

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUAL SURVEY OF JOHN 9

1. APPROPRIATENESS CONDITIONS

The question of which conditions and rules are required for successful conversation is important for a speech act analysis. Appropriateness conditions provide an answer to this question. Searle suggests felicity conditions for individual speech acts. For conversational purposes, Grice suggests the Cooperative Principle; Leech submits Interpersonal and Textual Rhetorics; Bach and Harnish pose three presumptions and mutual contextual beliefs, and Pratt adds the notion of display text. These concepts are all realisations of appropriateness conditions. Before closely analysing the text of John 9, this chapter will consider the entire story itself in the light of these conditions. As part of this consideration, Johannine symbolism and the motif of suffering will also be discussed.

As for these appropriateness conditions, I would like to remind my reader again that my speech act approach recognises the importance of contexts, namely historical, social, cultural, religious, linguistic, literary, and so on, because the contexts for a specific speech situation play an important role in interpretation, especially in determining the meaning of a certain utterance, passage or section (cf. *Significance of context*, section 3.1 in Chapter 2). Findings and insights concerning these contexts from previous works, including those from historical criticism, will greatly help my analysis. Therefore, I shall attempt to identify the most plausible contexts for John 9, summarising the views of other scholars, conversing with them,¹ and providing my own assessments, where necessary.² It is hoped that identifying the most plausible contexts could form a basis for a moderate example of the attempt to combine the use of historical and literary approaches. This is a strength of my approach, and should not be viewed as a redundant representation of arguments by secondary sources.³

1 However, the engagement and evaluation of such scholars' views are not my main concern in this instance. In addition, the examination of primary sources is beyond the scope of this literary study. Again I would like to make use of the contributions of previous historical research.

2 I shall deal with these conversations and my own assessments in more detail in the text analysis in Chapter 4.

3 Nevertheless, if my reader is familiar with the contextual background and only if s/he is aware of the knowledge the reader and characters of the Gospel

2. THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE, AND INTERPERSONAL AND TEXTUAL RHETORICS

- a. The characters that participate in the conversations are assumed to be observing the *Cooperative Principle* and other principles of both Interpersonal and Textual Rhetorics.
- b. The author and the reader are assumed to be observing the *Cooperative Principle* and other principles of both Interpersonal and Textual Rhetorics.
- c. When the author and the reader are not observing the *Cooperative Principle* and other principles, the notion of implicatures will help the reader determine the meaning of an utterance.

3. THREE PRESUMPTIONS

As observed earlier (cf. section 1.2 in Chapter 2), Bach and Harnish (1979:7-12) suggest three presumptions that facilitate communication between speaker and hearer. Yet these mutual beliefs “are shared not just between S and H but among members of the linguistic community at large” (Bach and Harnish 1979:7). The following pages will show an application of the notion of these presumptions to our text.

3.1 Linguistic presumption

The mutual belief held by the characters in John 9 (who are apparently Jewish) presupposes that they are familiar with the language and are able to speak it correctly. The same presupposition holds true for the communication between the author and the reader. Although Greek is the only language of communication on the author-reader level, the language used by the characters at the particular point in their conversations is difficult to discern and can only be assumed to be either Hebrew, Latin, Greek (cf. John 19:20) or Aramaic. Since Aramaic is believed to be the common everyday language of the Jewish people (Wise 1992:435), it is plausible that the blind man and his neighbours may have used Aramaic. On the other hand, when the characters conversed with the Jewish authorities, it is probable that they did so in Hebrew, for this was still the language of religious and legal matters (Stambaugh & Balch 1986:88; Du Rand 1994:18). When the disciples and the blind man talked with Jesus, they may have interacted either in Aramaic or Hebrew. Many scholars (e.g., Brown 1966:cxxix; Smalley 1978:61; Du Rand 1994:18) currently

possess at a given moment (e.g., just before or during the story of John 9), s/he is welcome to skip the following sections.

support this view, asserting that Christians and other Jews in first-century Palestine spoke Aramaic and Hebrew widely. The use of the words ‘Rabbi’, ‘Messiah’, ‘Rabboni’, and so on in the *Fourth Gospel* points to the usage of the Hebrew language among the characters. Wise (1992:440) argues: “Greek was well known among the upper classes even in outlying areas of Judea ... Greek, as the official language of the eastern Roman Empire, was everywhere in the East regarded as a prestige language”. However, it appears that Greek was not used on a daily basis. With regard to Latin, which was seldom spoken in Palestine, it is unlikely that the characters spoke Latin in Chapter 9 (cf. Stambaugh & Balch 1986:87-88; Wise 1992:434-444; Du Rand 1994:18-20). The most important issue to accept, in this instance, would be that communication between the characters, as well as between the author and the reader, was made possible in these languages.

Relating to this linguistic presumption, the topic of John’s style of writing must be addressed. Botha expands the meaning of the term *style* in his work by dealing with it from a pragmatic perspective (Botha 1991a:188). The term *style* will be employed, in this instance, in its narrower sense, because the discussion will be restricted to the narrow framework of linguistic presumption – proper management of the language. Therefore, *style* describes literary devices and grammatical features only (including vocabulary in the *Fourth Gospel*). Since the analysis of style in John 9 in this sense is, to a great extent, dealt with in the section on ‘General analysis’, the observation will be very briefly confined to John’s grammatical peculiarities and Semitisms.

The analysis in the section on ‘General analysis’ (in Chapter 4) is in itself sufficient to reveal that John’s Greek is rather simple, yet possesses good quality, as displayed by the various literary devices such as *inclusio*, *chiasm*, *parallelism*, *repetition*, *omission*, *compactness*, and so on. Barrett (1955:5) comments: “It is neither bad Greek nor (according to classical standards) good Greek ... the style remains not only clear but very impressive, charged with a repetitive emphasis and solemn dignity which are felt even in translation.” Schnackenburg ([1968] 1984:110) represents other critics in saying: “As regards the Greek itself, scholars have often noted its simplicity, the absence of long periods, of the compound words and the attributive adjectives favoured elsewhere, the laboured progress, the preference for parataxis and asyndeton and so on.” Another characteristic identified by Barrett (1955:5) is that “[t]he Greek style of the fourth gospel is highly individual. It closely resembles that of 1, 2, and 3 John ... otherwise it stands alone in the New Testament”. In order to exemplify his observation partly, if not entirely, the items below

describe some of John's peculiar usage of the Greek language (cf. also Schnackenburg [1968] 1984:105-111):

- Du Rand (1994:20) points out that the “vocabulary of the Gospel of John is limited in comparison to the Synoptic Gospels”. This is characteristic of John's style and is recognised by many critics such as, among others, Carson (1991:23). Barrett (1955:5) concurs that “John's vocabulary is very small, but even so many of his most frequently used words occur comparatively rarely in the synoptic gospels”. The following words, among others, are more frequently used in John than in the Synoptics (Barrett 1955:5-6): εἶμι (9:5, 9); ἔργον (9:3, 4); Ἰουδαῖοι (9:18, 22); κόσμος (9:5, 39); κρῖνειν (9:39); μένειν (9:41); πέμπειν (9:4); τηρεῖν (9:16); φῶς (9:5).
- The following words are very rare in John in comparison with the Synoptics (Barrett 1955:6): βασιλεία, δαυμόνιον, δίκαιος, δύναμις, καλεῖν, λαός, παραβολή.
- The frequent occurrence of the coordinate conjunction (or particle) οὐν, is mostly used as a narrative link (9:7-8, 10-11, 15-20, 24-26) (cf. also Barrett 1955:5; Du Rand 1994:21).
- The exegetical ἵνα (ὅτι) is more often used than the common final use of ἵνα ὅτι (9:17, 30) (Du Rand 1994:21).
- The frequent usage of ἐκεῖνος (9:9, 11, 12, 25, 28, 36, 37) (cf. also Barrett 1955:5; Du Rand 1994:21).
- The partitive use of ἐκ with the genitive (9:16, 40) (cf. also Barrett 1955:7).
- The οὐ - ἀλλά construction with a following ἵνα is only found in John 1:8; 9:3; 11:52, and 1 John 2:19 in the New Testament (Barrett 1955:7).

