died, this threw the Christians into confusion because there was no longer a direct link or chain between them and Jesus. Concerning the effect on the Johannine community he writes:

Undoubtedly the impact of the loss of eyewitnesses was felt acutely in the period after 70, but for the Johannine community the full impact did not come until the death of the Beloved Disciple, the eyewitness *par excellence* (Jn. 19:35; 21:24), a death which occurred seemingly just before the Gospel was put in final form. Either this death or its obvious imminence must have presented to the Johannine community the agonising problem of survival without the principle living link to Jesus (1970:1142).

The absence of a direct link to Jesus following the death of the Beloved Disciple further added to the sense of crisis faced by the Johannine community.

3.2.6 A Community in Crisis

While there is general consensus as to the definition of a crisis, Hepworth (et al) note that what actually constitutes a crisis may be individually and culturally defined

(2010:389). “Perceptions of a crisis may vary based on associated threats, individual cognitions, and the significance of the situation, ego strengths, coping capacity, and problem solving skills” (2010:389). Furthermore Hepworth (et al) note that not every ‘critical event’ necessarily results in setting off a significant crisis, and recognise that what might be severely stressful and overwhelming for some might be manageable for another (2010:380). Nevertheless, having listed a series of traumatic events in the USA, not dissimilar to those experienced by the Johannine community, I suggest that we can apply Hepworth’s (et al) conclusion to the Johannine community:

In each of these circumstances, you might expect to find entire communities who feel particularly vulnerable and experience prolonged anxieties, physical, emotional, and cognitive distress, as well as an overall sense of grief and diminished coping capacity (2010:380).

As noted, the Johannine community faced conflict with Judaism, persecution from the Romans, rejection by the world, social ostracism, grief and loss following the death and departure of Jesus and later the Beloved Disciple. For these reasons, it seems reasonable to suggest that the combination of all these critical events present us with the very high probability that the Johannine community should be identified as being a **Community in Crisis**.

I believe that recognising the audience behind the Fourth Gospel as experiencing a state of crisis is crucial to our understanding of John’s approach to and intention in the writing of his Gospel. Furthermore, reading the Gospel from the perspective of a community experiencing a crisis sheds light on how John’s audience might have interpreted his presentation of the Jesus tradition. I suggest that John paints a pastoral picture of Jesus who speaks into the situation of persecution, rejection, grief, loss and an identity crisis experienced by the Johannine community – bringing words of hope, comfort and encouragement.

3.3 The Spiritual Effects of the Crisis.

If then, as the evidence suggests, the community behind the Gospel of John was indeed a community in crisis, what might the impact of this combination of critical

events have been on the community? In particular, what was the spiritual impact of the crisis and how did this affect their faith and belief?

Crises can affect individuals and communities in all sorts of ways – spiritually, mentally, physically, emotionally, and psychologically. According to Hepworth (et al), much of the literature (in the field of Social Work and Psychology) has tended to focus on the negative effects of crises on people (2010:383). These could include becoming angry, overwhelmed, hopeless, severely depressed, numb, showing other signs of physical, emotional, and cognitive distress, as well as an overall sense of grief and diminished coping capacity. However, some researchers suggest that adverse events may in fact stimulate growth in the aftermath of a crisis (Caplan 1964; Halpern & Tramontin 2007; James 2008; McMillen & Fischer 1998). Building on research done by Caplan (1964), McMillen and Fischer (1998) explored the perceived harm and benefits with individuals who had experienced a negative event. “Some reported benefits in the form of positive life changes, including spirituality, faith in people, compassion, and an increase in community closeness” (Hepworth et al 2010:383). To focus and dwell on the trauma alone could blind one to appreciating the positive benefits that could accrue from crises. “In some incidences, people may perceive and articulate positive benefits that emerge as a result of a negative experience” (Hepworth et al 2010:389).

How might faith itself be affected as a result of a crisis? Hoy (2007) notes that “A crisis can cause people to seek out God or to question their faith”. Mannion argues that from a faith perspective, tragedy may impact its victims in one of three ways:

Faith may remain unchanged; it may be rejected; or it may become transformed. This transformed faith “may have a basis in prior belief, or it may not. It is a faith, however, that has been radically transformed and deepened by a tragedy that could have been totally destructive of one’s spirituality” (Young 1998b).

How did the Johannine community respond to the crisis from a spiritual point of view? Did they reject their faith in Jesus or did their faith remain unchanged? The presentation of the Jesus tradition in John’s Gospel is unique and very different to that found in the Synoptic Gospels – could it be that what we find in its pages is in

fact a transformed and deeper understanding of faith that emerged as a result of the crisis?

In “*The Community Crisis Response Team Training Manuel*” published by the U S Department of Justice, Young asserts that “Traumatic events challenge the presuppositions about the world held by individuals, communities and culture” (1998b). She states that they can serve as an attack on meaning systems. This usually causes people to re-examine their beliefs and sense of meaning. Negatively, this can lead to their values and beliefs being shattered or more positively their faith can be strengthened (1998b). Young continues,

The reconstruction of a meaning system is sometimes the most difficult challenge victims and survivors of disaster face. It requires an inward search into one’s past, one’s identity, and one’s faith” (1998b).

Is there evidence to suggest that John’s Gospel might be such a reconstruction of the belief or meaning system of the Johannine community precipitated by the crisis?

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a case for suggesting that in the community for whom John wrote, they faced an on-going state of crisis. Not only would this have affected them psychologically, emotionally and physically, but also would have had significant spiritual implications as well. Not only is faith put to the test during a time of crisis, but “Spirituality can shape beliefs and provide strength during times of adversity, and the link to a faith community can be a tangible source of assistance and social support” (Hepworth et al 2010:221).

Thatcher observes that “theological developments are often precipitated by social crises” (2006:6). In the context of the crisis faced by the Johannine community, Ringe offers a pastoral perspective suggesting the author of John’s Gospel “pays attention to the traditions about Jesus that the community has inherited and, at the same time, to the pastoral needs for which those traditions are being recast” (Ringe 1999:10). The rest of this thesis will focus on how I perceive John has selected and

presented the Jesus tradition in such a way as to meet the spiritual needs of his community who were experiencing a time of crisis. It is my belief that he writes as a pastor leading his people to a reframed, transformed and deepened faith as a result of the on-going crisis they faced.

Chapter 4: Reframing the belief system

4.1 John's ministry of Pastoral Care

In my previous chapter, I argued that the Johannine community could be understood to be a community in crisis, which had amongst other things, significant spiritual implications for the faith of the community. That being the case, who would help them in their struggles to cope with the complexity of the crises they were facing, and how might this be done? John, I believe, does precisely that in fulfilling the role of a pastor exercising a form of pastoral care through the writing of his Gospel.

What is meant by 'pastoral care'? There are many ways of understanding what pastoral care involves, hence Griffiss acknowledges that the word 'pastoral' is in itself a very ambiguous word (1985:89-91). He suggests that pastoral care is primarily a theological activity, rooted in people's beliefs about God and the care God has for each person (1985:3). Dr George S. Everly Jr., a pioneer in the field of stress management, in his book entitled *Pastoral Crisis Intervention* defines pastoral care as "the function of providing a spiritual, religious or faith orientated leadership" (Everly 2007:12). He suggests that this is typically given by a person who has been specifically identified and commissioned by a faith group to provide "interpersonal support, assistance in religious education, worship, sacraments, community organisation, ethical-religious decision making and related activities of spiritual support" (2007:12). Brister, in his discussion on pastoral care in the church, describes the role of the pastor as someone who "provides moral leadership, spiritual guidance, and encouragement" (1992:19). This requires the pastor to take the initiative and reach out to those in their care, "even if uninvited" (Arnold 1982:37). In the pages of the Fourth Gospel, I suggest that what we find is John exercising this

kind of pastoral leadership in providing spiritual guidance, encouragement, support and help to the Johannine community as they come to terms with and navigate their way through their time of crisis.

Believing therefore that John's Gospel is written as a pastoral response to address the spiritual needs arising out of the crisis, I will present a study of significant texts and themes that provide the evidence necessary to support this hypothesis. Whereas the passages could be read simply as narratives, my intention is to show another dimension to our understanding of these texts. I suggest they can also be read through the lens of someone writing out of pastoral concern for those in his spiritual care. Through a close examination of these passages, I will show the way in which John as a pastor and spiritual leader uses the gospel message to respond to the spiritual needs of the Johannine community so as to reconstruct or reframe their belief system, and lead them ultimately to a transforming and deepening of their faith.

4.2 Effects of crises on beliefs and meaning systems

The U S Justice Department has conducted extensive research into the needs of those who have been affected by traumatic events. In their online publication *The Community Crisis Response Team Training Manual* (1998), Young asserts that "Traumatic events challenge the presuppositions about the world held by individuals, communities and culture" (1998b). These events can serve as "an attack on meaning systems" (1998b), which frequently causes people to re-examine their beliefs and sense of meaning. On the one hand, this process of re-examination can have a negative impact in leading to people's values and beliefs being shattered. On the other hand, more positively their faith can be strengthened as a result (1998b). Put in another way, Mannion suggests that a re-examination of beliefs following a crisis can result in faith remaining unchanged; it may be rejected altogether; or faith may become transformed into something deeper (quoted in Young 1998b)

4.2.1 Re-examining beliefs and sense of meaning

If we apply Young's analysis of the response of communities in crisis to John's Gospel, how does that sharpen our understanding of crisis and response? I suggest that what we find in the text of John's Gospel reveals that John's approach is in many ways consistent with Young's ideas, as he re-examines the Johannine community's previously held beliefs (pre-crisis) and sense of meaning. As a result of the crisis arising from severe conflict with 'the Jews', involving excommunication, persecution and even martyrdom, I suggest that the Johannine community was thrown into turmoil and questioned their beliefs. Were they wrong about Jesus? Should they renounce their confession of him as Messiah? They needed to find a way of making sense of what had happened. As they grappled with issues of faith, their convictions concerning the nature and identity of Jesus became more clearly defined, resulting in what has been described as a 'higher Christology'. Thatcher points out that "theological developments are often precipitated by social crises" (2006:6) and this unique 'higher Christology' clearly came about as a result of the social crisis of rejection by the Jews. The new 'higher Christology' perhaps illustrates what Young has termed a 're-examination of beliefs' (1998b) as a direct response to the crisis faced by the Johannine community. Put slightly differently, in the words of Martyn,

[E]xpelled from the synagogue, the Johannine community was bound to *search for a mature interpretation* (my emphasis) of the expulsion, and that search led it to new Christological formulations (1978:105).

Resulting from a crisis of *rejection* in particular, Ringe uses the language of the need to 'reinterpret the history and tradition' of the group. She writes:

When a group feels rejected by the larger congregation in which it originated, that group often *reinterprets the history* (my emphasis) it shares with the parent community as well. That *reinterpretation of the tradition* (my emphasis) of the congregation aims to prove that the members of the dissident group are indeed the true representatives of their religion (1999:22).

This point is illustrated I believe in John's Gospel, with the emphasis on acceptance by God resulting from a new birth/ birth from above through faith in Jesus (Jn. 1:12; 3:3-8) rather than by virtue of being born biologically into the Jewish community, the chosen people of Israel. This reinterpretation of the tradition concerning who the chosen people of God really are, would affirm and prove for the Johannine community that in spite of the crisis of being expelled from the Jewish community, they themselves were in fact the true children of God, and not the unbelieving parent Jewish community.

Brown's treatment of the 're-examination of beliefs' (Young 1998b) is found in his discussion on "Replacement Theology" (1979:48-50). He perceives that the Johannine community chose Jesus over Judaism, resulting in a *replacement* of Jewish belief and tradition (1979:48) rather than merely a *reinterpretation* of it. In response to the crisis of rejection by the Jewish community, it could be said that the idea of Young's 're-examination of beliefs' (1998b) led the Johannine community to *replace* their beliefs with new ones rather than simply reinterpret them. Using the same example as in my previous paragraph, Brown views the belief that 'the Jews' were automatically the children of God as being *replaced* by a new belief – that *any* person is given the power to *become* a child of God by receiving Jesus and believing in his name (Jn.1:12-13). Because 'his own' people, the Jews, did not accept Jesus (1:11), Jesus formed a new 'his own' (13:1) consisting of all those who did accept him (1:12) (1979:48). On this basis, the Johannine community would understand themselves to have replaced the old Israel and become the true Israel.

Brown's theme of replacement can also be seen in the way many of the sacred cultic institutions of Judaism were rejected on the basis that for the Johannine Christians, they had "lost their significance for those who believe in Jesus" (1979:49). He suggests that the traditional feasts (Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, Dedication) were seen as being feasts of 'the Jews' (5:1; 6:4; 7:2) so were no longer relevant for believers in Jesus. For example, "If it is customary to pray for rain during the Feast of Tabernacles, those who are thirsty can now come to Jesus, for from within him shall flow rivers of living water" (1979:49). The Temple of Jerusalem was replaced by the body of Jesus which was the true Temple (2:19-21) (1979:49). While the Law was a

gift through Moses, this grace and truth now instead came through Jesus (1:16-17), who embodied grace and truth (1:14) (1979:49).

Applying Young's ideas concerning the effect of a crisis on a belief system to Brown, it seems that the process of re-examination of beliefs in the case of the Johannine community could be perceived as having "a negative impact in leading to people's values and beliefs being shattered" (1998b), or as stated by Mannion, it could have led to a rejection of their previously held faith (quoted in Young 1998b). This resulted in Johannine Christianity going as far as becoming a new religion separate from Judaism (Brown 1979:50). The old belief system was replaced by a new one. However, whereas this could be viewed as something negative, it could also be interpreted as a positive outcome – in that their faith in *Jesus* became stronger and their convictions sharper resulting from the crisis. Their faith in Jesus led them to replace their former beliefs with a new, better, higher form of Judaism – far greater than what they had to leave behind (Brown 1979:50). Or in the words of Mannion, the result was positive in that their faith was transformed into something deeper (quoted in Young 1998b).

In summary, Young has noted that resulting from a severe crisis, individuals or communities often "re-examine their beliefs or sense of meaning" (1998b). Applying Young's idea to the Johannine community in crisis, how did this process of re-examination take place? I have noted that various scholars have answered this question in similar ways but using their own terminology. Martyn has written of the "search for a mature interpretation of the expulsion" (1987:105); and Ringe of the "reinterpretation of the tradition" (1999:22). Brown uses the language of "Replacement Theology" to describe the result of the crisis on the belief of the Johannine community (1979:48-50).

4.2.2 The reconstruction of a meaning system.

Perhaps the most extreme consequence of a crisis and subsequent re-examination of beliefs arises when an individual or faith community's entire meaning system is being called into question. In Young's view,

The reconstruction of a meaning system is sometimes the most difficult challenge victims and survivors of disaster face. It requires an inward search into one's past, one's identity, and one's faith (1998b).

The process of reconstructing a meaning system is no easy task yet can become necessary in order to make sense of and come to terms with what has happened as a result of a severe crisis which has shaken an individual or community's very foundations. This process aims to help find meaning in the crises of life.

From a Sociological perspective, Berger believes that the primary way in which life is made meaningful, and properly integrated, is through "symbolic universes" (Singleton 2014:38). A symbolic universe is a kind of grand, totalizing worldview: "These are bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic reality" (Berger and Luckmann 1966) . "These symbolic universes make sense of the various strands of life: the marginal situations and the everyday world" (Singleton 2014:39).

A person or community's religious faith is an example of a symbolic universe and meaning system. Singleton writes, "We live in a world of our own making – religion included – but religion also helps us make sense of the world" (2014:36). Singleton suggests that "Religion is unique among the various symbolic universes because it links the 'here-and-now' with the transcendent" (2014:39). In the words of Berger, religion locates "human phenomena within a cosmic frame of reference" (1967:35). The socially constructed world, described by Berger as "precarious and transitory" is thus "given the semblance of ultimate security and permanence" (1967:36). "It is in this way that religion is a *sacred canopy*: a mode of giving meaning to the social world by locating it in the sacred" (Singleton 2014:39). So religion is substantially different to other symbolic universes because of its special link to the sacred (Singleton 2014:39). Therefore the reconstruction of a meaning system is essentially another way of saying the reconstruction of a religious or belief system. This a challenge faced by those dealing with a severe crisis, in order to help them make sense of and find meaning in life's crises. This is precisely what I believe John is doing in Gospel.

In the face of the crisis of expulsion and rejection by the parent Jewish community, I believe that John's methodology concerning reconstructing the Johannine community's meaning system is consistent with Young's ideas. An *inward search into their past* leads John to conclude that their (Johannine community) new found faith in Jesus surpasses that of the old Jewish order – it is a higher form of Judaism, a new and better one! What they have gained through their relationship with Jesus far outweighs what they have lost through being rejected by the Jewish parent community (Brown 1979:50). In wrestling with their *identity*, John clarifies their beliefs and founding stories about Jesus (Meeks 1972:44-72). He leads them to embrace a new identity as 'children of God' (Jn.1:12) by virtue of their *faith* in Jesus rather than through biological birth into the Jewish nation or in obedience to the Law of Moses. This process has resulted in the reconstruction of their previously held, Jewish meaning system, into one where any true meaning is found only in Jesus. He alone is "the way, the truth and the life" (14:6). A relationship with God the Father is only possible through faith in Jesus, as no-one can come to the Father except through him (14:6). The Johannine community are guided to make sense of their world find meaning from a Christian rather than Jewish perspective and so reconstruct a new meaning or religious system.

In addition to Young's methodology involving an "inward search into one's past, one's identity and one's faith" (1998b), in what other ways could one set about embarking on the process of re-examining beliefs or reconstructing a meaning system as the result of a crisis? With this question in mind, I shall now turn to consider various approaches that have been used in the helping professions to assist people in times of crisis. I shall then highlight the idea "**Reframing**" which I have chosen as my focus, because I believe – from a Pastoral Studies perspective – it is a useful method or technique of pastoral care that has particular relevance for this study. This technique has been presented in a book by Donald Capps (Professor of Pastoral Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary), entitled *Reframing: A New Method in Pastoral Care* (1990). I suggest that what Capps aims to do in reframing is in essence a helpful method or technique that facilitates the re-examination of beliefs and sense of meaning (Young1998b) and the reinterpretation of a tradition (Ringe

1999:22). It can lead to the development of a Replacement Theology (Brown 1978:48-50) and the eventual reconstruction of a meaning system (Young 1998b). I shall explain the idea of reframing, and show how this methodology can be applied to John's writings as he responds to the pastoral needs of the Johannine community in crisis.

4.3 Reframing a belief system as a method of Pastoral Care

There are no simple answers or magic formulas that can be given to individuals or communities as they seek to find coping mechanisms in the face of a crisis. How have those in the pastoral or caring professions set about helping people navigate their way through a time of crisis? Various approaches, methods and techniques used in pastoral care and counselling were developed in the 1950s and 1960s. Howard Clinebell wrote what has become a classic textbook in Pastoral Care and Counselling, explaining these various approaches. They included Supportive Counselling, Crisis Counselling and Educative Counselling (Clinebell 1966). This book was later revised to include a new theological rationale for his previous project, but with no new methods added (Clinebell 1984). According to Capps, these techniques became the "tried-and-true methods" used widely by those involved in counselling and pastoral care (1990:3). However, the pastoral care and counselling movement of the 1950s and 1960s came under a lot of criticism by proponents of "new pastoral theology", including scholars such as "Charles Gerkin, Don Browning, and James Polling" (Capps1990:1). They argued that secular psychotherapies and psychological sciences were over emphasized at the expense of theological sciences. They saw themselves as providing pastoral care and counselling with "a much-needed theological, ecclesial, and ethical foundation" (Capps1990:1).

Capps proposed a new additional method to the already existing techniques used in pastoral care and counselling. He calls it "Reframing". He advocates that it can be used in a variety of contexts and "it reflects some of the new directions in pastoral theology, especially the effort to develop a biblically grounded approach to pastoral care and counselling" (1990:2). He states that this method has its roots in the 1970s, having originated in the field of psychotherapy with therapists such as Milton Erikson,

Virginia Satir, Carl Whitaker, Jay Haley (1990:2). Undergirding his reframing method is the Theory of Change as formulated by Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland and Richard Fisch in their book *Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution* (1974). Capps drew from their insights and applied them to pastoral care and counselling. This is because he viewed change and its impact on individuals and communities as a fundamental issue in pastoral care. I believe this reframing method of pastoral care also has application for my study.

4.3.1 What is “Reframing”?

What is meant by the term “Reframing”? According to Watzlawick (et al), to reframe means to

change the conceptual and/or emotional setting or viewpoint in relation to which a situation is experienced and to place it in another frame which fits the ‘facts’ of the same concrete situation equally well or even better, and thereby changes its entire meaning (1974: 95).

Stated more simply, Bandler and Grinder explain it in this way: “the meaning any event has for us depends upon the *frame* in which we perceive it. When we change the frame, we change the meaning” (1979:1). They suggest that reframing therefore involves “changing the frame in which a person perceives events in order to change the meaning. When the meaning changes, the person’s responses and behaviour also change” (1979:1). In essence, reframing aims to shift a person’s perceptions from negative ones to positive ones. It is a process that sets about changing a person’s perspective and perception of an event, thus giving the situation a new meaning.

Capps suggests that the therapeutic *technique* of reframing is both “intentional and self-conscious” (1990:10). It involves formulating and implementing a plan to produce the desired change (1990:22). This technique aims to try and get a client to think about their situation differently, to see things from a new point of view, to take other factors into consideration. In this way an intentional attempt is made by the therapist to “reframe events in order to get the client to respond differently to them”

(Bandler & Grinder 1979:2). Capps describes reframing not as a science but as an art. He says “It builds on the idea that a person can break out of limiting perceptions to a broader understanding of human possibilities” (1990:24). He continues:

For this model, problems are addressed by looking at them in a new way, from new, unaccustomed perspectives. The reason we are unable to deal with a problem is that our angle of vision is wrong, narrow or distorted. By seeing the problem in a radically different way, we discern, through this very seeing, how it may be resolved or that it is not a problem after all (1990:169).

Capps highlights that reframing differs in its objectives from every other pastoral care method in that it is designed to achieve a different kind of change (1990:11). It aims to change *perceptions* of problems and *meaning* of events, which then lead to a positive change in behaviour. According to Capps, “This time-honored technique of reframing is now widely used in therapy” (1990:11).

Whereas the language of *reframing* is not the terminology of the first century, I suggest that an examination of the writings of two significant first century pastors – namely Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and the author of John’s Gospel – show signs of this methodology or pastoral technique in operation. I shall begin by applying Capps’ idea of reframing firstly to Rabbi Yohanan’s writings, and then to the Gospel of John. How might Capps’ reframing technique sharpen our understanding of what both these writers were attempting to accomplish in their understanding of what both these writers were attempting to accomplish in their respective roles as pastors to a faith community in crisis?

4.4 Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai Ca. 1-80 C.E.

In the latter half of the first century C.E. Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai (sometimes spelt in the literature as Johanan or Yochanan ben Zakai) was involved in what I suggest was a process of reframing for the Jewish people. He was the principle figure in leading the rabbinical response following the fall of Jerusalem (70 C.E.), and was revered as “the master, the sage and rabbi, whose teachings guided Israel beyond the end” (Neusner 1984:89). Like John, Yohanan concerned himself with the

spiritual needs of the surviving remnant of Israel (1984:90). He was the one who guided the Jewish people in making sense of and finding meaning in the devastating fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple, and presented a way forward for faith and practice.

4.4.1 Historical background

In 66 C.E. Jewish rebellion overthrew Roman rule in the vicinity of Jerusalem and Galilee (Neusner 1962:104). Yohanan ben Zakkai, a pacifist, escaped from Jerusalem and took refuge from the war in Yavneh (Jamnia). There he founded an academy for the study of Torah. When word reached him that “Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Temple was up in flames, he tore his clothing and his disciples tore their clothing, and they wept, crying aloud and mourning” (Neusner 1962:128).

The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. was a massive catastrophic event for the Jewish people. Neusner refers to it as the “single most important event in the history of Judaism from the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.E. to the conquest of Palestine by the Arabs in 640 C.E.” (1984:47). This was because the Temple government was the focal point of Jewish political life, and was their principle cultic and religious centre for the service of sacrifice to God. Furthermore, the Temple “represented the nexus between heaven and earth” (Neusner 1984:47).

Following the destruction of the Temple, Yohanan ben Zakkai converted his school in Yavne into the Jewish religious centre in Palestine. He advocated that a significant way of *serving God* (my emphasis) was indeed through the study of Torah (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1976, vol 10: 229). He said:

The Children of Israel can continue without the Temple and even without its precious land- so long as Torah is being studied and observed. For a Jew is a Jew without his might, without his independence, and even without his Land- but not without his Torah (Rosenfeld 2008).

4.4.2 The Theological Challenge

With the Temple and all associated with it lying in ruins, Jewish morale sunk to deep despair. Many Jews saw themselves as “the rejected children of God, who had been born to disaster” (Neusner 1984:89). Others accepted that this suffering was a direct punishment for sin and reflected on their transgressions. Still others – Romans, Jews and Christians – “offered an explanation of the cataclysm in terms of their own understanding of human history” (Neusner 1984:90). Trying to make sense of this national disaster became an obsession for most people, resulting in a preoccupation with the future and hope for a speedy recompense (Neusner 1962:129; 1984:90).

Yohanan, like the Jewish apocalyptists, believed in a future redemption. However he underlined the necessity of the people to repent and return to God as a *condition* of future redemption. Unlike the Jewish apocalyptists, he did not offer the comfort and hope of a speedy redemption when suffering would cease, by just waiting for it to happen. Rather he offered a conditional promise, “just as punishment surely followed sin, so will redemption certainly follow *repentance*” (Neusner 1962:135; 1984:93). He called on the people to achieve a better fortune through their own efforts (1984:95).

However, whereas most of his generation chose to focus on what had happened and why, and what might come to compensate for the disaster in the future, Yohanan took a different approach. He chose to turn his attention primarily to the pastoral needs of the surviving remnant of Israel in their time of crisis (Neusner 1984:90). This approach is remarkably similar to that taken by John in his response to the Johannine community in crisis.

4.4.3 Yohanan’s pastoral response to the crisis

With the Temple no longer in existence, resulting in the cessation of the service of sacrifice to God, Yohanan saw the need to reframe Judaism for post-temple Jews. He recognised the importance of “reinterpreting inherited concepts lest they become irrelevant in new circumstances.” (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1976, vol 10: 229).

So at Yavneh, Yohanan began “the task of reconstruction” (Neusner 1962:129). This led him to “devise a program for the survival and reconstruction of the Jewish people and faith” (Neusner 1984:90). Rather than being preoccupied with their sufferings and difficulties, or being obsessed with future redemption, Yohanan reframed the situation by proposing a healthy, practical program forward for “the repair of the soul and reconstruction of the social and political life of Jewry in the land of Israel” (Neusner 1962:138). In this way, he believed that Israel would be able to “hold on to what could be saved by the disaster” (Neusner 1984:90). Through the process of reframing he would, as Capps suggests, aim to bring about significant change in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people and enable them to see their situation in a different light (1990:56,59).

4.4.4 A reframing of: “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice”

In commenting on Kohelet “Let your garments always be white, and let not oil be lacking on your head” (Koh.9.8), Yohanan emphasised the need for Jews to clothe themselves in the study of Torah so that they could learn what God required of them; obeying the commandments so doing God’s will; honouring God who gave the Torah by engaging in acts of loving kindness (Neusner 1984:95). These defined the duties of a pious person. These elements were probably a transformation of the teachings of Simon the Righteous two centuries earlier, who said: “On three things does the age stand: on the Torah, on the Temple service, and on acts of piety” (Avot 1.2; Neusner 1984:95). By “Torah” he had meant the books of the Torah; “Temple service” referred to the sacrificial cult centred in Jerusalem; “acts of piety” were those acts of obedience and loyalty to God (J. Goldin “The Three Pillars of Simon the Righteous”, *PAAJR*, XXVII, 43-56; Neusner 1962:142).

In response to the crisis resulting from the destruction of the Temple, Yochanan developed this teaching concerning the duties of a pious person, reframing it in such a way as to provide a new perspective concerning how atonement might now be achieved following the loss of the sacrificial altars.

Yohanan placed specific emphasis on the importance of *mercy/hesed* in the process of redemption: “*Just as the Jews needed a redemptive act of compassion from God, so must they now act compassionately in order to make themselves worthy of it*” (1984:97). So in reframing the Jewish understanding of achieving atonement for sin – from sacrifices offered in the Temple, to acts of compassion and loving kindness – Yohanan shifted the emphasis of religious piety from external actions and rituals to personal moral qualities which he believed was the foundation of true religion (1984:97). This focus on “compassionate fellowship... became the central focus of his consoling message for the new and troubled age” (1984:97).

In reframing the Jewish understanding of sacrificial worship, Yohanan changed the face of Judaism by placing a radical new emphasis on how to serve and please God. Whereas previously their Jewish faith had stood on the pillars of the books of the Torah, the Temple rites and acts of piety, the new age would endure “...on the foundation of studying Torah, doing the commandments and *especially performing acts of compassion* (my emphasis)” (Neusner 1984:97).

4.4.5 Conclusion to Yohanan

Yohanan responded to the pastoral needs of the Jewish community thrown into crisis arising from the destruction of the Temple, by reframing various beliefs and practices. He reframed their understanding of offering sacrifices suggesting that the noblest sacrifice of all was not in offering Temple sacrifices or loyal adherence to God’s covenant, but to follow the will of God in contributing love, self-sacrifice, for the building of a sacred community. He reframed their understanding of worship and sacrifice, and so encouraged them not to give up hope but rather empowered them to find new and better ways of worshipping God following the crisis.. Thus I would agree that “Johanan Ben Zakkai subsequently had a decisive influence on the continuation and development of Judaism following the fall of Jerusalem” (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1976, vol 10: 229).

Rabbi Yohanan was not alone in employing the pastoral technique of reframing to assist a troubled faith community in their time of crisis. I suggest that *reframing* is

precisely what the writer of John's Gospel was doing for the Johannine community in their time of crisis. The reframing of beliefs as a response to the crisis is, I believe, a significant factor in understanding the unique presentation of the Jesus story in John's Gospel.

Both Rabbi Johanan Ben Zakkai and John fulfilled similar pastoral roles in their respective faith communities, by responding to the faith crisis facing their people in utilising the pastoral method of reframing.

4.5 Reframing in John's Gospel

Capps' *Reframing* is a useful technique in pastoral care and counselling, to enable people to gain a new perspective on problems and give new, positive meaning to seemingly negative events (1990). This can be a particularly helpful coping mechanism in the aftermath of a crisis, or during an on-going state of crisis. I believe there is evidence of this technique in John's writing.

4.5.1 A Reframing of Critical Events

In the face of conflict with the Jews, expulsion from the synagogue, persecution from the Romans, an identity crisis, as well as grief and loss following the death and departure of Jesus, the Johannine community was most certainly a community in crisis. These 'critical events' experienced by the Johannine community could have caused the community members to be paralysed or overwhelmed by the enormity of their problems. How did they perceive these events and circumstances they were confronting? Certainly there were those who became apostates and no longer followed Jesus (Jn.6:66). Yet what of the rest of the disciples? One might expect to find them consumed with negativity, devastation and despair resulting in them possibly rejecting their faith (Mannion quoted in Young 1998b) or abandoning their mission. Yet this is not the impression given in the Gospel pages. John does not present the reader with a community wallowing in self-pity or unable to cope with the magnitude of the crisis besieging them. Instead, we are given a picture of a community of believers rising above their hardships, full of hope and love and a

determination to carry out their mission and calling in spite of the difficulties before them. How can this be?

Although John would not have used the language of 'reframing', I believe that John, in the selection and presentation of his material, aimed as their pastor to bring about "significant change in the hearts, minds, bodies of individuals by enabling them to think about things differently, to see the world in a new way, and to experience a new openness" (Capps 1990:56). I believe that John's pastoral approach was similar to Capps' counselling technique of reframing, in that it was "intentional" (1990:10) in the way he formulated and implemented a plan (1990:22) which challenged his hearers/readers to "see their situation in a very different light, within a frame of reference to which they were unaccustomed" (1990:59).

I suggest that in the pages of the Fourth Gospel, we witness the skill and pastoral care of John, reframing the above mentioned 'critical events' in a radically different way so as to shift the perception of these events from negative to positive ones. He presents the reader with a strikingly new and positive perspective which alters the meaning of the events and experiences and so he empowers them to remain firm in the faith. Although the members of the Johannine community experienced expulsion from the synagogue, persecution (Jn.9:22; 16:2), they were not alone – Jesus had experienced the same (15:20). Although they were hated by the world, Jesus too was on the receiving end of this hatred, together with the Father (15:18, 23-25). They need not despair or be ashamed of their sufferings, as these were on account of Jesus' name, because "they do not know him who sent me" (15:21). Although they faced the crisis of Jesus' death and departure, John's Jesus reassures them not to be troubled and upset because he would go ahead to prepare a place for them and would come back to take them to himself (14:1-4). Jesus' departure was not to be understood as a negative event – on the contrary, it was to their *advantage* that Jesus go away, as then the Father would send another Paraclete to be with them forever (16:7) so they would not be left as orphans (14:8). These are some of the ways I believe John changed the perceptions of these apparently negative events into positive ones, and so gave the Johannine community new hope and encouragement in the face of these critical events. In doing this, I believe John's

methodology is consistent with Capps' modern day technique of reframing as a pastoral way of responding to the crisis faced by the Johannine community.

4.5.2 A Reframing of Beliefs

Not only did John engage in reframing critical events, but he also was involved in a process of reframing the belief system of the Johannine Christians. "The Johannine community had made a choice between Jesus and Judaism – and this resulted in them being expelled from the synagogues and being forced to leave Judaism behind" (Brown 1978:48). They were cut off from the parent Jewish religious community. In order to make sense of this crisis of rejection and excommunication, the Jewish traditions needed to be re-interpreted and a new meaning system created. I believe John as a pastor embarked on a process of reframing as he set about presenting a different perspective on these events, and re-interpreting them in a positive light so as to give them new meaning. He showed the members of the Johannine community that they were called to a higher form of Judaism, far greater than what they had to leave behind. Their faith and belief in Jesus as both human and divine was in a sense a new and better Judaism (Brown 1979:50); a new and better belief system. They would be encouraged by realising that what was lost through being expelled from the synagogues and being ostracised by the parent Jewish community was nothing in comparison to the benefits in gaining a new relationship with God through Jesus and a new identity as a family, the "children of God" (Jn. 1:12). Furthermore, Brown suggests that "John preserved the terminology of the older, lower Christology while giving it new meaning" (Brown 1979:53), which is precisely what the process of reframing sets out to do.

Whereas the idea of seeing Jesus replacing Judaism is not a new one (eg Brown's 1979:48; Kysar 1984:24; Keener 2003a:493, 509), I would argue that it is an essential part of the pastoral process undertaken by John in using the technique of reframing a belief system in response to a crisis. In essence I believe that in assisting the Johannine community to reframe their belief system, John used a legitimate and recognised method in pastoral care, as did Rabban Yohanan Ben Zakkai his contemporary in the late first century.

I come now to a discussion of certain texts in John's Gospel. I have deliberately selected passages which I believe are helpful examples to illustrate the pastoral technique of reframing. I acknowledge that the line between this technique and others (such as reinterpreting the tradition, replacement theology, re-examining beliefs) is not always clear. Likewise there may well be other passages that could be included and highlighted. However for the purpose of this thesis, I believe and will show how these chosen passages are clear examples demonstrating John's methodology of reframing, with special relevance to the teaching and practice of Judaism.

The members of the community needed help as they moved out of Judaism into the Johannine community, with its attendant challenges. John's reframing of the old world (symbolic universe) enabled them to make the transition into the new world of the Community. This is clearly spelled out in the following passages.

4.5.3 The Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12)

The account of the wedding at Cana in Galilee is the first of the seven signs in John's Gospel that describe a miraculous event which is intended to point and direct viewers and readers to a revelation as to the true identity of the divine Jesus and his glory. This event resulted in the disciples believing in him (Jn. 2:11). No parallels to this incident are found in the synoptic gospels, making it part of John's unique presentation of the Jesus story. However it is possible that this miracle story could be related to the synoptic gospel tradition where Jesus speaks in parables, comparing the kingdom of heaven to a *wedding banquet*.

A similar theme or message to John's story is evident in the synoptic passages where the metaphor of new wine not being poured into old wineskins is presented. (Matt. 9:17; see also Mk. 2:22; Lk. 5:37-39). This synoptic parable raises questions "about the whole structure of Jewish ceremonial in the light of the arrival of the kingdom" (English 1992:71). Dray suggests in this parable Jesus seems to be comparing the old system of ceremonies with the new age that he introduced: "The good news of Jesus and the life and power it brought could not be contained in the

old rigid framework” (1998:109). Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:155) indicate that this metaphor communicates the idea that over against Judaism, the message of Jesus is essentially new. Furthermore, Jesus brings a new and better quality to Israel. In the words of Malina and Rohrbaugh,

Jesus’ project involves something new. In the context of traditional Israelite expectations, it fits like...new wine in an old wineskin. It simply cannot be applied to anything earlier without ruining previous social structures, symbolised by...bursting. The forthcoming theocracy cannot be compromised; it will do away with previous forms of Israelite living (2003:60).