Since the first part of the 20th century, it has been suggested that John's language is influenced by Semitisms. Barrett (1955:8) explains that “[m]ost students of the gospel are disposed to allow some Semitic influence upon the Greek of the gospel, but the degree of influence postulated varies from critic to critic”. Thus it would be acceptable to conclude that “John was written in Greek from the start, even though the language displays many Semitisms or Semitic colouring” (Schnackenburg [1968] 1984:110). Where is this colouring evident in John? Here are some examples:

- Striking is the use of Semitic vocabulary such as rabbi (9:2), Messiah, manna, Rabboni, ἀπεκρίθη καὶ εἶπεν (9:30, 36), πᾶς before a conditional particle, and so on (Schnackenburg [1968] 1984:107; Du Rand 1994:19).
- The frequent usage of grammatical parataxis (repeated usage of καί) “is as characteristic of Aramaic as it is rare in good Greek. The adversative use of ‘and’ is also Semitic” (Barrett 1955:8) (9:6-7, 11, 15, 27, 30, 34,

36; 1:10-11; 8:57; 10:12; 16:22, and so forth (cf. also Schnackenburg [1968] 1984:109; Carson 1991:23; Du Rand 1994:19).

- Asyndeton (the sentences are often placed side by side without a conjunction and even without *καί*), one of John's traits, "also is common in Aramaic" (Barrett 1955:8) (1:40; 2:17; 7:32; 8:27; 9:9; 21:3, and so on (cf. also Du Rand 1994:20-21).

More examples can be added to this list. But the significant point is clear: there is a distinctive Johannine language style, and the author and the reader, in particular, are supposed to be able to understand and manage his language properly, including the idiosyncrasies in the Gospel.

3.2 Communicative presumption

The mutual belief among the author and the reader, the narrator, and the characters in the narrative presupposes that, when the speaker is saying something to the hearer, the speaker has some discernible illocutionary intent in his utterance.

3.3 Presumption of literalness

The mutual belief among the author and the reader, the narrator, and the characters in the narrative presupposes that, if the speaker is saying something to the hearer literally, the speaker is speaking literally. If it is obvious to the hearer that the speaker could not be speaking literally, the hearer must seek the non-literal meaning of that utterance.

4. GENERAL MUTUAL CONTEXTUAL BELIEFS PRESUMED IN JOHN 9

As indicated in section 1.2 in Chapter 2, mutual contextual beliefs can be regarded as knowledge shared by the participants in their conversation. These beliefs help the characters or the reader understand and interpret the speaker's utterance in the narrative, and include *social and cultural knowledge, knowledge of relations between two parties, knowledge of specific speech situations* (Botha 1991a:71), *background knowledge such as schemata, frames, or scripts* (Yule 1996:85-87), and *religious knowledge, social norms, practices, rules*, and so forth. I shall use the term *mutual contextual beliefs* in a broader sense.⁴ For the present purpose, mutual social, geographical, religious, forensic, and story beliefs will be identified, in this instance, for the context and co-text of Chapter 9. They will be

4 In fact, its notion is much broader than that of Bach & Harnish (1979:4-5).

termed *general mutual contextual beliefs*⁵ as opposed to knowledge of specific speech situations and relations between two parties, which will be discussed according to the seven dialogue scenes in the sections termed *specific mutual contextual beliefs*.

Before proceeding with the discussion, I wish to note the following factors. *Firstly*, the idea of utilising social (and historical) context for a speech act analysis, which is, to a large extent, a text-immanent approach, is not a new enterprise (cf. Saayman 1994, 1995; Cook 1995; Tovey 1997), but the method followed in this instance, integrating social and historical data into the text analysis, intends to present a valid model of all the possibilities. Insights into the social context of John 9 are drawn from the endeavour of so-called social-scientific criticism. *Secondly*, Elliott (1993:11), among others such as Malina 1982; Esler 1994:21-25; Koester 1995:27, suggests the indispensability of exposing such social data for the purpose of understanding an ancient text. He illustrates this point by warning that it is dangerous to attempt to understand social and cultural contexts of a biblical text uncritically with the modern perception of 20th century, for it leads to “the twin errors of an anachronistic and ethnocentric reading of ancient Mediterranean texts”. *Thirdly*, Hanson (1994:183) points out:

The social spheres or domains addressed by social scientists (politics, economics, religion, kinship) are never discrete entities that operate in isolation from one another – they are interactive in every society. But beyond interaction, one sphere may be *embedded* in another. By this I mean that its definition, structures, and authority are dictated by another sphere.⁶

Some scholars even state: “In the world of the New Testament only two institutions existed: kinship and politics. Neither religion nor economics had a separate institutional existence or was conceived of as a system on its own” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:396). This observation indicates that this should be borne in mind when social-scientific insights are incorporated into the text analysis.

Fourthly, I wish to present my assumption regarding the reader in John 9. This forms the theoretical basis upon which will be built every mutual belief between the author and the reader. It will, therefore, be an important assumption. Traditionally, this kind of assumption would be called “the readership of the Gospel”. Together with the authorship, the

5 Most of the beliefs identified in this section will be referred to again for extensive analysis in my speech act reading of the text.

6 For an in-depth discussion on how these spheres are interrelated, cf. Hanson’s (1994) article.

issue has generated heated debates in Johannine studies. These debates are further linked to the issues of the background and purpose of the Gospel. This section will not engage in these discussions as such. Rather, my assumption should be considered as a point of departure to account for the establishing of mutual contextual beliefs shared by the author and the reader.

As far as the readership in the Gospel is concerned, two sets of axes can be extrapolated: believers and non-believers, and the Jews and the Gentiles (the Samaritans could be included in this category). Further combinations are possible, including the Jews and believers or non-believers, on the one hand, and the Gentiles and believers or non-believers, on the other. Four groups can, therefore, be formed. It is theoretically possible that the readership could include all four groups in the Gospel, in general, and in Chapter 9, in particular. However, as far as Chapter 9 is concerned, the most likely readership from the reading of this chapter would be Jewish Christians (cf. Karris 1990:104; Koester 1996:9). They appeared to be a single, monochrome and homogeneous group. Therefore, I intend to treat the readers in John 9 as a single reader (used as a collective noun). This assumption is based mainly on the Jewish and Christian traits of this Chapter:

- The characters in this Chapter all appear to be Jews, and Jesus was always the centre of their topics (cf. my analysis in Chapter 4).
- Jewish thought on the relationship between sin and suffering was raised in 9:2.
- The allusion to the “I am” sayings in 9:5 presupposes the reader’s knowledge of the Old Testament (e.g., Ex 3:14; Is 41:4).
- The issue of the breaking of the Sabbath was important to the characters in 9:13-16.
- The Jews’ decision in 9:22 was directed at those members of the Jewish synagogue who would confess Jesus as the Christ.
- The arguments in the characters’ debates, especially the references to Moses and God (9:24-34), reflect Jewish thought.
- The Jewish understanding of the expressions *the prophet* in 9:17 and *the Son of Man* in 9:35 is quite possible.
- The confession of belief in the Lord indicates a Christian character in 9:38.
- A seemingly anti-Jewish tone displayed in Jesus’ judgment, which passed on the Pharisees in 9:41, implies that the author favours Christians.
- The reader appears to be very familiar with the Old Testament and Jewish thought based on the deduction that the author uses these ideas with hardly any explanation.

These traits do not exclude, of course, the possibility that sympathetic readers could be found among the non-Christian Jews (cf. Brown 1979:168-169). But the real difficulty with my assumption of this readership appears to be the translation of the word *Siloam* in 9:7. It suggests that the reader does not know the significance associated with the term, and that he knows only Greek. However, if Jewish Christians as the reader lived outside of Palestine, this fact could possibly explain this translation. Or, this translation could be an indication of diversity in the readership (cf. Culpepper 1983:211-227). However, these counter arguments do not invalidate the overwhelming evidence above altogether.

Lastly, I should point out clearly for the sake of argument in this study that the reader will be treated as a first-time reader of the Gospel. The notion of *narrative temporality*, therefore, applies to mutual contextual beliefs (for this notion, cf. section 2.3 in Chapter 2).

4.1 Mutual social beliefs

The following mutual social beliefs may shed some light on the story of the blind man.

4.1.1 Honour and family

The central social value of the Mediterranean society in biblical times was honour-shame (Malina 1981:25-50; Esler 1994:25). This value pervades every aspect of social life. One's honour was directly proportional to one's social standing. Thus the acknowledgment of honour by others was of crucial and any community member generally endeavoured to avoid shame at all costs.

Honour could be granted through natural ascription by being born into an honourable family, or by it being bestowed by someone who was sufficiently honourable and powerful, or by acquiring it by engaging in the ceaseless game of challenge and response (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:76; Esler 1994:25). One vital aspect was that honour was "not honour unless publicly claimed, displayed and acknowledged" (Neyrey 1995:141). Another important factor was that, although an individual could gain honour, all family members normally shared honour as a collective unit (Neyrey 1995:141). Essentially, therefore, no individualism existed in this value. Therefore, "[p]arents socialize their children to be absolutely loyal to their biological kin group, since every member of the family shares the family honor and one member's misbehavior shames the entire group. The life prospects for everyone in the family depend on solidarity in protecting family honor" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:300). Moreover, when arranged

marriages were made, both families of bride and groom were “very careful to assess the wealth, worth and honour of a family with whom a marriage is contemplated” (Neyrey 1995:143). Briefly, it was essential to maintain one’s honour in the ancient society.