Green, McKnight, and Marshall (1992:130) conclude that “Doubtless John sees the changing of water (set aside for rites of purification) into wine by Jesus as symbolic of the transition from the old age to the new”.

Why has John chosen to select and include this unique miracle? In line with my hypothesis, in what way is the account of the Wedding at Cana an example of reframing in John’s writings, in response to the crisis faced by the Johannine community?

I shall first look at the story itself, before highlighting signs of reframing. Not much detail is given concerning the wedding itself (Jn. 2:1,2) as clearly the significance of the event lies rather in what Jesus would accomplish through it. In antiquity a wedding feast was a formal, elaborate banquet. It was a ritual festive meal, marking the important social change for the couple and their families. It was a “joining of the honor and interests of two families with a view to new life” and a “significant public demonstration of family honor” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:70). On this occasion, a crisis occurs, with the potential of causing not only huge embarrassment but also extreme loss of family honour and giving rise to rumour and gossip. The unthinkable had happened – they ran out of wine! (2:3). This would indicate both a lack of adequate financial resources as well as a lack of friends (1998:70).

Jesus’ mother (not named in this gospel) is the one who alerts Jesus to the catastrophe – perhaps an initial sign of faith on her part. She apparently believes that Jesus might in some way be able to rescue the situation. Jesus rebukes her (Jn.

2:4), perhaps implying that he will not allow either his mother or any other human to manipulate him or dictate to him what he should do. His cryptic comment “My hour has not yet come” (2:4) is seen later to refer to the hour of his passion (7:30; 8:20), enabling readers to see that Jesus’ actions can only be interpreted retrospectively in the light of this death and resurrection. She accepts his rebuke but nevertheless directs the servants to do as he commands (2:5). Jesus instructs the servants to fill the six stone water jars with water (which the reader is told were for the Jewish rites of purification), right to the brim (2:6-7). When they took some to the chief steward, it was found to be a superior quality wine (2:8-10). In this action, Jesus does not hesitate to suspend ritual law, symbolized by water, in favour of saving a friend’s honour (Keener 2003a:492). The end result was that through this Jesus revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him (2:11).

Although the form of the text is that of a typical miracle story (Bultmann et al 1971:115), in my view it carries much more significance than that of a mere miracle story. The account of changing water into wine is, I suggest, selected and included by John because it has symbolic value far beyond the extraordinary act itself. For Bultmann, it is “the symbol which occurs throughout the whole of Jesus’ ministry, that is, the revelation of the $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ of Jesus” (1971:119). However, the significance of the miracle does not end here. I would suggest that this miracle, performed at the start of Jesus’ ministry, sets the tone to begin the process of reframing the belief system for the Johannine community.

How does John do this? The first clue is found in the detail concerning both the function and number of water jars. John underlines that they had been set aside for the Jewish rites of ritual purification or cleansing (Jn. 2:6). Green (et al) note that the early history of Jewish hand-washing before meals is largely unknown (1992:128). According to Mark (7:3, 5) it appears such hand-washing was required by the “tradition of the elders” (1992:128). They note that in John (2:6) the assumption is that the practice of hand-washing before meals was customary among Jews (1992:128). According to the *Archaeological Study Bible* (2005:1724), Jews became routinely ceremonially defiled during the normal circumstances of daily life, and they were cleansed by pouring water over their hands. For a lengthy feast with many

guests, a large amount of water was required for this purpose. The significance of the number six (the number of water jars) has been a topic under much discussion. Bruner (2012:139) agrees with scholars such as Schnackenburg who believe “It would be idle to look for a symbolic value in the number six” (1968: 332). However other scholars (for example Barrett 1978:191; Dodd 1953:299) argue that John most likely intends symbolism in the number of the jars. The number seven is known to represent completeness or perfection, with six being one less than perfect. If the number of jars has been deliberately included by John, then these six jars could well “symbolize not the total ineffectiveness of the Jewish ritual and cult, but rather its failure to attain to the full perfection which is to be found only with Jesus, the true *logos*” (Suggit 1993:44). Brown adds, “The Jewish dispensation, typified by its ceremonial water, was partial and imperfect” (Brown 1978:191), compared to the new order brought in by Jesus who represents, as Moloney suggests, “the perfection of the former gift of the Law” (2005:158).

However, regardless of the number of water jars used, the significance in the miracle lies in the fact that water used for purification rites, was changed into wine. Keener explains “Jesus replaced water that was pure, at least by the host’s standards, with what could not be pure for washing by anyone’s standards” (2003a:513). In doing so, Jesus “sets aside the purificatory purpose of waterpots that embody traditional religious practices” (2003a:492). As good as these purifying rites may be, they are limited, and will be transformed by the action of Jesus. John reframes the belief that ritual purification is obtained by pouring water over hands – instead a person becomes cleansed or purified through faith in Jesus, who is “the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Jn.1:29). Keener adds, “At the Gospel’s first Passover festival, God’s lamb then purifies the temple itself” (Keener 2003a:492)

John’s reframing process does not simply end with the purification rite itself being transformed. In this miracle, John highlights the relationship between Judaism and Jesus. Following the arrival of Jesus, the Hebraic-Jewish tradition is purified and transformed from the inferior old ‘water’ into a new ‘wine’, a wine of superior quality (2:10). In the words of Kysar, “The revelation of God’s glory challenges and transforms the established religion” (1984:25). What have other scholars said

concerning John's unique miracle at Cana? Schnackenburg interprets the miracle as follows:

[It] represents Jesus' break with Judaism and the superiority of the New Testament to the Old. The precious wine of the Gospel is contrasted with the water of Jewish rites of purification, the order of grace with that of the law (1968:339).

Milne describes Jesus as bringing the "wine of the kingdom to the water of Judaism" (1993:74). Suggit writes, "The wine of the Jews, the Torah, the Covenant, had run its course and was to be superseded by the wine which Jesus would provide" (1993:42). Barrett puts it this way, "It seems clear that John meant to show the supersession of Judaism in the glory of Jesus" (1978:189). Kysar sums up the meaning of the sign "This is part one of John's special themes, namely, that the revelation of God in Christ is the further and full maturation of the ancient tradition of God's work among the people of Israel" (1984:24). Quite correctly Kysar concludes that John uses this miracle to suggest that Jesus' life and ministry is "the re-creation of the Jewish faith" (1984:24), or in Keener's words, a "replacement" of the Jewish faith. He writes "the waterpots, associated with ritual purity, come to be used for a new purpose" (2003a:509). He continues,

In John's symbolic world, even his language here will suggest replacement of some sort: Jesus baptism is greater than traditional purification (3:25-26), one may prize purity while seeking Jesus' death (18:28), and when she discovers Jesus' living water the Samaritan woman later leaves her 'waterpot' behind (4:28). In the milieu of John and his audience, the purity of water also excludes other elements mixed in with it, and wine is specifically mentioned as a substance that must not be mixed with the water if it is to be valid for purifications (2003:509-510).

I suggest that what we have seen through this miracle story, is that John has reframed Jewish faith and tradition by presenting his readers with a new perspective – helpfully summarized in the words of Bruner, "Jesus transforms the water of Judaism into the new wine of Christianity" (2012:134).

In conclusion, how and why has John used this story to reframe the belief system of the Johannine community in crisis?

In changing water (associated with Jewish cleansing rituals) into superior quality wine (seven jars full), I would argue that John is beginning to offer a different perspective on Judaism and their new found faith in Jesus. By virtue of their public confession of Jesus as Messiah, the Johannine community had been ostracised, cut off and disowned by the Jewish community. Instead of seeing this as a loss, and something negative, John reframes the situation by presenting them with a new perspective. He shows them that even though they have been cut off and forced to leave Judaism behind, they have in fact gained far more through their relationship with Jesus. He sheds new meaning on the situation. The 'new wine' of Jesus is far superior to the 'old water' of Judaism, and is free and in abundance. Furthermore, the Jewish cleansing rituals will no longer be necessary, for as John the Baptist had declared – Jesus replaces these rituals in that he himself is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" (Jn. 1:29).

Furthermore, this miracle takes place in the context of a wedding which is a ritual festive meal. Such meals "mark[s] some individual or group's transition or transformation" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:71) – a wedding marks the transition from leaving one's parents and a life of singleness, to being united to one's spouse and forming a new social unit in the community. Perhaps John is subtly using the symbolism of what happens when a couple gets married, to offer a new perspective on the seemingly negative event of being cut off and separated from the parent Jewish community – he reframes this 'negative event'. Just as a couple undergoes a social change through marriage; the Johannine community too, as a group, have experienced a transition or transformation. They have left the 'parent community' of Judaism behind, and formed a new community. They are no longer associated with the old water of Judaism, but instead, through their belief and trust in Jesus they have become members of a new social group and family, and are transformed into the new wine of the children of God (Jn. 1:12).

The unique miracle of the changing of water into wine at Cana recorded by John has certainly been selected and included in John's Gospel as a sign which reveals Jesus' glory and results in people believing in him (Jn.2:11). However, in my view, it also can be seen as an illustration of John's use of the technique of reframing as a tool to give a new perspective and new meaning to the Johannine community in response to the crisis they were facing.

The next passage I have chosen to illustrate John's process of reframing a belief system, is John's version of the cleansing of the Temple.

4.5.4 Jesus cleanses the Temple (John 2:13-22)

Before highlighting signs of reframing Jewish beliefs evident in this passage, I shall begin by looking at the content of the passage, and noting its differences in comparison with the Synoptics. This will give a clearer view as to John's intention in including it in his Gospel. This account, commonly referred to as the cleansing or purging of the temple, has a strong concentration on the Jewish context in all that unfolds. Jesus went to Jerusalem and to the temple because the Passover of the Jews was near. The insertion of the words "the Jews" is probably an indication that the Church no longer observed the feast because it had already been fulfilled in and through Jesus (Beasley-Murray 1987:39). Annual attendance at three feasts was commanded in the law – Passover, Pentecost (Harvest/Weeks) and Tabernacles (Booths) (see Ex. 23:14-17; Deut. 16:16). If it was not possible for people to attend all three, the Passover was deemed to be the priority. Hence the setting for this event would have been extremely strategic and very visible – because most Jewish males would have been in Jerusalem at this time, giving Jesus maximum exposure.

John's narrative is similar to that of the other Gospels (Matt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-18; Lk.19:45-46), but the author uses a unique version of the tradition. There are two significant variations.

Firstly, the *context* in which the story is placed is different. In the Synoptics this is recorded towards the end of Jesus' ministry, after the triumphant entry into Jerusalem. However in John, it is placed right near the beginning of Jesus' ministry,

as his first public and very visible act. This is significant, because as Kysar suggests, John “believes it is the paradigm of the whole of Jesus’ life and ministry. Jesus’ life means that Judaism – indeed human religion in general – can never be the same” (1984:25).

What happened? In the temple (ἱεροῦ - referring to the whole temple precinct) (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:372) Jesus found people engaging in commercial business practices – selling cattle, sheep and doves as well as money-changing (Jn. 2:14). Whereas this was not praiseworthy, it was not intrinsically wrong (Moloney 1998:76). He made a whip and drove out all people and animals, overturned the tables of the money changers, attacking what he saw to be the abuse of the ἱεροῦ. His anger was clearly directed at those detracting from worship, rather than those leading it. He told the dove sellers to stop making his Father’s house (τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρὸς) into a house of merchandising (οἶκον ἐμπορίου.) (2:16). It is noticeable that John’s Jesus changes the word from ‘temple’ (τό ἱερόν) to ‘house’ (ὁ οἶκος). He is saying in essence that the temple (τό ἱερόν) is not simply a place where people come to encounter God, but where “the God of Israel, whom Jesus calls ‘my Father’, has his dwelling (οἶκος)” (Moloney 1998:77) (note that Arndt and Gingrich give the meaning of οἶκος as both house and dwelling 1979:560).

Here John uses the technique of reframing to give a new meaning to what the Jews understood about the temple. It is not rightfully theirs (they have abused it and turned it into a market place): the temple in fact belongs to Jesus because it is the house of his Father (τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρὸς). For the Johannine community banished from places of Jewish worship, John provides a new a perspective. The temple of the Jews is in fact the house of the *Father of Jesus*, and therefore by implication must surely belong to them as well, being ‘the children of God’ (Jn. 1:12). This would mean that following the crisis of being excluded and unwelcome by the Jewish authorities, the Johannine community find themselves (from God’s perspective) wonderfully included and belonging.

The second thing that is different in John, is the *discussion* that arises following Jesus’ actions (Jn. 2:18-25), which is not included in the synoptic accounts. The

enraged Jews demand to know what gives him the right to challenge the practices of the temple personnel. John deliberately wants his readers to start asking strategic questions concerning Jesus' true identity. 'Who is this man?' 'What gives him the right to behave in this manner?' When challenged by the religious leaders for some kind of sign as justification for his authority to indulge in this confrontational behaviour, he responds: "Destroy this temple (ναὸν τοῦτον = inner part of Jewish temple; sanctuary) (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:533; Brown 1966:115), and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). This Johannine symbolic language is a classic example of a 'misunderstanding' (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:230). This style of writing is used to provoke listeners to question what is said in order to bring out a clarification. So when Jesus is speaking of spiritual matters, the listeners instead take his words literally and they need to be shown the true meaning. "By means of this technique the Johannine narrative succeeds in explain more fully the matter it is actually dealing with" (du Rand 1994:21). This technique of 'misunderstanding' is similar to one of Capps' pastoral techniques used in reframing which he calls "Confusion". He describes it as making "a confusing statement that leads the client to have to depend on their own problem solving skills, and struggle through to their own interpretation and resolution of the problem" (1990:33). This is precisely what John wants his readers to do with Jesus' statement concerning his ability to raise up the temple in three days.

What did Jesus mean when he said that if the temple was destroyed he would raise it up? Schnackenburg (1968:349) notes that the verb for destroy (λύσατε) and raise up (ἐγερῆς αὐτόν) can be applied both to the tearing down and reconstructing of a building, as well as the destruction and resurrection of the body of Jesus. As irony intended by the author, these words completely confuse the Jews (Jn. 2:20). Jesus is not meaning the destruction and rebuilding of the physical stone building of the temple (ἱεροῦ), as they assumed he meant, but rather the future event of his own death and resurrection; literally translated as "the raising of the sanctuary of his body" (τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ) (2:21). This statement of Jesus is explained by the narrator. John implies that "At a time when there is no longer a Temple in Jerusalem, believing readers of the Fourth Gospel will experience the presence of the crucified yet risen Jesus as their 'Temple'" (Moloney 1998:79). Malina and

Rohrbaugh note that scholars are not in agreement as to whether this incident is an attempt to reform the temple, or a prophetic action intended to symbolise the forthcoming destruction of the temple (1998:73). In any case, the meaning for John is to be found in the words of Jesus.

This statement of Jesus “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn. 2:19) I suggest lies at the heart of John’s technique of reframing in this passage. In order to appreciate how John uses these words of Jesus as part of his reframing technique, it is necessary to highlight the significance of the place of the temple in Jewish belief and worship.

4.5.4.1 Reframing the understanding of where God is found

The Jews understood the temple to be the place where God’s glory dwelt on earth. It was the area where God was to be found among his people. John reframes this belief by claiming that in Jesus the specific place where God is to be found has now shifted from the physical temple building in Jerusalem to the person of Jesus himself. In the words of Bowker, “Jesus fulfils the Temple, for he himself is the place where God is present (2:21) (1998:313). This is true regardless of whether the temple was still standing or had already been destroyed, as God’s glory would be found not in a building but in a person. “The Temple of Jerusalem may have been destroyed, but it has been replaced by the body of Jesus which is the true Temple” (Brown 1979:49). Suggit suggests “Jesus is to be seen as the new Temple, the new centre and focus of worship” (1993:49).

All this would only become clear after his resurrection, but John plants this message in their minds right here at the start of Jesus’ public ministry (Kysar 1984:25). In hindsight the disciples remembered what he had said and believed the scripture (Jn. 2:21-22).

Having been rejected by the Jewish community and no longer welcome in places of worship, John has reframed (for the Johannine community) their understanding of where God is to be found – he gives them a new perspective. God is not restricted to the temple but is found in the very person of Jesus. As Yohanan replaced the

Temple with the home of the Jews, John replaces the Temple with the person of Jesus. In this way he is reassuring them that they have not been separated from God who supposedly resides in the temple, because God is in fact with them in the person of Jesus. He is the 'Word made flesh'; God in human form (Jn.1:14).

4.5.4.2 Reframing the sacrificial system of worship

John continues by reframing their understanding of worship by providing a new perspective on the sacrificial system of temple worship. The animals and birds mentioned in John (2:14) were prescribed in Leviticus (1:3-17) to be used for sacrifices for atonement and purification. This function of offering sacrifices, central to temple worship, becomes no longer necessary as it is fulfilled in Jesus. "Jesus purified the temple, showing thereby that he had come to remove all barriers to the true worship of God" (Scott 1952:19). No longer was it necessary for believers to worship following the system of religious observances of offering sacrifices at the temple – for in the symbolic action of cleansing (purging) the temple and throwing out the sacrificial animals, Jesus introduced a new order of worship. "By temporarily disrupting the trade necessary for sacrifice, Jesus foreshadowed the permanent cessation of sacrificial worship in Jerusalem and its replacement by his own death" (Koester 2003:88). This symbolic action of cleansing the temple took place during the Passover festival (Jn.2:13), when lambs were killed in remembrance of the time when Israel was set free and delivered from bondage in Egypt. At a later Passover, when Jesus would face his death at this crucifixion, he would become the sacrificial lamb who 'takes away the sin of the world' as proclaimed by John the Baptist (1:29).

4.5.4.3 Reframing the understanding of true worship

Even though the Johannine community was expelled from Jewish places of worship, and one day the physical temple would be destroyed, John reframes his readers understanding of true worship. It is no longer essential for people to find and worship God in the physical place of Jerusalem, or in a building designated for worship, as believed by the Jews. In chapter four, in Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, John highlights and expands on this new approach to worship. It

is no longer the *place* of worship that matters. Rather what is important *how* one worships, which needs to be in “Spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:21-24). This is only possible for those who have been “born of the Spirit”, and not simply “born of the flesh” (3:5-7).

4.5.4.4 Reframing the symbol of unity represented by the temple

The temple was seen to be a symbol of unity for the people of Israel. “Reverence for the Jerusalem temple helped to give a distinctive identity to Jews scattered across the Graeco-Roman world and into Babylonia” (Koester 2003:88). Gentiles could worship in the temple, but only in a limited way as certain sections were reserved for Jews only. John identifies Jesus as the new temple, who would (after his death and resurrection) become the unifying symbol for all God’s children (as defined in Jn. 1:12) in the same way that the temple building had been before. Having lost their identity as the People of Israel when they were cut off from the Jewish community and banished from Jewish places of worship, the Johannine community can take comfort in the realisation that in Jesus, the temple, they have a new and distinctive identity. Through him they would be united to one another - and indeed be united to the whole community of those called to worship in Spirit and in truth (4:24).

In summary, both the miracle at Cana and the Cleansing of the temple seem to serve as signs which point to the same fundamental truth, namely that Jesus has come to establish a new order in religion (Bruner 2012:125; Dodd 1963:303). Kysar suggests that both these incidents

[C]ause a transformation of the Jewish faith...In fact we are driven back to the cosmic beginning of John’s story of Jesus. He is rejected by his own people (Jn. 1:11) even though he is the completion and fulfilment of the religious faith by which they intend to structure their lives (1:17-18) (1984:36).

In conclusion, the Johannine community had left behind the temple with its sacrificial system of worship; they had been expelled from the synagogues and made to feel excluded and unwanted – yet John showed them that in Jesus they have been given a new order of religion. They have gained far more than they have lost. In Jesus they

find the true temple, the dwelling place of God. Their life of worship of God is no longer confined to a specific place (Jerusalem, the temple building) nor does it require animal sacrifices. They have been cut off from the parent Jewish community of faith with its religious practices and places, but have gained in Jesus the true temple – access to God, forgiveness for their sins, a new understanding of worship, a new identity and unity with all who worship ‘in Spirit and in truth’ (Jn. 4:24).

John has taken the story of the cleansing of the temple, also found in the Synoptics, but given it a different context and added to it an important discussion on the temple. In this way, he gives a unique presentation of the Jesus tradition and uses this event as part of his process in reframing the belief system.

4.5.5 Festival of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:1-10:21)

The last passage I have chosen, for the purpose of demonstrating John’s use of the reframing technique, comes within the broader context of John chapters 7 to 10:21. This is the Jewish Festival of Booths or Tabernacles, which ends with another festival being introduced at 10:22 – the Feast of Dedication. At various points in this narrative, John reframes the common understanding of this particular Jewish feast by reinterpreting specific rituals thus giving them new meaning and providing a different perspective.

The feast of Tabernacles was the most popular of the three pilgrimage feasts, and was described by Josephus as being “especially sacred and important to the Hebrews” (Moloney 1998:233). Pilgrims came to Jerusalem by the thousands for a corporate time of prayer and celebration (Koester 2003:197). A central feature was the building of tabernacles or booths, which represented the tent experience of the Israelites in the wilderness during which time God was pleased to manifest himself in the Tabernacle. During the seven days of the festival, the men slept and ate their meals in their booths (Moloney 1998:233). On the eighth day they specifically gave thanks for YHWH’s protection during the Exodus in the wilderness. The festival took place in autumn towards the end of their long, dry harvest season (September - October) just ahead of the rainy season, so it included special prayers of thanks for

the blessings of God in the harvest and requesting an abundance of rain as a sign of God's on-going care which would bring prosperity to his people (Morris 1971: 419-420; Sloyan 1988: 91; Moloney 1998:234; Koester 2003:197).

4.5.5.1 Rivers of living water (Jn. 7:37-44)

One of the major elements which formed a significant part of the festival rituals was the 'Water Libation Ceremony'. This ritual was rich in its symbolic actions, laying an ideal foundation for John to show how Jesus' presence gives them new meaning. Every morning, the priests and singing Levites would lead the people in a procession to the Pool of Siloam, which was a main water source for Jerusalem. There one of the priests would fill a golden jug with water, then process back to the temple area through the Water Gate which led to the sanctuary, to the sounding of the ram's horn (Moloney 1998:234; Koester 2003:197).

According to Rabbinic literature the Water Gate had eschatological significance as through it waters of life from the threshold of the Temple would flow (cf. *t. Sukk.* 3:2-10; *Gen. Rab.* 28:18; *m. Šeqal.* 6:3; *m. Mid.* 2:6). The crowds would wave lulabs (bundles of leafy branches from trees typically associated with water) while saying verses from the Psalms "O give thanks to the Lord for he is good....Save us we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!" (Ps. 118:1, 25) (Moloney1998:234). On arrival at the altar the priest would pour the water from Siloam and wine into two small bowls with a spout that drained onto the altar (cf. *m. Sukk.* 4:9). On the seventh day of the feast, the procession around the altar was repeated seven times (cf. *m. Sukk.* 4:5). This symbolic action was a prayer that in the same way that God provided water for them in the past in the wilderness, he would bless them again with the gift of good rains and make them prosperous in the coming year (Moloney 1998:234-235; Koester 2003: 195,197-198). Dodd notes that "the idea of the satisfaction of the need for water to live recurs in rabbinic discussions of the festival and its meaning" (1953:349).

The ceremony anticipates future blessings. According to Bruner (2012:489-490), the following scriptures from the Old Testament may have been on Jesus and/or John's

minds during this festival, starting with the words of the prophet Isaiah when he said: “I am about to do a new thing now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Is.43:19), and “Ho everyone who thirst, come to the waters” (Is.55:1). Other sources might be Ezekiel, who had a vision of God’s glory returning to the house of the Lord and rivers flowing from it enlivening the desert regions (Ezek.47:1-12). Joel foresaw that when the Lord God comes to dwell in Zion “all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the Lord’s house and will water the valley of acacias” (Joel 3:18). The association with water also links this festival with the end of time when living water would flow out from Jerusalem in summer and winter (Zech. 14:8-9) and all surviving nations will go to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles and if they fail to go “there will be no rain upon them” (Zech. 14:12, 17).

The water ceremony was associated with Jewish messianic expectations in which a teacher like Moses, the eschatological prophet of Deuteronomy (ch.18), is linked with the gift of water from the well, the interpretation of the Law/Torah. Stories about Moses providing water for the people in the desert were retold at the festival (Ex. 17:1-6; Num. 20:2-13). God had promised that he would raise up a new prophet, like Moses (Deut. 18:15-18) and considering he had made rivers of water flow from the rock to quench their thirst, the expectation was that the future prophet would do the same (Moloney 1998:234-235; Koester 2003: 195,197-198). According to Samaritan eschatology, the Messiah was Moses, but this idea is not found in Judaism – so Moses is never called Messiah. Instead in Judaism he is called the Redeemer and compared to the Messiah; Moses works miracles (bread from heaven) as the first redeemer and the Messiah does miracles as the second redeemer (Meeks 1967).

The Water Libation Ceremony in the context of this festival provided the perfect setting for Jesus’ proclamation on the final day: “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believers heart (κοιλίας = belly or womb) shall flow rivers of living water’ ” (Jn. 7:37-38).

Jesus had previously introduced this theme of living water in his personal encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn.4:1-15). Yet that had been a private conversation. Here, in the presence of all those who were at this great festival, the Greek indicates that Jesus was standing (εἰστήκει – rather than sitting as Rabbi's did when they taught), and he cried out (ἔκραξεν) – implying the special significance of his words (Keener 2003a:722) and suggesting he wanted to ensure that the maximum number of people would hear. This proclamation of Jesus ends with a word of clarification given by John as narrator, when he states that “Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (7:39). In other words, the significance of the living water is explained in terms of the Holy Spirit which the believers would receive only after Jesus had been glorified (after his death and resurrection).

It is significant that Jesus spoke these words on the last and eighth day of the festival, the climax of the feast – when the symbol of water had been eliminated from the ceremony, as it makes his claim even more impressive (Morris 1971: 422; Moloney 1998:252). He takes the water symbolism of the festival and speaks into it as he tells of the living water that *he* will provide. “Coming on the last day of the Feast of Sukkoth and in the temple, this declaration of Jesus suggests that he is the life-nurturing water for which the pilgrims prayed” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:154). His invitation “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink” closely resembles the word of God spoken through the prophet Isaiah “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters”(Is. 55:1). He turns the attention of his listeners who are thinking of rain, and their physical needs, to “the deep need of the soul and to the way he would supply it” (Morris 1971: 421). The implication is that Jesus alone can meet the spiritual thirst of humankind in a way that cannot be found elsewhere.

So within the context of this festival full of water libations and the promise of the expected Messiah and a new prophet like Moses in bringing forth water, John presents Jesus proclaiming in the Temple that *he himself* is the source and provider of living water – referring to the Holy Spirit which they would receive after he had been glorified. This causes division among the people as some recognise him as the

prophet spoken of in Deuteronomy (18:18), and others conclude he is the Messiah (Jn. 7:40-42).

Having outlined the background to the Water Libation Ceremony, in what way might John have used this unique passage as part of his process of reframing to help his community in crisis? In the words of Jesus: “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believers heart (κοιλίας = belly or womb) shall flow rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:37-38), it is evident that John takes the symbolism of water and their symbolic rituals and reinterprets them for his Johannine community. He gives these well-known Jewish symbols new meaning and offers a different perspective. It will no longer be necessary for the Johannine community (who have been disowned and rejected by the Jewish religious authorities) to participate in this daily water libation ceremony with all its rituals, bringing water to the Temple from the pool of Siloam, and letting it flow from the altar. Why? John reveals that Jesus himself is the source of living water who is easily accessible for *anyone* who thirsts (Ἐάν τις διψᾷ) and for *he who* believes in him (ὁ πιστεύων). This new perspective is evidence of John’s pastoral technique of reframing at work.

John reframes the rituals of the Jewish feast by identifying Jesus as “the one in whom the hopes of the festival find fulfilment” (Koester 2003:198). The only conditions required in order for a person to receive the gift of this living water are to come towards Jesus (Jn. 7:37 ἐρχέσθω πρός με) and have faith/believe in him (7:38 ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ). For the Johannine community, no longer welcome in this popular Jewish festival of Tabernacles, John has made it clear that they are none the poorer for it, as this feast is no longer necessary and in Jesus alone they have all they need.

There has been considerable discussion surrounding the precise meaning and interpretation of John chapter 7 verse 38 (ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ, καθὼς εἶπεν ἡ γραφή, ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ ῥεύσουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος). Firstly, the allusion to “scripture” (Jn.7:38) “has sent scholars looking for the exact source of his reference” (Keener 2003a:727). Sloyan suggests that “It may be a targumic reframing of Psalm

78:16 or Zechariah 14:8-9, the latter a reading for the feast of Sukkoth which refers to a spring flowing out of the Jerusalem temple 'on that day'" (1988:91). Keener concurs with scholars who argue "that John elsewhere midrashically blends various texts and that he is following that practice here" (2003a:728).

Secondly, there appears to be ambiguity concerning from whom does the water flow? Is this referring to Jesus, the believer, or both? (See detailed discussions by Morris 1971:442-434; Keener 2003a:728-730; Bruner 2012:488; 490-492). Bruner notes that it was largely the Western Fathers (Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus Tertullian, Cyprian) who interpreted the verse as applying *exclusively to Christ* (2012:491). This view is supported by modern scholars such as Bultmann (1971:303); Schnackenburg (1968:1:153-154); Moloney (1998:253); Keener (2003a:730). The Eastern Fathers (Origen, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil and Chrysostom) are those who applied the text to *believers in Christ* (Bruner 2012:491). This view is supported by, for example Lindars (1972:301) and Ridderbos (1997:273-274). The 'Double Interpretation' (that the waters flow from *both Christ and the believers*) is a view proposed by Luther, *LW* 23:273 and supported by modern scholars such as Hoskyns (1947:321-322) and Barrett (1978:326, 328).

I agree with Bruner in support of the 'Double Interpretation' view, suggesting that water flows from "*both* the giving Christ *and* the receiving Christian, each of whom overflows with resources to the surrounding needy" (2012:488). This seems to make most sense in the light of John chapter four. First and foremost Jesus identified *himself* as the source and giver of living water (Jn. 4:10-14a). This water is a gift that *he* gives to those who ask (4:10). Then Jesus suggests that the Samaritan Woman (representing believers) herself would become "a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (4:14). It appears that this 'life giving water' flowed from the believing Samaritan woman immediately afterwards, when she shared her testimony resulting in many Samaritans from the city believing in Jesus (4:39). Hence it seems that in "chapter 4 it is *both* Jesus *and* the Samaritan Woman who overflow with living water" (Bruner 2012:488).

In issuing the invitation to 'come and drink again' (previously to the Samaritan woman) in the context of the Water Libation Ceremony rituals (Jn.7: 37,38a), this time in public, Jesus fulfils the scriptures looking forward to the day when the Lord will satisfy his thirsty people with living water (eg. Is. 55:1) and concerning future blessings promising rivers of living water flowing from the Temple and invigorating the desert regions. In Ezekiel (47:1-11) the waters flowed from the threshold of the Temple and now Jesus proclaims that the life-giving waters flow from within *him* (he had previously identified his body as the Temple in 2:19-21). John shows that the prophecy is transferred from the place to a person (Barrett 1978:328). Jesus himself is the source and origin of the water. "He perfects the symbol of the definitive mediation of God's gift of water from the well of the Torah promised by the water celebrations of the feast of Tabernacles" (Moloney 1998:253).

Jesus is identified as being the ultimate source and provider of the gift of living water, but this water is channelled through the believer to others (Morris 1971:426-427). The Johannine community would both receive and give the living water. The OT scriptures promised that the Lord would satisfy his people with living water and then bless the world through these 'refreshed' people.

Since Jesus believes that he himself as Risen Lord will embody God's Temple (John 2:21), the waters that come flowing from the Temple in the Old Testament promises are understood in the Johannine Church as flowing from Jesus to those who come to him, and then through these blessed persons the waters come flowing out to fructify the earth and to refresh the seas- in short, to bring blessings to a needy world (Bruner 2012:489).

John concludes this saying of Jesus by adding a commentary, wherein he explains that "Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn. 7:39). On Easter Sunday evening, the risen Jesus breathed on the believing disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (20:22). Jesus could only do that because his glorification was now complete. Through his death on the cross, he had become, in the words of John the Baptist, the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (1:29). The blood and water flowing from his side when pierced on the cross (19:34)

probably symbolises his atonement for our sins (blood) and the gift of the Holy Spirit (water) (Bruner 2012:488). Jesus' work was done, and now all that was necessary was for the believers to come and drink, come and receive the Spirit, so that out of them might flow rivers of living water. Morris suggests this to mean that when anyone comes to believe in Jesus "the scriptures referring to the activity of the Holy Spirit are fulfilled" (1971:424).

I suggest that John in his brief comment probably points to the period after Pentecost when the Spirit would be poured out on all believers. Jesus had told his disciples that it would be better for them if he went away as otherwise the Holy Spirit would not come (Jn. 15:7). After Pentecost, the Spirit was present in the lives of the believers fully and permanently, and gave them the power needed to continue as faithful witnesses to Jesus, even in the face of severe hardships.

When the apostles spoke so *fluently* of the things of God, as the Spirit gave them *utterance* (Acts 2:4), and afterwards preached and *wrote* the gospel of Christ with such a *flood* of divine eloquence, then this was fulfilled, '*Out of his belly shall flow rivers*' (Bruner 2012: 490).

The mission of the Johannine community was to bear testimony to Jesus and be a blessing to others. In the light of the crises they were facing (being persecuted, rejected, or disowned) it would have been understandable if they questioned their faith and were tempted to give in to despair. Seeing all the Jewish people come to the popular festival, perhaps they longed to be included in the joyous festivities and wondered if they had done the right thing by giving it all up for the sake of Jesus. So John, as their pastor, speaks a word of encouragement in the context of their popular Festival of Tabernacles to give them a new perspective. He uses the symbolism of water and associated Old Testament scriptures to reframe their understanding of the feast in the light of the presence of Jesus. Out of Jesus, the true Temple, flow the promised streams of living water. He alone can satisfy their deep thirst (Jn. 4:13-14). Better still, as they – the Johannine community of believers – come to him, not only is their thirst quenched but they in turn are to become channels of this divine living water to the world around them. In doing so, they are used by God to fulfil the prophecies which speak of the living waters invigorating the deserts regions (see Is.

55:1), which could symbolise the unbelieving world in which they lived. This takes place by means of the Holy Spirit which is given to them following the glorification (death) of Jesus.

Perhaps we hear in John's words a hint of warning that even though the Johannine community will indeed receive the Holy Spirit; this does not mean that they will be exempt from persecution and suffering. John notes that the rivers of living water could only flow from Jesus after his glorification – which involves the cross. His choice of the word 'glorification' implies not a defeat, but a victory; not something negative but positive. For some of them, like Jesus, it may even mean death – a death that would not imply defeat or shame, but glory. (Early Church history shows us that the church was built on the blood of the martyrs). As Ridderbos helpfully suggests,

The abundance of the gifts of the Spirit...does not mean that the believer will be transferred from a struggling faith to a purely triumphant faith but that the believer will become a participant, by the Spirit, in the glorification of Christ (1997: 275-276).

Yet through the work and outpouring of the Holy Spirit, rivers and streams (not small drops or insignificant trickles) would flow from out of their "belly" (κοιλίας) in profusion to bring life to the dry and thirsty world around them. This reframed, new perspective would surely have given the Johannine community fresh courage and renewed hope to remain firm in the faith, even during their time of crisis.

In the context of the Festival of Tabernacles, and in particular the rituals associated with the Water Libation Ceremony, I suggest that John as their pastor has skilfully reframed some of the previously held beliefs of the Johannine community, to give them new meaning and a sense of purpose and hope in their time of crisis.

4.5.5.2 The Ceremony of Light

A second major element forming a significant part of the Festival of Tabernacles was the Ceremony of Light. This provided the strategic setting for Jesus' claim to be the 'light of the world'. Every night for each of the seven days of the feast, the Temple

was lit up with four menorahs in the centre court of women. Each of these had four golden bowls on top, containing wicks made from the girdles of the priests. When they were lit, it was said that all Jerusalem reflected their light (Brown 1966: 344). While the Levites sang the words of Psalms (120-134), the men danced under the lights. This was in keeping with the words of the Zechariah who prophesied that on that day when the Lord God would come, “And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the Lord), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light” (Zech. 14:7) (Moloney 1998:266).

Light is rich in symbolic significance in the Old Testament. David refers to God as “my light and my salvation” (Ps. 27:1). The priestly benediction of Leviticus is a prayer that the Lord would “make his face to shine upon you” (Num. 6:25) giving his people grace and peace. The Servant of the Lord is sent as a light to the nations, so that God’s salvation can reach all corners of the earth (Isaiah 49:6). The Torah was identified as the light that was given to the world in Jewish wisdom tradition, to guide the path of the obedient (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23).

The Light Ceremony was also a symbolic reminder of the presence of the Lord when the pillar of fire led them through the wilderness by night (Ex. 13:21). The expectation was that the pillar of fire would return at the end of time, as foretold by Isaiah (4:5) (Moloney 1998:235).