In light of the above, it takes little imagination to understand that the loss of honour and status in Palestinian society had tremendous influence both on family life and on the life of individual family members. “His name would be reviled, his reputation held up to rebuke and his character calumniated” (Neyrey 1995:148). The person who lost his honour would lose his standing in the community. Hence, neither business was conducted nor marriage arrangements made for those who lost their honourable status (Neyrey 1995:148). It is obvious that this loss of honour had implications more fatal than the mere loss of wealth (Neyrey 1995:154). This has, of course, some significance for our text.

4.1.2 Challenge and response

The result of the social game called challenge and response seriously affected one’s status thereafter. If the challenger won the match, honour was credited to him. If, on the other hand, he was defeated by the receiver, he reaped shame. In this honour-shame society, the consequence of such a game was literally “a matter of life and death” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:76-77). Equals usually competed in this game (Esler 1994:28), and its form was not restricted to public debate and the like only. Giving and receiving gifts was perceived as a positive gesture in this game. An insult was interpreted as a negative challenge. Hence, the implementation of challenge and response influenced every area of life, either positively or negatively (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:76-77). The serious nature of this game may be one of the factors that contributed to characterising this culture as very competitive (Esler 1994:27).

Intense dialogue between Jesus and the Jews in John 8, especially in 8:31-59, is a good example of challenge and response (Esler 1994:87-88). So is the conversation between the blind man and the Jews in the interrogative situation (John 9:24-34). These conversations are heated up because the Jews’ honour was at stake in the social and cultural context.

4.1.3 Family life

In New Testament times, the family was a basic social unit based on kinship (Elliott 1993:129). A typical family consisted of the male family head, his wife and their children, including the children’s families. “It not only was the source of one’s status in the community but also functioned as the primary economic, religious, educational, and social

network. Loss of connection to the family meant the loss of these vital networks as well as loss of connection to the land” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:201). One of the most important aspects is that families in antiquity were patriarchal and the father’s authority was, therefore, fundamental for its existence (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:300). Under his authority, the males played the public role for their entire family, and the females managed the internal affairs in the household. As such, “[s]ocially and psychologically, all family members were embedded in the family unit” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:179).

On the matter of children, Malina & Rohrbaugh (1992:118) report: “Children had little status within the community or family. A minor child was on a par with a slave, and only after reaching maturity was he/she a free person who could inherit the family estate.” Moreover, it is surprising to know that over 70% of children grew up without one or both parents before attaining puberty (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:117).

As far as the relationship between mother and son is concerned, a bride would not gain her place in the household where her husband’s family lived until she gave birth to a child, particularly a son. Perhaps and therefore, this precondition, in conjunction with the custom that boys were nurtured by their mothers entirely in the women’s world until reaching puberty, caused mother and son to develop a strong connection that remained the closest bond in the family (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:300). In other words, “a son would grow up to be his mother’s ally and an advocate of her interests within the family, not only against his father but against his own wife ... Thus the wife’s most important relationship in the family is that to her son” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:30).

4.1.4 Secrecy

A publication by Neyrey (1998) on an aspect of secrecy in the *Fourth Gospel* adds considerably to our understanding of mutual contextual beliefs. His essay may be a first attempt at presenting a comprehensive view of the dynamics of information control in the *Fourth Gospel*, examining the manner in which dynamics contribute to distinguishing both the group boundaries between outsiders and insiders, and the social hierarchy within the Johannine group. The author uses information control as one of the key elements for characterisation, namely to assign unique roles to main and supporting characters based on “who knows what, and when” (Neyrey 1998:87-105). In fact, this particular aspect is not a new observation, but Neyrey’s work is perceived as unique in the sense that he deploys the sociology of secrecy and information control in order to examine the nature of characters. He also draws attention to the fact that the ancient family,

kinship, and group established on a certain agenda kept their secrets for maintenance, development, and survival (Neyrey 1998:106). Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992:203-204) explicate this secrecy as follows:

In the honor-shame world of the Mediterranean, family reputation meant everything. It had to be guarded at all costs, and all members of the family had to be watched ... to ensure that nothing went awry. Scandal or suspicion could endanger the family's place in the community ... Since honor is largely determined by public opinion, it becomes critical that the public learn nothing that might damage a family's reputation. Secrecy becomes an internal family necessity at the same time that it is socially unacceptable ... Secrets that might damage reputation are thus guarded by lying, deception, or whatever strategy is necessary to protect it.

This knowledge will provide a key to our understanding of the text, especially of the dialogue between the parents and the Jews (John 9:18-23).

4.1.5 Healing

Pilch (1992:26) points out that “[h]ealing is a culturally defined and culturally determined phenomenon”. The most important perspective regarding healing and sickness in the New Testament world is, therefore, that “one’s state of being was more important than one’s ability to act or function” (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:71; Pilch 1992:30). Although this may be a significant mutual contextual belief between the author and the reader, it is even more crucial for modern readers, because it differs radically from the perceptions of modern Western culture. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992:210) go on to report:

Anthropologists carefully distinguish between *disease* – a biomedical malfunction afflicting an organism – and *illness* – a disvalued state of being in which social networks have been disrupted and meaning lost. Illness is not so much a biomedical matter as it is a social one. It is attributed to social, not physical, cause. Thus sin and sickness go together. Illness is a matter of deviance from cultural norms and values.

This helps us understand the major role played by ancient healers. They focused on restoring a patient’s social standing (healing) rather than on restoring his malfunctioning organs in the biomedical sense (curing) (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:71). Briefly, remember that, in the first-century Mediterranean world, there was a clear distinction between disease and illness, and between curing and healing (Van Eck & Van Aarde 1993:37).

4.2 Mutual geographical beliefs

In the narrative world, the characters have common knowledge of particular places. For instance, when Jesus commanded the blind man to go to the pool of *Siloam* in 9:7, they both knew its location. The fact that the neighbours did not request the blind man to explain the reference to the pool in 9:11 also indicates that they were familiar with it. The pool was situated on the southwestern slope of Ophel (the city of David) near the junction of the Tyropoeon Valley and the Valley of Hinnom, and its source was the spring of Gihon in the Kidron Valley (Bruce [1983] 1994:210; Schnackenburg [1968] 1980:243; Rousseau 1995). When the neighbours took the blind man to the Pharisees in 9:13, and when the Jews summoned the parents in 9:18 and the blind man in 9:24, they all knew *the place* where the Pharisees and the Jews could be found. Since the Pharisees “formed closed communities” (Jeremias [1969] 1975:247, 251), perhaps it was not difficult to find them. In Jerusalem, the Temple was probably a frequent meeting place for the Pharisees and the Jews (Edersheim [1967] 1976:214).

By contrast, there is apparently no significant mutual geographical belief shared by the author and the reader. When Jesus commanded the blind man to go to the pool of Siloam, the narrator deliberately translates the meaning of Siloam. This gesture leads us to suspect that the reader is not familiar with the place.

4.3 Mutual religious beliefs

Since all the characters appear to be Jews, they must have known the rules of the Sabbath day – both the expectations and the prescriptions. The Jewish authorities were more familiar with the details of *the Sabbath laws* than the general public. Nevertheless, every Jew was presumably aware of the basic concepts of Jewish Law.

In 9:17, when the blind man answered the Pharisees’ question by saying that Jesus was a *prophet*, nobody asked him to clarify himself. When Jesus asked the blind man whether he believed in *the Son of Man* or not (9:35), the latter asked who the Son of Man was, but not what he was. Moreover, when the blind man finally recognised Jesus to be the Son of Man, he worshipped Jesus. Thus the characters seemed to share the same ‘beliefs’ concerning the notions of the prophet and of the Son of Man. I shall examine these notions in more detail in specific mutual beliefs in sections 5.1.1 and 8.1.1 (Chapter 4), respectively.

The characters all knew about *Moses* when the Jews mentioned his name in 9:29. One scarcely has to mention that they all knew something about the *God* of Israel (e.g., 9:31).

These observations suggest that the characters, the author and the reader are all aware of the basic aspects of Judaism. There seems to be no need for the author to explicitly explain the religious context in the text.

4.4 Mutual forensic beliefs

The narrative of John 9, especially verses 13-34, is often regarded as the form of a trial (Dodd [1953] 1968:354).⁷ In fact, this trial form is a literary trait evident throughout the Johannine story of Jesus (Trites 1992:879-880).⁸ With regard to this forensic motif in John, one should, of course, not forget the discourse of the work of the Holy Spirit (especially 16:7-11) and the narrative of Jesus' trial (18:12-19:16). In this section, I shall discuss the forensic elements as a *frame* and *script* (Yule 1996:85-87) to our text. However, considering the nature of these dialogues in John 9, greater emphasis will be placed on the Jewish trial form than on the Roman form.