The theme of light and darkness is woven throughout the Fourth Gospel. Koester describes it as its “most striking motif” (2003:141). Right from the opening words of the Prologue, God’s Word, even before he became incarnate, is presented as the source of life and light (Jn. 1:4). Now, by his incarnation, John asserts that the true light which enlightens everyone has come into the world (1:9). At the conclusion of Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus, he makes pointed comments concerning those who “loved darkness rather than light” (3:19-21). For John, the symbolism surrounding light is embodied in the person of Jesus, who himself is the ‘light of the world’ (8:12).

4.5.5.2.1 Jesus, the Light of the World.

In the context of a festival steeped in the Old Testament symbolism associated with light, in which the Temple was lit up throughout seven nights and shone in Jerusalem, Jesus made his astonishing claim (Jn. 8:12) “I am the light of the world” (Εγὼ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου). He stood in the Court of Women filled with lights, and proclaimed that he was the light, “not only of Jerusalem but of the whole world” (Brown 1966:344). John’s choice of Jesus’ statement here “perhaps makes high-context allusion to considering Jesus as the original behind the large golden candelabrum” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:156). Jesus “perfects the liturgy of Tabernacles” (Moloney 1998:266). In antiquity light was understood to be a substance which had no source other than itself. Considering all living creatures were believed to have light, life and light went side by side. “Jesus’ temple declaration as Israel’s light was thus the equivalent of saying he is the ‘life of the world’, the source of Israel’s life and its very substance” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:156).

John made it clear that the presence of the light calls for a decision, because “the light of Jesus brings a double possibility” (Moloney 1998:266). A decision whether or not to believe in and follow Jesus results in either remaining in darkness, and coming under God’s judgement, or walking in the light (Jn. 8:12b; 1:10-12; 3:19,21). Those who refuse to accept Jesus the light will remain in darkness precisely because there can be no other light than the light of the world. The light which Jesus brings is the ‘light of life’ because it is life giving (1:4). The Psalmist wrote, “For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light” (Ps. 36:9).

John would have been well acquainted with the Ceremony of Lights at the Festival of Tabernacles, as well as the Old Testament language and symbolism concerning light. Yet, as pastor to the Johannine community, he “would have insisted that the language, to have any effective meaning, must be understood personally, in relation to the living and life-giving ‘light of the world’” (Bruce 1983:188). John reframed their understanding of the Ceremony of Lights by showing that its true meaning was found only in Jesus, the Son of the Father, the Servant of the Lord spoken of in Isaiah, the

Word of God incarnate, who had come as the light into the world. “So Jesus, as the Son of the Father, the Servant of the Lord and the Word incarnate, embodies this OT language” (Bruce 1983:188). By believing in and following Jesus, the Johannine community were the ones walking in the light of God and filled with his life, rather than the Jews who remained in darkness and would come under God’s judgement. John showed that this popular Jewish Feast had lost its significance in the presence of Jesus, and was no longer relevant for the followers of Jesus but only for the Jews (Brown 1979:48).

This statement by Jesus triggered a public challenge to the validity of the testimony about himself, leading to an intense discussion with the Pharisees (Jn. 8:13-19). Jesus’ claim to be the light of the world was confirmed and illustrated in the later healing of the man born blind, when as the ‘light’ he gave new life to the man in restoring his physical sight as well as opening his spiritual eyes.

In the following chapters, I shall continue to examine John’s pastoral approach in response to the crisis faced by the Johannine community. Having considered his use of the technique of reframing in response to the crisis, I shall now show how I believe he leads the community to a transforming and deepening of their faith. In doing so, it must be acknowledged that the process of selecting passages by virtue of these artificially constructed categories of reframing, transforming and deepening faith is not clear cut, as several passages could equally belong in more than one category.

Chapter 5: Transforming faith

5.1 The potential of a transformed faith resulting from a crisis.

In the *Community Crisis Response Team Training Manual* published by the US Department of Justice, Mannion is quoted as stating that from a faith perspective, tragedy may impact its victims in one of three ways: Faith can remain unchanged; it can be rejected or most positively faith can be transformed (Young 1998b). Mannion continues,

This faith may have a basis in prior belief, or it may not. It is a faith, however, that has been radically transformed and deepened by a tragedy that could have been totally destructive of one's spirituality. It has not come without struggle or doubts, questions or even momentary denials...A transformed faith implies that one's belief that 'that which has broken me can help to transform me' (Young 1998b).

This certainly rings true in my own pastoral experience, as I have journeyed alongside people grappling with issues of faith as a result of a personal crisis. Many people will testify to the reality that in hindsight, their faith has been radically transformed and deepened in ways they would never have imagined, because of a crisis. Instead of being destroyed spiritually, the crisis has been a catalyst for them to grow spiritually and become much stronger in their faith. Not only do Young's comments ring true for today, they have particular relevance for our reading of the Gospel of John and for the transforming and deepening of their faith, through tragedy and affliction.

In the face of bitter hostility between the Johannine community and the synagogue, I suspect members of the Johannine community may have been tempted to reject or renounce their faith to be spared from persecution and even martyrdom. I propose that John, as their pastor, sought to lead them to a transformed understanding of their faith to help them cope in this situation of crisis. Paradoxically *their faith* was the

very reason that they suffered, yet I suggest a *transformed faith* is what sustained them and enabled them to rise above it with renewed hope and strength to carry on.

Apart from the crisis resulting from excommunication from the synagogue, persecution and in some cases the death penalty at the hands of the Jews (Martyn 1979:81) as well as persecution and provocation by the Romans (du Rand 1991:60), the Johannine community also faced a spiritual identity crisis (Martyn 1987:104; du Rand 1991:64). At the heart of the conflict was issue of the identity of the Messiah (Keener 2003a:202). Many amongst them were people who had inherited the Jewish faith and grown up believing they were God's 'chosen people'. However, because they embraced Jesus as their Messiah, they were rejected, ostracised and disowned by the parent group (Jews) and no longer belonged anymore. As noted by Brown, "[N]o matter how true and how long one's Jewish lineage may be, one ceases to be a Jew when one confesses Jesus to be the Messiah" (1986:63). How were they to see themselves now? If no longer counted amongst God's chosen people, how did God see them now? What were the implications concerning their continued relationship with God?

In this first section, I will demonstrate how I believe that the account of Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus was selected and included in the Gospel as part of John's pastoral approach in leading the Johannine community to a radical, transformed understanding of their faith and of themselves, in relation to God. In this account Jesus "dialogues with one of Israel's teachers, clarifying the radical nature of the kingdom he is inaugurating" (Milne 1993:74). John, here, highlights for the Johannine community that, whereas they supposedly lost their status as God's chosen people (in the opinion of the broader Jewish society) they in fact gained far more in being welcomed as children of God. They were given a new, spiritual identity.

5.2 Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)

Before discussing the radical message of this text unique to John's Gospel, I shall first pay attention to the characters presented in this encounter.

5.2.1 *The representative characters*

In the dialogue between Nicodemus and Jesus, both of them speak for themselves as well as functioning in a representative capacity.

5.2.1.1 *Nicodemus*

In John chapter three, verse one, the reader is introduced to a man (ἄνθρωπος) of the Pharisees (Φαρισαίων), named Nicodemus, who was a ruler of the Jews (ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων) – implying that he was connected to “the elite who oppose Jesus (7:48)” (Keener 2003a:535). Koester suggests that Nicodemus functions in a complex representative role which is generally signalled by the use of plural forms of speech placed in the mouth of select individuals (2003:12). Although Nicodemus is alone, he speaks in the plural: “Rabbi, we know...” (Jn.3:2). Initially Jesus responds to him with the singular ‘you’, σοι (3:3, 5, 7); Σὺ (3:10); but later in the conversation shifts to the plural “[Y]ou (pl) do not receive (οὐ λαμβάνετε) our testimony. If I have told you (ὁμῖν) about earthly things and you (pl) do not believe (οὐ πιστεύετε), how will you (pl) believe if I tell you (ὁμῖν) heavenly things?” (3:11-12). Then Jesus goes on to speak of the whole world’s estrangement from God (Koester 2003:45).

In what specific ways does Nicodemus function as a representative character? Firstly, as a ‘man’ (ἄνθρωπος) Nicodemus is a representative of the human race who are estranged from God (Suggit 1993:49; Koester 2003:46). Secondly he is a Pharisee and leading figure of the Jews and referred to by Jesus as ‘the teacher of Israel’ (ὁ διδάσκαλος) (Jn.3:10), thus representing the Jewish authorities – who repeatedly refuse to believe in Jesus elsewhere in the Gospel (Suggit 1993:49; Koester 2003:12). Thirdly Nicodemus speaks for those who believe because they saw the signs Jesus was doing (2:23-24; 3:2) but whose faith was superficial and unreliable (Milne 1993:74; Kysar 1984:25). As a representative of these different groups, Nicodemus is contrasted with true believers for whom Jesus speaks (3:11). It seems that Nicodemus’ primary trait is his inability to understand the ways of God! This is characteristic of the way in which the Jewish authorities and Pharisees are represented throughout the Gospel (Koester 2003:46). Therefore, I suggest,

Nicodemus represents for the Johannine community, all those who do not know who Jesus really is and consequently do not accept and believe in him (1:10-11). He is a representative of the outsiders and so is perceived as hostile to the insider readers of the Gospel. These outsiders include specifically the Jewish leaders who have rejected the Johannine community.

5.2.1.2 Jesus

Jesus himself also appears to function in a representative role. At first, he speaks for himself, using the singular pronoun, I, then shifts to the first person plural in the middle of the conversation: “Amen, amen, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and testify to what we have seen....” (Jn.3:11). This suggests that Jesus is represented as speaking both for himself as well as for the community of believers (see also 9:4), as his followers will continue to testify to him once he has left this earth (Koester 2003:12). Later in the discourse, it becomes apparent that Jesus speaks not just for himself and his followers, but also for God. Koester helpfully demonstrates that “Jesus has come from above and ‘utters the words of God’ (3:32-34). The remainder of the Gospel unpacks what it means for Jesus to be God’s unique representative, the one in whom God’s Word is embodied (cf.1:14)” (Koester 2003:12). John shows that the words Jesus speaks to Nicodemus, therefore, are words of truth and carry the authority of God.

Acknowledging therefore that both Nicodemus and Jesus are portrayed in representative roles, suggests that John is addressing key issues of faith which are pertinent to a wider audience – beyond that of a private conversation between two people. The topic under discussion – that of the new birth – was, I believe, of particular relevance for the Johannine community, as they grappled with their spiritual identity crisis in broader Jewish society.

5.2.2 The Conversation

Nicodemus, a leading religious figure, *the* teacher of Israel (Jn.3:10), is ironically portrayed as coming ‘by night’ (also mentioned in 19:39). Keener suggests it is likely

that the reason for this is to avoid being seen as night “was the time for secret (sometimes antisocial) deeds and whatever one wished not to be known” (2003a:536). However John probably uses ‘night’ on a symbolic level, showing that John wants to contrast the light, that Jesus brings, with the darkness, into which he arrives (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:81). Nicodemus’ lives in the darkness of unbelief, the darkness of this world, which is alienated from God. Suggit acknowledges that “Though he comes by night, he comes paradoxically to the light, though his recognition of this occurs only later” (1993:50).

So the backdrop to this discussion is the contrast of the darkness of the world of unbelief, which true believers need to leave in order to come to the world of Jesus’ light (Keener 2003a:536). As Kysar helpfully observes, “Indeed this passage is a commentary in part on 1:5, the darkness cannot comprehend the light” (1984:26).

Nicodemus, perhaps part of the crowd in Jerusalem whose superficial belief was based largely on the signs Jesus had performed (Jn.2:23) (Milne 1993:74), understands correctly that Jesus is a teacher *from God* (3:2). Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:81) point out that the phrase *from God* is emphasised, in the Greek, by placing it before both the verb and object, ‘we know that *from God* you have come as teacher’. This statement is clearly ironic, as Nicodemus does not seem to have any idea as to what is involved in acknowledging that Jesus is ‘a teacher *from God*! He later completely misunderstands what Jesus says, struggles to grasp who Jesus is, and cannot quite bring himself to believe in Jesus. As is typical of Johannine prose, the author’s intention in using irony is that the readers will come to discover the true meaning of Jesus’ words for themselves (du Rand 1993:21-22).

Jesus’ begins his response to Nicodemus with the words: “Amen, amen (Ἀμήν ἀμήν) I tell you” (Jn.3:3), a phrase which is repeated in the discourse (3:5, 11) (translated as KJV= ‘Verily, verily’; RSV= ‘Truly, truly’; Jerusalem Bible= ‘I tell you most solemnly’). In fact, this phrase is frequently used throughout John’s gospel (25 times) whereas the Synoptics only use a single ‘Amen’. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:57) explain that the double ‘Amen’ functions as an oath whereby a person deliberately and publicly is giving their word of honour, rather like swearing an oath on the Bible

in court. This would be taken very seriously in Mediterranean society. By speaking in this manner, John's Greek form emphasises and assures his readers that Jesus is speaking the truth (1998:57).

"Amen, amen, I say to you, unless someone is born again/from above (*ἄνωθεν*), he is not able to see the Kingdom of God" (Jn.3: 3 literally translated from Greek). Initially Jesus' statement to Nicodemus seems completely unrelated to what Nicodemus had just said! However, Suggit correctly points out an intimate connection. "For John intends the reader to understand that the meaning both of the signs and of Jesus can be appreciated only by those who have been given a new view of life" (1993:50).

The radical statement of Jesus – that no-one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again/from above – was of particular pastoral significance for the Johannine community. I will demonstrate how John's inclusion of it presented a new perspective concerning their honour status as well as transforming their understanding of their faith and more specifically their relationship to God.

5.2.3 *The transformation of honour status through a new birth*

Jesus uses the language of new '*birth*' as the requirement to 'see the Kingdom of God' (Jn.3:3-10). An understanding and appreciation of the social context of the ancient Mediterranean world sheds new light on the significance of Jesus' choice of this image. Thus, Malina and Rohrbaugh provide valuable insights concerning the importance of *birth status*, describing it "as the single, all-important factor in determining a person's honour rating" (1998:81). Ascribed honour, which was derived from the social standing that one's family had on the day of one's birth, usually remained with a person for their whole life. Therefore all members of the family shared the same general honour rating (1998:123).

A person's honour rating was of critical importance in pre-determining much about a person or family's social interactions. This was because issues around 'honour' and 'shame' were "the core, the heart, the soul of social life in Mediterranean antiquity.

Concern for honor permeated every aspect of social life” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:121). They continue:

Simply stated, honor is public reputation. It is symbolized in good name or eminent family of origin. It is one’s status or standing in the village together with the public recognition of it. Public recognition is all important....Legitimate honor that is publically recognized opens doors to patrons; honor withheld cuts off access to the resources patrons can bestow....It [ascribed honor] serves as the prime indicator of social place (precedence) and provides the essential map for persons to act with superiors, inferiors, and equals in socially prescribed or appropriate ways (1998:121-122).

Clearly, the family into which a person was born had far reaching implications for a person’s life and status in the community. Therefore, I believe, Jesus deliberately spoke into this social context when he introduced the language of a ‘new birth’ (Jn. 3:3, 5, 7) which could radically alter the ‘honour rating’ and reputation of his followers in the broader society.

What is meant by this new birth? The Greek word *ἀνωθεν* is purposefully ambiguous and means both ‘from above’ as well as ‘again/anew’ (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:77). Acknowledging “antilanguage regales in puns”, Malina & Rohrbaugh (1998:81) demonstrate that this ambiguous Greek word is clearly a significant one for John’s argument – just as irony forms an essential part of John’s Gospel and this chapter is full of irony.

Jesus speaks of the necessity of being born *ἀνωθεν*, which Nicodemus interprets to mean being *born again* (Jn.3:4). As an outsider (rather than an insider of the believing Johannine community), he cannot grasp Johannine symbolic language and gives it a literal meaning (Suggit 1993:51). Nicodemus’ response can be viewed as a classic example of Johannine ‘misunderstanding’, whereby he misses the spiritual meaning and focuses on the mundane instead (du Rand 1994:21). Capps refers to misunderstanding as the ‘Technique of Confusion’ (1990:32-34) as a method in counselling. He describes this as “the strategic value of confusing language” (1990:33), which at face value sounds like a ridiculous statement. He suggests it is

beneficial in that the client has to “depend on his own problem-solving skills, and to struggle through to his own interpretation and resolution of the problem” (1990:33). However, as in the case of Nicodemus, Jesus’ confusing statement (that a person must be born again), did not result in him grasping the true meaning of what Jesus had said.

Nicodemus’ literal interpretation of being *born again* is important for John’s argument as it has significant implications relating to birth status. However impossible a second birth might seem to be – if it were to happen, a fundamental change would take place in a person’s ascribed status. A new birth would signify a totally transformed ascribed honour status, derived from the social standing of the new family into which a person was born. So as Malina and Rohrbaugh correctly appreciate, a second birth – especially if very different from the original birth in terms of honour status level – “would be a life-changing event of staggering proportions” (1998:82). In using the language of being born again, Jesus is implying that the believer receives a new level of honour.

What would this new level of honour be? Malina and Rohrbaugh point out that “The quality of the honour is underscored by the second meaning of the pun” (1998:82) namely to *be born from above*. To be born from above; to be born from heaven (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:77), or born of the realm of God – is to be born as child of God. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:82-83) helpfully unpack the implications of such a new birth. Whatever honour status a person might originally have had in Israelite society, being born *from above* would re-create them at a whole new level and result in them acquiring the very highest possible honour status – as a child of God! Furthermore, because children of the same father acquired the same honour status, any previous differences in honour status would fall away. Hence *all* children of God become equals, “except for the firstborn” (1998:82).

In Mediterranean antiquity, the opposite of ‘honour’ was ‘shame’. Malina and Rohrbaugh define to ‘be shamed’ as “the state of public loss of honor” and explain that “Major loss could occur from some public shame, and every member of the family would suffer grief” (1998:123). The social implications of this were enormous –

affecting for example with whom they could do business, what functions they could attend, where they could live, who they could marry. It seems reasonable to suggest that as a result of being ostracised by the parent Jewish community (Bruner 2012:587), and their experience of dislocation and alienation (Martyn 1978:104; du Rand 1991:64), the Johannine community had been severely 'shamed' in the eyes of the broader society. This resulted in a 'major loss' in their honour status.

John, as pastor, addressed this painful reality by giving the Johannine community a whole new perspective on their situation. The irony is that whereas they suffered loss of honour and were shamed by the Israelite society *because* of their belief in Jesus, by virtue of that same belief in Jesus they experienced a new birth from above and consequently acquired the highest possible honour status – as nothing less than being counted amongst the children of God! They therefore gained far, far more than they had lost. The crisis of being disowned and cut off from their Jewish heritage was transformed from something very negative to something incredibly positive. In the context of the identity crisis faced by the Johannine community, John effectively transformed their understanding of who they were; in assigning to them a new identity as the children of God. In selecting this material for inclusion in his gospel, I believe John restored to his community a sense of worth and dignity; and opened their eyes of faith to recognise their radically transformed (and improved) honour status.

5.2.4 A transformation of established religion

Not only did John respond pastorally to the identity crisis faced by the Johannine community through this passage (Jn.3:1-8), he also presented a radically new and transformed understanding of criteria for entrance into the Kingdom of God. In doing so, Kysar correctly concludes that Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus serves to "challenge and transform the established religion" (1984:25).

While Nicodemus obviously did not understand what Jesus meant by being born *ἄνωθεν* (Jn.3:3-4), his confusion and misunderstanding provided the opportunity for Jesus to clarify his remark. Malina and Rohrbaugh correctly see Nicodemus

functioning as “a kind of foil who offers Jesus the opportunity for an explanatory monologue” (1998:81). This led to an address not just to Nicodemus but to the wider Johannine community and indeed all the readers of the gospel. This is evident in the change of pronoun ‘you’ from singular to plural, indicating a larger audience: Jesus said “Amen, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet *you* (pl.) do not receive our testimony. If I have told *you* (pl.) about earthly things and *you* (pl.) do not believe, how can *you* (pl.) believe if I tell *you* (pl.) about heavenly things?” (3:11-12).

Born of Jewish biological parents, a devout Jewish religious leader, *the* teacher of Israel – Nicodemus no doubt presumed that his place in the coming Kingdom of God was guaranteed by virtue of his race and his circumcision (Milne 1993:75). He assumed he was counted among God’s ‘chosen people’. This in essence would be consistent with the beliefs of the established Jewish religion. However, in this encounter, John radically challenges and transforms this incorrect and inadequate belief and assumption, by making it clear that *only* in being born ἀνωθεν can one see the Kingdom of God and experience God’s kingly royal rule (Jn.3:3). Luther underlines this statement of Jesus when he writes: “Christ’s words are if to say, ‘You must give up your old life and become a new man.... It aims not at the performance of new works, but first at being born anew; not at a different life, but at a different birth’” (*SML*, 3:412 quoted in Bruner 2012:172). Barrett points out that John (in Jesus’ words) implies that the Old Testament religion, and Judaism which Nicodemus represents is inadequate as it cannot move forward continuously into the Kingdom of God. Instead, “A moment of discontinuity, comparable with physical birth, is essential. Man [sic] as such, even the Israelite, is not by nature capable of the Kingdom of God” (Barrett 1978:206).

If Judaism is an inadequate religion that cannot lead a person into the Kingdom of God, how then is this possible? Jesus tells Nicodemus, “Amen amen, I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again/from above” (Jn.3:3). Nicodemus in confusion asks Jesus how on earth another birth might be possible (3:4), paving the way for a more detailed explanation. “Jesus answered him, ‘Amen, amen I say to you, unless someone is *born of water and spirit* (my emphasis), he is

not able to enter into the Kingdom of God. The thing having been born of the flesh is flesh, and the thing having been born of the spirit is spirit” (3:5 literal translation.).

To appreciate the meaning of Jesus’ statement (Jn.3:5), it is necessary to consider the passage as a whole. In verse twelve, Jesus says, “If I have told you (pl.) about earthly things and you (pl.) do not believe, how can you (pl.) believe if I tell you (pl.) about heavenly things?” highlighting that this discussion concerns heavenly or spiritual matters. Nicodemus does not appreciate this because he is thinking of earthly things (physical birth).

This explanation of Jesus (Jn.3:5) makes no sense to Nicodemus’ rational mind. Bruner helpfully notices that Nicodemus’ seems fixated in what he thinks people can or cannot do. His speech is interspersed with the auxiliary verb “can/is able”; “no one can/is able” notably: “no one can (δύναται) do these signs unless....” (3: 2); “How can (δύναται) anyone be born...one cannot (μὴ δύναται) go back....” (3:4); “How can (Πῶς δύναται) these things be?” (3:9). Nicodemus seems to be preoccupied on what he thinks are human possibilities or capabilities. For him, only what is humanly reasonable can be true (Bruner 2012:174). Therefore it is impossible for a person to be ‘born again’. There is an irony here again in that a Jewish religious leader, the teacher of Israel, cannot grasp the spiritual truths Jesus speaks even though he recognises that Jesus must be from God (3:2). Ironic too is the fact that none of his supposedly impressive credentials or human effort will enable him or anyone to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It requires divine intervention – from above; it is possible only through the work of the Spirit.

What is meant by ‘Entering the Kingdom of God’? In John’s Gospel this does not refer to a future theocracy. Instead, Jesus explains that entering the Kingdom of Heaven refers to experiencing new life – eternal life, which starts in the present and continues into the future (ἔχῃ = pres.act.subj. ζῶντι αἰώνιον) (Jn.3:15-16). This is possible only through believing in Jesus, the Son of Man – who descended/came from heaven, and after being lifted up (John’s language for the crucifixion) ascended into heaven (3:13-14) “as promised in 1:51, the Son of Man on whom persons ascend and descend to God is Jesus, who now offers access to the sky in his post-

death appearances” (as seen in chaps. 20-21) (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:83). In other words it is in Jesus that heaven and earth meet (1:51), and he provides the way for people to have access to God (14:6).

In this passage, access to God is attributed to “being born of water and Spirit” (Jn. 3:5). Much scholarly controversy exists concerning the precise meaning of ‘water and spirit’ (see an extensive overview of the interpretations through the centuries in Bruner 2012:181-188). Many scholars (including Luther *LW*,22:283-291; Westcott 1880:1:108-109; Bultmann 1971:139; Hoskyns 1947:214; Dodd 1953:342; Brown 1966:140-143; Lindars 1972:152) believe that the words allude to the baptism that functioned as the initiation rite into the family of God. More recently Suggit concludes that it “cannot but refer to the baptism already promised in 1:33” (1993:51). Furthermore, Bruner suggests that Nicodemus, like other Judeans of his time, would have immediately thought of John the Baptist’s baptism for repentance (1:19-35) (2012:175-176). He argues that the Greek preposition used – ἐξ (up out of) water, rather than ἐν (in) water – implies the immersion of baptism (1993:175,185). So he understands that “The New Birth occurs when a human being is moved to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ by the divine Spirit through the Christian message...and so to seek public Christian initiation in baptism”(Bruner 2012:175-176). This would imply that the members of the Johannine community would have received the new birth through their faith in Jesus, which was then sealed through the rite of baptism.

Like Keener I agree that the emphasis of the passage is on the Spirit rather than on the water, “for it is the Spirit which is repeated in the context (3:6, 8)” (Keener 2003:550). In Thyen’s view (2005:193-194, quoted in Bruner 2012:184) the ‘water’ refers to the biological mother’s water in giving physical birth, followed by the ‘Spirit’ of the second birth. Keener prefers to see water as simply another word for Spirit, meaning that Jesus calls Nicodemus to a spiritual, not to a baptismal experience, “to a *spiritual* proselyte baptism, a baptism in the Spirit” (2003a:550-551).

In my view, it makes sense to read ‘water and the Spirit’ in the broader context of the passage, which points to *Jesus’ death* rather than to baptism. The reference in verse fourteen to lifting up of the brass serpent on the pole by Moses in the

wilderness (Num. 21:8ff) is compared with the elevation of Jesus in his crucifixion and exaltation in glory. The lifting of the bronze serpent was an important symbol already being interpreted as a symbol of salvation. “For the one who turned to look at it was saved, not because of what he saw, but because of Thee the saviour of all” (Wisdom of Solomon 16:7). Salvation comes through the cross, as Jesus is lifted up like the bronze serpent. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:83) make the link between ‘water and the Spirit’ and Jesus’ crucifixion, when, in the language of John, he was lifted up – “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (Jn. 12:32). When Jesus died, John records that he “bowed his head and gave up *his spirit*” (my emphasis) (19:30). Soon after, a soldier pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and *water* came out (19:34) – not just blood. Malina and Rohrbaugh helpfully underline that

[B]oth the water and the Spirit in chapter 19 come ‘from above’, from Jesus on the cross! Hence, in John’s Gospel, it will be the lifting up of the Son of Man that provides the water and Spirit that give new life to those who believe in the ‘lifted up’ Son of Man (1998:83).

Given the literary context of this verse, I conclude that to be ‘born of water and the Spirit’, becoming a child of God and entering the Kingdom of God, requires receiving and believing in Jesus (Jn. 1:12; 3:15-16), who comes from heaven (3:13, 31; 1:1, 14) and who died on the cross (3:14) for our salvation (3:17). In this way, a person is ‘born again, from above’ and becomes a child of God, receiving the gift of eternal life (3:15-16). Clearly, in the broader context of the whole Gospel of John, the emphasis is repeatedly on the importance of belief in Jesus which leads to having life in his name, as summed up in John twenty verse thirty-one, rather than a focus on baptism.

In conclusion, the Jewish members of the Johannine community would have grown up believing that they were ‘God’s Chosen people’ by virtue of their birth as Jews, and their circumcision. However, because of their faith in Jesus they were expelled from the Jewish synagogues and ‘shamed’ in Israelite society, losing their ascribed honour status. In selecting this account of the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, I believe that John as a pastor speaks into this situation. In the words of

Kysar, John “challenge[s] and transform[s] the established religion” (Kysar 1984:25). The only way to enter the Kingdom of heaven is not by virtue of Jewish nationality, religion or culture, or any other means. Admission is *only* through a new birth: being born again/from above; being born of water and Spirit. By being born spiritually from above, a person not only enters the Kingdom of heaven, but also receives a new honour status as a child of God the Father.

Contrary to Jewish belief, John makes clear that ironically it is ‘the Jews’ themselves who forfeit their right to be the children of God because they refuse to believe in Jesus – not the Johannine community. As a result of their unbelief, they are condemned already (3:18). Furthermore, the Jews are described as children of the devil (8:44, 47). Consequently their guilt remains and they will die in their sins (9:41; 8:24).

For the Johannine Christians, this transformed understanding of faith and their relationship to God would reassure and encourage them to believe that in spite of their persecution and rejection by their parent Jewish community, God has recreated them and exalted them to the highest honour status possible. The established religion has been challenged and transformed (Kysar 1984:25). Jesus had come to his own (the people of Israel), but they did not accept him (Jn.1:11) so he formed a new community (13:1) of those who did choose to accept him (1:12) (Brown 1979:48). As children of God, they become brothers and sisters – members of the same family. Malina and Rohrbaugh highlight that John’s antisociety functioned as a surrogate family and a place of refuge for the members of the Johannine community (1998:89). This new community becomes the real, true Israel, consisting of everyone who believes in and receives Jesus (1:13, 47) and is born again/from above (3:3) of water and Spirit (3:5). Jesus is known as the “King of Israel” (1:49; 12:13).

Out of a modern pastoral context, Mannion correctly concludes that a transformed faith implies that “that which has broken me can help to transform me” (quoted in Young 1998b).

5.3 The death of Jesus

A second way I believe John presents a transformed understanding of faith is in the way he presents the passion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

The passion narratives in the gospels each present a different view of Jesus. Brown summarizes these as follows: we find

[T]he Marcan Jesus who plumbs the depths of abandonment only to be vindicated; the Lucan Jesus who worries about others and gently dispenses forgiveness; or the Johannine Jesus who reigns victoriously from the cross in control of all that happens (1986:70).

Why does John present the passion from such a different perspective to Mark, (Matthew almost identical to Mark) and Luke focussing on Jesus' triumph and glory? In the following section, I shall show how I believe John portrays events surrounding the passion and death of Jesus in such a way as to encourage and transform faith and renew hope for the Johannine community in crisis. He sharpens and deepens the conviction that Jesus is indeed worthy of honour, worship and glory.

5.3.1 *The transformation of a shaken community to a triumphant community.*

On account of their faith in Jesus, the Johannine community experienced persecution and suffering of various kinds on a daily basis. Some had been martyred (Martyn 1987:104-105). Members had been ostracised, rejected, disowned and cut off from the parent Jewish community (Blomberg 2001:62; Stibbe 1994:107-131). They lived in fear for their lives, were traumatized, and their faith shaken. Following Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension Jesus had departed from them and not yet returned as expected (Moody Smith 1999:307). They grieved the absence of Jesus (Syreeni 2004:188). They were indeed a community in crisis.

And yet the Gospel emerges as a bastion of faith-triumphant – this is the paradox of the Gospel – the Johannine community should have been devastated, but instead come out stronger, thanks to the way in which the author represents the teaching and ministry of Jesus. This I think is the key – John uses the existing traditions (word

and deed) of Jesus but shapes them to meet the needs of the community – a truly inspired response to a community in need. Who is speaking? John, Jesus or the Community? The probable answer is all three – since the three voices are now so interwoven, that it is now virtually impossible to separate one from another. We are left with a faint sense, that there is a mind guiding the process of pastoral care – where Jesus ends and John begins can only be suggested – but then that is what this thesis is all about – painting a vision of pastoral care. The proof lies ultimately in the conviction of the final product.

What were the members of the Johannine community to make of the confusing reality of the death of Jesus? Jesus, the one whom they recognized and worshipped as “My Lord and my God” (Jn. 20:28); the Christ, Messiah and Son of God (20:31) – was also the one who had been publically humiliated, ridiculed, mocked and shamed in the eyes of Israelite society. He died a criminal’s death on the cross. In the eyes of outsiders and enemies, it appeared that he had lost all honour and power, as in the cultural world of the New Testament, “Jesus’ death by crucifixion was acknowledged as a most shameful experience” (Neyrey 1994:114) Jesus’ had warned the Johannine community that just as the world hated him without a cause, they too would be hated and persecuted (15:18-16:2). This was certainly their experience. By virtue of being followers of Jesus, I suggest that in Israelite society they were deemed ‘guilty by association’ and were identified with Jesus in his shame. Like Jesus, they were mocked and ridiculed. His guilt was their guilt; his shame was their shame. This, I suggest, further contributed to their experience of being in crisis.

A common experience of individuals and communities facing crisis is to start to question their belief system. Is it really true? Does it ‘work’? Does it fulfil its promises? They might begin to have serious doubts – have they been misled? Did they get it wrong? It is probable that members of the Johannine community in crisis struggled with similar questions. Was Jesus really who he claimed to be, and who they believed he was – the Messiah, the Son of God? If so, why did he die a humiliating and shameful death, like a common criminal? Where was God the Father in all of this?

Would the members of the Johannine community be able to stand firm in their faith under these circumstances? Could they endure the shame? I suspect that a very real potential existed for some among them to abandon their faith and give in to despair and disillusionment. Perhaps the cost of following Jesus was just too high. Maybe a compromise might have been to join the group of so-called 'secret Christians' (like Joseph of Arimathea Jn.19:38) and continue their faith in private, out of the public eye.

I suggest that in the years following the death of Jesus, in hindsight, John together with the Johannine community, grappled with issues of their faith. In particular, they pondered on the mystery and meaning of Jesus' passion and death, seeking to process what had happened. How were they to make sense of the humiliation and shame? Was Jesus' death in vain? What was the reason behind it all? I believe that the particular portrayal of Jesus death in John's Gospel was borne out of a process of community engagement and reflection, and presents for the readers a new and transformed understanding of their faith. In the language of Mannion (quoted in Young 1998b), instead of remaining unchanged or being rejected – as a result of their grappling with these hard questions – the faith of the Johannine community has most positively been transformed. In the words of Peter, their faith has proved itself to be genuine and endured the test of fire (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

In my view, what we find in the Fourth Gospel is that John the pastor presents the Jesus logia in such a way that they are able to transform the shaken community and enable the Johannine Christians to become a triumphant community. In responding dialectically to the views of the Johannine community – John has ironically and wonderfully transformed the portrayal of the death of Jesus from unqualified shame into honour, glory and victory! As Neyrey correctly asserts, "Far from being a status denigration ritual, his passion is seen as a status elevation ritual" (1994:114). In this section, I shall draw attention to the way in which John masterfully demonstrates that not only does Jesus maintain his honour in the events leading up to and including his crucifixion, but more than that *gains* honour and prestige (Malina & Neyrey 1988:95-

131). John's portrayal of the death of Jesus vindicates Jesus in the eyes of his readers, and has pastoral benefits in vindicating the Johannine community, over against the outsiders, as well. In so doing, John leads them to a transformed faith which has the potential to strengthen their belief, trust and commitment to Jesus and sustain them through this time of crisis.

5.3.2 Transformed from shame to honour

How does John's portrayal of the death of Jesus transform it from being a shaming process to one of bringing him honour and prestige? Before answering this question, it is necessary to consider the meaning of 'shame' and 'honour' in the first-century cultural context of the Mediterranean world.

Malina and Rohrbaugh acknowledge that "All human groups enculturate their members into internalized sanctions that keep those members from disrupting the group" (1998:121). They explain that these sanctions may vary from anxiety to shame to guilt. For the first-century Mediterranean world, the predominant social sanction was shame, with its opposite being honour. Neyrey describes shame as "Contempt, loss of face, defeat and ridicule...." (1994:117). Honour is gained either by ascription by another (birth, adoption, appointment) or can be acquired by one's own achievement. He continues, "Honor must be both claimed and acknowledged. After all, it is the respect one has in the eyes of others" (1994:117-118). In essence, shame then is essentially a loss of honour. "Honor and shame were the core, the heart, the soul of social life in Mediterranean antiquity. Concern for honor permeated every aspect of public life" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:121). Greeks, Romans and Judeans all considered honour and shame as fundamental values in their cultures (Adkins 1960).

5.3.2.1 Shame and honour in Jesus' journey towards crucifixion

In Jerome Neyrey's article "*Despising the Shame of the Cross: Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative*" (1994:113-138) he demonstrates how the crucifixion process was characterized by a progressive public humiliation and

deprivation of honour. Hence it can clearly be seen how, in the eyes of the Israelite community, the intention was to shame Jesus to the utmost degree. This can be summarized as follows:

- a) Jesus was given a public trial (Jn. chs. 18-19) which served as a status degradation ritual, and labelled Jesus as a shameful person (“misera est ignominia iudicorum publicorum,” Cicero, Pro Rabinio 9-17).
- b) Jesus was publically flogged (Jn.19:1), with the intention of inflicting pain and shedding blood but especially to humiliate and disgrace him (Jos. War 5.449-51 & 3.321; Livy 22.13.19; 28.37.3; Seneca, On Anger 3.6; Philo, Flac. 72; Diod. Sic. 33.15.1; Plato, Gorgias 473bc & Republic 2.362e).
- c) Jesus was mocked by the soldiers. They dressed him as a king wearing a crown of thorns and purple robe; sarcastically said “Hail, King of the Jews”; and struck him on the face (Jn.19:2,3,5,6; 18:22). To be mocked was considered far more painful than physical scourging because it produced the most dreaded of all experiences – shame (Philo, Sp.Leg. 3.160).
- d) The soldiers confiscated Jesus’ clothes (Jn.19:23-25), hence he was further shamed by being stripped naked in public (see Diod. Sic. 33.15.1).
- e) In having his hands nailed to the cross, Jesus lost power and thus honour (Philo, Post. 61; Somn. 2.213).
- f) Death by crucifixion was slow and protracted, resulting in the powerless victim suffering bodily distortions (Steinberg 1983:82-108) which also crudely added to the public entertainment value and increased the victim’s shame.
- g) Ultimately the victims were deprived of life itself, leaving no possibility of vengeance or revenge. This was the ultimate form of shame (Neyrey 1994:114).

Jesus, like other victims who endured crucifixion, was progressively humiliated and stripped completely of any public respect or honour leaving him completely shamed in the eyes of Israelite society. This was considered to be the worst fate imaginable (Neyrey 1994:114). At the same time, I suggest that the crucifixion of Jesus left the Johannine community shamed by association in the eyes of the broader Israelite community. Perhaps too they were encountering other Christians who by association with Paul (Phil.2:5-11) or Judaism saw the crucifixion as a shaming process.

Despite all the intended shame and humiliation heaped on Jesus, John turns the situation upside down to show that ironically the very things intended to degrade, discredit and undermine him instead lead ultimately to his glorification. John transforms his readers understanding of what really is going on. How did John accomplish this?

Starting with the events leading up to the crucifixion, there are signs of John highlighting ways Jesus' own behaviour both displays and maintains honour (Neyrey 1994:118 - 132) (see also Brown 1986:57-62). Some examples of these can be identified as follows:

- (a) Throughout the betrayal and arrest of Jesus in the garden (Jn.18:1-11), he is shown to be omniscient so cannot be caught off guard by what will happen (2:25; 6:6, 70-71). Knowing all that was to happen to him, Jesus takes control of the events (18:4). He asks his accusers questions (18:4, 7) and issues commands (18:8, 11), assuming a position of power (Neyrey 1994: 119). De la Potterie notes that "Honour means power and control" (1989:29), which is exactly what we find in the behaviour of Jesus.
- (b) When identifying himself in the garden using the divine name 'I am' (ἐγώ εἰμι) (Jn.18:5,6), Roman soldiers and Jewish Police – representing worldly power, civil and religious – fall to the ground leaving Jesus standing in a superior position of power. Most commentators understand the "I am" as the divine name, which Jesus is permitted by God to use (Neyrey 1988:213-220). Not

only is it an act of honour and power to use God's name, but also Jesus enjoys an honourable status with armies falling at his feet (Brown 1986:58; Neyrey 1994:119).

(c) When Jesus is bound (Jn.18:12) and led to his interrogation by Annas the high priest concerning his disciples and his teaching (18:19-24) it appears that he has lost power. Yet when questioned, he responds confidently, pointing out that he has always spoken openly, never in secret (18:20-21). This aggravates his accusers who strike him on the face – to shame him (18:22). He withstands the insults and continues to speak boldly. Jesus has the last word, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" (18:23). "Annas, not Jesus, is left with an embarrassing, unanswered question" (Brown 1986:58). By asking questions, controlling the events, giving commands, he shows himself to be "without doubt the most honourable person in the situation" (Neyrey 1994:120). His bold speech denotes courageous and honourable public behaviour. "In contrast, this gospel declares as shameful people who are afraid to speak openly about the Christ" (9:22-23; 12:42) (Neyrey 1994:120).

(d) Jesus' trial before Pilate "can be described as an extended game of charge and refutation or challenge and riposte" (Neyrey 1994:121). This is like an honour contest between Pilate and the Judeans, and Pilate and Jesus. John portrays Jesus throughout giving "a solemn riposte" to the challenges to his identity and authority. His kingship is not of this world (Jn.18:36-37), which implies it belongs to another world – God's world (8:23; 17:16, 18) – which is truly honourable. Although shamed and rejected in this world (1:9-10), Jesus belongs to a kingdom where he is rightly honoured (1994:124). In response to Pilate's question "Where are you from?" (18:8) Jesus remains silent, as knowledge of where he comes from and where he is going to has been an on-going theme throughout the gospel (6:38; 3:13; 6:62) (Neyrey 1994:127). He is the 'Son of God' (20:30) and continuously calls God "my Father" (2:16; 5:18-19; 6:40), so enjoys the honour of his Father's name. Furthermore, the

power tables are turned as Pilate may think he has power; but is told he has no authority (19:10-11). Ironically it is not Jesus who fears Pilate, but Pilate who fears Jesus, the Son of God (19:7-8). Jesus puts Pilate on trial to see if he is of the truth (18:37-38) (Brown 1986:61). Jesus has the upper hand.

- (e) John makes it clear that Jesus has power and control over his own life and death. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus prays that the cup of suffering might be taken from him (Matt. 26:38-39; Mk. 14:33-35; Lk. 22:42). However rather than being afraid of the cup of suffering, death and loss of honour, John portrays Jesus as ready to drink the cup that the Father has given him (Jn.18:11) (Brown 1986:58). This is because in John's Gospel, Jesus' death is said to be the reason for which he came (12:27); it is the work that God gave him to do (17:4). He has power and control over his life, and he willingly chooses to lay down his life, and take it up again (10:17-18) in obedience to the command from his Father. In this way he honours and glorifies his Father (17:1) "thus warranting the honor of an obedient son" (Neyrey 1994: 128).

Jesus is not a victim at the mercy of anyone, not even Pilate (Jn.19:10-11). Nor does the 'ruler of this world' have any power over him (14:30). No-one can take his life from him unless he permits it (10:17-18). He is "the master of his fate" (Brown 1998 vol 2:1073). He willingly chose to die: "Death is noble or honourable when voluntary" (Neyrey 1994:131). In dying, Jesus suffers no shame and never loses control over his life and destiny, thus maintaining his honour (Neyrey 1994:132).

John shows that in spite of the on-going attempt to shame him on the part of his accusers, Jesus maintains his honour. In this way, I suggest, John seeks to encourage the Johannine community to follow the example of Jesus in maintaining their honour and dignity, even in the face of persecution and humiliation, and hatred from 'the world'. Like Jesus, they should maintain their sense of power and control in the presence of their accusers. They need not allow themselves to feel intimidated. They should take control of events and ask questions of their accusers, as well as

responding confidently to questions levelled at them. They should speak in the name of the divine one who revealed himself as *ἐγώ εἰμι* (I am) and never be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified openly in public. Their bold speech would denote courageous and honourable public behaviour. In following Jesus' example, they would maintain their honour. In addition, this behaviour would show that they are not victims of their circumstances; rather, they have been empowered and transformed from a shaken community into a triumphant one instead.

5.3.2.2 Shame transformed to honour at Jesus' crucifixion

Neyrey rightly observes that "New Testament authors reflect the general perception of crucifixion in the Greco-Roman world as 'shame' (Heb.12:2)" (1994:113). According to Jewish law, anyone who was crucified came under the divine curse (Deut.21:22-23). It was seen to represent a most shameful death and loss of honour. However, John's gospel "inculcates an ironic point of view that death and shame mean glory and honor" (Neyrey 1994: 126). In line with my understanding of John's pastoral role, this suggests a radically transformed understanding of Jesus' crucifixion.

In Matthew and Mark's gospels, Jesus' death on the cross appears to be a defeat, with him crying out in despair, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:33). It is in his resurrection that he is exalted and glorified. However by contrast, throughout John's gospel, it is the **death** of Jesus that is repeatedly described as his hour of glorification – not his resurrection (Jn. 7:39; 12:23, 27-28; 13:31-32; 17:1, 5; 21:19).

Throughout the gospel, John prepares his readers to interpret the cross as a visible manifestation of divine power by referring to it as Jesus' 'lifting up' (Jn.3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33), meaning both his physical elevation and exaltation in glory (Forestell 1974:61-65; Koester 2003:235). This 'lifting up' is what is done when a king is enthroned – it will be the enthronement of the King of Creation. Jesus' accusers mocked him by placing a crown of thorns on his head, and dressing him in a purple robe (19:2), the royal colour. They gave Jesus a mock coronation. The soldiers

struck him on the face and sarcastically called out, “Hail, King of the Jews” (19:3). Pilate placed a sign above the cross which read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (19:19). These actions, intended to shame Jesus, are turned on their head by John. Jesus truly is proclaimed as a reigning king, God’s anointed King – but his kingdom is not of this world (18:36, 37), but belongs to another world (8:23), that is, “God’s world, which is eternal, unchanging, and truly honourable” (Neyrey 1994:124). As Neyrey correctly concludes, John ironically describes the story of Jesus’ intended shame as his “‘lifting up’, his exaltation, his enthronement, in short, his honor” (1994:118). On the cross, the forces of darkness will try to extinguish the light of Christ, yet ironically, in trying to do so, this act is the means by which Jesus will be glorified and the light shine even brighter! (Kyser 1984:62). Furthermore, in comparing Jesus’ ‘lifting up’ with Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness (3:14), John reinterprets the wilderness tradition. Just as the Israelites were saved from death when they looked upon the bronze serpent, so will people be saved when they look upon Jesus lifted up on the cross.

In my view, this is surely the biggest irony of all in John’s gospel!

If John demonstrates power by Jesus’ death, then the community of believers also render Jesus a verdict of honour rather than shame (Neyrey 1994:119). In doing so, by association as believers and disciples of Jesus, they in turn are vindicated and honoured.

5.3.3 John’s transformed interpretation of Jesus’ death

Having pointed out signs of shame and glory in Jesus’ journey to the cross and at the crucifixion, I shall now highlight key themes which I believe summarize John’s radical understanding of how Jesus’ death is an honourable, glorious and victorious event. In doing this, he transforms the death of Jesus, presenting a different perspective to that of the synoptic gospels.

The Johannine community were persecuted because of their faith in Jesus, the crucified one. In the eyes of his accusers, his death on the cross was a scandal (Macrae 1993:111) (see 1 Cor. 1:23). Whereas throughout his life Jesus repeatedly

predicted his death (see Jn.3:14; 6:44; 8:21; 12:27-34), while hanging on the cross in shame we are not given an explanation of what it all meant. In hindsight, the Johannine community needed to process and interpret the meaning of Jesus' death. Was it a supreme act of shame? Was it a sign of defeat and a waste of his life? What did it accomplish? Surely his life alone, the signs and wonders he performed, were enough to show that he was indeed the Son of God, the Messiah? Was his shameful death on the cross really necessary?

John clearly shows that Jesus' death was not a waste of a life; it was not in vain. Having grappled with these issues, John the pastor transforms what might be perceived by Jesus' accusers as overwhelming defeat – into a glorious victory! Through the eyes of faith, Jesus death is viewed in a radically new way. John presents his readers with a very a different perspective. According to John, it was through the death of Jesus, that he accomplished what the Father sent him to do (17:4). Throughout the gospel, John points to the benefits of his passion and death. These can be summarized as follows:

5.3.3.1 God's glory is revealed.

On the cross, the glory of God the Father and the Son is revealed (Jn.7:39; 12:23, 27-28; 13:31-32; 17:1, 5; 21:19). Koester helpfully defines 'glorify' as "to manifest the power and presence or glory (doxa) of God" (2003:235). In dying on the tree of shame, this should prove that Jesus was an adversary of God (Deut. 21:22-23). However, as summed up by Koester, "The Gospel reverses this judgement to show that the crucifixion actually reveals Jesus oneness with God, manifests his glory, and signals the triumph of the Son of God over the forces of Satan" (2003:230). Macrae describes it as the scandal of the cross – "the scandal of the transcendent divinity revealing itself in the paradox of humanity suffering out of the motive of love" (1993:111-112).

5.3.3.2 The love of God is manifested.

God's love is supremely revealed to the world. John explains that "God so loved the world that gave his only Son...." (Jn.3:16). Jesus demonstrated the greatness of his love in laying down his life for his friends, which is the most anyone can do (15:12-13; 19:30). John powerfully proclaims that Jesus' death on the cross is an indication of the enormous depth of his love for the world, not least the Johannine community of believers.

5.3.3.3 Eternal life is given.

Suggit correctly states that in John's Gospel, the crucifixion and exaltation of Jesus is the sole foundation for eternal life and salvation (1993:54). Throughout the gospel, John repeatedly emphasizes that the primary purpose of Jesus' coming to earth (Jn.1:14) is to make God the Father known – for to know God through Jesus is to experience eternal life (17:3). This life is available to all who respond to him in faith by believing in him (20:31; 3:15-16; 6:40, 47). Conversely, those who remain in unbelief are judged and condemned (3:14-18). Even though all the miracles recorded in John's gospel are signs to point people to Jesus the Son of God and evoke faith in him (20:30-31), John tells his readers that it is ultimately when Jesus is lifted up on the cross that he draws all people to himself (12:32).

5.3.3.4 Evil is defeated.

John makes it clear that on the cross, Jesus overthrows the forces of evil. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, there are no exorcisms recorded in John's Gospel. Instead, the crucifixion is the ultimate exorcism, where the prince of this world is cast out (Jn.12:31) (Koester 2003:234). Satan has ruled the world with the power of hatred (3:20; 7:7), but God has overcome hatred with love (3:16; 15:12-13). Satan has relied on lies and deceit (8:44-45) but Jesus banishes falsehood with truth, as he is the truth (14:6). On the cross, Jesus, the light of the world (9:5), overcomes the darkness (1:5). Evil is defeated.

At times I suggest the Johannine community may have been overwhelmed by the hatred of the world (Jn.17:14) and despair that evil seemed to have the upper hand. Why should they experience on-going suffering? John encourages them not to give up because ultimately they are on the winning side. Jesus on the cross has defeated the powers of evil and the ruler of this world does not have the final say. He has overcome the world! (16:33).

How might Jesus' victory on the cross and overcoming of the world translate to the experience of the Johannine community? Keener suggests that

[B]elievers overcome the evil one and the world by faithful obedience (1 John 2:13-14; 4:4), trusting in the accomplished victory of Christ (1 John 5:5:4-5). Such overcoming also demands persevering (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7), especially achieved through martyrdom (Rev 5:5; 12:11; 15:2). Ironically – quite in contrast with the world's view of victory – it is accomplished even when the forces of the world 'overcome' the saints in a worldly sense (Rev 11:7; 13:7), in view of Christ's future defeat of the world's forces (rev 17:14) (2003b:1049).

Furthermore, as Brown helpfully acknowledges, "There are still moments where with Johannine faith we must see that suffering and evil have no real power over God's Son or over those whom he enables to become God's children (1986:71).

5.3.3.5 The Spirit is given.

At the Festival of Tabernacles, Jesus is portrayed as the source of living water and invites those who believe in him to drink. (Jn.7:37). He then refers to a scripture which said that out of Jesus' heart/belly shall flow rivers of living water (7:38). John tells us that this water was a symbol of the Spirit which believers would receive at his death – when he was glorified. When Jesus hung on the cross, the soldiers pierced him resulting in a flow of water coming from his side – symbolic therefore of the giving of the Spirit at his death.

5.3.4 Transforming the Passover festival.

Right from the opening chapter of John's Gospel, in the words of John the Baptist, Jesus is presented in this way: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn.1:29). John in his gospel places a unique and significant emphasis on Jesus' symbolic role as the 'Passover Lamb'. He links Jesus' **death** to the Jewish religious festival of Passover with its slaughtering of the Passover lambs. By doing so, he transforms the Jewish understanding of what this festival represents and applies it symbolically to the person of Jesus. How does he set about doing this?

5.3.4.1 Jesus' death is the real Passover

John starts by separating the last meal Jesus had with his disciples, from the Passover festival. This meal took place "before the festival of the Passover" (Jn.13:1). Blomberg notes that a considerable majority of scholars take this in its most common sense of referring to the first meal of the feast, where they ate the Passover Lamb and recited the Haggadah (2001:237-238). He continues, "This then forces the meal of John 13 to be something other than the normal, festive meal with which Passover began" (2001:238). It takes place *before* Passover, which is different to the Synoptics where the meal was eaten on Passover evening itself (Matt. 26:17; Mk. 14:12; Lk. 22:7). Keener highlights the significance of the fact that John omits the final paschal meal in his passion narrative (contrasted to Matt.26: 26-29; Mk.14:22-25; Lk.22: 17-23); and instead makes Jesus' *actual death the real Passover* (my emphasis). He thus transfers the Passover from the Last Supper (as in the synoptic gospels) to the crucifixion (2003a:690).

5.3.4.2 Jesus is likened to a Passover Lamb

At the time of Jesus death, Jews were gathering to celebrate the Passover. What was the significance of this Jewish festival? This festival commemorated the first Passover in Exodus chapter twelve. God declared the tenth plague on the Egyptians would involve the death of all their firstborn. He commanded the Israelites to slaughter a one year old male lamb, without defect, and smear its blood on the

doorposts of their homes. In this way, the angel of death would pass over their homes and they would be saved or delivered from death.

John goes to great length to repeatedly and explicitly emphasize that Jesus was slaughtered in the *time* and *manner* appropriate for the Passover sacrifices (Koester 2003:220). Clearly his intention is to liken Jesus to the Passover lamb, without defect, whose blood would result in the salvation of all believers and their deliverance from eternal death. What is significant in the details John includes concerning the timing and manner of Jesus' death?

(a) The timing of Jesus' death

On the morning of the day Jesus was crucified, the Jewish authorities took him to Pilate's headquarters but did not enter "so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover" (Jn.18:28) (φάγωσιν τὸ πάσχα). Jesus was thus sentenced to death and handed over to be crucified on the afternoon of the day of *Preparation* for the Passover, at about noon – the sixth hour (19:14). This was at the same time that the sacrificing of lambs began in the temple (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:273; Koester 2003:220; Brown 1986:65, Blomberg 2001:238). Jesus' sacrifice (death) was complete before evening. It was because of Passover Preparation Day that the Judeans wanted him off the cross and out of sight before the Sabbath (19:31).

Concerning the timing of Jesus' death, John contradicts the Synoptics (Casey 1996:18-25). While Blomberg observes that most scholars adopting this reconstruction find the Synoptic dating more correct (2001:238), scholars such as Robinson(1985:252-254) represent a minority that prefers John to the Synoptics. Nevertheless, noting that John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the 'Lamb of God' on two occasions earlier in this Gospel (Jn.1:29, 36), I agree with Blomberg in concluding that John has *changed the chronology* (my emphasis) here in service of his theology, as clearly he wants his readers to connect the timing of Jesus death with the sacrifices of the Passover lambs (2001:238).

(b) The manner in which Jesus died

Malina and Rohrbaugh show that Jesus' behaviour at the time of his death was in keeping with what was expected of a suitable Passover lamb (1998:274). Jesus willingly was led 'like a lamb to the slaughter'. He was not resistant to his captors in the garden (Jn.18:1-10); he freely took the cup of suffering (18:11), he allowed himself to be bound when arrested (18:12). They point out that the behaviour of a sacrificial victim was considered of great importance, as any sign of resistance – or worse still, escape – was considered a bad omen. The lamb had to die willingly in order to please the deity. "Jesus' willingness to please the Father, like his command of the situation, underscores sacrificial themes befitting the paramount Passover sacrifice" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:274).

In response to Jesus' request for a drink (Jn.19:28), a sponge of wine was placed on hyssop (ὑσσώπω) rather than a reed (καλάμῳ Matt. 27:48; Mk. 15:36). John deliberately uses this symbolically; as hyssop was used to sprinkle the saving blood of the paschal lamb on the doorposts of Israelite houses (Ex 12:22) (Brown 1998 vol 2:1077; Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:274).

Breaking the legs of crucifixion victims was "a typical way of completing the slow movement toward death...." (Koester 2003:219). The legs of the men crucified with Jesus were broken (Jn.19:31-32), but when the soldiers came to Jesus they found he was already dead (19:33) so it was not necessary to break his legs. This detail is only recorded in John's Gospel, once again highlighting the symbolic link between Jesus and the Passover lambs. The Passover lamb was to be unblemished (Ex. 12:5) and none of its bones were to be broken (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12), otherwise it was unacceptable. Hence this (Jesus' unbroken bones) is consistent with the requirements for a perfect Passover sacrifice (Koester 2003:220). When a soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear, "immediately out came blood and water" (19:34 direct translation). As Ford has shown, the presence of blood and water in rabbinic

lore, constitutes a kosher object (1969:337-338). Hence John declares that Jesus is a 'fit' or 'kosher' sacrifice!

5.3.4.3 *The role of the Passover Lamb.*

As is clearly apparent, there can be little doubt that John intends his readers to liken Jesus with the Passover lamb. However, unlike other sacrifices, Passover sacrifices were NOT considered to be sacrifice for *sin* but rather a sign of *deliverance from death*. Koester explains that "John's Gospel appropriated and modified this understanding of the Passover sacrifice, insisting that the death of Jesus spared people from death precisely by delivering them from sin" (2003:221). Sin leads to death for those who continue in the sin of unbelief (Jn.8:24), and freedom from sin and death comes only through Jesus (8:34-36). When Jesus is 'lifted up' on the cross, he draws people to himself, he evokes faith which removes sin, and so, as foretold by John the Baptist, he is (becomes) "The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29).

John's group is to believe that Jesus has become the Passover Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (referring to Israelite's unbelief and dishonouring of God). The final outcome of Jesus' death is "the restoration of honor status before God through the eradication of Israel's sin. At least for the 'children of God', John's Community, this is the outcome of Jesus' being glorified" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:275).

In addition to highlighting the benefits of Jesus death, and transforming the Passover festival by showing Jesus saving role as the Passover Lamb, John's portrayal of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb – "the Lamb who was slain" (Rev 5:12) – speaks pastorally into the situation of crisis experienced by the Johannine community. Malina and Rohrbaugh highlight the pastoral benefits of this pointing to the implication that Jesus, as a "fitting Passover Lamb, can now nourish and protect those who acknowledge him, as the Passover Lamb did in the Exodus" (1998:274).

5.3.5 John's ultimate transformation of Jesus' death and honour status

According to John, Jesus is charged with being a criminal (Jn.18:30) and for blasphemy, claiming to be the Son of God (19:7). Both are considered to be extremely serious sins, warranting the death sentence – even though Pilate repeatedly declares Jesus' innocence. Jesus dies a condemned man – shamed by the Jews, the religious leaders, the crowds and the Romans. He was repeatedly mocked and scorned as “King of the Jews” (19: 2-3,5,14-15,19-22) and rejected as the Messiah and Son of God (19:7; 1:11; 10:33) by his accusers. John completes the process of transforming his understanding of Jesus' death, by showing that the one thought to be the greatest sinner (criminal, blasphemer), shamed by the broader Israelite community, is ultimately declared sinless and vindicated by God through his burial as well as his resurrection. His honour is fully restored and indeed exalted.

In John's gospel, we read that a week before Jesus died, Mary lavishly anointed him with myrrh, as a preparation for his burial and enthronement (Jn.12:7, 13-15). Once he had died, the Jews saw to it that his body was removed from the cross because of the approaching Sabbath (19:31). John underlines that this was a special Sabbath – the Sabbath during Passover week which was doubly sacred (Blomberg 2001:254). Because of the law stipulated in Deuteronomy (21:23), the Jewish leaders could not leave Jesus' body hanging on the cross overnight (Josephus, *War* 4.317). Usually victims were denied an honourable burial, and their corpses were left on display and eaten by scavenger birds and animals, thus adding to their shame (Neyrey 1994: 132). An unburied corpse was seen as extreme disgrace in Jewish thought (Blomberg 2001:257).

Joseph (a secret believer Jn.19:38) and Nicodemus (not mentioned in the Synoptics, but appearing in John three times), both ranking Jewish leaders, request permission to remove his body and prepare it for burial. They bring a staggering amount (a hundred pounds) of myrrh and aloes (19:39), fit only for a king (Blomberg 2001:257). (Note in Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1 it is the women prepare spices and ointments). They bound him in linen cloths. Rather than lay his body on a shelf in a tomb, as was common practice at the time (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:276), they laid Jesus in a

new tomb – affording him kingly status. It was in a garden, which was considered suitable for a royal burial (see 2 Kings 21:18, 26) (Koester 2003:228). Certainly not what one would expect for a shamed common criminal!

An appreciation of Israelite burial customs at the time of Jesus, as helpfully provided by Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:276-277), further enhances the significance of John's details surrounding Jesus burial. They explain that death was viewed as a lengthy process with mourning rites lasting a full year. During this time, the body was left on a shelf to decompose. A person's evil deeds were thought to inhabit their flesh, so the rotting flesh was symbolic of the person being purified. When the flesh had completely decomposed (a year later), it was believed that the debt for sin was paid and the sentence complete. The next step was to collect the bones and place them in a casket as it was thought that God used these bones to attach new flesh in the resurrection life. Once the second burial was complete, the process of mourning ended in the hope of the resurrection.

Malina and Rohrbaugh continue to point out that in keeping with burial customs, Jesus was laid in tomb to begin the period of decay, in order to atone for his sins. However, God interrupted this atonement process! Rather than allowing his flesh to decompose in order for his sins to dissolve in preparation for future resurrection, God raised him to life on the first day of the week – the third day after his death! God intervened before the rotting started. With God taking Jesus directly to resurrection, it implies that there was no guilt in his flesh; he had committed no sin. In the cultural context of the day, "the resurrection for Jesus asserts that his death was wrong and has been overturned by a higher judge" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:277). God effectively overturned the judgement of the religious leaders – the death sentence – and pronounced a verdict of 'not guilty'. "For John, Jesus died due to the intransigence of Judeans, but God rescued and vindicated him because Jesus was in fact the mediator of life itself" (1998:277).

Herein lies another Johannine irony – Jesus the wrongdoer, sinner, criminal that was condemned to the most shameful death by crucifixion, was in fact shown to be the

unblemished, sinless Lamb of God. He is the one who, through his sacrificial death, takes away the sin of the world (Jn.1:29).

5.3.6 Conclusion

Belief in Jesus, the crucified Messiah and Son of God, had led to loss of honour, ridicule, persecution, even martyrdom for the Johannine community. During this situation of crisis, the possibility existed that their faith – like others experiencing a severe crisis – could, in the words of Mannion, have remained unchanged; been rejected or most positively it could have been transformed (quoted in Young 1998b). John, writing as a pastor has, I believe, carefully portrayed the events surrounding the passion and death of Jesus in such a way as to lead to a renewed understanding and transformation of their faith. He has given new meaning to the death of Jesus, and changed perceptions concerning the identity of Jesus and his honour status. He highlights for his readers the irony of shame turned to honour and glory; defeat transformed to glory and victory. He has transformed the Jewish feast of the Passover by linking Jesus with the unblemished Passover Lamb, by whose blood people find salvation and are spared from eternal death through faith in him. In this way, John proclaims that he is worthy of the title afforded him by Thomas, “My Lord and my God” (Jn.20:28).

Not only does John’s portrayal of the death of Jesus restore to him honour in the eyes of his readers, but also has pastoral benefits in vindicating the Johannine community as well. Their shame, like Jesus’ is turned to honour. Furthermore, they are recipients of the benefits of the death of Jesus, which are available to all who put their faith and trust in Him.

Understanding Jesus’ death from this radically new perspective, with its implications (benefits) for them as a believing community, would, I suggest, have served to inspire a transformed faith, renewed hope and courage for the Johannine community in the context of their crisis.

They (the members of the Johannine community) also gain a new perspective on their suffering and martyrdom – when endured in obedience to God, it will bring God

glory (Jn. 21:19). In addition they need not fear death as they will be raised with Jesus on the last day (6:44)

Chapter 6: Deepening faith

6.1 Introduction

Crises are to be expected. Jesus (according to John's Gospel) warned his followers (and indirectly the Johannine community) that this would be part of their life experience. They would face troubles in the world (Jn. 16:33). They would be hated just as Jesus was hated (15:18). They could expect persecution just as Jesus was persecuted (15:20). Some would be killed by those who thought that in doing so they were worshipping God (16:2). They would face the pain of grief, loss and separation (16:16-22). In the farewell discourses, Jesus both reassured and instructed his disciples how to live in the hostile environment of the world once he had departed (Moody Smith 1999:306). He challenged them not allow themselves to be overcome by fear in the face of these 'critical events' (troubles, hatred, persecution, and in particular grief and loss through the death and departure of Jesus) when he said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled (ταρασσέσθω) (14:1, 27), and do not let them be afraid" (δελιάτω) (14:27a). Instead, they should "Believe in God, believe also in me" (14:27b) – in essence, he appeals to them to trust him. "The basis for trusting Jesus is his intimate relationship with God ('Father') and consequent knowledge of heavenly things" (Scott 2003:1196). This need to trust Jesus is reinforced throughout chapter fourteen.

I suggest Jesus recognized that when facing all sorts of trials and tribulations, such as his followers encountered, one of the hardest challenges is not to become overwhelmed or paralyzed by fear. In the following section, I shall discuss the ways John through his representation of Jesus addressed the issue of fear.

6.2 Addressing the issue of fear

Jesus addresses his disciples in these words, “Do not let your hearts be troubled (Jn. 14:1, 27). The verb *ταρασσέσθω* is written here in the 3 p. sing. pres. pass. imper. and can mean to be troubled, frightened or terrified (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:805); troubled, disquiet, perplexed (J. H. Moulton and Milligan 1963); or to stir, agitate, trouble (Strong 2007:§G5015). This verb appears in only three other places in John’s Gospel, each time referring to Jesus. He was ‘deeply troubled’ when he saw Mary’s grief at the death of her brother Lazarus (11:33); his ‘soul was troubled’ as he spoke about his approaching death (12:27); and he was ‘troubled in spirit’ as he predicted Judas’ betrayal (13:21). A person’s greatest fear is often that of being left alone after someone they love dies or goes far away. Here, in the context of these verses (14:1, 27), Jesus speaks into this kind of situation by instructing his disciples (imperative) not to allow themselves to be troubled as they learn of his imminent death and departure (14:1-6; 18-31).

Arndt and Gingrich add that in these verses (Jn.14:1, 27), Jesus’ words can have the additional meaning of not letting your hearts be *intimidated* (1979:805). This would make sense in the broader context of the on-going animosity the disciples (in particular, the Johannine community) experienced through hatred and persecution (15:18, 20; 16:2) – they are exhorted by Jesus not to allow themselves to be intimidated by people who threatened them or sought to do them harm. Why this exhortation? Instilling fear through intimidation can, I believe, be a powerful weapon in the hands of one’s enemies. Yet when the ‘victims’ resist giving in to fear and intimidation, I suggest they in some way are empowered and able to disarm their enemies.

In John chapter fourteen verse twenty-seven, Jesus repeated the challenge not to be troubled (Jn.14:1) and added that the disciples should also not let their hearts “be afraid” (*δελιάτω*) (3 p. sing. pres. act. Imper). This is clearly added for emphasis. It is the *only time* that this particular verb appears in the scriptures (Terrien 1982:257; Moulton & Geden 1989:186) . The more commonly used word for fear in the New

Testament is φοβέω (Douglas 1996:365; Terrien 1982:257), which means to being afraid, frightened, terrified; or it can refer to having reverence, respect, being in awe (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:862-863; Strong 2007:§G5399). Terrien notes that the “concept of fear in the Bible is related to a wide range of emotions extending from simple apprehensiveness to utter terror or dread, caused by the suspicion of an impending peril, known or unknown (1982:256). John uses φοβέω just three times in his gospel to describe the disciples being terrified when they saw Jesus walking on the water (6:19-20), and Pilate being terrified on hearing Jesus had claimed to be the Son of God (19:8).

However, the particular word for fear that John chose here (Jn.14:27) (δειλιάτω) has the meaning of timidity, fear, cowardice (Strong 2007:§G1168; Terrien 1982:257) and “be cowardly, timid....before wild beasts M Pol 4. M-M.” (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:173). Mundle adds the meaning of “despondent” (Mundle 1980:622). Perhaps it is reasonable to suggest that John specifically used δειλιάτω because those who hated the disciples (and specifically members of the Johannine community) could be compared to wild beasts having the capacity to frighten and even *terrify* them. Jesus emphasised to his followers the importance of not giving in to fear; not allowing them to become despondent, afraid, timid or cowardly in the face of their fierce opponents.

Why might John, in the words of Jesus, have placed such an emphasis on not being troubled or afraid? Fear is a very common human response to danger (Jolley 2000:457). I suggest John does this because fear can be very counterproductive in the face of crises and only makes things worse. So if – as in the case of the members of the Johannine community – a person is faced with all kinds of troubles (including persecution or even death), they are more likely to cope in the situation if they face the crisis without letting their minds succumb to fear than would otherwise be the case.

In the face of a crisis fear needs to be addressed and not allowed to get the upper hand. John and the members of his community had ample cause to be afraid and become crippled by fear, yet fear would be totally counterproductive in dealing with

their situation of crisis. Fear could potentially be a greater enemy than the martyrdom, persecutions, hatred, expulsion from the synagogues, loss of identity, grief that the members of the community would experience following Jesus' death and departure – as not only could it play into the hands of their enemies, but also be detrimental to their own ability to cope spiritually and emotionally and rise above their circumstances. Worse still, fear of suffering ridicule or physical harm could lead them to renounce their faith in Jesus (Marshall 1991: 41). Hence, according to John's Gospel, Jesus repeatedly commanded his disciples not to allow their hearts to be troubled, nor to let fear cause them to be cowardly or intimidated. These words were an instruction, an imperative of great importance.

6.2.1 *Love casts out fear*

Being told not to be afraid is easier said than done. How could the disciples overcome their fear? Douglas notes that the fear of people in particular "can be cast out by true love to God" (1996: 365). Mundle acknowledges that "The Christian is constantly confronted by the task of overcoming the motive of fear by that of love" (1980:624). If indeed "perfect love casts out fear" as stated in 1 John 4:18, it is not surprising then that John repeatedly emphasised Jesus' exhortations to love and receive love in this chapter and the next (Jn. 14:15, 21-24; 15:9-17). This love is not a feeling but "an act of will – namely, both an intention and an action. 'Will' also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love" (Peck 1988:83). The disciples had a choice – they could choose to fear, or choose to love. Jesus encourages them to love. His exhortations to deepen the bonds of love between the disciples and God through Jesus; to love one another; and to grow and deepen those relationships are clearly significant dimensions of Jesus' answer to empower them to deal with their fear and respond positively to the crisis.

6.2.2 *Peace replaces fear*

Having spoken of his death, his departure (Jn. 14:1-6; 18-31); the animosity and hatred they would encounter from 'the world' (15:18-16:4); the importance of not being afraid; Jesus' words to the disciples "conclude on the note of peace and

victory” (Morris 1971:714). Part of the continuing gift of Jesus is peace (Scott 2003:1197).

“I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face *persecution/tribulation* (θλίψιν)” (Jn.16:33a). This noun θλίψιν is used only twice in John’s Gospel (Moulton & Geden 1989:460). The other time it is used in the context of a mother who no longer remembers the “anguish” (NRSV) of labour pain after giving birth to her baby (16:21). It means “affliction, anguish, burden, persecution, tribulation, trouble”(Strong 2007:§G2347) or “oppression, affliction, tribulation” (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:362). These are all intensely powerful words, indicating far more than just little everyday worries.

Jesus warns the disciples to be under no illusions that life will be difficult and have its share of challenges. They live in the world and therefore they will have tribulation – that is its characteristic. “Jesus’ promise of tribulations no doubt reflects the experience of the first readers of this Gospel (cf.15:18-16:3), but they should not become the all determining element in their lives as disciples of Jesus” (Moloney 1998:455). They would be scattered (Jn. 16:32), which Keener notes is “the usual fate of troops whose leader had fallen, but in biblical tradition, it was especially the fate of sheep without a shepherd, the condition of Israel when lacking faithful shepherds” (2003b:1048). He adds “Being abandoned, left ‘alone’, was normally viewed as great hardship” (2003b:1048). This most likely reflects the experience of the Johannine community, following the death and departure of Jesus their shepherd (10:11).

Yet in spite of these tribulations Jesus reassures his disciples that they will find peace and joy (Jn.16:31-33) ‘*in him*’ – as they remain in relationship with him (15:4-10). This peace in Jesus “contrasts with persecution in the world which fits after the extensive description of the world’s hatred (15:18-16:4)” (Moody Smith 1999:305). Scott describes the peace Jesus brings in this way:

Fundamentally, it is the state which results from being in a continuing relationship with God, the very thing of which Jesus has been speaking. It does not release the believer

from trouble, but its presence ensures that trouble cannot overwhelm – thus the allusion back to 14:1. Since the ‘world’ does not believe, it cannot either receive or give such ‘peace’ (2003:1197)

The peace that Jesus brings is a deep inner peace that transcends life’s difficult circumstances; it is given even in the face of tribulation and persecution; and is found only in relationship with him. They would receive this peace in full following Jesus’ death and resurrection (Jn.20:19, 21), when Jesus breathed on them so they might receive the Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα ἅγιον) (20:22).