I wish to examine the question as to whether or not there was an established court or court procedure in Jewish society. According to the Old Testament, it appears that, in ancient Israel, a trial was held in the place where God chose (Dt 17:8). This means that people went to the priests and the judges (Dt 17:9). In the time of Moses, Moses was also the supreme judge (Ex 18:13). He delegated his authority to the officials whom he selected as judges (Ex 18:14-26). When people had disputes, they went to these judges. Consequently, the place where they held their 'offices' was considered the court.

According to Harvey (1976:46), Jewish legal procedure was markedly different from modern western practice. *Firstly*, Jewish trial procedure was much less formal. It was not necessary for the accused to appear before a formally constituted court in order for a trial to take place (Harvey 1976:46). This may be a factor that makes it difficult to clearly categorise whether a trial was official/formal or not (cf. section 5.3 in Chapter 4).⁹

7 Cf. also Resseguie 1982:298; Ashton [1991] 1993:226; Holleran 1993b:365.

8 Cf. also Meeks 1965:481-482; Lincoln 2000:4; Chapter 1). Neyrey (1998:92) points out: "The most common formal element of the Johannine discourses seems to be that of a forensic trial of Jesus. A conservative reading of the document indicates that Jesus is first put on trial in 5:16-18, which trial is continued in 7:14-52, 8:12-59, 9:13-34, 10:21-39."

9 Harvey (1976:46) provides more clarification on the procedure in Old Testament times: "[J]ustice was 'at the gate' of the city (Amos 5.15) and was administered by the 'elders', that is, the leading citizens in the place (Deut. 19.12), who might be called upon at any time (as in Ruth 4.1-12) to arrest an offender (Deut.19.12), determine his guilt (Deut. 25.7-9), and either carry out the punishment themselves (Deut. 22.18-19) or command the witnesses of the deed to do so

In later times, priests or scribes took the place of the elders, and local sanhedrins (courts) were even organised under the supervision of the great Jerusalem Sanhedrin (Harvey 1976:46). However, even in New Testament times, the principle remained the same. People, usually witnesses, went to priests or (Roman) officials after their attempt to correct the offender's sin had failed (Harvey 1976:48; Derrett 1972:181). As long as the judge(s) and the witnesses were assembled, with or without the accused, in one place such as a gate of a town or village (cf Dt 17:5), or a market place (Ac 16:19), the trial could be conducted. In Jesus' trial case (Catchpole 1971; Winter 1974), Jesus was brought to the house of the high priest (Mt 26:58; Lk 34:54; John 18:13) and the Praetorium (John 18:28). In addition, he was taken to the Sanhedrin (Mt 26:59; Mk 15:1; Lk 22:66; O'Neill 1970), which was also used as the Supreme Court when the charge became extremely serious (cf. Ac 5:21; 6:12; 22:30; 23:28). Twelftree (1992:731) makes an informative report: "From the death of Herod the Great, Galilee and Perea were separate administrative regions so that the civil jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin did not extend beyond Judea. Thus while Jesus remained in Galilee, the Sanhedrin had no judicial authority over him." Although numerous theories about the Sanhedrin have been proposed as a result of the conflicting sources and various terms, it is generally agreed that Jerusalem had at least one Sanhedrin (Twelftree 1992:729). This invites the interesting question as to whether any controversial dialogue depicted in John 9 was held at this Sanhedrin or not (for this issue, cf. the section on 'CS' in 9:13).

Secondly, it appears that the role of witnesses was of greater importance in Jewish forensic processes. A Jewish court was not equipped to investigate evidence (Harvey 1976:47). The admissibility and competence of witnesses were often the dominant factors in deciding a case. The judges were merely present to ascertain the reliability of the witnesses (Harvey 1976:47). Thus, more so in a Jewish trial than in the case of a modern trial, "[c]onsiderable attention will be placed ... on the veracity of the witness and on their character ... testimony from an honorable, educated, prominent person simply commands more credibility in forensic situations than that of a slave, a woman, or an uneducated person" (Neyrey 1987:511; Harvey 1976:47).

Thirdly, in hearings according to Jewish custom, normally at least two witnesses had to supply evidence to prove the legitimacy of the charge.¹⁰

(Deut. 21.18-21). There were, of course, superior courts to which more difficult cases might be referred (Deut. 17.8-13)."

10 Cf. Dt 17:6-7; 19:15; Nm 35:30; Mt 18:16; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tm 5:19; Heb 10:28; Trites 1992:877.

However, Harvey (1976:47) reports: "It could happen in certain cases that there might be only one witness." He indicates that this was also a distinctive character of Jewish procedure (Harvey 1976:47). In order to win such a court case, it would be better if the witness were a person who was well respected in society, or if the claimant supported his claim on oath, calling God as his witness. Since the witness's role bore such weight, grave penalties were imposed if he gave false evidence (Harvey 1976:49).¹¹ Although the duration of a trial probably varied according to the seriousness of the charge brought before the court (e.g., ranging from petty theft to murder), all trials essentially ended after the judge's verdict.

John 8:12-59 provides a good example of the forensic argument. While Jesus is the speaker who takes on the role of the defendant, the Pharisees and Jews are the hearers who act as the prosecutors. The paternity of Jesus would be the main argument (Stibbe 1993:99). In this argument, Jesus uses the notion of the light of the world to enhance his personal credibility. This credibility is the key concept concerning the speaker as a witness, and Aristotle calls it *ethos* (Stibbe 1993:100). As the argument proceeds, the author reveals the irony that these roles will be reversed and Jesus, the judged, will become the judge (Neyrey 1987:535, footnote 50).

According to Neyrey (1987:541), it is interesting to know that "trials function as status degradation rituals whereby an interest group attempts to label someone a 'deviant' and to impose censure and penalties by virtue of a process which publicly defames the alleged 'deviant'". In this respect, a trial could be considered part of the game of challenge and response in the ancient society.

11 Neyrey (1987:535) presents the Roman judicial process, which differed in many points from Jewish procedure, and suggests the following as the formal elements of a typical trial: a judge, plaintiffs, a norm of judgment or law with punishment, testimony from witnesses, a judge's *cognitio* and forensic proof. Like witnesses, the judge was one of the most important elements in a trial, and his task was to assemble and establish a court case, and to investigate the charge properly (Neyrey 1987:511). In other words, "[t]he judges solicit testimony, shift evidence, and make inquiry – all to discover the secret of whether the accused is guilty or innocent" (Neyrey 1998:92). For this reason, the identity and authority of the judge should be revealed at the beginning. Particularly in a Roman trial, the judge's *cognitio* was important in that the judge evaluated "the testimony of the plaintiff in response to the charges" (Neyrey 1987:510). Attorneys were sometimes employed to help their clients' cases (Ac 24:1). In general, "[e]ach side presents witnesses, offers evidence and pleads its case" (Trites 1992:879).

4.5 Mutual story beliefs

The information which the reader received about the characters, the events, the relationships between the characters, and so on, up to the ninth chapter, also helps him decode the text better and, therefore, needs clarification. I shall refer to this information as *mutual story beliefs*, shared by the author and the reader, which are determined by the narrative temporality.

4.5.1 Short summary of mutual story beliefs

In this subsection, I provide a short summary of mutual story beliefs concerning three major characters, namely Jesus, the disciples and the Jewish authorities, based on my own reading. This summary helps us understand what the author wants to communicate to the reader through the story thus far.

- a. Jesus' divine identity has been emphasised both by his own words and deeds as well as by others' words, including the narrator's comments. He was pre-existent, created all things, performed signs, and possessed complete knowledge. He was equal with God, had a strong relationship with the Father, and because of this relationship, he had the authority to judge.
- b. Jesus was sent by the Father to come into the world with clear purposes such as granting the right to become children of God, revealing the Father, taking away the sin of the world, manifesting his glory, giving eternal life, coming as the bread of life and the light of the world, making disciples, doing the Father's will, passing judgment, saving those who believe in him, and so on.
- c. Jesus was not subject to Jewish laws.
- d. The 'I AM' sayings with a predicate nominative (6:35, 51; 8:12) indicate Jesus' function (role) rather than his identity, whereas those sayings without an image (4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58) primarily express his identity.
- e. Some people responded by believing in Jesus, but others did not, as summarised in 1:11-12.
- f. The open attack of the Jewish authorities on Jesus started from his healing on the Sabbath in Chapter 5. The Sabbath controversy was, therefore, one of the big issues which made them hostile towards him.
- g. Jesus took up the Sabbath issue when he discussed it with the multitudes (Chapter 7). The conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities gradually became intense. The Jews were even determined to kill him.