6.2.3 *Courage through the victory of Jesus*

Jesus’ final word of exhortation and comfort comes in the last verse of chapter sixteen, where he concludes by saying “...but (ἀλλὰ) (emphatic) take courage (θαρσεῖτε); I have conquered (νενίκηκα) the world!”(Jn.16:33). Whereas great hardship, hatred and persecution await Jesus’ disciples (and by implication the members of the Johannine community) in the world, Jesus has conquered the world “proleptically, in his death” (Moody Smith 1999:305), and consequent resurrection. Moloney suggests that “the disciples eventual awareness of his victory should bring them courage and joy in the midst of their many tribulations” (1998:456).

John uses the verb νικάω only in this verse (Jn.16:33) in his Gospel (Moulton & Geden 1989:665). According to Strong, it can mean to subdue, conquer, overcome, get the victory (2007:§G3528). It is especially frequent in Revelation (17 times) being used there as here of Christ’s victory (Morris 1971:714; Moulton & Geden 1989:666). In Revelation (2:7, 11, 17, 26) the believer is also described as the one who conquers. Moody Smith suggests there are “hints that the one who conquers is the Christian martyr, who conquers and sits on the throne of Christ as Jesus conquered and sat down with the Father on his throne (Rev 3:21)” (1999:305-306). Moody Smith concludes that “Jesus is not encouraging his followers to think they shall escape suffering and death in this world. If they must suffer and die, they will conquer the world with Jesus” (1999:306). Therefore there is no need to be afraid –

even if the disciples face tribulation in Jesus' death (16:21) and in sharing his sufferings; even if they are persecuted to the point of death, this will not mean defeat but victory which they share with Jesus. Furthermore Keener notes, "In the context of John's Gospel and early Christian eschatology, this note of triumph...[is] a promise that evil and suffering do not ultimately prevail for Christ's followers" (2003b:1048-1049). These would be words of great encouragement to the Johannine community in crisis.

6.3 Potential spiritual benefits arising from a crisis

Mannion suggests that on a spiritual level a crisis can have a negative effect resulting in people's beliefs being shattered or more positively it can result in their faith being strengthened (quoted in Young 1998b). An example of this can be seen in the responses of the two criminals crucified with Jesus, as presented in Luke (23:39-43). In the face of death, one cursed God and the other found salvation. Applying these alternatives to the Johannine community, this would suggest that their crisis could lead some members to succumb to fear, despair and disillusionment with God, resulting in a shattering of their faith and causing them to renounce their belief in Jesus. At the same time, others might respond by becoming even stronger and more deeply rooted in their faith, and being more zealous and fervent in their commitment to Jesus.

I agree with Clinebell, when he states that by far the most opportunities for caring present themselves at times of crisis (1984:35). In my years of pastoral experience as both a priest and Social Worker, I have seen this to be true. When confronted by a crisis that leaves people feeling emotionally raw and vulnerable, people appear far more open to others and to God because of their vulnerability, than when all seems well and they perceive they have no need. A crisis can be viewed as a challenge to reach out, to dig deep, to change and to grow. Clinebell proposes that one goal of pastoral care is to enable people to embrace their crisis as a potential growth opportunity, and in particular a *spiritual growth opportunity* (my emphasis) (1984:35). This involves helping them gain a different perspective of the crisis, and transforming their perception of it from being something negative and destructive to something

positive and constructive. In this way, the crisis can be embraced not as a threat or something to be feared, but rather a gift, with the potential to lead one to personal and spiritual growth.

The Johannine community could not control or change the circumstances or 'critical events' that precipitated the crisis they were facing. So much of what they experienced was, in the words of Hepworth (et al.), "woven into the fabric of everyday life" (2010:380). Their faith and commitment to Jesus and confession of him as Messiah led to hatred and rejection by the world (Jn. 15:18). Scholars agree that they lived in a context marked by extreme hostility and conflict with Judaism, a serious and violent dialogue with the synagogue, expulsion from the synagogue (Jn. 16:2) resulting in social ostracism; on-going persecution (15:20) (Carroll 1957:19-32; Grässer 1964:74-90; Meeks 1967:318-319; Martyn 1968; 1979; Fortna 1970:151-166; Brown 1979:25-91; Neyrey 1988; du Rand 1991:61; Culpepper 1986:1-20; Ringe 1999:18-23; Menken 2000; Koester 2003:20). Some faced martyrdom (Jn.16:2) – Martyn suggests that only those members of the Johannine community identified as evangelists or preachers were seen as being guilty of leading others astray (1979:67). Both du Rand and Ringe conclude that, the members of the Johannine community lived under constant threat, trauma, persecution, fear for their lives, being despised and rejected by the Jewish community and 'the world' (du Rand 1991:64; Ringe 1999: 22). These factors combined amount to a crisis of epidemic proportions! The potentially high levels of stress, anxiety, trauma, fear that must have been part of their on-going daily existence is hard to begin to imagine. They could not control their circumstances, but they could choose how they would respond to them.

My view is that John, as a pastor and leader in the community, played a pivotal role in guiding his community to respond positively to the crisis. In agreement with Mannion and Clinebell I believe that suffering or facing a crisis can become catalysts for rebuilding and redefining one's relationship with God, resulting in a deepening and maturing of one's faith (Mannion quoted in Young 1998b) and the revitalising of one's relationship with God (Clinebell 1984:31). In face of the crisis, I believe John

seized the opportunity to guide his readers to grapple with their faith and so come out stronger in their relationship with Jesus.

6.4 The significance of Relationships in times of crisis

Where do people turn for help when facing a crisis? Some people choose to withdraw and cut themselves off from others, hiding in seclusion and struggling on their own in the face of a crisis. They seem to think that admitting their need of help is a sign of weakness. However, frequently I have found that in times of crisis people are more likely to cry out to God for help as well as turn to other people to find strength and comfort rather than struggle in isolation. For most, it is easier to cope with life's knocks when they are not on their own but can experience the presence and support of others.

Humanity was created to enjoy fellowship with God and to share in God's experience of loving and being loved (Gaybba 2004:133, 135). However, as Flood correctly observes, "A relational faith, by its very definition, is inherently social" (2007:2). Through faith in Jesus a person begins a relationship with God as Father, yet inevitably that means they become part of the wider family of believers (the children of God), and so share a common life of faith with others. In the words of Lukács, "A Christian must not remain an isolated individual; he or she is a member of a great communion, of the *Body of Christ*" (2003:282).

As a community of believers, Christians have the privilege and responsibility to encourage and support one another in times of crisis, and spur one another on to grow in their faith. Therefore an individual's relationship with God "is at once a personal, but not private relationship fostered by the community of the Church" (Shiert 2008).

How might these insights concerning the importance of relationships be applied to the situation in which the Johannine community found themselves? In their time of crisis, John the pastor encouraged the Johannine community to turn to God through

Jesus and to deepen their relationship with him, through loving and caring for one another (Jn. 15:12-17) and strengthening the bonds of unity between them (17:20-23). In Jesus' high priestly prayer (17:1-26) he asked the Father to create a shared community between himself (Jesus) and his disciples, as well as disciples of future generations to come. In the words of Malina and Rohrbaugh, "Throughout the Gospel the focus is on close interpersonal bonds with Jesus and within the Johannine group"(1998:247). If the Johannine community could maintain strong interpersonal relationships and remain united with Jesus and one another especially in their experience of crisis, they would be a visible sign of the presence of God and also find protection against the assaults of the evil one in the world around them. John foresaw that by strengthening the interpersonal bonds with Jesus and one another, the Johannine community would be well equipped to stand firm in the face of the crisis besieging them.

6.5 John's invitation to relationship

John's presentation of the Jesus story is unique. Throughout the Gospel, John invites and urges his readers to enter into a personal relationship with God through Jesus. The only way a person can face life's challenges, trial and tribulations is by living in relationship with Jesus.

The reader is not simply presented with the facts concerning who Jesus is (both human and divine) and what he did and said (as in the Synoptic Gospels), but rather the reader is given evidence which demands a verdict! All the miracles recorded in John's Gospel – which John calls 'signs' (τὰ σημεῖα) – are intended to point beyond themselves to the true identity of Jesus (Jn. 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-18; 6:1-15; 6:16-21; 9:1-41; 11:1-44), "the revelation of the δόξα of Jesus" (Bultmann 1971:119). Barrett points out that for John the actual history of Jesus of Nazareth is important, giving a reliable account of what Jesus did and taught, because in it the eternal God revealed himself to humankind (1978:5). However, Barrett notes, John deliberately selected and presented the material in his gospel in such a way that "men [sic] may recognize their relation to God in Jesus, rather than to convey interesting information about him" (1978:5). In the words of du Rand, "the reader must make a decision

about the main protagonist, Jesus, the Son of God. The Gospel of John knows no compromise” (1991:2). The choice is clear – either a person can open their eyes of faith and believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and receive eternal life (20:31; 3:16) being born from above as a child of God (1:12; 3:3-7) and so live in the light (1:4) – or alternatively unbelief leads to death and judgement and remaining in darkness (3:16-21). “The two diametrically opposed extremes are indicated in the words, ‘to perish’ or ‘to have eternal life’ (du Rand 1991:2). The evidence demands a verdict!

Having established Jesus’ true identity, John intends his readers to move beyond the facts of Jesus to appreciate their real significance (Suggit 1993:5). He repeatedly confronts his readers with an invitation and challenge to believe in Jesus (Jn. 1:12), to know God (17:3), to be in an on-going relationship with God – for that is essentially what eternal life is all about. Eternal life itself is relational – it concerns life shared with God and with the people of God (Wenham and Walton 2001:252).

6.5.1 Significant Relational verbs in John’s Gospel

6.5.1.1 Believing (πιστεύω).

The most important and frequently used verb in John’s Gospel is ‘to believe’ (πιστεύω). According to Strong, this Greek word means to have faith in, to entrust or to believe (2007:§G4100). This appears ninety-eight times in John (compared to Matt. 11 times; Mk. 14 times; Lk. 9 times) (Moulton & Geden 1989:805-807).

Bruner highlights that in John the verb πιστεύω stands alone and is never accompanied by an adjective or adverb to intensify believing (like sincerely or genuinely believing, or believing and trusting). He writes,

Believing says it all, does it all, receives all that is given, motivates all that issues from it, and is as simple and as concrete as the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who, like believing, needs no supplementation. Jesus did it all. Believing receives it all. This is the Gospel according to John (*Solus Christus, sola fide.*) (2012:22).

Believing in Jesus Christ is the ultimate goal of this gospel, as underscored in John's mission statement, "But these are written so that you might believe/ may come to believe/ may continue to believe (πιστεύ[σ]ητε note that textual variants affect the tense of the verb) that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name" (Jn. 20:31). This then is both an invitation to life, and an invitation to a deeper faith. It is an invitation to come and see, and experience for yourself (2008). "Believing is *the* central human "decision" sought in human beings by the divine Word according to the Fourth Gospel...." (Bruner 2012:21). God longs for all to come know him and to grow in that relationship with him. It is literally a matter of life and death – the decision to believe in Jesus and enter a relationship with God through him leads to life and light whereas unbelief leads to death, darkness and judgement (3:16-21).

Malina and Rohrbaugh refer to an emerging consensus that believing in John's Gospel involves more than simple credence but implies trust as well (1998:130). "It is not believing that what He says is true, but trusting Him as a person (Morris 1971:99). This is evident in the novel way John uses the verb by following it with εἰς and the accusative in place of the expected dative case, so that it is a believing literally INTO (εἰς) its object of faith, and not believing in the faith object. By contrast the simple dative would mean believing that what someone says is true (Morris 1971:99). This characteristic Johannine idiom appears thirty six times in the gospel (for example in Jn. 1:12; 2:11, 23; 3:18; 6:35) and strongly suggests elements of a close interpersonal relationship between Jesus and his followers (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:60).

Bruner understands believing into Jesus as involving complete commitment to him (2012:30), or in the words of Malina and Rohrbaugh, to "be attached to the person of Jesus, who he really is" (1998:248). Furthermore, in the context of Mediterranean society, believing into Jesus inevitably meant being attached to and belonging to the Johannine community as well (1998:248), to the extent that the person who believed was "completely embedded in the group of which he [Jesus] is the central personage" (1998:230). Being both 'attached' and 'embedded' in the Johannine

community hints at a unity and loyalty that is extremely deep (1998:130). Hence the act of believing as found in John's Gospel, is inherently relational.

6.5.1.2 *Knowing* (γινώσκω)

Closely related to 'believing into Jesus' is the idea of 'knowing' God the Father and his incarnate Son (Jn.14:7; 17:3, 25) (γινώσκω Strong 2007:§G1097). Knowing God the Father is only possible through Jesus his Son, who is "God's agent, his apostle, his sent one" (Witherington 1995:269). The Father and the Son "are inextricably connected as Revealer and Revealed" (Bruner 2012:971). Carson adds that "Knowledge of God cannot be divorced from knowledge of Jesus Christ. Indeed, knowledge of Jesus Christ, whom God has sent, is the ultimate access to knowledge of God" (1991:556).

How does John's understanding of the idea 'knowing God' compare with its usage in Old and New Testament thought? Barrett refers to the twofold background of Greek and Hebrew: "In Greek thought, knowledge regularly implies observation and objectivity" (1978:162). He continues, "In the Old Testament, however, knowledge (Hebrew word) is a much less intellectual and more comprehensive term" (1978:162).

Carson (1991:556) points out that in the Old Testament God's people are destroyed from lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6), and Habakkuk sees a time when "the earth with be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (2:14). In Deuteronomy we read that "the Lord is your life" (30:20). Carson concludes that "To know God is to be transformed, and thus to be introduced to a life that could not otherwise be experienced" (1991:556).

In the Gospel of John, Barrett notes that

Though the noun γνῶσις does not occur in John, "knowledge", represented by the verbs γινώσκειν and εἶδεναι, is an important feature of John's thought. These seem to be used synonymously (eg 7:27; 8:55; 13:7; 14:7). Both words are used simply of human cognition of matters of fact (7:51; 11:57; 9:20; 18:2) (1978:162).

Barrett continues,

This Old Testament usage constitutes the decisive, though not the only factor in John's conception of knowledge. (1) Jesus himself knows the Father, and this knowledge issues in a relation of love, obedience, and mutual indwelling (e.g. 10.15; 17.25; 7.29; 8.55). (2) When men know God through Jesus a similar relation is brought into being (e.g. 8.32; 17.8, 25; 10.4; 13. 17; 15.15). When, however, John goes on to add (3) that knowledge of God and Christ confers, or rather is, eternal life (17.3), he is treading ground that is common to both Hellenism and the Old Testament" (1978:162).

Carson highlights that for John, knowledge is not merely an intellectual matter. "[I]t is clear that the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ entails fellowship, trust, personal relationship, faith" (1991:556). Barrett concludes that John's usage of the verb 'to know' is primarily in keeping with the Old Testament understanding (1978:162) – being experiential and relational – rather than the more theoretical sense of observation and objectivity as found in Greek thought.

6.5.1.3 Knowing and believing lead to eternal life

As highlighted by Barrett, in John's Gospel, knowledge "is a way of entrance into salvation and life" (Barrett 1978:81). He continues, "Knowledge of God and Christ gives life; but the same result follows from believing (20:31). Knowing and believing are not set over against one another but correlated" (1978:504). In the words of Carson, they "are central to the acquisition of eternal life (3:16; 20:31)" (1991:556). John's mission statement was to present the Jesus story in such a way that people may 'believe' that he is the Son of God, and so have life in his name (Jn.20:31). Jesus describes his mission or manifesto as being to glorify God in completing the task given to him by the Father – to make God known through his words and actions. This results in eternal life (17:3), in the words of Moloney,

The believer has eternal life by knowing the God revealed by Jesus, the *logos* of God. The revelation that makes eternal life possible for 'all flesh' (vv.2-3) has taken place in Jesus' revealing words and works (1998:461).

For John the evangelist, knowing God involves a move from head knowledge or cognitive belief (knowing facts about God) to an on-going personal relationship. In the words of Ringe, “Christian theology is not a mental and doctrinal labour. Rather, it is a loving relationship with God that leads to celebration, transformation, knowledge” (1999:2). As noted by Wenham and Walton, “ ‘Knowing’ here is to be understood not as a theoretical knowledge, but in personal terms...the knowledge of God referred to is a strong, even intimate relationship – like that of the shepherd knowing his sheep by name and loving them sacrificially (10:3,15)” (2001:251).

Therefore both the actions of ‘believing’ and ‘knowing’ in John are inherently relational. They imply a deep and intimate, personal knowledge of God through Jesus, which leads to eternal life.

6.5.3 The relational purpose of John’s Gospel

The essence of John’s language, in my opinion, suggests that at the very heart of John’s Gospel, is relationship. I suggest that the whole purpose of the gospel **is** relational – every miracle, sign points to Jesus, given so that we may believe and have eternal life which involves a personal relationship with God. John speaks continually of life “lived out of the context of a conscious relationship with God made possible through Christ” (Kysar 1984:27). This gospel tells the story of how God sought relationship in coming to dwell among us in Jesus, the ‘word made flesh’ (Jn. 1:14). In this relational encounter, all those who ‘received him and believed in his name’ (1:12) found true life; they were witnesses to this story, in order that the readers might also encounter the living Christ relationally as they had (Flood 2007:3). Flood adds that our faith is not so much ascribing to timeless truths as about encountering the living truth in the person of Jesus Christ, who embodies the truth (14:6) (2007:4) .

John clearly longs for his readers to know God, not just in a theoretical or intellectual way, but personally and intimately, so that their knowledge of him will be “experiential and relational, as in the OT” (Mobley 2000:777). In my view, this clear emphasis on relationship unique to John’s Gospel is a deliberate attempt on his part

to meet the pastoral needs of his community in crisis. John writes as a pastor with a definite intention – to lead his readers to a deep and intimate relationship with Jesus, and to strengthen their faith in him, particularly in times of crisis.

In the fourth Gospel, I suggest that John develops his own theology of relationship. More recently, scholars have introduced the term “Relational Theology”. In the next section, I shall explore what in their view is meant by this term, and demonstrate how their ideas might apply to the Gospel of John.

6.6 Relational Theology

The term ‘Relational Theology’ was first given attention by writers of Systematic Theology and was the research topic of the third LEST (Louvain Encounters in Systematic Theology) conference held at the K.U. Leuven’s Faculty of Theology in November 2001 (see Haers & De Mey 2003). Apparently, however, it has not yet become a tool in the hands of Biblical scholars. I am advocating that it be taken into the arena of Biblical Studies, and applied to John’s Gospel. My reading of the Fourth Gospel, outlined in this thesis, argues that John instinctively developed a primarily ‘Relational Theology’ to meet the pastoral needs of the Johannine community in their time of crisis, in leading them to a deeper relationship with God and one another.

What is currently understood by the term “Relational Theology”? For Sawtelle (2006) there is confusion as to what Relational Theology is about. He argues that “All thinking, all theology, all science is relational, because thinking is the discovery of relationships. Relational Theology is unique because it is clear that we are relational creatures living in a relational universe created by a relational God” (Sawtelle 2006).

Folsom, who describes himself as a ‘Relational Theologian’, similarly suggests that the “defining theme in Relational Theology is that God exists in relationship, and all that God does is for the purpose of relationship” (Folsom 2008). He continues “[A]ll humanity is addressed by God, in the person of Jesus Christ, to respond to the invitation, the initiation of the God who reconciles, creates community, speaks to us, and calls us his own, His family, His body....” In Matrix Theology (“What Is Relational

Theology? | Matrix Theology” 2006), the essence of relational theology is said to be “that God and man [sic] are intricately involved. Human beings were created with an essential connection to God which is severed by self- serving actions, namely sin”.

God desires to be in relationship with all that God has created, as affirmed by the Systematic Theologian, LaCugna, who suggests that the economy of creation and redemption reveals that “God is not self-contained, egotistical and self-absorbed but overflowing love, outreaching desire for union with all that God has made”(1991:15). She concludes that God as revealed in the incarnation of the Word and in the gift of the Holy Spirit is a person “turned towards another in ecstatic love....God’s To-Be is To-Be-in-Relation and To-Be-in-Communion” (1991:14,250). In essence, God is by nature, relational.

Flood, in his online article entitled *An Evangelical Relational Theology: A Personal Relationship with God as Theological Leitmotif* points out that “at the heart of all language about God, lies the foundation of relationship” (2007:6). He suggests that “Relationship is not only the goal of theology, it is also the leitmotif, i.e. the central guiding concept and interpretive framework through which all doctrine and Scripture must be understood” (2007:6). He asserts that it is vital that “a relational theology be rooted in a biblical understanding of relationship that reflects the heart and mind of Jesus” (2007:2). He concludes that the propositional truths contained in the Scriptures all tell us about God’s character, and where we stand in relation to God – hence they all have the purpose of pointing us to a living relationship (2007:9).

6.6.1 Root metaphors of Relational Theology

In his opening address of the LEST Conference in 2001, Haers made a plea for a Relational Theology – one that centres itself on the root metaphors of relation, connectedness, encounter and conversation (Haers 2003:1-40). In doing so, he drew attention to a crucial element in Origen of Alexandria’s concern and theology, namely that of “the dynamism of the relationship with God, a relationship which takes its form concretely in the reality in which we live” (Haers 2003:16). For Origen, “the deep

truth about reality lies in the encounter with God and in the interconnectedness that arises from that encounter....therefore, reality is, profoundly, spiritual, i.e. relational" (Haers 2003:16-17). Influenced by Origen, Haers refers also to the work of Karl Rahner who's theology "originates in the context of spiritualities that take the concrete and contextually situated relationship between God and human beings, as well as the relationships between human beings, seriously" (Haers 2003:17).

According to Haers, one of the goals of the research programme on Relational Theology at the University of Leuven in 2001 was to clarify the intention of these metaphors – "relation", "encounter", "connectedness" and "conversation" (2003:1). The Systematic theologians proposed the following, as summarized by Shielt (2008): 'Relation' refers to the position of one thing to another, and expresses the "mode or manner of being" – for example God the Father expresses a relationship which is a metaphor for the manner that God exists with human beings. 'Encounter' as a metaphor "articulates the tension between nearness and distance, similarity and strangeness, sameness and difference, self and other" (Haers 2003:13). It includes the notion of challenge and in many ways defines the gaps between God and the world (Shielt 2008). 'Connectedness' refers to the notion that as humans we are connected to God and the world, in the words of John Paul I, "Human beings are not made to live alone" (John Paul II 1998).

The Systematic Theologians at Leuven University refer to David Tracy in his book *Plurality an Ambiguity* who describes 'Conversation' as a game with rules: say accurately what you mean; listen to the other and respect what they say; be willing to defend your opinion if challenged or change your mind if the evidence suggest it. This can only take place "within some relationship (respect, community, friendship) and has as its end a meeting of the minds" (Tracy 1987:19). In essence it as people engage in conversation with one another, in speaking, listening and responding, this serves to strengthen the relationship between them.

6.6.2 Root metaphors of Relational Theology in John's Gospel

Throughout John's gospel, these root metaphors of relation, connectedness, encounter and conversation are clearly evident. I have already mentioned that at the heart of John's Gospel is the invitation to relationship with God. The readers are invited to receive eternal life through 'believing into' Jesus (Jn.3:16) and 'knowing God' personally (17:3).

John uses the metaphorical language of **relation** in describing God as being like a Father and believers becoming his children when they are born again/ from above into his family (Jn.1:12; 3:5-7). Additional metaphors of relation are used to describe Jesus' relationship with the believing Johannine community, such as Jesus being the Good Shepherd to his sheep (10:11-16), and being a friend to friends (15:12-15). Metaphors of **connectedness** such as Jesus being the vine and believers the branches (Jn.15:1-8) present a picture of the Johannine community being connected intimately both to God and with one another. Believers also remain connected to Jesus, who is the "bread of life" the "living bread" (6:35, 48, 51), by abiding in him through eating of his flesh and drinking his blood (6:54-56). In this way they have eternal life in the present (6:47, 54) and into the future – they will not die but be raised up on the last day and live for ever (6:44, 48-51, 54, 57-58). People have the opportunity to '**encounter**' God through the 'word made flesh' who came to live as a human among us (Jn. 1:14) and as they are continually challenged by Jesus (14:9). The root metaphor of **conversation** is most clearly evident in the accounts of Jesus interactions with both Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-10) and the Samaritan Woman (4:1-25).

John incorporates many of these root metaphors of Relational Theology throughout the pages of his gospel. In my view this is because – in the context of a community in crisis – the strengthening of faith is John's pastoral concern. In striving to reach this goal, John develops his own 'Relational Theology' to lead the members of the Johannine community into a deeper relationship with God and one another. As they for example 'abide/remain' in him (μείνᾱτε) like branches attached to the vine (Jn. 15:4) or through eating his flesh and drinking his blood (6:56); or stay close to him like sheep following their shepherd; they will be enabled to deal with life's challenges

– for “apart from me (Jesus), you can do nothing” (15:4-5). In this way they will have the necessary inner resources to cope and sustain them through their time of crisis. Furthermore they will be strengthened and equipped to deal with whatever else may come their way in future (15:5-7), and experience joy (15:11; 16:20, 22) and peace (16:33) rather than fear, even in the midst of hardship. They will find that even death will have no power over them (11:25-26). They will enjoy eternal life in the present life which will continue beyond the grave into eternity (6:44, 51, 54, 58; 11:25-26). For John, maintaining their relationship with God and consequently with one another is the secret to living life in all its fullness (10:10) – something which paradoxically can be experienced even in the context of suffering and crisis.

Chapter 7: Root metaphors of Relational Theology

7.1 Introduction

Relational Theology centers itself on the root metaphors of relation, connectedness, encounter and conversation (Haers 2003:1-40). It is primarily through relationships – with God and other people – that we as humans find the comfort, strength, support and encouragement we need to sustain us in times of crisis. The deepening and strengthening of relationships is therefore of utmost importance in exercising a ministry of Pastoral Care. It is not co-incidental, therefore, that John in his role as pastor to the Johannine community places such a strong emphasis on metaphors central to Relational Theology – metaphors which are noticeably absent in the Synoptic Gospels. I will now turn my attention to focus on four of John's unique metaphors of **connectedness** and **relation** – namely the Vine and the Branches, the Friend, Good Shepherd and the Sheep. John is rich in relational root metaphors, but I have chosen these ones simply to illustrate his tendency to use such metaphors to further his purpose in guiding the Johannine community to a deeper relationship with God and one another. In my view, these were specifically selected and included by John in his gospel to encourage the community members to remain faithful to Jesus and to draw strength from him and one another in their time of crisis.

7.2 A Root Metaphor of Connectedness: The Vine and the Branches

One of the most obvious root metaphors of 'connectedness' found in John's Gospel, is that of the vine and its branches (Jn.15:1-11). "Most scholars are fascinated by the metaphor of the vine, but it serves as a vehicle to articulate the importance of abiding" (Moloney 1998:417). The Greek word μένω, usually translated as 'abide' or 'remain' (also stay, continue, dwell, see Strong 2007:§G3306), implies "mutuality and reciprocity" (Moloney 1998:423). John presents the metaphor as a description of the relationship desired between Jesus and his disciples, both individually and corporately. It is the most important, the primary relationship, and forms the basis from which relationships between the disciples will flow (Malina & Rohrbaugh

1998:234). Abiding in Jesus “is a relationship essential to life” (Ringe 1999:67). Throughout this discourse, the necessity of a close and enduring interpersonal relationship between Jesus and the members of the Johannine community is emphasized. I believe that John recognised the need for an on-going close bond with Jesus in order to keep them strong in times of persecution and doubt after he had returned to his Father. Only through maintaining a close relationship with Jesus and one another (Jn.15:12-17) would the disciples be able to stand firm in their faith and encourage one another in the face of their on-going crisis.

7.2.1 Why choose the ‘Vine’?

I believe this metaphor was an appropriate choice for John’s readers for a number of reasons. Firstly, they would have been well acquainted with the many vineyards on fields and hillsides prevalent in the Mediterranean world. As Koester points out, “The broad appeal of viticulture made it an appropriate image to foster connections between Jesus and ‘every’ or ‘any’ believer (15:2, 6)” (2003:272).

Secondly, the image of the vine is common in Jewish literature. Although John makes no reference to the Old Testament scriptures, his readers may have been familiar with the imagery of Israel being described as a vine (see Ezek. 7:6-8, 19:10-14; Ps. 80:8-16, 18-19; Is. 27:2-6; Hos. 10:1). However, as scholars note, the vine often has negative connotations in that it frequently refers to a *degenerate* Israel (Jer. 2:21) (Bruner 2012:895; Koester 2003: 275). This results in the vine being “usually connected with the theme of judgement (e.g., Is. 5:1-7; Ezek. 15:1-8), certainly not the dominant motif here” (Scott 2003:1198). By contrast, John introduces Jesus as the true vine who brings life instead of judgement (Jn. 15:1; 11:25-26).

Thirdly, the vine was sometimes associated with the wisdom of God and the law of Moses (Koester 2003:275). Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai (Ca.1-80 C.E.) who reinterpreted the tradition and founded an academy for the study of Torah at Jamnia (after the temple was destroyed), referred to his academy as “the vineyard at Jamnia” (2003:275). This name was of significance in the light of what was written in

the book of Sirach, which said that “divine wisdom found in the law was ‘like a vine’ that ‘caused loveliness to bud’, with blossoms that ‘became glorious’ and ‘abundant fruit’” (Sir. 24:17). In wisdom tradition, Sophia is pictured as a vine (Sir.1:20; 24:17, 19) who provides sustenance and abundance of life through the fruit growing on her branches (Sir. 23:25), and she seeks faithful followers who will also bear such fruit in contrast to the faithless (Scott 2003:1198). In the same way, John uses this metaphor of the vine and its branches to show that Jesus is the wisdom of God who provides life and sustenance for those joined to him, which was particularly for the Johannine community in their time of crisis. Furthermore, like Sophia, Jesus’ seeks faithful followers who encouraged to produce much fruit (Jn. 15:5, 16).

All of these factors make the vine a contextual and relevant image and helpful choice of metaphor for John to use in underlining the importance for the Johannine community to remain connected to Jesus and to one another through their time of crisis.

7.2.2 The metaphor of the Grapevine (Jn. 15:1-11)

The metaphor of the vine explains the nature of the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The major components of this analogy are – the Father as the gardener; Jesus as the vine; the disciples as the branches; and the fruit as the outcome of this close relationship.

7.2.2.1 Jesus the true Vine

Jesus said: “**I am the vine** (Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος), **the true one** (ἡ ἀληθινή)” (Jn. 15:1a). Here Jesus uses for the last time the divine “I am” (Ἐγώ εἰμι) formula that is characteristic of John (Moody Smith 1999:280), in identifying himself as the true, real, genuine, dependable (Newman, Jr. 1971:7) vine which is a term appropriate for God (see Jn.7:28; 17:3). This image of the vine conveys the idea that Jesus himself provides the unique source of life and fruitfulness (Moloney 1998:419).

Moloney highlights that by placing the adjective “true” emphatically at the end of the affirmation it contains a “hint of polemic” (1998:419) because if Jesus is indeed the *true* vine, the implication is that the vine of Israel is a *false* one. Bruner suggests the stress on being the ‘true vine’ also makes Jesus’ self-designation even more “imperial” (2012:878). In declaring Jesus to be the true vine, John is claiming that Jesus is the authentic Israel in person (Bruner 2012:878); the new but finally faithful Israel (2012:895). For the Johannine community who were rejected by the parent Israelite community (the false vine), this description of Jesus would likely be affirming and most reassuring. Their expulsion from the broader Jewish community had ironically cut them off from their attachment to the *false vine*, yet it set them free to be properly joined to Jesus, *the true vine*. Furthermore, noting the vine was sometimes associated with the wisdom of God, this statement reinforces Jesus’ earlier claim to be the truth (Jn.14:6) and suggests that he embodies God’s wisdom. The implication is that the members of the Johannine community are not foolishly misguided in following Jesus – as supposed by the Jewish authorities – because he alone is the truth, and the only way to the Father (14:6). In a sense they lost what is false, and gained what is true!

7.2.2.2 *The Father is the Gardener*

In introducing the metaphor of the vine and the branches, John focuses initially on the relationship and connectedness between Jesus and his Father, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower or gardener” (γεωργός farmer, landworker, husbandman; Strong 1997:§G1092) (Jn. 15: 1b), before extending the metaphor to define his relationship with his followers. The gardener and the vine are two separate entities, yet they are closely connected. This metaphor acknowledges both the difference between Jesus and the Father, as well as conveying their unity (Koester 2003:272). It is a unity of love that bonds the Sender and the Sent One (cf. 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 14:31) (Moloney 2008:421). This metaphor “shows Jesus’ relational oneness with the Father...as the source and means of his life and ministry” (Venter 2009:101). As Moloney acknowledges, “The Johannine story of Jesus has always looked to God, the Father of Jesus, as the source and goal of all Jesus is and

does”.(1998:421). Everything Jesus is and does flows from his relationship with his Father. Jesus is totally dependent on his Father for everything and in everything. He only acts according to the Father’s instructions (5:17, 19-20, 36). Apart from the Father, Jesus can do nothing (5:30, 8:28). The relationship between the Father and the Son – the Gardener and the Vine – serves as a model for the relationship Jesus desires with his disciples, and between the disciples.

7.2.2.3 The Disciples are the Branches

Jesus includes his disciples in this metaphor by referring to them as ‘the branches’ of his vine (Jn. 15:6). This is a profound metaphor of **connectedness**, as Jesus exhorts his disciples to abide in him (15:4-7) in the same way that branches are attached to the stem of the vine. Scott points out that this is “a variation on the theme of mutual indwelling already rehearsed in the first part of the speech (14:11, 20, 23)” (Scott 2003:1198), where for example Jesus says that through loving him and keeping his word, “we [the Father and Jesus] will come to them [the disciples] and make our home *μονήν* (or ‘residence’ Strong 2007 ;§G3438) with them” (14:23).

7.2.3 Being connected through abiding in Jesus

‘Abiding in Jesus’ is a key term used by John, to describe the critical interpersonal bond between Jesus and his followers. It is used ten times in the passage on the Vine and the Branches (Jn.15:4-10) (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:234), and forty times throughout the whole gospel (compared to only 12 times in the Synoptics) (1998:55). It implies mutuality and reciprocity (Moloney 1998:423). The Greek word μένω, usually translated as ‘abide’ or ‘remain’ (also stay, continue, dwell, see Strong 2007:§G3306) is written in the imperative in chapter fifteen verse four (Han 1972:214), indicating that Jesus’ words to, “abide in me” are an instruction or command issued to his disciples to emphasise the “necessity of a close interpersonal relationship between Jesus and group members” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:233). In view of the fact that the members of the Johannine community had been socially displaced and viewed as deviants, interpersonal relationships between them become “of more value than relationships with those in the broader society”

(1998:233). Only by maintaining close ties with Jesus and one another would they be strong and able to stand their ground in the face of their opponents.

Acknowledging that the verb 'abide' and its noun 'abode' are somewhat old fashioned translations of μένω, Bruner helpfully chooses to paraphrase the saying 'abide in me' using the more commonly understood English words "make your home with me" (2012:881), suggesting that Jesus is inviting the disciples to live continually with him, in the same way that he is 'making his home' in them (this idea follows on from Jn.14:23). For John, the life they (the members of the community) seek and long for can only be experienced in relationship with Jesus (see Bultmann 1971:529-530). This abiding involves a "total dependence of the Christian upon Jesus" (Brown 1970 :678) as well as "a demand for loyalty" (Bultmann 1971:535-536). In the same way that Jesus is loyal to his disciples, so are they to remain utterly loyal to him and to one another.

Koester makes the point that "A major element in the [vine] imagery concerns the promise of divine love" (2003:228). The source of Jesus' love for his disciples is a continuation of the love the Father has for him (Jn.15:9-10) (Moloney 1998:421). So for the disciples to abide in Jesus means that they must abide in his love, in the same way that the Father loves the Son (15:9), "like branches on a vine, drawing strength from the main stalk and themselves bearing fruit" (2003:228). This love and strength comes from their (disciples) connectedness to Jesus.

John emphasises that being connected to Jesus and remaining in him is not an optional extra but a fundamental need. It is essential for survival in the world. It is of utmost importance for the Johannine community to be connected to Jesus, because, in the words of Moloney, "He provides the unique source of life and fruitfulness" (1998:419). Without being attached to the vine, a branch is useless as it cannot receive the necessary sap needed in order to live, grow and bear fruit (Scott 2003:1198); in the same way no disciple can ever bear fruit alone (Moloney 1998:420). Unless the disciples (branches) remain connected to Jesus (the vine), they will not have the life of Jesus within; they will not be able to bear fruit; and ultimately they will not be able to do anything either individually or corporately (Jn.

5:5). This will result in them being useless and good for nothing – cut off from and unable to draw on the resources that Jesus offers to keep them faithful and strong in their situation of crisis.

As highlighted by Moloney, the abiding Jesus requires is not just a matter of enjoying a relationship with Jesus, but consists of “doing something”; it is a way of life governed by obeying the commandments of Jesus (Jn.15:10) (1998:421). He continues, “The disciples are to repeat, in their relationship with Jesus, what Jesus has always had with the Father: a loving mutuality shown by unconditional observance of his commandments” (1998:422). These commandments include teaching as Jesus did (12:49-50); bearing testimony as faithful witnesses to Jesus (15:27) and loving one another (15:12) (Scott 2003:1198). Koester emphasises that the command to love is ultimately a call to service as evident in the example set by Jesus to his disciples in washing their feet (13:34-35) (2003:273). Koester interprets loving one another to be “primarily a call not to martyrdom but to a life of service, which includes acts of love that might extend as far as giving up one’s life for others” (2003:273). This is the greatest sacrifice of love anyone can make for another (15:12-13; 10:17).

The life-giving bond between the branches and the vine must not be taken for granted. The prophecies of the betrayal of Judas (Jn.13:18, 21-30) and denials of Peter (13:38) have shown that “the life of union is begun but not perfected” (Moloney 1998:420). Moloney continues by stressing that it is not enough to have been with Jesus and to have received his word (15:3). The disciples (and indirectly the Johannine community) need to continue remaining in Jesus just as he promises to abide in them (15:4a) and live faithfully in obedience to the commandments (Moloney1998:420). There needs to be an “on-going life-giving mutuality generated by the disciples’ union with Jesus and Jesus’ union with them” (Moloney1998:420).

John warns his readers about what will happen if the close interpersonal bond between them and Jesus is weakened. Like detached, useless branches, they will be “gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned” (Jn.15:6) by the Father. Malina and Rohrbaugh suggest

Such language implies substantial concern among group members that strong boundaries be maintained between fully committed insiders and all others. Only by maintaining the close ties with Jesus and one another (vv.12-17) will they be safe (1998:234)

Koester interprets the burning in the fire (Jn.15:6) as a “threat of divine judgement” (2003:273). Scott suggests that “Fire is sometimes taken as a symbol of judgement, but this is alien to Johannine thought. It is simply a natural part of the image of vine-dressing, where the discarded material is fit only for burning....” (2003:1198). Moody Smith points out that in viticulture the death of a branch *precedes* its withering and being thrown away, hence he regards these words of Jesus (15:6) as a “strong element of warning or admonition” (1999:283) to his disciples describing what will happen to them (branches) if no longer attached to their source of life (vine) – like dead wood they will be gathered up and burnt. For John and his community, remaining connected to Jesus and one another is a matter of life or death (see also Jn. 1:3-4; 6:56-58, 11:25-26).

Schnackenburg suggests that this warning of the consequences of being unattached to Jesus, “reflects the reality of failure among members of the community (1968 vol 3:101). In noting that this speech is addressed to disciples not to the world, Scott considers this image of detached branches to be a likely indication of the situation in the Johannine community where some had ‘detached themselves’ (2003:1198). “In contrast, however, the abiding disciple will be able to continue the work of Jesus (15:7), receiving from God the necessary support (cf.14:13-14)” (2003:1198). For John, the importance of being attached to Jesus clearly cannot be overemphasised.

7.2.4 Bearing fruit glorifies the Father

A healthy vine is expected to be fruitful. It is only by mutual abiding – the disciple remaining in Jesus and Jesus in the disciple – that much fruit is produced (Jn.15:4-5).

John leaves the meaning of 'bearing fruit' deliberately open for interpretation (Bruner 2012:898). Although the kind of 'fruit' that the disciples are expected to produce is not specified, Scott notes that "there are echoes of Jesus' earlier teaching, where the task of witness and bringing others to encounter Jesus is emphasized" (2003:1198), or in the words of Bruner, fruit involves "doing Christian mission or evangelism" (2012:897). Chapter fifteen ends with an exhortation for the disciples to testify on Jesus' behalf (Jn. 15:27). It is important for the disciples to bear this kind of fruit, for if they failed in the task of testifying and bringing others to Jesus, Jesus' ministry on earth would have been in vain.

However, Scott adds, "While this [witnessing and bringing others to Jesus] may be in the background, it will emerge in the course of the speech that 'fruit' here is in fact faithful fulfilment of the love command (15:9-12)" (2003:1198). Smith agrees that given the emphasis on the indispensability of loving one another (for example 15:12; 13:34-35) it is "a reasonable inference that their fruit are works of love" (1999:283). There is general agreement among scholars that bearing fruit can be summed up both in the act of living out the Christian life and especially practising mutual love (see Barrett 1978:474; Bultmann et al 1971:532; Schnackenburg vol 3 1968:112). Moody Smith adds that even though the death of Jesus is the primary moment of the Father being glorified, "apart from the disciples' fruitful obedience and union with Jesus, it remains incomplete" (1999:284). The fruit of love shown in the disciples is therefore an essential aspect of the way the Son glorifies the Father (15:8) (Carson 1991:518).

In view of the crisis faced by the Johannine community, the members are urged to stay connected to each other and glorify the Father by living out the Christian faith and especially practising mutual love. Through loving one another in the same way that Jesus loved them, "everyone will know that you are my disciples" (Jn. 13:34-35). The deepening and strengthening of their (disciples) faith would most likely be a natural outcome of this way of life.

7.2.5 Warnings against being unfruitful

For John, it was absolutely essential for his readers to realise the critical importance of them 'bearing fruit'. Failure to do so would result in drastic consequences, as forewarned in the words of Jesus: "He [Father/ vine-grower] removes/cuts off (αἶρει αὐτό) every branch in me that bears no fruit" (Jn. 15:2a). Although the vine-grower in this verse does what any farmer or gardener would do, Moody Smith correctly draws attention to the fact that his actions have "patent symbolic significance as John makes clear" (1999:282). He continues, "Unproductive branches are cut out; productive ones are pruned (or cleansed) so that they may bear more fruit....[T]he idea that branches are judged in terms of their productivity by the vine grower is certainly stressed" (1999:282). The members of the Johannine community were expected (even required) to be fruitful.

It might seem disturbing to think of God the Father removing or cutting off a branch (disciple, member of the Johannine community) that is '**in me**' (connected to Jesus) because it bears no fruit. To whom does this refer? It seems unthinkable even shocking that anyone connected to Jesus could be 'cut off' by the Father. This seems to speak of a threat or warning of divine judgement.

Some commentators argue that this 'cutting off' can only apply to unreal or hypocritical Christians, not to true believers, in the light of Jesus' promise that those to whom eternal life has been given will not be snatched out of his hand (Jn.10:28) (Morris 1971:669; Lindars 1972:448; Carson 1991:515). However this seems to ignore the fact that these branches are said to be 'in me' – i.e. people who are already connected to Jesus. Bruner suggests those who will be 'cut off' refers to those who are "not being real" (2013:879), yet this idea seems to be a somewhat loose translation and Bruner is not clear as to how 'being real' is determined. Another point of view is articulated by Brown who suggests that Jesus is referring to Christians who had been converted and were 'in Jesus' but who are now 'dead' – perhaps implying those mentioned in first John chapter two (vv.18-19) who "went out from the ranks of Christians because they did not really belong and could not remain united to the Christian community" (Brown 1970:675-676).

Koester provides another perspective on the meaning of this verse. He assumes that “fruitless branches are *already separated* (my emphasis) from the love that the vine provides, since they do not bear the *fruit of love* (my emphasis)” (2003:273). He argues that clearly God does not separate a person from Christ any more than a vine-grower would cause a branch to be unproductive and wither. “Rather, God’s act of removing the branch finalises the separation that has already occurred” (2003:273). This idea, he continues, seems to correspond to other passages in John that suggest people place themselves under divine judgement by separating themselves from the love that the Father offers through the Son (Jn.3:16-18) (2003:273). This view is consistent with Barrett’s interpretation, who understands the ‘cutting off’ as applying to apostate Christians. He suggests that these ‘cut off branches’ are Christians (once joined to the vine) who subsequently renounced their faith in Jesus and so had already ‘died’ having stopped receiving the ‘life giving sap’ from Jesus the vine. In separating themselves from Jesus so no longer joined to the vine, they ceased producing the desired fruit of love for one another. This resulted in it being necessary for the Father (vine-grower) to cut them off and remove them from the vine (Barrett 1987:473-474).

John is warning the Johannine community not to be complacent in their faith, nor to succumb to the pressure to renounce their belief in Jesus. They (members of the community) are urged to ensure that they remain connected to Jesus and one another as they live in a state of on-going crisis. In the face of persecution, hardship, suffering, grief – they are to show their true allegiance to Jesus by abiding in him, and abiding in his love (Jn.15:9). By bearing fruit that lasts, especially the fruit of love for one another, they will be known as Jesus’ disciples and bear testimony to him. In this way they will glorify the Father. Their faith will deepen and be strengthened. Failure to do so will result in them withering and dying, and eventually necessitate the Father to remove them from the believing community. Even in his role as comforter and encourager, John ensures that the members of the Johannine community are well aware of the dire consequences of detaching themselves from Jesus and the rest of the community.

7.2.6 *Becoming even more fruitful*

A vine-grower will do all he can to ensure that his vine is healthy and bear as much fruit as possible. Therefore, fruit-bearing branches will be pruned in order to become even more fruitful. “Every branch that bears fruit he [Father/ vine-grower] prunes (καθαίρει can mean prune, cleanse, cut back see Strong 2007:§ 2508) to make it bear more fruit” (Jn. 15:2b).

The idea of pruning can seem hurtful and painful. Yet gardeners know that this action is necessary and good for plants to enhance growth. Perhaps in the image of branches being pruned, John was exercising a gift of encouragement for the Johannine community. Rather than perceiving difficult circumstances or experiences the members had to endure (such as persecution, being ostracised, grief) as hurtful, painful or destructive, John offered a new perspective – these same experiences could be regarded instead as ‘pruning’ by their loving Father with the intention that these (experiences) would cause the members of the community to draw closer to Jesus and depend more fully on him, and as a result produce more fruit. Bruner suggests that the greatest example of pruning was the cross of Jesus, which three days later bore the harvest of the empty grave completing the glorification of the Father and producing the fruit of eternal life (2012:880). So too with the disciples (Johannine community) – after pruning, the expectation is that something more fruitful will become evident. Pruning, pain – can result in a greater good.

However, this pruning John writes of does not only refer to suffering or difficult circumstances, but also the cleansing that comes from the word Jesus had spoken to his disciples (Jn. 15:3) over the course of his life. As previously noted, the Greek word καθαίρει can mean cleanse as well as prune. Bruner suggests that “Jesus’ Word cuts – cleanses, purifies, purges. All disciples have experienced this cutting as they have ‘taken in’ Jesus’ often sharp Words” (2012:880). Moloney recognises that “Because they [disciples] have heard and accepted the word of Jesus the pruning process is already in place” (1998:420). The indication that they were all clean, except the one who was to betray Jesus (13:10) is repeated (15:3), but now they are told that this cleanliness comes from the word of Jesus (Moloney 1998:420). Bruner

concludes that “disciples are cleansed by *all the cutting experiences* that the pruning Lord allows and brings into disciples’ lives” (2012:880), which include the word of Jesus as well as experiences of suffering and crisis. So the Vine-grower (Father) prunes the branches (disciples) in order that they may bear more fruit (a lifestyle incorporating mission, evangelism and mutual love as previously discussed), and consequently become even more connected to Jesus and deepen their relationship with him.

7.2.7 The positive benefits of abiding in Jesus

In addition to bearing fruit, John alludes to two outcomes or benefits resulting from remaining connected to Jesus.

Firstly, there is a “Deep Conversational promise” (Bruner 2012:885). Jesus said “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (Jn. 15:7). Bruner suggests that Jesus makes his home in the lives of the disciples when “*his* conversation – his words – ...are taken seriously, listened to expectantly, and responded to honestly” (2012:885). Conversation is a two way process, so in turn the disciples are invited to “talk with Jesus (we call it prayer) about not just ‘*whatever*’ but more practically about what *he* has just said to us (this is the essence of good conversation)” (2012:885). Jesus then responds by doing what has been asked of him (15:7).

Conversation, as has been previously discussed, is another of the root metaphors of Relational Theology. The possibility of on-going conversation between the disciples and Jesus could provide a ‘life-line’ to strengthen them in their time of crisis. Through the words of Jesus (Jn.15:7), John reassured the Johannine community that they could turn to Jesus at all times, in the present and future, seeking his help, comfort, guidance, encouragement or whatever they needed (see also 14:13-14). This would result in a further deepening in the relationship between them and Jesus.

Secondly, an additional outcome of maintaining a close interpersonal bond with Jesus would be the experience of his joy deep within (Jn.15:11); a joy which “contrasts with the hostility so evident in chapters 2-12, and will reassure the

community when Jesus is gone” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:234). Jesus wanted his followers to experience the same joy that he had from his relationship of oneness and obedience with the Father (Moloney 1998:422). John encouraged the community by showing that the deep need for joy that they (and all people) longed for would find maximum satisfaction through faithfully remaining attached to Jesus like branches to the vine, and keeping his commands especially by loving one another (Bruner 2012: 890). In essence, joy, like the peace which Jesus gives (14:27), is received in the context of a close interpersonal relationship with Jesus and transcends life’s difficult circumstances.

7.2.8 Conclusion

In guiding the Johannine community to deepen their relationship with Jesus through their time of crisis, John presented them with a unique root metaphor of connectedness, namely that of the vine and its branches. This metaphor is a picture of the nature of the deep and intimate relationship Jesus seeks with his disciples. John foresaw that the continuing experience of a close relationship with Jesus is what would keep the Johannine community together when Jesus was no longer with them (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:233-234). Only by “maintaining close ties with Jesus and one another (vv. 12-17) will they be safe” (1998:234). In addition, if the disciples (indirectly the Johannine community) remained attached to Jesus like branches to the vine, the life and love of Jesus would flow through them and sustain them in their time of crisis. Through this ‘connection’ the disciples would receive the resources they needed to fulfil their mission and calling and so bring glory to God.

In the root metaphor of the vine and the branches, John’s message to the Johannine community seems clear and simple – in order to survive the crisis, ‘Stay connected to Jesus and to one another!’ in the same way that a branch must always be connected to its vine.

7.3 A Root Metaphor of Relation: Friends of Jesus

7.3.1 Introduction

As previously noted, Relational Theology centers itself on several root metaphors including that of 'relation' (Haers 2003:1-40). The Systematic Theologians at LEST explained 'relation' as referring to the position of one thing to another, which expresses the "mode or manner of being" – for example 'God the Father' expresses a relationship which is a metaphor for the manner that God exists with human beings (Haers 2003:13). One of the metaphors of relation, which is unique to John's Gospel, is that of Jesus relating to his disciples as friends. This choice of metaphor is, I believe, of particular relevance and significance when applied to the context of a community in crisis.

7.3.1 The importance of Friendship in times of crisis

People were not made to live in isolation – we need one another. When all is going well, we enjoy the privilege of sharing our joys with a friend who takes an interest in our lives and cares about us. When going through a difficult time or experiencing a crisis in one's life, what a person most often particularly wants and needs is a friend to be with them to share their burden and offer their supportive presence. Ringe suggests that

The line between everyday life and occasions for crisis is not always clear. Sickness and death are facts of everyday life, yet to those who experience them themselves or in their families or communities, they are crises that can reorder one's physical circumstances, one's priorities, and one's relationships, and even threaten one's faith (1999:77-78).

Ringe continues to underline the critical importance of friendship at times of crisis: "At such moments the friendships that undergird daily life with presence and companionship can be the key to survival itself" (1999:78).

What better metaphor could there be for John present to the Johannine community in their on-going situation of crisis, than that of Jesus being their friend? Indeed,

applying the idea noted by Ringe (1999:78), I believe that Jesus' friendship, presence and companionship with the members of the Johannine community, and likewise their friendship with one another, was exactly what was needed for their survival.

The word "friend" (φίλος) is not common in the Synoptic Gospels. It does not appear in Mark; Matthew uses it only once (11:19) and although in Luke it appears fifteen times it is mainly in negative contexts (Moulton & Geden 1989:991). However John uses it six times in his Gospel (see Jn. 3:29; 11:11; 10:11; 15:13-15; 19:12) – with three of those referring specifically to the relationship between Jesus and his disciples, where Jesus explicitly states "I have called you friends" (see 15:14-15). This root metaphor of relation – Jesus being the friend of the disciples – is unique to John's Gospel and indeed I believe it provides a comforting and reassuring picture of one significant aspect of the nature of the relationship Jesus offers to his followers in their daily lives and particularly while enduring an on-going state of crisis.

The significance of John's choice of 'friend' as an appropriate metaphor for people in crisis was aptly demonstrated for me while living and working in Bonteheuwel on the Cape Flats from 1994 – 2002. This community is racked with social problems, where people face on-going trauma through gang-violence, abuse, rape, suicide, alcoholism, drugs and crime on an on-going basis. Many seem to move from one crisis to the next, often living in fear for their lives. It was not uncommon for me to conduct three funerals a week. In this context, it was perhaps not surprising that one of the most popular songs sung at our church gatherings, and at the vast majority of funeral services, was the well-known chorus:

What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and grief to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
Oh what peace we often forfeit,
oh what needless pain we bear -
All because we do not carry,
everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations,
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged

take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful,
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness –
take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Jesus only is our refuge,
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do thy friends despise for sake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
thou wilt find a solace there. (Joseph Scriven, 1819-86).

In times of crisis and suffering, turning to Jesus in prayer was for many parishioners, their only life-line. Their relationship with Jesus as a trustworthy, dependable, faithful friend was the best way for them to find refuge, comfort, hope and strength to keep on living. I suggest the same was true for the Johannine community.

7.3.2 What is meant by 'Friendship'?

We can be friends of Jesus, which invokes this metaphor of relation, but what might this mean in the context of the Johannine community? In order to answer this question, I will examine first a general understanding of friendship, followed by a brief consideration of friendship in the broader culture of the ancient Mediterranean world. Thereafter, I will turn my attention to specifically to focus on friendship in the gospel of John.

7.3.2.1 A general understanding of friendship

McFague in her book, *'Models of God'*, defines friendship as "the bonding of two (or more) parties by free choice in a reciprocal relationship" (1987:160). She describes it as a warm relationship without distinction of class, race, gender or colour (1987: 172-174). Ford, in her book, *'Redeemer, Friend and Mother'*, suggests that "The friend comes to rescue a friend and enables him or her to realize the totality of their potential" (1997:73). Alastair Campbell emphasizes "the heart of friendship is a way of being, not any particular activity" (1981:93.)

Ford underlines that friendship, being such a free relationship “carries with it a hidden, huge, necessary, and unstinting responsibility. It is one that may necessitate death for the loved one” (1997:75). This idea is clearly consistent with Jesus’ understanding of friendship, when he said “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friend” (15:13). This is precisely what Jesus did in willingly laying down his life on the cross (10:17).

7.3.2.2 Friendship in the broader culture of the Ancient Mediterranean World

Malina and Rohrbaugh note that “The term friend was a very significant one in the ancient Mediterranean world. It implied mutual obligations of a high order” (1998:235). These obligations included the willingness to protect and defend the friend even to the extent of sacrificing one’s own life for them, “not unlike the willingness expected of close kin to defend family integrity” (1998:235).

In the Hellenistic culture of the Roman period, two kinds of friends were most commonly recognised, namely “political” and “fictive-kinship” friends (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:236). The first refers to “political dependence on a royal patron” (Keener 2003b:1006). Malina and Rohrbaugh describe political friends as “clients who received favors from patrons and in return sought the good reputation of the patron” (1998:236). In return for these favours, the client was expected to show loyalty and commitment to the patron (1998:267). This is what can be understood by the term ‘friends of Caesar’ (see Jn. 19:12). It could also apply to “alliances, cooperation, or nonaggression treaties among peoples....It could likewise apply to personal and familial relationships undertaken for political expediency” (Keener 2003b:1007).

Malina and Rohrbaugh describe “Fictive-kinship” friends as those who treated one another as if they were family members (1998:236). They continue,

The chief characteristic of a friend is that he...seeks the well-being of his friend. And a ‘good friend’ is one who has a recognized honor rating – that is, one who is ‘worthy’. Friendship is a reciprocal affair, with friends

mutually seeking the well-being of one another
(1998:236).

Ringe (1999:69-71), Ford (1997:76-92) and Keener (2003b:1006-1013) all provide detailed overviews of friendship from the perspective of ancient philosophers. Ringe writes: "According to many Hellenistic philosophers, friendship is among the richest of human relationships. They call friendship a virtue (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.i.1)"(1999:69). Aristotle defined a friend as "one who will always try, for your sake, to do what he takes to be good for you" (Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.5.16). Ringe notes that friendship or filial love was said to consist of mutual respect, trust, care, and goodwill between persons. "It both improves the quality of life and is a value in and of itself" (1999:69). Keener underlines that Hellenistic ideals of friendship "include a strong emphasis on loyalty" (2003b:1009).

Ringe continues, "For the Hellenistic philosophers the value of friendship undergirds all of human life (Cicero, *De Amicitia* 22), and it comes powerfully into play in situations of extreme danger or need" (1999:70). Aristotle says that even one who possessed all goods would not wish to live without friends (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.1.1155a). He talks of the dilemma that occurs when a friend comes readily to the aid of another in a time of need. "That aid would bring comfort to the friend being helped, but it would bring him additional pain also, out of empathy for the friend who must witness a friend's pain (Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* VII. xi)"(1999:70).

Philosophers seem to agree that readiness to accept responsibility for the welfare of a friend or take risks or suffer on behalf of a friend, is basic to that relationship (Ringe 1999:70). Many philosophers identify the supreme duty of a friend as readiness to commit one's life on behalf of a friend, even to the point of death (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.8; the letter of Epicurus to Diogenes Laertius 121; Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 32.3; Philostratus, *Apollonius of Tyana* vii.14; Lucian, *Toxaris* 7) (1999:71). In that vein, Seneca observes that to have a friend is to have someone for whom one may die or at least pledge one's life ("On Philosophy and Friendship," *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*). Plato concurs in writing, "Above all true friendship requires that one should be willing to lay down one's life for a friend"(Plato

*Symposium*179a) and “Only those who love wish to die for others” (Plato *Symposium*179b).

Keener sums up the essence of the philosophers understanding of friendship in stating that “true friends were viewed as those who would share in one’s hardships, who would do whatever necessary for one, and the greatest expression of devoted friendship was regarded as willingness to die together or die for one another” (2003b:1005). By connecting friendship with readiness to risk one’s life for a friend, these writings from Greek and Hellenistic philosophers find many echoes in the Fourth Gospel’s story of Jesus and his ‘friends’ (Ringe 1999:71).

7.3.3 The vocabulary of Friendship in the Gospel of John

Although the actual noun φίλος (friend) appears just seven times in the Fourth Gospel, the general vocabulary or theme of friendship is clearly evident throughout its pages (Ringe 1999:65). The verb φιλέω, meaning “to be a friend to, fond of, have affection for, personal attachment, a matter of sentiment or feeling” (Strong 2007: §G5368) is more prevalent in John’s Gospel than in the Synoptic Gospels. Matthew uses it only five times, Mark once, Luke twice, in comparison with John’s use ten times (Moulton & Geden 1989:990). John uses the verb φιλέω in the following way:

It is used of the Father loving the Son (John 5:20); of Jesus loving his friend Lazarus (John 11:3, 36); of the one who loves his life but will lose it (John 12:25); and, finally, of the *kosmos* who loves ‘its own’ (John 15:19). The Father loves the disciples because they have loved Jesus (John 16:27) There are also five references to the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 20:2) and, finally, in what appears to be an appendix to John’s Gospel, Jesus discourse about *phileō* and *agapaō* with Peter (John 21) (Ford 1997:109).

However, traces of friendship in John are not confined to these two words (φίλος and φιλέω) alone. Ringe observes that “If one includes in the tally of evidence the virtually synonymous verb ἀγαπάω, the language of friendship sounds a persistent beat from the beginning to the end of the narrative” (1999:65). Furnish points out that

it is apparent that for John the two verbs φιλέω and ἀγαπάω appear synonyms (1972:134), as demonstrated by Ringe,

Both are used to name God's love for Jesus or the Father's for the Son (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23, 24, 26), Jesus' love for members of the family from Bethany (11:3, 5), and God's love for the disciples (16:27; 17:23), and to refer to the disciple whom Jesus 'loved' (13:23; 19:26; 20:1; 21:7, 20). Both are found in the triple question and response in the dialogue between Peter and the risen Christ in 21:15, 16, 17. In 15: 12-17, the passage where the disciples are called Jesus' 'friends' (φίλος), the verb ἀγαπάω identifies the love for one another that Jesus commands (15:12, 17; see also 13:34). The same verb is used elsewhere to name both Jesus' love for those whom he will call 'friends' (13:1; 15:9), and their love for him (14:15, 21, 23, 24, 28) (1999:65).

It seems evident that John uses these two verbs interchangeably – showing that friendship and love belong together; they cannot be separated from one another. Therefore unlike the Synoptic Gospels, the prominence of these two verbs indicates that friendship is a major theme throughout John's Gospel. This I believe is a deliberate attempt on John's part to emphasise for his community the critical importance of maintaining a close and committed relationship of love and friendship with Jesus. The friendship Jesus shares with his followers provides a model for them demonstrating how to relate to one another in everyday life but most especially during their time of crisis.

7.3.4 The Ministry of Friendship

Bishop Charles Albertyn (Anglican Bishop-Suffragan of Cape Town Diocese), had several key phrases he used to describe the kind of pastoral ministry we as clergy were called to exercise in the townships. He spoke of the importance of an "incarnational ministry" which involved "loitering with intent" and practising the "ministry of presence". In essence, he was challenging us as clergy to walk around the streets of our troubled communities, be a visible presence, get our hands dirty, be alongside people in their daily lives and share their pain and burdens

(pers.comm. February 1994). Ringe uses the term “the Ministry of Accompaniment” (1999:75) to describe this ministry of friendship, or of presence.

The above mentioned understanding of ministry has its roots in the Prologue of John’s Gospel – the incarnation. It is in essence a ministry of friendship. Right from the opening chapter we see that Jesus came to live in the world, be with his own people (Jn. 1:10-11) and take our human nature upon himself. “The Word (λόγος) became flesh (σὰρξ = flesh, meat, body, human nature, human being, carnal (Strong 2007: §G4561) and lived/dwelt (ἐσκήνωσεν = to tent, encamp, occupy, reside (Strong 2007: §G4637) among us....”(1:14). Ford helpfully points out the connection between the incarnation and friendship in this way, “The Logos becomes immanent among us, just as the true friend in classical literature shares the joys and pains of the beloved, irrespective of a response in him or her” (1997:113). In this way the Logos is friend and mediator (1997:113). She continues, “It [the incarnation] links deity and humanity in a new mode of intimacy in which God shares God’s nature with the beloved. Here there is ‘descent’ to the level of the beloved, intimate relationship, mutuality, immanence, co-suffering, and empathy” (1997:111). She highlights that it is through Jesus, the word made flesh, that “humanity attains an intimate and filial relationship with (and in) the Godhead” (1997:113). Ford suggests that the incarnation, the word becoming flesh, is in essence God’s supreme act of friendship and a sign of God’s super-abundant love on humanity (1997:111).

Consistent with the ideas of Ford, Bishop Charles believed that by identifying with and living amongst our parishioners – following the example of the incarnate Jesus – we as clergy would be demonstrating God’s love and friendship to the local community (people of Bonteheuwel) in crisis. Shelp (2003) suggests that it is by and through human presence, an expression of relationship, that God becomes present and active in the world. In a similar way, I believe it was important for the Johannine community to exercise a ministry of friendship to one another, offering support and empathy as they shared in one another’s sufferings. In this way God’s presence would be made known to them in their experience of crisis.

7.3.5 Jesus' example of Friendship

Ringe suggests that the picture John gives his readers of Jesus of him sharing a common human nature with humanity; his daily engagement with and accompaniment of the community of followers; suggests a motif of *friendship* in everyday life (1999:75). Starting in the Prologue (Jn.1:10, 11, 14) and continuing throughout the gospel, Jesus gets alongside people, sharing their everyday lives, relating to family, strangers, religious leaders and enemies alike. He faces – with the community – the hostility of the religious authorities (for example, the confrontations following the healing of the man born blind in chapter nine) (1999:75). He takes time to engage people in conversation, talking and listening at length – for example, his interactions with Nicodemus (3:1-21) and the Samaritan woman (4:1-30). He relates to people as friend to friend.

McFague, in her model of friendship (1987:157-180), suggests that friends delight in being together in community, especially as they share meals together. In a wonderful way, the activity of eating together combines both pleasure and need. In support of this idea, Ringe suggests that “crucial to the maintenance of friendship is the sharing of meals” (1999:76-77). The only miraculous event recorded in all four of the gospels is that of Jesus providing food for a crowd of people who had been following him. In John's Gospel, the feeding of the five thousand (Jn. 6:1-14) is one of the signs recorded which leads into a teaching of Jesus wherein he points to the cross, his glorification, and eternal life (6:25-59). However, Ringe points out that it is also an example of Jesus seeing to the basic human need of food, as friends do for one another (1999:77). Jesus relates to people as friend to friend.

In all the Gospels, Jesus eats meals with others. In the Synoptic Gospels, through shared meals, social outsiders become insiders. However, Ringe (1999:76-77) shows that meals serve a different function in John. Meals mark the end of times with his companions and try to prepare the community to understand and accept Jesus' death and departure. The meal with Mary of Bethany (Jn.12:2-3) was an act of friendship, with the later anointing explained as a preparation for burial and subsequent departure (12:7). During Jesus' supper with his disciples, marking the

last time he would spend with them, he washed their feet as an example of the servant form their friendship was to take (13:12-20). The post-resurrection breakfast on the beach provides the disciples with “both nourishment and food for thought and understanding as they prepare to move from a time of memory of Jesus’ time on earth into the new stage of the community’s life” (1999:77). Ringe concludes that “The emphasis is thus on their [the meals] importance for the life of the community, those especially identified as his friends” (1999:77). I suggest that John, through the actions of Jesus, showed the importance of meals as a means to maintaining, nurturing and strengthening bonds of friendship between the members of the Johannine community, so that they could lean and depend on one another as friends particularly in their time of crisis.

I believe that we discover who our real friends truly are in a time of crisis, as in a sense friendship is put to the test at times like this. It is then, more than at other times, one turns to one’s friends for support and encouragement. Real friends, more than acquaintances, are special people in our lives who are willing to go the extra mile, drop everything – no matter how inconvenient – and come to our assistance when in need. Nothing is too much trouble for a friend. However, this implies that a foundation of friendship has already been established in everyday life prior to the experience of crisis.

Throughout John’s Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as a real and true friend who comes alongside people both in their everyday lives, as well as in times of need or crisis. Although God is not just someone to call on in an emergency or time of crisis, Ruth Page acknowledges that “the divine presence is with us in our ambiguity and suffering, bringing a different status to the creature” (1985:189-190). John portrays Jesus as the true and faithful friend who shows compassion and care in the way he attends to the cries of the sick and dying, and engages with them (for example the official’s son, the paralysed man at the Sheep Gate, the man born blind). He consoles, listens to, gets alongside and comforts the grieving sisters Mary and Martha and more than any friend can do he restores to life his friend Lazarus (Jn.11:1-44). He protects the honour of a friend running out of wine at his wedding (2:1-11). He provides food for the hungry crowd (6:1-15). He rescues the woman

caught in adultery from the hands of her accusers (8:1-11). Like the Good Shepherd, he protects his sheep (followers) and willingly lays down his life for his friends (10:17; 15:13). He saves them from the power of death, and is the means through whom they can receive eternal life (for example 3:16; 6:53-58). Ringe observes that the entire narrative of John's Gospel is woven together with a presentation of Jesus the friend who commits his very life on behalf of his friends and requires no less of them. "In that way it proclaims his story as the 'good news' that brings life to a community whose entire world seems to be hanging in the balance" (1999:78).

Furthermore, Ringe (1999:79) notes that in times of crisis, when "the usual patterns and mechanisms of support break down" friends take responsibility and commitment for one another's families and take over the role of family. Jesus clearly demonstrates this when in the crisis of his own death on the cross, he commends his mother and his friend the beloved disciple into one another's care to form a new family in the community (Jn. 19:26-27) (1999:79).

All these motifs of friendship woven throughout the Fourth Gospel underline for the disciples what friendship looks like in real terms and sets the scene for the climax when the disciples of Jesus are given the new status of 'friends of Jesus' (Jn. 15:14-15). In essence, therefore, friendship from John's perspective was no superficial kind of relationship. It was a privilege to be known as a friend of Jesus, and was a key to their survival, but it came with expected responsibilities, commitments and obligations.

7.3.6 Jesus calls us 'Friends' (John 15:13-15)

Previously, in John's account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet (Jn. 13:1-20), Jesus had performed actions and used language pertaining to a 'master-slave' relationship. Yet clearly, Scott indicates, Jesus intended his actions to convey humility rather than what might traditionally be envisaged of a master-slave relationship (2003:1198). In chapter fifteen John makes the nature of Jesus' relationship with his followers more explicit. John, in the words of Jesus, initially offers a root metaphor of connectedness, namely the 'vine and the branches' (see

previous section). In doing so, he emphasizes the importance of abiding or remaining in Jesus' love, just as Jesus abides in the love of the Father (15:9). The disciples are to abide in his love by keeping the commandments (15:10).

Jesus then proceeds to expand on the great commandment, to 'love one another' (OT), by adding a **new** dimension, "**as** I have loved you" (καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς) (Jn. 15:12). Malina and Rohrbaugh suggest that "The main feature of this new command is that the disciples are to be attached to one another as Jesus is attached to them" (1998:235). This language is similar to the idea of the disciples abiding in Jesus, like a branch that is attached to the vine (15:4). Moloney explains the nature of this love as follows: "They are to love with a love that is continuous and lifelong (v. 12a: *agapate*: present subjunctive), and the measure of their love for one another is the supreme act of Jesus' love for them (v. 12b: *ēgapēsa*: aorist)" (Moloney 1998:424).

The (new) 'love commandment' (ἀγαπάω) sets the scene for introducing the root metaphor of **friend**. This metaphor moves away from the 'master-servant' language of chapter thirteen. Jesus stresses the fact that he has specifically chosen his disciples (Jn.6:70; 13:18; 15:16), whom he now calls his 'friends' (Moloney 1998:425; Kieffer 2001:989). Jesus' love has established a new relationship with his disciples "through no act of the will or physical effort on their part" (Moloney 1998:425). Moloney continues, "They are not *douloi* depending on the whim of a master, but *philoι*, intimate and equal associates of Jesus who loves them without limit (cf. 13:1: *eis telos*)" (1998:425).

In the Old Testament, both Abraham and Moses were mentioned as being God's friends (Is. 41:8; Ex. 33:11). Early Jewish literature applies the title 'friend of God' to Abraham, because of his intimate relationship with God whereby God took Abraham into his confidence and did not treat him as a servant (Keener 2003b:1012-1013). Having an intimate relationship with Jesus appears to be a fundamental characteristic of friendship with Jesus, as noted by Keener who writes, "Jesus intimately shares the secrets of his heart with the disciples, treating them as friends, as God treated Abraham and Moses by revealing himself to them" (2003b:1014). Scott adds, "Jesus indicates that this friendship relationship is confirmed by his

openness in sharing the things of God with them. Such intimacy is not part of a slave's expectation" (2003:1199). Moody Smith points out that in fact "It is quite remarkable that Jesus defines friendship as being in the know, knowing what Jesus himself is doing; this sets them apart from slaves, who do not know" (Jn.15:15) (1999:285).

Not only does Jesus love the disciples and call them his friends, but he expects them to follow his example and to do the same towards one another (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:235). They are to abide in Jesus' love – just as he abides in the Father's love (Jn. 15:9, 10) – and love one another as Jesus loves them. The implication is that whereas friendship with Jesus involves a personal relationship, it is not a private matter (Shiert 2008) – the expectation is that this friendship will be lived out in relation to others. Whereas in Jewish sources one was not required to love one's neighbour more than oneself, Jesus commands that his followers were to demonstrate their attachment and commitment to one another – not just to Jesus – by relating to one another as true friends willing to risk even their lives for one another (15:13) (Keener 2003b:1004). Jesus indicates that in fact the *greatest* (my emphasis) of all loves is shown by the person who lays down their life for friends (15:13) (Moloney 1998:425). Koester suggests that this "command is primarily a call not to martyrdom but to a life of service, which includes acts of love that might extend as far as giving up one's life for others (2003:273). This love commandment, was "Jesus' new and final request" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:235). By participating in this kind of love for one another, the disciples would demonstrate that they are indeed Jesus' friends (Ringe 1999:67).

Jesus' understanding of friendship did not imply hierarchical relationship, (like a patron-client relationship, or a master-servant relationship), but rather for him friendship involved reciprocity" (Koester 2003:274). Nevertheless, as noted by Barrett, "It is clear that the status of friend is not one which precludes obedient service; this is rather demanded" (1978:477). It appears that the pre-requisite for being friends of Jesus, and objects of his self-sacrifice (15:13) is to **do** – obey - what Jesus commands them (Jn.15:12, 14). Keener points out that

The paradoxical image of ‘friends-not-slaves’ who ‘obey’ Jesus’ commandments is meant to jar the hearer to attention; friendship means not freedom to disobey but an intimate relationship that continues to recognize distinctions in authority (2003b:1015).