- h. Jesus made it clear to the Jewish authorities through his deeds and words that he came from above and that God the Father sent him, yet they did not want to accept it.
- i. Jesus severely criticised the Jewish authorities, especially the Jews, for their unbelieving attitudes.
- j. Jesus explained judgment to the Jewish authorities on at least two occasions (Chapters 5 and 8).
- k. Jesus often indicated that the Jewish authorities were already judged and would be judged in their sin.
- l. The Jews showed their hostility towards Jesus more than did the Pharisees.
- m. Jesus interacted with the Jewish authorities more often than with his own disciples.
- n. Although the disciples showed their faith in Jesus, they did not fully understand him, or spiritual matters. They were still 'disciples' who needed to learn.
- o. The disciples were willing to follow and help Jesus, and participated in his ministry.

4.6 Relationships between the author and the reader

More relationships can be assumed between the author and the reader from the reading of the Gospel up to the ninth chapter. These relationships are important in establishing the speech context.

- To the reader, the author appears to be an authoritative interpreter of Jesus, and is thus considered to be trustworthy.
- The author endeavours to identify with the reader.
- The author intends to guide the reader to make a full commitment to Jesus in faith.
- The relationship between the author and the reader is not always so simple because of the author's use of a literary device, namely the so-called technique of reader victimisation in narratives such as 4:1-42; 7:1-10 (cf. section 2.3 in Chapter 2).

5. JOHANNINE SYMBOLSIM

According to Culpepper (1983:149-202), symbolism is one of the ways in which the *Fourth Gospel* silently yet effectively communicates with the reader. In conjunction with misunderstanding and irony, symbolism

displays “the signature of the evangelist’s insight and art” (Culpepper 1983:199). Dodd ([1953] 1968:143) states that the *Fourth Gospel* is “bound together by an intricate network of symbolism”. Macgregor (1928:xxv) claims that “[n]o understanding of the Gospel is possible without an appreciation of the part played by symbolism”. Similarly, the story of John 9 cannot be fully understood unless one can appreciate the way in which the author interprets and uses symbols in this narrative, because “John 9 is particularly significant for an understanding of John’s symbolic discourse” (Painter 1986:55; cf. Lee 1994:11-12, 161-162).

Per definition, a symbol is basically a (concrete) element that expresses an abstract or transcendent concept, connecting two different realms (cf. Culpepper 1983:182, 187).¹² “In Johannine terms, symbols span the chasm between what is ‘from above’ and what is ‘from below’ without collapsing the distinction” (Koester 1995:4). According to Du Rand (1994:250), “[s]ymbolism is an attempt to present the divine communication in an understandable way”.

The question of the classification of symbols does not enter into the discussion in this instance.¹³ It will suffice to introduce the distinction between two types of symbols, namely core and supporting symbols. Koester (1995:5) suggests this distinction and points out:

Core symbols occur most often, in the most significant contexts in the narrative, and contribute most to the Gospel’s message. For example, the repeated statements identifying Jesus as ‘the light of the world’ (1:9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46) establish light as a core symbolic image with darkness as its counterpart. Other elements such as day and night and sight and blindness play an important supporting role in the text through their relationship to light.

Culpepper (1983:189) identifies light, water, and bread as the three core symbols of the Gospel: “Each of these points to Jesus’ revelatory role and carries a heavy thematic load”. By contrast, Ashton ([1991] 1993:516) views life as the central symbol of the Gospel, and light, water, and bread as the three most important subsidiary symbols. The former coincides with

12 It is crucial that symbols be distinguished from signs, metaphors, parables, allegories or motifs. For a discussion of this issue, namely the relationships between symbol, metaphor, sign, motif, parable and allegory, cf. Stemberger 1970; Ricoeur 1976:45-69; Schneiders 1977a, 1977b; Culpepper 1983:181-189; Snodgrass 1992:593-594; Van den Heever 1992; Du Rand 1994:250; Lee 1994:23-35; Koester 1995:4-7; Jones 1997:12-14; Lemmer 1998; Zimmermann 2006. Cf. also more articles in Frey *et al.* (2006).

13 For the subject, cf. Culpepper 1983:184-190; Du Rand 1994:251-253; Zimmermann 2006:20-23.

my own understanding, because a symbol should be more concrete than abstract. The 'life' as a symbol cannot be seen, touched nor consumed like the other three symbols. Either way, the author uses the core symbols as one of the primary means to illustrate and convey the utmost significance of Jesus to the reader. Supporting symbols are, in turn, employed to reveal the significance of the core symbols (Koester 1995:6).

A crucial question concerning Johannine symbolism in this study is: How do the symbols function in the *Fourth Gospel*, especially in John 9? In dealing with this particular question, I intend to use the terms *function* and *purpose* interchangeably (or loosely) in this section. In his essay *John 9 and the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (1986), which is mainly based on his earlier article *Johannine symbols: A case study in epistemology* (1979), Painter (1986) devotes over half of the essay to examining Johannine symbols (in which he separates the purpose of the symbols from their function). Painter (1986:52) points out:

In John 9 the symbols are shown to have three purposes. First, they are intended to deal with the problem of unbelief ... Secondly, those who do not believe in Jesus are confronted with the symbols by which they interpret their own lives. Because the point of reference has been changed this is a radical attack on man's understanding of himself ... The symbols express the judging character of the revelation. While they enable faith to see, they condemn unbelief to blindness.

Thirdly, the symbols bring a new understanding about God through Jesus to those who believe (Painter 1986:46): "The symbols are the means by which Jesus is disclosed in such a way as to evoke faith or provoke unbelief". The symbols naturally contain the elements of both revelation and concealment, as in the case of the parables (Du Rand 1994:250).

The central focus on Christ in Johannine symbolism has been widely recognised, as Culpepper (1983:189), among others,¹⁴ points out that "Jesus himself is the principal symbol of the Fourth Gospel, for he partakes of the being of God and reveals Him in this world". However, from the standpoint of the underlying structure of the symbolic system in the Gospel, Koester's (1995) thesis is worth noting. He proposes the twofold structure of Johannine symbolism. The theme of Christology lies at the primary level of meaning, and that of discipleship at the secondary level. "The movement from Christology to discipleship is apparent in symbolic images and actions throughout the Gospel" (Koester 1995:13). He also draws attention to the story of the blind man in order to illustrate his thesis:

14 Scheneiders 1977a:373; Leon-Dufour 1981:454; Painter 1986:55; Du Rand 1994:35; Lee 1994:21; Van der Watt 2000.

“On a primary level the miracle is christological; by enlightening the eyes of a man blind from birth, Jesus demonstrates that he is truly ‘the light of the world’” (9:5). On a secondary level, the passage is about discipleship. A substantial part of the chapter explores what it means to “see the light, both physically and through the eyes of faith” (Koester 1995:14-15). I wish to examine the claims of both Painter and Koester concerning the function of symbols as my analysis proceeds (for this result, cf. section 1.4.3 in Chapter 5).

As far as the literary context of Johannine symbolism in John 9 is concerned, Lee (1994:163) proposes (cf. also Milne 1993:136):

The two images of light and water are part of the ritual symbolism of Tabernacles, where on each morning of the feast, water was drawn from Shiloam and taken in procession to the Temple, and each evening lamps were lit in the Court of the Women to illuminate Jerusalem. It is in this context that Jesus revealed himself to be the giver of living water (7.37-39) and light of the world (8.12). Both themes, and particularly the latter, form the background for the narrative of John 9.

Painter (1986:56) makes a similar observation, namely that John’s use of symbols is to be understood in the context that Jesus as the light of the world came to expose and overturn the power of darkness and give sight to the blind. The ensuing subsections address the images of light and water.