Keener continues, “By obeying, they continue to make themselves more open recipients of God’s love, ‘abiding’ and persevering in ever deeper intimacy with God” (2003b:1015). Through obedience, the relationship of friendship between the Johannine community and Jesus would be strengthened.

7.3.7 Conclusion

John presents Jesus as a loving, loyal, dependable and trustworthy friend who models how to be a friend to one another in the life of the Johannine community – in good times as well as in times of crisis. Jesus’ life encapsulates the philosophers understanding of true friendship as someone who would “share in one’s hardships... do whatever necessary for one, and the greatest expression of devoted friendship was regarded as willingness to die together or die for one another” (Keener 2003b:1005). John shows Jesus as one who gets alongside his friends and shares their lives, who shows care and compassion in times of crisis, and doesn’t abandon them in the face of opposition and hostility. He loves and values them enough to be willing to sacrifice his own life on their behalf. In the command to follow Jesus’ example of friendship shown in sacrificial love, members of the Johannine community are to commit their lives to one another “that no risk is too great to take on behalf of the life and well-being of these friends” (Ringe1999:83).

Instead of abandoning their faith as they experienced an on-going crisis (in the face of persecution, hardship, rejection, grief, loss of identity), John the pastor leads the Johannine community to deepen their faith in God by turning to Jesus in love and obedience, and place their trust in him as their friend. Through obedience, they would “continue to make themselves more open recipients of God’s love, ‘abiding’ and persevering in ever deeper intimacy with God” (Keener 2003b:1015).

Through this intimate friendship the Johannine community would remain united to Jesus and to the Father who sent him, “in an indestructible bond that is life itself” (Ringe 1999:83). In my view the reciprocal friendship relationship between Jesus and the members of the Johannine community – lived out in loving friendship between the members of the community – was the key to their survival and sustained them during their time of crisis.

After Jesus’ death, resurrection and glorification the relationship between Jesus and his followers would continue through the indwelling of the other Paraclete (Ringe 1999:82). In this way, they would remain ‘friends of Jesus’ even once he was no longer physically present with them. Furthermore I believe that through their on-going friendship, support and care for one another, they would become expressions of God’s presence in the community even after Jesus had returned to his Father.

7.4 A Root Metaphor of Relation: The Good Shepherd and his sheep

7.4.1 Introduction

Another of John’s leading relational metaphors, in addition to those of Father-Child and Friend-Friend, is that of the **Shepherd**. John likens Jesus to a shepherd (ὁ ποιμὴν) with his followers being his sheep (τῶν πρόβατα). This is a wonderfully pastoral metaphor of relation suggesting “a strong, even intimate relationship” (Wenham & Walton 2001:251) where the shepherd knows his sheep by name and loves them sacrificially (Jn. 10:3, 15). In their experience of on-going crisis, I suggest that John chose the specific metaphor of shepherd to lead the members of the Johannine community to deepen their understanding of Jesus’ continual loving, caring, protective relationship with them and also to provide a model of leadership for them to follow in their life together once he was no longer with them.

7.4.2 The background to the Shepherd metaphor.

How might John's audience have understood this metaphor of relation? This metaphor would no doubt have evoked a number of associations for John's readers. In the Greek-speaking world of the first century, shepherds were a common sight, with sheep and goats being the most important domestic animals in the biblical world (Mattingly 2000:1208). Hence people would be able to relate to this metaphor drawing from their own life experience of what they knew of shepherds and their flocks (Koester 2003:16).

Associations with this metaphor might come from the reader's particular ethnic and religious heritage (Koester 2003:16). The use of metaphors concerning sheep and shepherds has a long history in Ancient Near East (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:179). Homer and other writers of the Greek classics, frequently used "shepherd" as a metaphor for kings, governors and leaders like Agamemnon the king (Iliad 1.263) (Mattingly 2000:1208). Philosophers compared the art of governing a people to the art of shepherding a flock (Homer, Iliad 2.243, 254; Plato, Republic 345c-e; Epictetus, Discourses 3.22.35.) (Koester 2003:16). Egyptian, Babylonian, and Iranian gods were spoken of as shepherds, as were Babylonian kings and Greek heroes (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:179).

In the Jewish scriptures, some of the leading figures in Israel's history had been shepherds (Koester 2003:16). Both Moses and David were actual shepherds (Ex. 3:1-6; 1 Sam. 17: 34-35) as well as being metaphorically referred to as the shepherds of God's people (Is. 63:10-11; Ps. 78: 70-72). In Biblical writings, the term ποιμήν (or its Hebrew equivalent) was used metaphorically to refer to Israel's leaders, frequently judging them as faithless shepherds who injure and mismanage their flocks and neglect their pastoral care, or as false shepherds leading God's people astray (Jer. 10:21; 12:10; Jer. 23:1-4; 50:6; Ezek. 34:1-6; Zech. 11: 4-9) (Stewart 1996:1093; Moloney 1998:301; Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:179; Koester 2003:16). God promised that he would raise up a new shepherd (Ezek. 34:23; 37:24). It was expected that this shepherd would come from "Davidic lineage and

would suffer on behalf of the sheep” (Mattingly 2000:1208), a pledge which “eventually took on messianic significance” (2000:1208).

Biblical writers made extensive use of shepherd imagery, with customs of shepherds frequently used to illustrate spiritual principles (for example Num. 27: 16-17; Eccl. 12:11; Jn. 21:15-17) (Mattingly 2000:1208). In the Old Testament, God is described metaphorically as the shepherd (Gen. 49:24; Ps. 23:1; 80:1; Is. 40:11; Jer. 31:9; Ezek. 34:11-16), with his people being described as his sheep (Ps. 74:1; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3) (Moloney 1998:301; Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:179; Mattingly 2000:1028; Koester 2003:16; Keener 2003a:799). God feeds his flock, gathers his lambs and carries them (Is. 40:11). God scatters his flock in anger but gathers them back in forgiveness (Jer. 31:10) (Stewart 1996:1093).

Metaphors, like symbols, can evoke associations not just on a cognitive but also on the affective level (Fawcett 1970:34; Caird 1980:17). The image of a shepherd could appeal to or repel the reader; it could create a feeling of peace or uneasiness – depending on the reader’s background (Koester 2003:17). For some, especially in the western part of the Greco-Roman world, the image of a shepherd could evoke “a certain idyllic quaintness” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:179) or nostalgia for the idyllic life of a shepherd lying in the shade playing music on his pipe (Koester 2003:17). However, in Jesus’ day, shepherds were a “somewhat despised group and their occupation scorned” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:179). They were presumed to be dishonourable men as they could not protect the honour of their women as they were out at night (1998:179). They were stereotypically viewed as unscrupulous characters and thieves who grazed their flocks on other people’s property (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:179; Koester 2003:17). This metaphor could therefore evoke negative reactions for some readers of John’s Gospel.

However, I suggest that John’s portrayal of Jesus as a shepherd serves to juxtapose the good and bad shepherds. In John’s discourse where he introduces the metaphor of the shepherd and his sheep in chapter ten, Keener notes that “The nature of Jesus’ comparisons in the passage will evoke especially the pictures of shepherd as **‘leader’** rather than as unscrupulous” (2003a:799). In using this metaphor, John

draws primarily on the traditional imagery of God as shepherd in the Old Testament (Gen. 49:24; Ps. 23:1; 80:1; Is. 40:11; Jer. 31:9; Ezek. 34:11-16), with his people being described as his sheep (Ps. 74:1; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3) (Moloney 1998:301; Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:179; Mattingly 2000:1028; Koester 2003:16; Keener 2003a:799) – rather than from the negative picture derived from contemporary society. Whereas both the Old Testament writings and John were familiar with the notion of both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ shepherds, John presents his metaphor of Jesus the shepherd as one who demonstrates the good, positive qualities of God, rather than being likened to a ‘bad’ contemporary shepherd who was viewed negatively as a social outcast being dishonourable and unscrupulous. How does John achieve this?

Koester suggests that John skilfully “appropriates and transforms...the associations readers might bring to the text” (2003:17). John “softens the suspicion often levelled at shepherds by acknowledging that those who came before Jesus were indeed ‘thieves and robbers’ (10:8) but Jesus himself is the good shepherd” (2003:17). John contrasts the shepherd who cares for and brings life to the sheep with the thieves who come to kill and steal and destroy the sheep (10:10). He shows how fully Jesus, the good shepherd, cares for and loves his sheep by protecting them against wolves who pose a danger to the flock – even at the cost of his own life (10:16-18). This is in contrast to the hirelings who run away in the face of danger because they do not care for the sheep, resulting in the sheep being prey to wolves and being scattered (10:12-13).

With the imagery of shepherds and sheep evidently being so familiar to John’s audience – from life experience, ethnic and religious backgrounds – it is perhaps not surprising that John chose this as one of his root metaphors of relation. In presenting this metaphor, John highlights the nature of the relationship Jesus desires with his followers including the members of the Johannine community.

Although John weaves together both the metaphor of Jesus being the ‘shepherd’ and the ‘door or gate’ (ἡ θύρα) for the sheep (Jn. 10: 1-18), my focus will be specifically on the ‘shepherd and sheep’ as a root metaphor of relation. It is easier to relate to a ‘shepherd’ than to a ‘door’ or ‘gate’! In understanding their relationship to

Jesus as being like that of sheep to the shepherd, I will demonstrate how John leads the Johannine community to a more intimate relationship and deeper faith in Jesus during their time of crisis.

7.4.3 Beyond the Synoptic tradition – Jesus is the Good Shepherd

Kieffer (2001) points out that a shepherd's care for his sheep is a common theme in the synoptic tradition. For example, we read of Jesus having compassion for the crowds who are like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36; Mk. 6:34). In the parable of the lost sheep (Matt. 18:12-14) Jesus tells of God's care for any who are lost, or of the Father's rejoicing over one sinner who repents (Lk. 15:3-7). Jesus addresses his disciples as the "little flock" (Lk. 12:32; Matt. 25: 32-34) to whom the Father is giving the kingdom (2001:979).

However, John **develops** the synoptic tradition concerning a shepherd's care for his sheep by identifying **Jesus** as the shepherd. This idea is unique to John's Gospel. As a shepherd, Jesus takes active care of his followers – his sheep (Jn. 10:1-18). However Kieffer points out that "the perspective is different: Jesus speaks of the Shepherds who do not fulfil their vocation, and alludes to the OT expectation of God becoming Israel's true shepherd in the future (cf. Is. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34: 11-16)" (2001:979). John takes the image further by presenting Jesus as **the Good Shepherd**: "Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός. ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός" (Jn.10: 11, 14) which translates literally as "I am the shepherd, the good one. The shepherd, the good one..." Scott points out that the word 'good' (καλός) here is synonymous with 'true' as used in the metaphor of the 'true vine' (15:1) (2003:1187). This is rooted in the image of God as the true shepherd of Israel in contrast to the bad shepherds or false leaders who have failed God's people (Ezek. 34) (Moloney 1998:303). Moloney points out that the introduction of this metaphor of Jesus being the Good Shepherd "links Jesus with the messianic shepherd of the people of God" (1998:304)

John's portrayal of Jesus as shepherd certainly resonates with what was expected of God's new shepherd who would come from "Davidic lineage and would suffer on

behalf of the sheep” (Mattingly 2000:1208) – for as the ‘good shepherd’, Jesus would willingly lay down his life for his sheep (10:15, 17, 18).

7.4.4 The nature of the relationship between Shepherd and Sheep.

I will now examine this metaphor in more detail to see what insights John might wish to convey to his readers concerning the nature of the relationship desired between Jesus the shepherd and his followers, the sheep.

7.4.4.1 The Sheep are called by name

Shepherds often became very familiar with their sheep, and Keener suggests that calling sheep by name indicates both familiarity and a degree of affection (2003a:805); it conveys a thought of “belonging and intimacy” (Keener 2003a:806). Rather than being a flock of anonymous sheep, the shepherd names each one (Jn. 10:3) and takes a personal interest in them. The phrase “door or gate” (ἡ θύρα) (10:7, 9) means, in Greek idiom, ‘individually’ (Dodd 1963:384; Bultmann 1971 et al :373; Beasley-Murray 1987:169). Malina and Rohrbaugh note that calling sheep by name and having sheep readily follow are common and familiar patterns in Mediterranean shepherding (1998:179). The use of names both provided a way to call the animal, as well as signifying the shepherd’s ownership of them (Keener 2003a:805).

Keener (2003a:807) points out that knowing people’s names shows a pastoral concern and indicates a personal relationship, as seen in the Old Testament where God knew Moses by name (Ex. 33:17-19). Furthermore, God calling people by name indicated a special covenant relationship with his people (see Is. 43:1; 62:2). Scott adds that “The intimacy of relationship between leader and disciple is stressed in the notion of recognition through naming. This is beautifully illustrated later in the immediate aftermath of the resurrection (20:16)” (2003:1187), where Mary recognises the risen Lord Jesus in the garden, when she hears him call her by name.

John reinforces the special nature of Jesus the Shepherd's relationship with his sheep, when he uses "the language of familiarity, friendship and intimacy" (Bruner 2012:624) with the expression "I know my own and my own know me" (Jn.10:14), just as "the Father knows me and I know the Father" (10:15). "[B]ehind the mutuality of the Good Shepherd and his sheep lies the fundamental mutuality between the Father and Jesus" (Moloney 1998:304).

Naming the sheep, and then leading "all" (πάντα) of "his own" (τὰ ἴδια) (Jn. 10: 4), suggests that each one is precious and important to the shepherd. Jesus the shepherd takes care in ensuring not one of his flock is left behind or goes unnoticed. Furthermore, "The repetition of '*his own*' suggests a certain emphasis: it indicates the *close* relation of the shepherd with 'his' sheep" (Haenchen 1984 vol 2 :47). In this way, John emphasises the love and care Jesus has for his followers (and each member of the Johannine community). Each person is known by Jesus and belongs to him. In the words of Bruner, "each one of them stands in a direct relationship to him" (2012:610). Through the idea of the shepherd naming the sheep, I believe John communicates a deep pastoral concern for the members of the Johannine community. He is in essence reassuring the members that in their time of crisis (metaphorically as they encounter wolves, thieves and hirelings), they will not be abandoned and left to struggle on their own.

7.4.4.2 The Sheep recognise the Shepherd's voice and follow him

The shepherd is able to lead the sheep because each one knows its own name and can distinguish the voice of their own shepherd from those of other shepherds when he calls them, and so they respond immediately by following him (Jn. 10: 3-5) (Moloney 1998:302; Keener 2003a:806). In most sheep-raising countries, the shepherd follows the sheep yet in Palestine it is customary for the shepherds to walk ahead while calling their flocks (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:181; Keener 2003a:806). In his work *On Animals* (7.27), Aelian regards sheep as the most obedient of animals, submissive to others' rule in following their shepherd and remaining close to the rest of the flock (Keener 2003a:801). In stating that the sheep know and

recognise the shepherd's voice, Bruner believes that "John expresses confidence in the people of God listening only to the voice of the true shepherd "(2012:614). By contrast, the opposite reaction is to be expected when the sheep hear an unfamiliar voice – instead of following they run away from a stranger (Jn.10:5).

In the literary context of this passage (Jn.10:1-18), Jesus is still addressing the Pharisees in the presence of the man born blind, so Keener suggests that the point John emphasises (10:3-4) is that "God's true people hear Jesus because they recognise him as their shepherd; thus the very authorities who have excluded the healed man from the synagogue now prove excluded from the people of God" (2003a:807-808). The members of the Johannine community have followed Jesus in confessing faith in him resulting in their expulsion from the synagogues – whereas the actions of the unbelieving Jewish leaders have proved that they are not members of Jesus' flock.

In their time of crisis, John implies through this metaphor that it was crucial for the members of the Johannine community to remain in a close relationship with Jesus by listening to his voice (Bruner 2012:625). It was important to listen carefully and follow *only* the voice of Jesus and not be fooled by the voice of the "stranger" (Jn.10:5); the "thief" (10:10) or "the hired hand" (10:12-13) as these do not care for the sheep nor have their best interests at heart. They are interested only in personal gain and are motivated by self-interest (Moloney 1998:304). Rather than lead the sheep to "pasture", they come only to "kill and destroy" (10:9-10).and lead the sheep astray. John warns the Johannine community concerning the dangers of following these other voices – but who might they represent?

Although neither the 'stranger' the 'thief' nor the 'hired hand' are specifically identified, Scott suggests that "This is a jibe at Jesus' opponents" (2003:1187), or in the words of Malina and Rohrbaugh, "a critique of Judean leadership" (1998:181). Bruner suggests that given the audience of the previous chapter – John chapter nine – John is likely referring to the Pharisees who badly misjudged the previously blind man's situation through overlooking the fact of his healing and condemning Jesus as a sinner (Jn.9:24), and "stealing the safety of the healed man by throwing him out of

the protective community of God's people (9:34)" (2012: 606-607). In this way the Pharisees behaved like a "thief", "bandit", "stranger" or "hired hand" that did not care for the sheep (the man born blind). Jesus implies that "the Jews" who came before him (10:8) claiming to be leaders of God's people are false. As stated by Moloney, "They are thieves and robbers, purveyors of a messianic hope of their own making. As the response of the man born blind to their interpretation of the Mosaic tradition has shown (cf.9:24-33), the sheep have not listened to them" (1998:303). John invites his readers to seek Jesus leadership alone, "and so to beware of the leadership of all false shepherds, who are, as experience shows, only 'hired hands'" (Bruner 2012:604).

7.4.4.3 The Shepherd leads, saves and protects the Sheep

John tells his readers that Jesus metaphorically would save his sheep by leading them in and out (Jn.10:9) through the door / gate (10:7, 9) to find pasture – food for grazing and water to drink. The Old Testament speaks of Israel being the sheep of God's pasture (Ps. 95:7) and God being the shepherd who would lead them to pasture (Jer. 23:3; 50:19; Ezek. 34:14). Keener suggests that "This leading of the sheep was a fitting expression for one who would watch over them with their best interests at heart" (2003a:811).

In contrast to the synoptic tradition, John does not emphasise the role of the shepherd seeking what is lost (as in Matt. 18:12-14) but rather Jesus the Good Shepherd is the one who **protects** his sheep from the dangerous 'thief', 'bandit' (Jn.10:1, 8,10) and 'wolf' (10:12) (Keiffer 2001:979). Malina and Rohrbaugh suggest that John uses the imagery of a shepherd protecting the flock from wolves to warn of dangers (1998:181) – Jesus as the shepherd will protect his flock, the members of the Johannine community, from the dangers and threats posed by the Jewish religious leaders who appear set on persecuting (Jn.16:33), driving out (9:34; 16:2), scattering (16:32) and destroying (10:10) the followers of Jesus. Keener suggests that this presentation of Jesus "is a direct challenge to the Pharisees' hostility in this Gospel" (Keener 2003a:814).

In the context of hostility and opposition experienced by the Johannine community, it is particularly significant that John should emphasise this particular role of the shepherd. A good shepherd was one who cared for his sheep and certainly would not harm them but protect them (Keener 2003a:813). Keiffer points out that in the previous chapter (chapter nine) John demonstrated what this protective role looked like, in the account of the healing of the man born blind. Jesus had healed and sought out the man born blind (9:6-7) whereas by contrast the Pharisees – like wolves – had reviled him (9:28), treated him with disdain and driven him out (9:34) (2001:979). In the words of Bruner “Jesus’ action, full of tenderness towards this maltreated and insulted man, is found [here] in the picture of the good shepherd intervening on behalf of his sheep” (2012:605).

Even though the Johannine community encountered the literal dangers of persecution and the possibility of being killed, John speaks a pastoral word of encouragement into this situation of crisis. By remaining close to the Shepherd, and being led in and out of the gate to find pasture (Jn.10:9), not only would Jesus *protect* and keep his sheep (followers) *safe* from ‘thieves and bandits’ (religious leaders), but they will be *saved* (10:9).

What does this mean in the context of persecution and possible death? Keener suggests that “the specific term [the saving of sheep] points beyond that [safety from thieves] to the sort of salvation Jesus provides those who follow him, the eschatological salvation God promised his own flock (Ezek. 34:22; Zech. 9:16)” (2003a:811). The ultimate safety and salvation of Jesus’ followers (by implication the members of the Johannine community) lies not in their physical safety, but rather is found in Jesus’ promise of abundant and eternal life which no thief (or religious authority) can steal from them. In the words of Jesus, “I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly....I will give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No-one will snatch them out of my hand” (10:10; 28-29). This picture of protection and salvation would surely provide a sense of comfort and security for the members of the Johannine community in the face of threats from their opponents.

7.4.4.4 The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep

The stark contrast between the shepherd who leads, cares for, protects his flock and the thieves who come only to destroy the sheep (Jn.10:10) leads into a picture of just how fully the Good Shepherd loves his sheep (Keener 2003a:813). Another facet of the shepherd imagery that is completely new to John, compared to the synoptic tradition, is the aspect of the shepherd as self-sacrificial, in being willing to “lay down his life for the sheep” (10:11, 15, 17, 18) (Moloney 1998:304; Scott 2003:1187). In the words of Keiffer, “More clearly than in the Synoptics, Jesus himself takes the initiative to give his life (cf. Isa 53:5-8 and 1 Pet 2:24-5)” (2001:979).

Koester points out that “Responsible leaders, like good shepherds, were expected to seek the welfare of the sheep and even risk their lives for the flock, but only Jesus, *the good shepherd*, would lay down his life for the sheep.” (2003:18). Jesus’ willing sacrifice for his sheep “expresses his care for the sheep” (Keener 2003a:812). Moloney highlights that “This self-gift of the shepherd unto death for his sheep has no parallel in the Jewish texts that speak of the messianic shepherd” and so “Jesus does not fit the model of the expected Davidic shepherd-messiah” (1998:304). Jesus’ willingness to lay down his life for the sheep points to Jesus’ passion and death where he voluntarily laid down his life on the cross (Lindars 1972:361; Bruner 2012:622). Jesus’ death, according to John, was the ultimate sign and proof of the extent of Jesus’ love for his followers (indirectly the Johannine community), as is clearly evident in the words of Jesus, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (15:13). This was “his single greatest gift to the world” (Bruner 2012:622).

Not only would Jesus, through his death on the cross, lay down his life for his followers – but he also challenged the believing community to follow his example in loving one another as he had loved them even if it meant risking their lives (Jn.15:12).

7.4.5. *The Good Shepherd as a model of friendship*

Ringe suggests that the picture of the good shepherd also serves as an image of friendship, especially in times of crisis (1999:80). She notes that although it is not a mutual relationship of friendship (as the shepherd is clearly the caregiver), the description of the shepherd echoes aspects of friendship. Like friends, shepherds and their sheep spend lots of time together – with the shepherd accompanying the sheep day and night while living alongside them. As a result, the sheep recognise the voice of their shepherd. The shepherd names each sheep, and knows them well. At night when the sheep are most vulnerable, the shepherd becomes the gate into the fold (Jn.10:7-10) preventing them from going out or enemies coming in. The real test comes at a moment of crisis when the sheep's safety is threatened either by humans (thieves, robbers) or wild animals. Like a true friend, the good shepherd protects them in the face of danger and is even willing to risk 'laying down his life' to ensure the safety of those in his care (10:11; 15:13). (Ringe1999:80). Hence Ringe concludes that the image of the shepherd completes the Gospel's understanding of friendship and serves as a summary of the sayings concerning friendship (15:12-17) (1999:82).

Bruner suggests that "One mark of a true shepherd...is not leaving the sheep in crises" (2012:624). Unlike the 'hired hand' (Jn.10:12), the good shepherd – like a trusted friend – does not run away in the face of threats or danger. The metaphor of both shepherd and friend offer a reassuring and comforting picture of Jesus' never failing presence and support for the members of the Johannine community in their hour of need in the face of threats from their unbelieving opponents.

Perhaps through this metaphor John was also indirectly urging leaders in the Johannine community to follow Jesus' example as shepherd intervening on behalf of their sheep (the members of the Johannine community), in the face of opposition. Like Jesus, they needed to remain close to their members and support them especially as they faced danger. This is precisely what Jesus had done in seeking out the healed blind man who had been driven out by the Pharisees (Jn.9:35), and

confronting his accusers with their sin and blindness (9:41). This reflects both the role of shepherd as well as that of friend.

7.4.6 *The Good Shepherd as a model of leadership*

Koester suggests that given the common use of the term ‘shepherd’ for a leader, as well as the references to the shepherd leading his sheep (Jn.10:4), John was “claiming a special leadership role” for Jesus (2003:18). He shows that

The literary context then transforms the usual understanding of the shepherd metaphor by connecting it with Jesus’ crucifixion. Responsible leaders, like good shepherds, were expected to seek the welfare of the sheep and even risk their lives for the flock, but only Jesus, *the* good shepherd, would lay down his life for the sheep (2003:17-18).

The metaphor of Jesus as the good shepherd provides a positive picture of what responsible leadership is meant to be, in comparison with that of the false shepherds/Israelite leaders who led God’s people astray. Jesus knows his sheep by name, leads them, they listen to his voice and follow him (Jn.10:3, 4). “A good governor would accept danger to protect his charge” (Keener 2003a:814), and Jesus as the good shepherd does this in laying down his life for the sheep (10:15, 17-18).

This leadership role was to be exercised in the context of a loving, caring, pastoral relationship. Towards the end of John’s Gospel, Jesus instructed Peter to continue this style of relational leadership as a way of showing his love for Jesus (Jn. 21:15-17) even when Jesus would no longer be with them (the members of the Johannine community). I believe that by deepening their relationship with Jesus as their shepherd and following his leadership example in caring for one another was of fundamental importance in enabling the members of the Johannine community to remain strong, support one another and not give up their faith during their experience of on-going crisis.

7.4.7 Conclusion to the Shepherd metaphor

The metaphor of shepherd-sheep is a specific way in which John highlights the interpersonal bonding between Jesus and his followers (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:181) (this is similar to believing 'into Jesus', remaining or abiding in Jesus like branches to vine). It gives an intimate picture of the kind of on-going relationship Jesus desires to have with his followers, which is of particular importance in the face of an on-going crisis. United through their belief in Jesus, the members of the community saw themselves as a close knit group of 'insiders', whereas those who did not believe were classed as 'outsiders' (the 'world') who were in opposition to them and acted with hatred and hostility towards them. In the context of persecution, expulsion from the synagogue, rejection by the parent Jewish community, and hatred by 'the world', Malina and Rohrbaugh suggest that John selects and presents this relational metaphor for the members of his community of 'insiders' because "A dyadic relationship of trust and loyalty is a safeguard against attack from outside" (1998:181).

Garber notes that "Without the shepherd, the sheep were helpless" (1979: 463-464) and by implication the same was true for the followers of Jesus – on their own they would not be able to endure, because as Jesus had said "apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). In order to come under his protection, Jesus' followers needed to remain close to him (10:27-29) in an intimate relationship similar to that of a shepherd and his sheep. As they followed Jesus their shepherd in trust and obedience and remained loyal to him and one another, this would place the members of the Johannine community in a better position to withstand the attacks and hardships experienced at the hands of the 'outside' community of the 'world'.

In addition to following Jesus the Good Shepherd, I suggest the implication is that the leaders in the Johannine community in turn needed to assume the role of shepherd by carrying on his task in the life of the community – in caring for, protecting, feeding, supporting, sacrificially loving one another. The leaders are clearly given a mandate by Jesus to exercise an essentially *pastoral ministry*. This is evident in Jesus' question (repeated three times) to Peter following his resurrection,

“Do you love me? Feed my lambs...tend my sheep...feed my sheep” (Jn. 21:15 – 17). Three times Peter had the opportunity to undo his previous denials, yet each time his answer to Jesus was inadequate. As Ringe points out, the issue was not an incorrect use of the verb “to love” (φιλέω, ἀγαπάω) in Peter’s reply, “but that he does not recall that to love Jesus means to keep his commandments (14:15), which is that they love one another as he has loved them (15:12)” (1999:82). She continues by clarifying that Peter’s answers fell short because they remained focussed on Jesus only, rather than extending to include love for others as well (1999:82). “Love for Jesus, expressed in love for one another, takes the form of faithful shepherding” (Ringe 1999:82). By loving and caring for one another through their time of crisis, following the example of Jesus the Good Shepherd and faithful friend, the leaders and members of the Johannine community would be demonstrating their own love for Jesus in a tangible way and remain united to him and one another. This loving, caring behaviour is, I believe, is fundamental to any authentic pastoral ministry.

In essence therefore, I believe that John was suggesting that by maintaining a strong, intimate relationship with Jesus as the Good Shepherd as well as caring for one another as his sheep, the Johannine community would be in a stronger position to cope with their situation of on-going crisis.

7.5 Conclusion

People respond differently to crises – for some, their faith remains unchanged or even rejected; for others, it can be transformed and deepened (Mannion quoted in Young 1998b). Noting the important role relationships play in helping people grapple with issues of faith in the aftermath of a crisis and help them find comfort, security, support and encouragement, John as a pastor places a significant emphasis in his Gospel on metaphors of relation. In particular, he introduces unique metaphors that provide insights to help his readers understand something of the nature of the kind of relationship Jesus desires with his followers. These include the Vine-Branches, Friend-Friend, Shepherd-Sheep. The deepening and strengthening of relationships is fundamental to his ministry of pastoral care, therefore in selecting and including

these particular metaphors, I believe John furthers his purpose in guiding the Johannine community not to reject their faith in response to their crisis but rather to deepen and strengthen their relationship with God and one another. This will prove to be the key to their survival, because ‘apart from Jesus they can do nothing’ (Jn. 15:5). As they remain in Jesus like a branch attached to the vine, they will receive his life-giving sustenance and nourishment and bear much fruit; as they turn to him as a friend who loves them sacrificially, they will experience his supportive presence; as they listen to his voice and closely follow Jesus their shepherd, they will come under his protection and receive his salvation. Ultimately, by turning to Jesus in faith and trust even in the face of extreme hardship and suffering, they will experience the positive benefits of a crisis – the transforming and deepening of the faith.

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Chapter 8: The ‘other Paraclete’ – concluding thoughts

8.1 Introduction: overview of this thesis

This thesis began with the observation that the Fourth Gospel offers a “strikingly different picture of Jesus from the one found in the Synoptics” (Wenham & Walton 2001:243). This is evident both in John’s selection of material, unique use of language and choice of metaphors, and his particular presentation of the Jesus tradition. This begs the question: how do we account for these differences?

Was it different because the author drew from different sources compared to those used by the evangelists responsible for the writings of the Synoptic Gospels (Bultmann et al. 1971)? Was it because he prepared a new and improved life of Jesus to help Christians remember the Synoptic accounts in a more favorable form (Dowell 1990:19-37)? Compared to the Synoptic Gospels, did the author of John write with a different purpose in mind as indicated at the conclusion of the Gospel (Jn. 20:31) – either to challenge and evangelize non-believers to come to faith in Jesus (Culpepper 1988:88-89) or to encourage existing believers to continue in the faith (Keener 2003b:1216)? (noting that textual variants affect the tense of the verb πιστεύ[σ]ητε).

My starting point in considering the question of difference and purpose, was to look at the community behind the Gospel of John – believing that John, “like every other early Christian, developed the contours of his thinking and preaching about Jesus in response to some historical situation” (Thatcher 2006: 6), I explored what Johannine scholars have said over the past few decades concerning the community behind John’s Gospel. Scholars have recognized that the question of the community of origin is particularly pertinent in the case of the Fourth Gospel, precisely because it is so different to the Synoptics (Ringe 1999:10).

In spite of recent challenges to the long held idea of a community behind the Gospels (Bauckham 1994 and Klink III 2007), my literature review revealed a

prevailing consensus favouring the existence of a separate church group of primarily Jewish Christians – referred to as ‘The Johannine community’ (based on the founding work of Martyn 1968, Meeks 1972, Brown 1979). Although it has been suggested that the definition of ‘community’ needs to be re-examined (Klink III 2004:78), consistent with a Sociological understanding of community, I believe that John’s audience was a community of people connected through their shared history, shared values, beliefs and experiences. The prevailing consensus among scholars is that the Johannine community was born in a context of hostility and conflict with Judaism, including expulsion from the synagogue and persecution and even martyrdom for some. Its membership consisted of primarily Jewish converts, but included a later addition of Samaritans and Greeks (Gentiles). It was a unique community, different to other Christian groups, because the situation in which it was created was different (Domeris 1988:51-52).

Having looked at the historical context in which the Johannine community was formed, I then highlighted various ‘critical events’ and issues experienced by the Johannine community that I believe were reasons to suggest it was indeed a **community in crisis**. These critical events were: hostility and conflict with Judaism; persecution by both Jews and Romans; rejection by the world; social ostracism leading to an identity crisis; grief and loss (the departure of Jesus and delayed parousia).

It was on this foundation that I built my thesis. Believing that the Johannine community was a community in crisis, my hypothesis is that John’s Gospel is different to the Synoptics because the Evangelist reshaped the Jesus tradition in such a way as to address the spiritual and pastoral needs of this community in crisis.

The core of my thesis was an exploration of John’s strategic pastoral response to this community in crisis. Referring to the work done by the US Department of Justice in their online publication of *The Community Crisis Response Team Training Manual* (2nd ed) (Young 1998), I reflected on the effects of crises on spiritual beliefs. Young suggests that tragedy (crises) can serve as an attack on meaning systems and cause people to re-examine their beliefs and sense of meaning. Negatively, this can

lead to their values and beliefs being shattered or more positively their faith can be strengthened (Young 1998b). In the words of Mannion, a crisis can affect a person's faith in one of three ways: "Faith may remain unchanged; it may be rejected; or it may become transformed" (quoted in Young 1998b). Hepworth (et al) emphasise the importance of faith communities being a "tangible source of assistance and social support" (2010:221) in times of crisis.

Making use of these insights from the U S department of Justice and the field of Social Work, I showed how we could use these concepts to understand something of what John is doing in the writing of his Gospel. I presented a simple three part model to demonstrate John's strategic pastoral response to the Johannine community in crisis, namely – reframing, transforming and deepening faith.

Reframing beliefs and events: noting that in the event of a crisis people often "re-examine beliefs and sense of meaning" (Young 1998b), I suggested that what we find in the text of John's Gospel is consistent with Young's ideas as he re-examines the Johannine community's previously held beliefs and sense of meaning.

I found John's approach was similar to Donald Capps' pastoral technique of *reframing* (1990), used in modern day pastoral care and counselling. This is a deliberate strategy designed to help people in the face of a crisis bring about "significant change in the hearts, minds and bodies of individuals by enabling them to think about things differently, to see the world in a new way, and to experience a new openness" (Capps 1990:56). It aims to lead people to gain a new perspective and find positive meaning in seemingly negative events. This, I believe, is precisely what John set out to do in the selection and presentation of his material. Applying my understanding of Capps' reframing technique to John's Gospel, I selected the miracle at Cana (Jn.2:1-12) and John's version of the cleansing of the temple (2:13-22) to illustrate his use of reframing beliefs. Both of these accounts served as signs to point to the same fundamental truth – that Jesus had come to establish a new order in religion and "cause a transformation of the Jewish faith" (Kysar 1984:36). In the context of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, I highlighted Jesus' claim to provide 'rivers of living water' (7:37-44) during the Water Libation Ceremony, and his claim to

be the 'light of the world' (8:12) given during the Jewish Ceremony of Light. John reframed these rituals of the Jewish feast by identifying Jesus as "the one in whom the hopes of the festival find fulfilment" (Koester 2003:198), thus in effect reframing the belief system of the Johannine community.

Transforming faith: noting that faith can either be rejected or transformed through the experience of a crisis (Mannion quoted in Young 1998b), I selected firstly the account of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (Jn.3:1-21) to illustrate how John pastorally guides his community to a transformed understanding of their faith and themselves in relation to God. In the face of expulsion and rejection by the parent Jewish community, I believe John encourages his people by highlighting the irony that they had gained far more than they had lost. Through a spiritual re-birth, being born anew/from above (by receiving Jesus and believing in him Jn.1:12), they (not the unbelieving Jews) were welcomed as children of God into his family, and given a new honour status as well as a new spiritual identity.

The second example I chose to illustrate 'transforming faith' can be seen in John's presentation of the death of Jesus which is very different to that found in the Synoptics. I believe this is because John has carefully portrayed the events surrounding the passion and death of Jesus in such a way as to lead to a renewed understanding and transformation of their (members of the Johannine community) faith. John has given new meaning to the death of Jesus, and changed perceptions concerning the identity of Jesus and his honour status. He highlights for his readers the irony of shame turned to honour and glory; defeat transformed to glory and victory. He has transformed the Jewish feast of the Passover by linking Jesus with the unblemished Passover Lamb, by whose blood people find salvation and are spared from eternal death through faith in him.

John's transformed understanding of Jesus' death both vindicated Jesus in the eyes of his readers, as well as having the pastoral benefits of vindicating the members of the Johannine community as well (who had been shamed by association). By highlighting the benefits of Jesus' death, John leads the community members to a

transformed understanding of their faith which could strengthen and sustain them during the time of crisis.