5.1 Light and darkness

It has been argued that the *Fourth Gospel* has a close relationship with Jewish thought (the Old Testament, Rabbinic Judaism, Qumran) and/or with thought systems other than Judaism (Platonism, Stoicism, Hermetic literature, Gnosticism, Philo, Mandaean writings). The connecting links are established through the same kinds of terminology and/or images/concepts they employ (e.g., dualism, light and darkness, knowledge, Logos, Wisdom, Word, brotherly love, and so on). In this section, I cannot and shall not address all of these relations. Considering the symbols of light and darkness as well as Jewish orientation in John 9 (Barrett 1975:18, 69-70; Ball 1996:259, 268 regarding the ‘I am’ sayings), I shall only suggest the potential Jewish influence on the text.¹⁵

15 For the relationships of the Gospel with this philosophical and religious thinking, cf. Dodd [1953] 1968:10-285; Meeks 1965; Yamauchi 1973; Barrett 1975; Lindars [1972] 1981:35-42; Smalley 1978:41-68; Nickelsburg 1985; Beasley-Murray 1987:liii-lxiv; Painter [1991] 1993:33-60, 2005; Scott 1992; Willett 1992; Evans

5.1.1 The author's perspective

Firstly, the symbols of light and darkness are discussed from the author's perspective. The light and darkness imagery is one of the most striking motifs in the *Fourth Gospel*. This motif is introduced, from the outset, in the Gospel's Prologue. Light symbolises the power and presence of God, and it is closely associated with the life and Logos (1:1-5; Dodd [1953] 1968:269). In Jewish thought, Logos further points to the wisdom of God (Carter 1990:37-39; Johnson 1992:482), and Wisdom is, in turn, linked not only to God's creation (Pr 8:22-31; Wis 9:9),¹⁶ but also to the Torah (Sir 24:23, 25; 1 Bar 3:36-4:4).¹⁷ "Many Jews and Samaritans understood that the wisdom of God was localized in the Law of Moses, which was often identified as a source of light" (Koester 1995:128-129). The Torah, the Law of Moses, is also called the Word of God (Ps 119:105; Is 2:3; 5:24; Mi 4:2).¹⁸ In the Prologue, Jesus is depicted as the incarnate Word, the light of all men (1:4, 14) as well as the agent for the revelation of God (1:18). This light gives life (1:12-13). One should note that, in the Gospel, all of these aspects signify the person and work of Jesus Christ (Shirbroun 1992:472).

Based on the relationship between Jesus and Wisdom, it is likely that the author of the Gospel also implies that Jesus is a new 'Torah'.¹⁹ In the

1993; Du Rand 1994:42-49, 2005; Smith 1995:10-20; Onuki 1996:165-170; Neufeld 1997; Draper 1997; Kanagaraj 1998:64-181; Endo 2002; Aune 2003.

16 Cf. also Burnett 1992:877; Koester 1995:128.

17 Cf. also Dodd [1953] 1968:85; Painter 1986:49; Carter 1990:47.

18 Cf. Johnson 1992b:482.

19 There is some support for this view. In connection with the light image, David states in Psalm 27:1: "The LORD is my light and my salvation." Just as Carter (1990:47) remarks that "in early Judaism ... Torah was regarded as the dwelling place and embodiment of wisdom", Jesus was also described as the dwelling place and embodiment of Logos, the Wisdom figure (Jn 1:14). Nickelsburg (1985:83) proposes the following: "The functional equivalence of Torah and Jesus, or the sage and Jesus the teacher, is not accidental. John underscores both the parallel and the contrast between his theology and traditional Jewish wisdom theology" (cf. Dodd [1953] 1968:83). Nickelsburg illustrates his point by quoting John 1:17: "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." This contrast is further revealed in some episodes of Jesus' controversies over the Torah such as in John 5:9-18, 7:16-24 and 9:13-34 (Nickelsburg 1985:83). Finally, the imagery of Jesus as the true vine in John 15 may strengthen this argument, for Wisdom is depicted as a vine bearing fruit (Sir 24:17-19) and the vine is frequently used as a symbol of Israel (Ps 80:8-14; Jr 2:21; 6:9; 8:13; Ezk 15:1-8; Hs 10:1; Whitacre 1992:867). In Jesus "the life of the new Israel (the true vine) has come to birth" (Smalley 1978:90; Ball 1996:260). Through the symbols, as Painter (1979:34) mentions, "the evangelist implies that the expectations and hopes of Judaism are fulfilled in Jesus".

remainder of John's Gospel, the image of light corresponds to many of the concepts described in the Prologue. In 3:18-21, light brings judgment; this may emphasise John's realised eschatology (Smalley 1978:236; Du Rand 1994:34). Concerning 3:19-21, Von Wahlde (1995:382) states: "The image of light becomes the symbol of Jesus' public ministry." In 5:35, the author refers to John the Baptist in connection with light (cf. 1:6-8). The supporting lamp symbol, in this instance, indicates "the role of the Baptist and the superiority of Jesus" (Culpepper 1983:191). Jesus himself revealed explicitly to the Pharisees that he is the light of the world (8:12). This is the climax in the entire Gospel narratives in terms of the identification of Jesus as the light (Culpepper 1983:191). This is echoed in 9:5, where Jesus similarly reveals himself, but this time he speaks to his disciples. In 11:9-10, the author retrospectively refers to the images of light, day and night in order to link the two greatest signs (Chapters 9 and 11) in the Gospel (Smalley 1978:183). After these signs, the author makes Jesus utter words of exhortation to believe in the light in order to evoke faith (12:35-36), and the purpose of his mission as the light as a conclusion of the book of signs (12:46). The term *light* does not reappear explicitly after this verse, and only some allusions to 'light' are mentioned, such as torches, lanterns (18:3) and charcoal fire (18:13).

Likewise, the most striking similarity between Qumran and John 9 depicts God as light (1QH xviii.29; John 9:5). The *Community Rule* (1QS cols 1, 3, 4) also mentions the dualism of light and darkness among other similar terminology (Smalley 1978:31; Du Rand 1994:48-49; Smith 1995:16). However, in my opinion, the Old Testament in which light is also regarded as a significant motif, provides a more satisfactory background to John 9. There is no doubt that the author uses this rich heritage rooted in Judaism in order to convey his vital message about Christ to the reader (Shirbroun 1992:472). For example, Jesus as the light of the world can be observed against the background of Isaiah 9: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined" (NRSV Is 9:2). With regard to 9:6-7, Koester (1995:138) states: "Christians regularly understood it as a prophecy concerning the Davidic messiah. They connected it with Isaiah's references to the messianic servant of the Lord who was to be the "light of the nations" (Isa. 42:6; 49:6)". The following Old Testament passages also mention the image of light: Genesis 1:3-5; Job 33:28, 30; Psalm 36:9; 104:2; 118:27; Isaiah 2:5; 9:1-2; 42:6-7; 49:6; 60:1-2, 19-20; Zechariah 14:7.

As the counterpart of light, darkness symbolises the powers that rebel against God, namely sin and evil (Koester 1995:125). Although these aspects of darkness are only implicitly referred to in the Prologue (1:5, 10-11), they are gradually exposed as the Gospel is unfolding.

In John, sin is perceived as unbelief and human opposition to God. The unbelief and opposition become increasingly evident in the Jews' hostility towards Jesus along with the development of the story, and reach their climax in Jesus' crucifixion. Backstage, evil powers are also at work. The author depicts these 'dark' powers with the term *devil* in 6:70, 8:44 and 13:2, *Satan* in 13:27; *the ruler of this world* in 12:31, 14:30, and 16:11, and *evil one* in 17:15. Furthermore, darkness captures an image of death as the ultimate result of physical and spiritual sin. *Sheol* or *Hades* is described as the place of deep darkness (Ps 88; Koester 1995:127). "Light and judgment are interrelated concepts in this Gospel, for light causes division or separation so that light and darkness cannot coexist" (Resseguie 1982:302).

As noted earlier, Koester (1995:5) perceives light and darkness as core symbols because of the recurring statements depicting Jesus as the light of the world. These symbols are further elaborated by other supporting symbols such as day and night, sight and blindness (Koester 1995:5), which also play a significant role in John 9. The symbols of sight and blindness, in turn, represent the realms of faith and unbelief, knowledge and ignorance (Stibbe 1993:110, 127). These symbols, made up as pairs, are very significant in understanding the Gospel, and are especially referred to as Johannine dualism.²⁰ They can be distinguished from the symbols without overt opposites such as water, bread, wine, and so forth (Jones 1997:13; cf. Culpepper 1983:200).

The core symbol of light, with darkness as its counterpart, makes a vast contribution to describing Jesus in conjunction with other significant motifs. Barrett (1955:296) states that "light" is not a metaphysical definition of the person of Jesus but a description of his effect upon the cosmos; he is the light which judges and saves it". All humanity will be judged based on their reaction to the Light, for "all who encounter him will be exposed under the searching light of truth" (Koester 1995:133).

5.1.2 The reader's perspective

Secondly, the symbols of light and darkness are discussed from the reader's perspective. From his reading up to Chapter 9, the reader is assumed to have knowledge of most of the important implications provided by the light imagery. He is aware of the related significant notions of life, Logos, Wisdom, Word, the Law of Moses, and so forth in the Prologue, and of Jesus' ministry (including judgment) and his identity described in terms of the light symbol in the first eight chapters. The reader also appears to

20 For this subject, cf. Ladd 1974:223-236; Barrett 1982:98-115; De Klerk & Schnell 1987:259-263; Ashton [1991] 1993:205-237; Du Rand 1994:25-27.

understand the Old Testament background to the light motif well. However, the reader does not have knowledge of the use of the images of light, day and night, to link the two miracle stories in John 9 and 11, and the use of light and darkness in Jesus' summary of his ministry (Chapter 12). The majority of the expressions referring to dark powers are not yet available to the reader.

5.1.3 The characters' knowledge

Lastly, the characters' knowledge is assessed. When Jesus uttered the statement that he was the light of the world (9:5), he would have known the full implications of this symbol. His interlocutors were his disciples. They did not appear to possess the important information relating to the light imagery described in the Prologue and to know the references to the symbols of light and darkness in 3:18-21. The text does not state clearly whether the disciples were also listening to Jesus' remark about John the Baptist in relation to light (5:35) and Jesus' 'I am' saying (8:12). As they appeared to be very familiar with the Scripture (cf., e.g., 1:45; 2:17, 22), they could recall the Old Testament background of the light symbol.

5.2 Water

The development of ancient civilisations was closely associated with water, for it was so basic to human existence that no civilisation could survive without it. In this sense, human history was a history of acquiring and controlling water to some extent, and ancient societies knew the indispensable value of water. The same holds true for Palestinian society. Burge (1992:869) states: "The arid climate of Palestine and the absence of major rivers for agriculture gave a unique value to water in its culture." This unique value of water gives rise to the symbolic usage of water in the *Fourth Gospel*. It has been said that Johannine symbolism, including water, was taken from both the fabric of everyday life and Judaism (Painter 1986:49; Culpepper 1983:188; Koester 1995:7). "The image of water appears surprisingly frequently and with the most varied associations of any of John's symbols. There are conversations about water, water pots, rivers, wells, springs, the sea, pools, basins, thirst, and drink" (Culpepper 1983:192). Jones (1997:12) provides a list of images which many religions associate with water, namely creation, divine powers, rites of initiation, life, sexuality, wisdom, knowledge, and/or purity. People find it easy to imagine the images water produces. However, for this reason, the symbol of water, being one of the core symbols in the Gospel, is less consistent and less unified than those of light and bread (Culpepper 1983:192-193; Koester 1995:155).

5.2.1 The author's perspective

Of all the images of water, as Koester (1995:156) points out, “[t]he significance of water is almost always connected with washing or drinking”. As for drinking, Jesus says in a loud voice, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink” (7:37; 4:10, 14).

Here water is a symbol for that which satisfies man's search for life and a fundamental emphasis is that those who *drink* the water that Jesus *gives* have eternal life, life that does not end. Jesus is the *giver* of the life-giving water and *drinking* is a symbolic description of believing (6.35). The water which Jesus gives is the life-giving Spirit (Painter 1986:45).

Burge (1992:869-870) echoes this: “If water symbolized life, cleansing, refreshment and renewal, it comes as no surprise to learn that it symbolized the Holy Spirit (Is 44:3-4; Ezek 36:25-26) ... It symbolizes the spiritual renewal promised in the OT prophets and offered in Christ.” As far as washing is concerned, water is linked with John's water baptism (Painter 1986:45) and with the baptism with the Holy Spirit (Culpepper 1983:193) in Chapters 1 and 3; with the Jewish custom of purification (Chapter 2); with the washing of the blind man's eyes (Chapter 9), and with the foot-washing of Jesus (Chapter 13). Koester (1995:13) considers that “this ‘washing’ provides a complete cleansing (13:8, 10)”. Briefly, it is important to remember that the symbol of water should be understood Christologically (Koester 1995:156). For that is the way in which the author utilises water, namely to reveal Jesus' identity and role.

I find it appropriate at this point to refer to an important issue regarding *Johannine sacramentalism*, especially baptism in relation to the symbol of water (but not so much other ‘sacraments’). Some critics draw attention to the fact that the term *sacrament* is not known to the New Testament.²¹ Hence, Lindars (1970:50) insists that this fact must be borne in mind when addressing this issue. The issue itself is derived from the observation, as Matsunaga (1981:516) points out, that the Gospel contains some allusions to the sacraments through the symbols and the related texts, but lacks the explicit accounts of the baptism of Jesus, and of the institution of the baptism and the Eucharist as in the Synoptics.²² As far as this issue is concerned, some scholars have expressed the opinion that the *Fourth Gospel* is sacramental.²³

21 Lindars 1970:49; Barrett 1982:81; Brown 1984:88, footnote 126; Smith 1995:155.

22 Mt 3:13-17; 26:26-29; 28:16-20; Mk 1:9-11; 14:22-25; Lk 3:21-22; 22:14-20.

23 E.g., Schweitzer 1931:352; Hoskyns 1947:365; Cullmann 1953:102-105; Dodd 1963:184; Brodie 1993:356; Matsunaga 1981:523; Paschal 1981:155; Rensberger 1988:65, 81. Barrett (1955:69) even states that the *Fourth Gospel* is the most

Others perceive that John is anti-sacramental.²⁴ The remaining scholars are between these two poles.²⁵ As previous historical studies on this issue are available to us,²⁶ I wish to examine various opinions concerning the text of the *Fourth Gospel*, specifically that of John 9.

There has been a schism among scholars in the attempt to interpret the story of the man born blind from a sacramental viewpoint, particularly through the water imagery. As mentioned earlier, Brown (1966:380-382, 1984:90) and Cullmann (1953:102-105) are among those, including the Church Fathers, who follow a sacramental interpretation. Porter (1966-67:390-394) argues that John 9:38-39a could be a liturgical addition to the text, because he believes that the addition was made particularly for the preparation for baptism and its practice, as well as for the use for the early lectionaries. Jones (1997:234) makes an interesting, if not a new, observation that, since the confession of the blind man (9:38) “follows his washing in the pool, any interest in baptism expressed here would support the tradition of baptizing infants more than that of believer’s baptism”. On the contrary, Carson (1991:365) exclaims: “Attempt to see in this washing an elaboration of baptism (e.g. Brown, 1.380-382) are far less convincing.” Koester (1995:180) follows: “A baptismal interpretation of the blind man’s washing lends itself to pastoral application but goes beyond the Johannine context.” Painter who recognises sacramental overtones in the Gospel still

sacramental of all the Gospels. Moreover, Cullmann (1953:102) reports that the interpretation which associates the story of John 9 with baptism was quite regularly made by the Church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Ambrose and Augustine (Hoskyns 1947:363; Porter 1966-1967:391; Brown 1966:381; Schnackenburg [1968] 1980:257; Riga 1984:170).

- 24 E.g., Kysar 1976:108; Painter 1986:44; Carson 1991:365; Koester 1995:180. Perhaps those scholars who are not convinced of the sacramental aspects in the Gospel share the same doubt with Schnackenburg ([1968] 1980:258) when he questions John’s motive: “If he had intended to allude to baptism, would he not have had to leave clearer signs of this? There is no really convincing basis in the text for crediting the evangelist with the intention of employing baptismal symbolism”. Matsunaga (1981:516) lists the critics who take an anti-sacramental approach: R. Bultmann, E.F. Scott, G.H.C. Macgregor, W.F. Howard, P. Gardner and J.D.G. Dunn.
- 25 E.g., Smith 1995:156; Jones 1997:232, 237. In my view, Bultmann (1955:58-59) does not necessarily consider John’s Gospel anti-sacramental, but he is of opinion that the sacraments play no role in the Gospel. He holds that the ecclesiastical redactor was responsible for the few sacramental references in the Gospel (Bultmann 1971:138, footnote 3).
- 26 For an overview of previous studies on the subject, cf. Porter 1966-1967:390; Matsunaga 1981; Rensberger 1988:64-66; Jones 1997:26-28. Cf. also the above footnotes.

rejects such an idea as far as this story is concerned. He proposes that, “while the Gospel as a whole suggests that John’s symbolism has some relation to the sacraments, the evidence does not point to a sacramental interpretation of this sign. Rather the evangelist has re-interpreted the sacraments in terms of his understanding of symbols” (Painter 1986:44). He believes that “[w]ater is used as a symbol because of its fundamental significance for human life. It is not to be understood in terms of baptism as the reference to *drinking* shows” (Painter 1986:45).

That the miracle took place at the pool of Siloam seems to give no end to the discussions. It is indeed difficult to decide unequivocally, because the text uses symbols in which revelation and concealment are inherent. Porter, who makes his comment on the basis of the interpretation of the Church Fathers and catacomb art, hesitates to give his final word on the issue based on the text. Instead, he expresses his concern as follows: “Whether or not the evangelist himself intended a baptismal interpretation of the story is open to question” (Porter 1966-67:390). In his observation of the scholarly debates, Rensberger (1988:65) puts the matter as follows: “Not surprisingly, and not necessarily wrongly, scholars’ own theological commitments and overall understandings of Johannine theology have often tended to sway the exegesis of particular passages.” My impression of the debates agrees with Rensberger’s assessment. That may be why scholars’ conclusions differ, even if they address the same relevant texts such as this story as well as John 3 and 13 with respect to the rite of baptism, and John 6 and 15 with respect to the Eucharist. Although the remainder of this section presents my own position on the issue, conversing mainly with Jones (1997), this should accordingly merely be regarded as a conclusion.