Deepening faith: although much of the literature in the field of Social Work and Psychology has tended to focus on the negative effects of a crisis on people (Hepworth et al 2010:383), I noted that more positively a crisis can become a catalyst for growth and result in a strengthening and deepening of a person's faith and relationship with God (Young 1998b). When facing a crisis, people frequently look for support and help through relationships – they turn to God and/or other people.

I demonstrated that although the term 'Relational Theology' was first given attention by Systematic theologians at a conference in Louvain (Haers 2003), my reading of John's Gospel suggests that John instinctively developed a primarily 'Relational Theology' to meet the pastoral needs of the Johannine community in crisis. Throughout the pages of the fourth Gospel, John invites and urges his readers to 'know' and 'believe' and so enter into a personal relationship with God through Jesus, and continue to grow and mature in that relationship. In my view, this is precisely because John as a pastor knows that the only way his community will be able to face their trials, tribulations, challenges, grief, hardships and crisis, is by continuing to believe and strengthen their relationship with Jesus (πιστεύ[σ]ητε present active tense).

I noted that 'Relational Theology' centres itself on the root metaphors of relation, connectedness, encounter and conversation (Haers 2003:1), all of which are clearly found in John's Gospel. Acknowledging the important role relationships play in helping people grapple with issues of faith in the aftermath of a crisis, I suggested that this is why John as a pastor places a significant emphasis in his Gospel on metaphors of relation. In particular, he introduces unique metaphors that provide insights to help his readers understand something of the nature of the kind of relationship Jesus desires with his followers, such as the vine and branches, friend, shepherd and sheep.

The deepening and strengthening of relationships is fundamental to his ministry of pastoral care, therefore in selecting and including these particular metaphors, I believe John furthers his purpose in guiding the Johannine community not to reject their faith in response to their crisis but rather to deepen and strengthen their relationship with God and one another. This will prove to be the key to their survival, because 'apart from Jesus they can do nothing' (Jn. 15:5). As they remain in Jesus like a branch attached to the vine, they will receive his life-giving sustenance and nourishment and bear much fruit; as they turn to him as a friend who loves them sacrificially, they will experience his supportive presence; as they listen to his voice and closely follow Jesus their shepherd, they will come under his protection and receive his salvation. Ultimately, by turning to Jesus in faith and trust even in the face of extreme hardship and suffering, they will experience the positive benefits of a crisis – the transforming and deepening of the faith.

Having presented a simple three part model of reframing, transforming and deepening faith to demonstrate John's pastoral response to the crisis faced by the community behind his Gospel, I now come to the climax of this thesis – John's presentation of the 'other Paraclete'. This unique contribution to the Jesus tradition is, I believe, the rhetorical fulcrum of John's strategic pastoral intervention to his community in crisis.

8.2 The 'other Paraclete' (ἄλλον παράκλητον)

If, for the members of the Johannine community, the key to the survival in the face of their crisis was to maintain and nurture their relationship with Jesus – how could the disciples be expected to continue relating to Jesus in these ways (branches to the vine; friend, sheep to shepherd), once he had left them? One of the contributing factors in the ongoing state of crisis experienced by the Johannine community was the so-called 'delayed parousia'. Jesus did not return as they had expected (Painter 1980: 21-38; du Rand 1991:51; Moody Smith 1999:307). How then could they remain in a close, intimate relationship with Jesus if he was no longer physically present? How could they continue to know God and be expected to deepen their relationship with him once he had gone? It is not surprising that Collins suggests one

of the fundamental questions concerning discipleship in the early church, was “how to live out one’s relationship with God” (1990:53). Furthermore, without the on-going support and presence of Jesus, how would they be able to remain faithful to him while enduring conflict with synagogue and world, persecution, martyrdom, alienation from parent Jewish community, an identity crisis?

The key to answering these questions lies, I believe, in the promise of another Paraclete (ἄλλον παράκλητον). This is John’s ultimate, unique and special contribution to the Jesus tradition. It is his all-encompassing, magnificent and utterly brilliant answer to address the pastoral needs of his community in crisis. As they (members of the Johannine community) live through the ongoing challenges that will face them in Jesus’ absence, John’s Jesus promises the “critical yet revealing presence” (Moloney 1998:456) of the Paraclete.

The other Paraclete is the glue that holds John’s three-fold pastoral response together. He leads the disciples (and members of the Johannine community) into all truth and reframes their previously held beliefs; he transforms their faith and spiritual identity and is the one who enables the community to grow and deepen in their on-going relationship with God.

I come now to discuss in more detail the skillful and wonderful contribution John brings in his presentation of the ‘other Paraclete’ (ἄλλον παράκλητον).

8.2.1 The promise of ‘another Paraclete’.

Twice, in the context of the so-called “Farewell Discourses” when the disciples show signs of distress and sorrow concerning Jesus’ death and imminent departure, Jesus gives his disciples the promise of “another Paraclete” to be with them. “I will ask the Father, and he will give you “ἄλλον παράκλητον” to be with you forever” (Jn. 14:16). “You know him, because he abides (μένει) with you, and he will be in you (ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται)” (14:17). “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you” (15:18). Later Jesus continues, “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, “ὁ παράκλητος” will not come to you (pl.); but if I go, I will send him to you” (16:7).

8.2.1.1 Comfort in grief

The disciples grieved that Jesus was going (Jn.14:1), but these fearful disciples would not be left abandoned as orphans, for John's Jesus reassures them "I will come to you" (14:18) through the presence of the Paraclete. The Paraclete would be with them as their comforter, counsellor, helper, and advocate. He would act as Jesus' successor and representative (Spriggs 2015) who would "facilitate the continued presence of Jesus" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:231).

Jesus emphatically reassured them that it was for their benefit he should go – "The Paraclete is better for them than Jesus in the flesh would have been" (16:7) (Keener 2003b:1029). The Paraclete, the helper, would take the place of Jesus' literal presence when he went to the Father, so would be given after his resurrection (7:39; 20:17, 22) (Kieffer 2001:990).

8.2.1.2 An indwelling presence

Rather than be restricted by human limitations, the Paraclete would permanently be in them (Jn.14:17), and the Father and Jesus "will come to them [those who love Jesus] and make our home with them" ("μονὴν παρ' αὐτῷ ποιησόμεθα" means literally a dwelling place with him we will make) (14:23), in the same way that God is in Jesus (14:20). In essence, to have the Holy Spirit as their Paraclete would be know God's presence with them and to have God himself indwelling their lives as believers. McFague puts it this way, "Pentecost means God's free, permanent presence with us" (1987:171).

Furthermore the presence of the indwelling Paraclete would enable a continuation and deepening of the disciples' relationship of intimacy with Jesus and the Father. "The fellowship they enjoyed with him will continue through his Spirit" (Spriggs 2015).

The verb μένω (Strong 2007:§G3306 to stay, abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand) is very prevalent in John (Jn1:32,33,38,39; 2: 12; 3:36; 4:40; 5:38;6:27,56;7:9;8:31,35;9:41;10:40;11:6,54;12:24,34,46;14:10,17,25;15:4,5,6,7,9,10,16;19:31,21:22,23) (Moulton & Geden 1989:628). Ringe describes the presence of

this verb being “like a red thread running through the Fourth Gospel from beginning to end” (1999:76). She notes that at times it is used to express the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit (14:17), and “Most important, it conveys the mutual indwelling of God, Jesus, and those united to them” (1999:76). This relationship of mutual indwelling expressed by the verb μένω “emphasizes the permanence of that relationship” (1999:76). Brown suggests that “As the Paraclete, the Spirit takes on a more personal role than in many other sections of the NT” (1970:639). Furthermore Ringe believes that μένω demonstrates the consistent and persistent presence that friendship entails (1999:76) – hence the indwelling Paraclete enables the relationship between the disciples and Jesus as ‘friends’ to continue even in Jesus’ physical absence, and in a sense the Paraclete functions as the “Replacement Friend” (Spriggs 2005).

Scott rightly suggests that “The language here indicates that Jesus’ current relationship with the disciples will find its counterpart in the Paraclete’s later work” (2003:1197). He continues, “It is thus an occasion for celebration rather than sadness, the limitations of incarnation finally being overcome” (2003:1197).

8.2.1.3 The answer to the so-called ‘delayed parousia’

Jesus promises the disciples “another Paraclete” to be with them for ever (Jn. 14:16). Many scholars (see Brown 1970:644; Burge 1987:6; Kieffer 2001:987; Spriggs 2015) understand Jesus to be the former Paraclete, referring to the first epistle of John, chapter two verse one. John’s portrayal of the Paraclete has very similar features to Jesus, namely both have come from the Father (6:57; 14:16); both are sent (3:17; 16:7); both are the truth (14:6; 15:26); both are holy (6:69; 14:25); neither are received or accepted by the world (5:43; 14:17). “The implication is that another Paraclete is therefore another Jesus, or Jesus returned” (Burge 1987:33).

The Spirit is identified as the ‘other Paraclete’ who succeeds Jesus (Kyser 1975:94; Scott 2003:1197). Burge acknowledges that “Although many scholars would not agree with this conclusion (Bultmann, Betz, Sasse, Spitta, Windish), the alignment in

14:26 is indisputable” (1987:142). Furthermore, “It is only the Holy Spirit that is expressly called *παρ.* = *Helper* in the Fourth Gosp.” (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:618).

The promise of the indwelling Paraclete therefore addresses the crisis of the so-called ‘delayed parousia’ – the apparent disappointment that Jesus had not returned in the lifetime of some of his close companions (see Matt.10:23; Mk. 13:30) as expected by his followers (Barrett 1950:1-15; Brown1966:128). Burge suggests that “This group certainly included the beloved Disciple (Jn.21:23). The deaths of these eyewitnesses, the delay, and a growing scepticism (cf. 2Pet 3:3-10; Jude 18) produced a great anguish” (1987:34). He continues, “But the Paraclete brought a profound answer. John did not lose hope in the parousia but emphasised in a way that Christ had come back already” (1987:34).

If Jesus’ answer to the crisis posed by his absence and seeming failure to return is the “critical yet revealing presence” (Moloney 1998:456) of the Paraclete, is the Paraclete essentially a synonym for ‘Spirit’ or does it have a wider meaning?

8.2.2 Spirit and Paraclete

In the Synoptic Gospels, the word “πνεῦμα” (Moulton & Geden 1989:819-820) is used to speak of the “Spirit” (Strong 2007: §G4151 Breath, wind, spirit). Like the Synoptics, John also makes use of this same term “πνεῦμα” in his gospel. For John, the Spirit – “πνεῦμα” – “is essentially the sign of spiritual life, and this underlies Jesus’ actions of breathing on the disciples (Jn. 20:22)” (Domeris 1989:20). Domeris notes that outside the farewell discourses (see Jn.1:32-33; 3:5-8; 6:63; 3:34; 7:39; 20:22), the picture given of the Spirit is very similar to that found in the Synoptic Gospels with the exception of chapter four (4:23-24) (1989:20). In these particular verses, Domeris suggests, “The mention of worship in ‘spirit and truth’ alerts us to the experience of the Johannine community, namely alienation from and conflict with the synagogue” (1989:20). However, in the Farewell Discourses, John moves beyond the traditional synoptic use of the term “πνεῦμα” by introducing this “unusual but highly significant title, namely ‘Paraclete’ “(Just 2013).

In the whole New Testament, the use of this term “ὁ παράκλητος” is unique to the Johannine writings. In the Fourth Gospel, it occurs four times (Jn.14:16, 26; 15:26; 16: 7), with one reference to Jesus as the Paraclete in the first epistle of John (1 Jn. 2:1) (Burge 1987:6). In the Farewell Discourses, John specifically identifies the Paraclete as the ‘Spirit of truth’ (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας) (14:17) and the ‘Holy Spirit’ (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) (14:26). However, since John uses both the term “πνεῦμα” as well as “ὁ παράκλητος” indicates that in his view, they are not one hundred percent synonymous – each communicates a slightly different understanding of the nature of the Spirit of God.

8.2.3 John’s unique Paraclete

As noted, the writers of the Synoptic Gospels refer to the ‘Spirit’, but make no mention of the ‘Paraclete’. Acknowledging the connection between the “Spirit” and “another Paraclete”, why then did John’s Jesus promise the Johannine community “another Paraclete” rather than simply sending the “Holy Spirit”? What was John trying to convey by introducing this new concept of the Paraclete? I believe Domeris takes us to the heart of the matter when he writes,

In a moment of supreme genius, the Fourth Evangelist drew together two distinct thoughts, one old and one new, to produce an unforgettable combination. The old Jewish understanding of the Spirit of God was interwoven with the new consciousness of the ongoing presence of Jesus, in the Christian Community, of which the Evangelist was a member (1989:17).

It appears that in John’s view, the Spirit and the Paraclete represent different aspects or dimensions of the same Spirit of God. He has “adapted this traditional image into his own context” (Burge 1987:41). It seems the particular emphasis that John brings through the Paraclete is the new idea of the on-going presence of Jesus in the life of the believers. Some scholars (Johnson 1970; Keener 2003b:1030; Just 2013) combine the two by using the term “Spirit-Paraclete”. However, Domeris argues that it is important to keep these two images separate. He writes:

The Spirit of Truth is a very Jewish concept, reminiscent of the Qumran writings. By contrast the Paraclete is John's special contribution. It enables him to broaden the picture of the Spirit (1989:21)

I believe that the particular events and circumstances experienced by the Johannine community provide the soil into which the seed of John's Paraclete is planted. The Johannine community was a community in crisis. Brown suggests that the passage wherein Jesus warns his disciples about the hatred they will encounter in the world (Jn.15:18-25), persecution (15:20), expulsion from the synagogue and even death (16:1-2) "may be the key to how the figure of the Paraclete came to play such an important role in the Johannine discourse"(Brown 1970:699). It is in this context that John's Jesus promises the presence of the Paraclete to be with them (15:26; 16:7) – words of encouragement which surely were intended to keep them from falling away during this time of crisis (16:1). Brown concludes "It is precisely this mention of the Spirit in the context of facing the persecution of the world that may have been the principal catalyst for the development of John's understanding of the Paraclete" (1970:699). This view is supported by Burge who writes, "This context of juridicial trial and persecution presents us with the most likely catalyst for John's introduction for the term ὁ παράκλητος" (1987:205). He continues "Therefore we can conclude that "John 15:18ff. is a key passage which anchors the Paraclete in a traditional context of persecution and witness" (1987:206) – a context of crisis.

John makes three references to the Paraclete (Jn. 14:15-17, 26; 15:26f; 16:7-14), which Painter suggests respond to three crises facing the Johannine community, namely the trauma caused by departure of Jesus; the bitter conflict with the synagogue and the experience of alienation following the excommunication from the synagogue (Painter 1980b:532-537). To these crises Domeris adds the delay in Jesus' return, and in the light of John twenty-one verse twenty-two, the death of the Beloved Disciple (1989:17). It is through the coming of 'another Paraclete' that the community would be equipped to cope with these crises (1989:18).

8.2.4 What is implied by John's usage of the term ὁ παράκλητος ?

What exactly does John imply by the term “ὁ παράκλητος” (Paraclete)? In attempting to answer this question, I shall first look at ways in which the term “Paraclete” has been translated from the Greek, and then examine these English words in the light of the *function or role* of the Paraclete as presented by John in the context of the Farewell Discourses.

Strong's definition of “παράκλητος” is an “*intercessor, consoler*:-advocate, comforter” (2007:§G3875). According to the Greek-English lexicon the word “παράκλητος” refers to “one who is called to someone's aid” (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:618). The lexicon cautions “but the technical mng. ‘lawyer’, ‘attorney’ is rare....In the few places where the word is found in pre-Christian and extra-Christian lit. it has for the most part a more general mng.: *one who appears in another's behalf, mediator, intercessor, helper*”. They continue, “The Gk. Interpreters of John's gosp. understood it in the active sense = *παρακαλῶν* or *παρακλητήωρ*”. They state that “In our lit. the act. sense *helper, intercessor* is suitable in all occurrences of the word” (Arndt & Gingrich 1979:618).

Some scholars interpret Paraclete as “Consoler”, dating back to Origen (Keener 2003b:955). Others interpret the Greek word as “comforter” or “one who strengthens” from the Wycliffe translation, yet Keener argues that this is “not the standard use of the Greek noun” (2003b:955).

Spriggs (2015), I believe, captures the essence of the problem of translation of ‘Paraclete’ in a simple but helpful way. Like Van der Watt (2007:70-71), Spriggs acknowledges that the word “παράκλητος” is difficult to translate into English, “as there is no word giving a direct equivalent meaning, giving problems to translators of the New Testament” (2015). He points out that the function of the Paraclete is so broad, that a variety of words is used in the different English translations, each one capturing in some way part of the broader meaning (2015). An overview of some English translations for “παράκλητος” is as follows:

Paraclete (NAB); Comforter (KJV, ASV, LB); Counsellor (RSV, NIV); Advocate (JB, NRSV, NEB); Helper (TEV, NASB); Someone else to stand by you (Philips); The friend (The Message). As I see it, each English translation is but one piece of the Paraclete puzzle, but when considered together they give a clearer picture of the whole.

The literary context in which the word Paraclete appears can shed some light on its intended meaning. Burge notes that as a verbal adjective παράκλητος has a passive sense παρακλημένος, referring to “one who has been summoned” (1987:6). As a noun its meaning is often narrowed to one who was called to help in a lawcourt court as an assistant, helper, or advocate (Burge 1987:6; Kieffer 2001:987). Burge suggests therefore that “Paraclete should be seen chiefly as a forensic term evolving out of the Jewish juridical sphere” (1987:208). This makes sense reading first John (2:1) where the setting is clearly forensic – Jesus the Paraclete acts as defence council in the heavenly court of law (1987:6). Likewise in John sixteen (vv.8-11), the context also seems to be a forensic scene (1987:208). However, Burge points out that John’s use of the term in chapter fourteen (vv.16, 26) and chapter fifteen (v.26) departs from this understanding, showing that “this forensic metaphor is not strictly maintained” (1987:6-10).

According to Keener, the forensic usage of the word for the function of the Paraclete in John has “been a subject of much academic discussion” (2003b:955). He acknowledges that “some scholars find difficulty relating this as a forensic term to what appear to be nonforensic functions in the Paraclete passages” (2003b:961). Kieffer writes “The word is filled with a complex meaning” (2001:987). There are differences between the Greek meanings of the word and how the Paraclete is portrayed in John (Spriggs 2015). The complexities in understanding John’s usage of the term Paraclete, have given rise to what has been termed “The Paraclete problem” (Burge 1987:6-10). Burge (1987:7) and Spriggs (2015) draw attention to inconsistencies in that on the one hand the Paraclete functions in a legal role as the divine accuser of the world (Jn. 16:8-11), who testifies on Jesus’ behalf (15:27). Yet on the other hand, at times he functions as a helper (14:17); as a revealer who will instruct and assist the disciples after Jesus’ departure (14:25-26); as a counsellor

who will guide the disciples into all truth (16:13) and as one who will transform the disciples from timid people into bold witnesses (Burge 1987:7; Spriggs 2005). Burge continues, “The title and the tasks ascribed to the Paraclete seem to be out of step” (1987:7) and “The variety of traits given to the Paraclete defy any attempt to give him a comprehensive title” (1987:9). He concludes, “Therefore John’s usage departs from the standard understanding of the Greek term. John has given a special forensic title to a figure which barely fits the customary pattern” (1987:7).

Despite the range of meanings attributed to the word “παράκλητος”, scholars such as Witherington (1995:25-252) and Scott (2003:1197) believe that its primary meaning in the Fourth Gospel is probably “Advocate”. This is in keeping with the legal background to the word involving helping in a law court. Given the fact that Jesus promises the Paraclete to his followers in the context of their experience of hatred (Jn.15: 18-25), persecution (15:20), expulsion from the synagogue and even death (16:1-2), in my view it makes sense to appreciate the advocacy role assumed by the Paraclete in the face of their (including Johannine community) accusers.

However I suggest that ultimately the determining factor in the choice of English word to translate ὁ παράκλητος lies in the interpretation of the role and function of the Paraclete, from the perspective of the translator. I suggest therefore that not *one single English word* be chosen to translate the Greek παράκλητος throughout all the Johannine references, but that different words be used that best describe the particular role the Paraclete fulfils in the particular context of each verse. Hence sometimes the Paraclete functions in a legal role – like an advocate – whereas at other times he is more of a comforter, counsellor or helper.

So I come now to a discussion of the role and function of the Paraclete as found in John’s Gospel. In doing so, I will demonstrate how the coming of the Paraclete is, I believe, John’s all-encompassing pastoral answer for the Johannine community to enable and equip them to deal with the many facets of the crisis they were facing. Whereas Matthew’s Jesus reassured his disciples saying “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (28:20), John’s Jesus comforts and reassures his followers (the

members of the Johannine community) that he will ask the Father to give them “ἄλλον παράκλητον to be with you forever” (Jn. 14:16).

8.2.6 The role and function of the Paraclete

Noting that the “other Paraclete” was introduced by John in the context of Jesus preparing his disciples for the imminent crisis they could expect to encounter, particularly that of persecution and conflict (Brown 1970:699; Domeris 1989:21; Painter 1980:532-537; Burge 1987:198; Scott 2003:1199), what role was the “other Paraclete” to fulfil? In what ways would his presence help and equip the Johannine community to deal with the crisis they would be confronting? John ascribes to him specific roles or functions as follows:

8.2.5.1 The Paraclete as Teacher and Revealer

Jesus told his disciples, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now (Jn. 16:12). Because of the disciples sorrow (14:28-29; 16:6, 20-22) in the face of what is to come, and their inability to hear any more predictions of forthcoming hardship, Jesus reassures them that “the Paraclete would continue to show them what they needed to know in the face of the world’s hostility (16:12-13)” (Keener 2003:1035). He affirmed that he would make provision for them in due course to help them through the time of severe persecution. “Therefore....Jesus’ logical provision of the Paraclete is exactly what we would expect” (Burge 1987:32).

John links the “other Paraclete” with the “Spirit of Truth” (Jn.14:17; 26; 15:26; 16:13) who will guide the disciples (by implication the Johannine community) into all truth (16:13); testify on Jesus’ behalf (15:26); and remind group members of the meaning of what Jesus said and did (14:26).

Although the word “ὁ παράκλητος” is not actually mentioned in Chapter sixteen verses twelve to fifteen, the Spirit of Truth (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας) will guide and enable the disciples to understand the profound truth that Jesus had taught them. Domeris suggests that here (Jn.14:17, 26) John broadens the understanding of the

Spirit “to include a number of new functions, particularly that of teaching” (1989:21). In this role, the Spirit of truth “is seen in his function of transmitting Jesus’ teaching to the disciples” (Kieffer 2001:990). As teacher, the Paraclete fulfils a pastoral role in guiding the Johannine community into all truth, in the absence of Jesus. The emphasis is on being a ‘truthful Spirit ‘ as opposed to a ‘lying spirit’ (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:231). The truth that Jesus received from the Father and passed on to them will continue to be revealed to the disciples by the Spirit. The truthful Paraclete will interpret the teachings of Jesus and help them understand the significance of his words; and declare things that are still to come (16:13). “The Paraclete will realize all Jesus’ sayings to the disciples, he will interpret them in their situation and thus give rise to new insights and experiences”(Olsson 1974:269). Throughout the Gospel John repeatedly underlined the fact that the disciples failed to understand Jesus’ words (for example 12:16) and that certain things would only become clear after Jesus had been glorified (2:22; 7:39; 12:16; 13:7), because only then was the Spirit given (7:39). So the Paraclete would bring glory to Jesus by taking from what is his (Jesus’) and making it known to his disciples (16:14). He would “continue to confront the community with the reality of Jesus” (Keener 2003b:1041).

In the context of hostility, conflict, persecution and excommunication because of their faith in Jesus, Locher (1966:565-579) suggests that the Paraclete, as the Spirit of Truth, acts to protect the disciples from error in the metaphorically forensic situation experienced subsequent to Jesus’ departure. Furthermore, the Paraclete as Spirit of Truth “re-presents Jesus dynamically to the world in each hostile situation” (Keener 2003b:1029-1030).

Domeris notes that John himself also fulfils a similar role to that of the Paraclete:

The task of teaching (*parakeleo*) is the very role which the Evangelist has taken upon himself, and indeed he is the one who brings to mind those things which Jesus had said. (1989:21).

I concur that in the writing the Fourth Gospel, John, like the Paraclete is fulfilling a pastoral role in the life of the Johannine community in the absence of Jesus. Inspired

by the 'indwelling Paraclete' John himself plays a teaching role in leading the Johannine community into a profound understanding of the truth, and revealing the truth about Jesus, who himself IS the truth (Jn. 14:6). Furthermore, through guiding the followers of Jesus into all truth, the Paraclete (and John) functions not just as a Teacher but also as a Helper and Counsellor.

8.2.5.2 The Paraclete's forensic role

In some incidences in John's Gospel, the Paraclete appears to function in a legal role as divine accuser of the world (Jn. 16:8-11), who testifies on Jesus' behalf (15:27). Trites notes that in situations of advocacy in the Old Testament, the dual function of both advocate and witness are present (1977:22) and are exemplified by Isaiah (chs. 40-55) (1977:35-47). In his view, this model – especially Isaianic forensic model – is applied directly to the Fourth Gospel (1977: 79, 84). In terms of the Paraclete's forensic role, both these functions (advocate and witness) clearly evident (15:27; 16:8-11).

Keener observes that "A forensic reading of these passages fits the trial motif throughout the Fourth Gospel and is becoming increasingly popular" (2003b:961). Burge states this convincingly when he writes:

The context of juridical trial and persecution presents us with the most likely catalyst for John's introduction for the term ὁ παράκλητος. In fact, it is the comprehensive activity of the Spirit as a forensic witness that best explains the varied tasks of the Paraclete in the Farewell Discourses. Christ was still on trial before the world, and the Johannine Church regarded its existence vicariously: it was on trial for Christ. Hence the Paraclete as an advocate implored and persuaded the opposition concerning the truth; and as a witness the Paraclete brought forward evidence establishing the case for Christ (and his church) (1987:205).

The Paraclete is sent to give help in the face of hatred and opposition from the world (15:18-27). "Commentators have noted the strong parallel to Matt 10:19-20, where the scene is one of disciples on trial needing a spokesperson, or advocate" (Scott 2003:1199) (see also Mk. 13:9-11; Lk. 21:13-15). Brown suggests that this tradition

is reinterpreted by John in the figure of the Paraclete (1966:699-701). In this passage (15:26-27), the role of the Paraclete is to enable them to be bold and effective witnesses in the face of persecution, giving testimony concerning Jesus. Burge points out that John has placed his emphasis on the theme of 'witness' skilfully in a juridical framework (Burge 1987:205) "Although the disciples are being judged by persecutors, through the Spirit, their words will bring conviction to their adversaries" (Spriggs 2005). Thus the act of witness is shared by the disciples (Domeris 1989:21). The Paraclete defends Jesus (15:26) in the testimony of the church (15:27), and in "16:12-15 the Paraclete is identified as substantiating the church's case through witness and revelation" (Burge 1987:207-208). Keener suggests that the "Paraclete's prosecution of the world is on their behalf and through their testimony" (2003b:1029).

In the context of Jesus warning the disciples of conflict and persecution with the Jews, including expulsion from the synagogue and even martyrdom (Jn.16:1-4), the Paraclete would be sent to help them (16:8-11) by acting as "an advocate for the disciples whom he consoles, but as accuser and a judge in a trial against the world" (Kieffer 2001:990). The disciples could be strong and need not fear in the face of persecution, because the Paraclete would be with them (16:7) (Keener 2003b:1029).

In his role as Advocate, the Paraclete would expose the truth and so accuse and convict the opponents of the Johannine community of three crimes: they are wrong about sin, righteousness and judgement.

Firstly, John tells his readers that one of the roles of the Paraclete is to prove the world wrong about their understanding of sin, because they do not believe in Jesus (16: 8, 9). "The Greek word *elengchō* in v.8 has a general meaning of 'to show' or 'to prove'" (Kieffer 2001:990). Here John has in effect reinterpreted the Jewish understanding of sin. Jewish tradition teaches that there are 613 'Mitzvot' (Commandments) (Rich 1996), and "Under the Jewish theocracy, wilful disregard of the positive, or wilful infraction of the negative, commands of God as proclaimed by Moses and interpreted by the Rabbis" is sin (Jacobs & Eisenstein 1906). The members of the Johannine community were accused of blasphemy, because of their

conviction that Jesus was equal to God (Jn. 5:18; 10:30). This was a violation of the commandment “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deut. 6:4) and “You shall have no other Gods but me” (Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:7). As a result of believing and proclaiming that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, in the eyes of the Jews they were committing a very serious and most grave sin and consequently expelled from the synagogue. As a result, they forfeited their identity as the “Chosen People of God”.

However, John turns this understanding of sin on its head. He states that the world is “wrong about sin” (Jn.16:8). Instead of the Johannine community of believers being guilty of sin, he points out the irony – it is in fact the unbelieving Jews who are to be convicted of sin. This is the task of the Paraclete. I believe that here John reinterprets the understanding of sin from ‘breaking the law/commandments’, to “interpersonal shaming; Israel has shamed God because they ‘do not believe in me’” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:241). This highlights a specific aspect of the teaching of John’s Gospel – “the sin of unbelief in Jesus” (Domeris 1989:22). This sin has already been emphasised on numerous occasions throughout the Gospel (for example 1:11; 3:19, 36; 8:24; 10:37-38; 15:22-25) (Kieffer 2001:990).

Secondly, the Paraclete “will prove the world wrong... about righteousness, because Jesus is going to the Father and his disciples will see him no longer” (Jn.16: 8, 10). According to Jacobs (2013), the Jewish understanding of righteousness is

[T]he fulfilment of all legal and moral obligations. Righteousness is not an abstract notion but rather consists in doing what is just and right in all relationships; ...keep justice and do righteousness at all times” (Ps. 106:3; cf. Is. 64:4; Jer. 22:3; Ezek. 18:19–27; Ps. 15:2). (Jacobs 2013).

This implies that a person can only achieve righteousness through their own efforts – by ‘doing what is just and right’.

Jacobs continues,

In the Bible righteousness bears a distinctly legal character; the righteous man is the innocent party, while

the wicked man is the guilty one: 'And the judges judge them by justifying the righteous and condemning the wicked' (Deut. 25:1; cf. Ex. 23:7; II Sam. 15:4; Is. 5:23) (2013).

Once again, John points out the irony that the Jews are wrong – this time about righteousness (Jn.16:8), and reinterprets its meaning. In the words of Malina and Rohrbaugh, John's understanding of righteousness refers to "The payment of interpersonal debts of obligation. Because Israel has not paid its debt of interpersonal obligation to God in the face of God's countless favors, Jesus will therefore 'go to the Father and you will see me no more'" (1998:241). Spriggs puts it this way: Jesus' "demonstration of righteousness was shown on the cross, his way to the Father, which showed that all men's attempts at achieving righteousness through their own efforts are ineffective" (2015). As noted by Kieffer "The Master's righteousness will be proved by his glorification (v.10; cf.5:30)" (2001:990).

Thirdly, the Paraclete "will prove the world wrong... about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned" (Jn.16:8, 11). In the Bible, righteousness bears a distinctly legal character; the righteous man is the innocent party, while the wicked man is the guilty one: "And the judges judge them by justifying the righteous and condemning the wicked (Deut. 25:1; cf. Ex. 23:7; II Sam. 15:4; Is. 5:23)" (Jacobs 2013). Instead of the members of the Johannine community coming under judgement, it is ironically their accusers (who thought themselves to be righteous), who are judged. Malina and Rohrbaugh write, "Israel is condemned because its ruler – 'the prince of this world' – now stands condemned" (16:11) (1998:241). Jesus' victory is "a judgement on the prince of this world (v.11; cf.12:31; 14:30; 16:33)" (Kieffer 2001:990). This condemnation is for all those who do not believe "in the name of God's one and only Son" (3:18). Once again, the work of conviction belongs to the Paraclete. John has 'reframed' the Jewish interpretation of who is deserving of judgement.

Kieffer concludes that in these verses (Jn.16:7-11), "We encounter here a cosmic trial against sin and evil. What takes place at the end of the world in the Synoptics is anticipated already by the action of the Helper in the Fourth Gospel" (2001:990).

Through the work of the Paraclete, John highlights this irony: the crisis faced by the members of the Johannine community was predominately as a consequence of their belief in Jesus, leaving them judged in the eyes of the world and the Jews. Yet John reframes the understanding of sin, righteousness and judgement by showing that the “Truthful Spirit” – the Paraclete – will expose the world (‘lying spirit’) concerning these things, “revealing the evil nature of the enemies of the community over and against the truth of his own teaching” (Domeris 1989:22).

Domeris draws attention to the fact that in these verses (Jn. 16:9-11) John has highlighted specific aspects of the teaching of his entire Gospel – namely, the sin of unbelief in Jesus (16: 9); the return of Jesus to the Father (16:10) and the judgement of the ruler of this world (16:11) (1989:22). He continues, “The teaching of the Paraclete is then precisely that of the Fourth Gospel...The connection between the work of the Paraclete and that of the Evangelist is unmistakable” (1989:22).

In addition to functioning in the role of an advocate, the second forensic function the Paraclete performs is that of a witness. “When ὁ παράκλητος comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, he will testify on my behalf” (Jn.15:26). This act of witness is to be shared by the disciples, “You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning” (15:27).

This action of ‘testifying’ is not meant in the way it is often understood in today’s world, where Christians ‘share their testimony’ as part of evangelistic outreach, to bring people to faith in Jesus. Rather, “witness” is used as a judicial image in this passage, where the Paraclete and Jesus’ followers “in this context bear witness against the world before God’s court” (Keener 2003b:1023). Just as the Pharisees had investigated the healing of the man born blind (Jn.9:13-34) by gathering witnesses to decide whether or not he should be expelled from the community, so in the following chapters we read of the ‘world’ putting Jesus on trial and condemning him (Keener 2003b:1023). Chapter fifteen verse twenty shows “that the same treatment is to be regarded as normative for disciples of Jesus; yet as his words convicted his opponents (15:20, 22), so would theirs” (2003b:1023). Keener concludes that “This is the Johannine context of ‘witness’ in 15:26-27” (2003b:1023).

Burge considers the judicial context for witness throughout John's Gospel as "one of the assured results of Johannine scholarship in recent years" (1987:204-205).

Like the Fourth Gospel, the Synoptics also warn that hardship and persecution can be expected – mission and rejection go hand in hand – and that the Spirit will provide the church with its witness during trial (Burge 1987:198). However, John goes beyond that: "The Johannine power for success amid persecution is the Paraclete (15:26-27)" (Burge 1987:198). Burge continues, "The Paraclete would recall the words of Jesus in the testimony of the church, lead the community into previously unrecognised truths, convince the world of its error, and through these ministries vindicate the message of Christ in the church's mission" (1987:198). Burge concludes that it is the comprehensive activity of the Spirit as a forensic witness that best explains the varied tasks of the Paraclete in the Farewell Discourses. He writes,

Christ was still on trial before the world, and the Johannine Church regarded its existence vicariously: it was on trial for Christ. Hence the Paraclete as an advocate implored and persuaded the opposition concerning the truth; and as a witness the Paraclete brought forward evidence establishing the case for Christ (and his church) (1987:205)

In addition to functioning as an advocate and witness in a forensic sense, the Paraclete will also enable the believers (members of the Johannine community) to boldly testify for Jesus, recognising that ultimately it is the unbelieving world rather than the believers who really are on trial before God (Keener 2003b:1024).

8.2.6 Conclusion

In my view, the 'other Paraclete' is clearly the capstone or rhetorical fulcrum of John's strategic pastoral intervention to his community in crisis. In the context of hostility and conflict with Judaism and the world, the Paraclete is their teacher, advocate and witness. When confronting fear and rejection, the Paraclete brings them peace and joy. Having lost their identity as members of the broader Israelite society, he is the means through whom they gain a new identity as children of God (born from above). When overcome by grief, he is their comforter. While facing the

crisis of the imminent departure of Jesus with grief and loss, and dealing with disappointment in the light of the so-called 'delayed parousia' – the other Paraclete is the one who will remain with the disciples for ever. The Paraclete would in many ways be like another Jesus, in that he would be the presence of Jesus while Jesus was physically absent (Brown 1970:643). Assured of the Paraclete's presence in the face of the crisis faced by the members of the Community, John in the words of Jesus can say with certainty "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (Jn.14:27).

As previously suggested, I believe the 'other Paraclete' is the glue that holds John's three-fold pastoral response together. He leads the disciples (and members of the Johannine community) into all truth and reframes their previously held beliefs; he transforms their faith and spiritual identity and is the one who enables the community to grow and deepen in their on-going relationship with God.

In conclusion, why is John's Gospel such a 'Maverick' and very different Gospel in its selection of material, use of language, metaphors and rich imagery? I suggest it is different because at the heart of this Gospel we hear the voice of a pastor – John's Gospel is fundamentally a pastoral document. He reshapes the Jesus tradition and writes a strategic response to the pastoral and spiritual needs of a community in crisis. In this way he fulfills the pastoral commission given to the early church in the concluding chapters of the Gospel: "Feed my lambs" (Jn.21:15); "Tend my sheep" (21:16); "Feed my sheep" (21:17).

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