In his monograph *The symbol of water in the Gospel of John*, Jones (1997:232) finds that there is hardly any interest in the sacraments, especially in baptism, intentionally expressed in the Gospel. He raises questions concerning the blind man’s washing in the water:

But if this action referred to or prefigured baptism, why does the narrator first have Jesus spread mud made with saliva over the man’s eyes and why does he have him go to the pool by himself? The man born blind appears to wash himself and thus is both the subject and the object of the washing (Jones 1997:234).²⁷

27 As far as these questions are concerned, Cullmann (1953:104) indicates that “in the earliest days of Christianity the act of Baptism was bound up with the laying on of hands, and in this connexion the double act of the laying on of the clay and the washing in Siloam constitutes an analogy”. Schnackenburg ([1968] 1980:257) also points out that “[t]he putting of clay on the eyes, described in 9:6, 11 ... could be a reminiscence of the baptismal anointing”. Although the man’s

Jones (1997:232, 237) goes on to offer his conclusion that the *Fourth Gospel* is neither anti-sacramental nor positively affirms the institution of baptism. The primary aim of the Gospel, including the narratives involving the symbol of water, is to evoke faith, and the author of the Gospel treats interest in the sacraments as of secondary importance to faith (Jones 1997:237). For Jones, apart from the symbol's utmost significance for Christology (Jones 1997:230), everything comes down to a call for a decision (Jones 1997:230-231), even regarding John 9, "[b]aptismal imagery cannot be ruled out of the narrative, but the focus is on faith" (Jones 1997:234).

My own view nearly corresponds with Jones' understanding, except for one subtle yet critical point. In my opinion, the author is more inclined to affirm the sacrament of baptism, not boldly, but gently. Positive affirmation quietly exists, as Barrett (1982:96-97) expresses, "in the back of his mind". As pointed out by Grigsby (1985:228, 235), if the author consciously links Siloam's water with the living water motif in John 7 (cf. section 3.1.3 in Chapter 4), it is very likely that the author also connects the symbol of water in Chapter 9 to the baptismal rite, because the living water motif signifies the cleansing from sin – washing in water (Grigsby 1985:232-233). As noted earlier in Rensberger's (1988:65) comment, however, it is the critic's judgment (based on his theological commitments and overall understanding of Johannine theology) that determines to what extent he would like to see meaning(s) in the symbol. Again, does the author refer to a sacramental baptism through the symbol of water? In other words, does this symbol support or negate the sacramental aspect of the church? In conclusion, the issue can be settled for now by citing Smith's (1995:156) remark: "Probably it would be correct to say that the water imagery of the Fourth Gospel alludes to baptism without referring to it. It evokes the liturgical act without being exhausted in it." I would agree with this remark, and this appears to be what the author wants to convey to the reader in John 9.

5.2.2 The reader's perspective

As the symbol of water has been discussed from the author's perspective thus far, two more important questions remain concerning the issue of Johannine water symbolism (cf. Ng 2001). The first question is: How much

self-washing may not be analogous to the anointing, there may be at least two reasons why Jesus sent the blind man to the pool alone. One is to demonstrate Jesus' extraordinary power of healing at a distance (Brown 1966:372; O'Day 1995:654). As in the second sign of healing the official's son in 4:46-54, Jesus did not necessarily have to be bodily present to perform a miracle. The second is that Jesus may have tested the blind man's faith. It is likely that Jesus wanted to see how the man would respond (to his commands), just as Jesus tested Philip before the sign of feeding the five thousand (Jn 6:6).

of the symbol does the reader know when he reads the story of John 9? For argument's sake, one should assume that the reader knows its possible background, purpose, function and the relevant information accumulated up to Chapter 9, and is therefore able to adequately discern the meaning it represents. Culpepper (1983:194) avers that the important understanding of the symbol of water was virtually completed by John 5.

5.2.3 The characters' knowledge

The second question is: How much do the characters know of the symbol of water? Three groups of characters appear to be on stage in 9:6-7: Jesus, his disciples, and the blind man. Since Jesus performed the miracle and commanded the blind man to go and wash in the pool, Jesus should be fully aware of this symbolism. However, the knowledge of Jesus' disciples appears to be limited. They were not present when John the Baptist referred to water in association with baptism, cleansing and the Holy Spirit (John 1:26, 31, 33), nor when Jesus had a dialogue with the Samaritan woman concerning the water Jesus would give (Chapter 4). The text does not state explicitly whether they had either heard Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, when Jesus mentioned water and the Spirit (3:5), or been present during Jesus' interaction with the paralysed man when Jesus healed him (especially 5:7). However, it is likely that they had listened to Jesus' discussion with the Jews concerning his flesh and blood (6:52-58; cf. 6:59, 67) and his 'preaching', on the great day of the feast, regarding living water (7:37-38). Furthermore, they were with Jesus when he turned water into wine (2:1-11). Hence, they were supposed to know that Jesus was the source and giver of good wine, living water and eternal life (Culpepper 1983:193). As they were familiar with Jewish culture and Judaism (cf. section 3.1.4 in Chapter 4), they appeared to know the Jewish custom of purification and the Old Testament background to this water symbol well. As far as the blind man is concerned, he did not appear to know the relevant information made available in the first eight chapters of the Gospel. The text of 9:6-7 also leaves no clue as to the man's inner understanding of the water imagery, but he had some good knowledge of the Jewish religion (cf. 9:30-33). It is, therefore, possible that he may also have some knowledge of the Jewish custom of purification and the Old Testament background for this symbol.

6. THE MOTIF OF SUFFERING

As far as symbolism is concerned, a motif is defined as a recurring cluster of either one or a number of symbols. However, the notion *motif* is not necessarily restricted only to symbols. A motif can also be a recurring cluster of either one or a number of ideas, themes, or even keywords.

In John 9, at first glance, it is reasonable to assume that the blind man had been suffering due to his being blind from birth (Barclay [1955] 1975:37; cf. Lindars [1972] 1981:341). He was even depicted as a blind beggar. Therefore, some expositors detect the theme of suffering in this story,²⁸ because suffering, in this instance, can be identified as a theme symbolised by the character of the blind man. However, my hypothesis is that the story will eventually disclose that not only the blind man, but also other characters had been suffering in one way or the other. If this is true, we may find an important motif of suffering intended in this story. To my knowledge, *no monograph or essay has thus far scrutinised suffering as a motif in the story of John 9*. For this reason, I shall propose the theme of suffering as an important motif in the story.

Boice (1977:20-26) deals with the problem of pain/suffering in his exposition of John 9. He scrutinises three purposes of suffering from a biblical perspective: it is corrective; it is constructive, and it is to God's glory (Boice 1977:23-26).

- a. Suffering is *corrective*: "God sends some pain in order to get us back on the path He has set before us ... The first thing we should do ... is to ask God whether or not it is intended for our correction. If it is, then we need to confess our sin or waywardness and return once more to the path set before us" (Boice 1977:24). This point may involve the issue of unbelief.
- b. Suffering is *constructive*: "God is able to whittle away that which is unpleasing in our lives and form the character of the Lord Jesus Christ within us" (Boice 1977:24). Affliction is a factor in our growth (Boice 1977:25).
- c. Suffering is *to God's glory*: Some suffering is solely "that the grace of God might be revealed in the life of the Christian" (Boice 1977:25). (E.g., Job, Lazarus, the blind man) [*Italics mine*].

Of course, some people may not understand Boice's proposal, especially with the third purpose, mainly from a humanitarian perspective. Expecting such objections, Boice (1977:25) summarises these objections in his own words: "Would God permit a man to be struck with total blindness throughout the better part of his life so that in God's own time He might become the object of a miracle performed by the Lord Jesus Christ?" In responding, Boice (1977:25-26) draws attention not only to the spiritual battle between the powers of light and darkness, but also to God's sovereignty and perfect love.

28 E.g., Howard & Gossip 1952:610-612; Gutzke 1968:105; Boice 1977:20-26; Milne 1993:137-138; Brodie 1993:346-347.

My speech act analysis will employ these three purposes of suffering as an axis of coordinates when I examine some important instances of this motif of suffering. Although this axis may not be the best of its kind, it makes sense to me and seems to be the only one available for this study at this point. After completing this analysis, the above hypothesis will be addressed again (cf. section 1.4.5 in Chapter 5).