

CHAPTER ONE

“A revolution is cutting its swath across our world and is gathering prodigious momentum.”

(Sweet 1999:17)

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PARABLE OF THE OTTERS

Once upon a time, eons ago, there was a family of ancient animals who lived in the primordial forest. They were small fur-covered animals who lived on fish from the babbling brooks that meandered through the forest. They were docile, warm-hearted little creatures who wouldn't hurt a flea, except for the food they ate to survive. They cared for their young very diligently and they stayed together in groups for comfort and safety. Because they felt they were so different from the other animals around them, they eventually came to call themselves “The Odders.” Actually, they weren't really that odd, but sometimes they felt like that.

For hundreds of years they went about their business of raising their young, hunting for food and building their nests in the forest. And then one day the Chief Odder assembled all of them together solemnly and made a proclamation.

With his black little nose quivering and his whiskers twitching, he said, ‘Fellow Odders, something is happening to our world. Grave changes are in the wind. The weather is shifting. The forest is changing. Some trees are dying while other new trees are sprouting up everywhere. I fear that if we do not respond to this crisis in our environment, our entire race will be obliterated from the face of the earth.’

The eyes of his fellow Odders were riveted to his face, their ears straining to hear his every word. His face grew sad and tired. ‘And, my fellow Odders, I am growing old and tired. Soon I will become sick and die. Therefore, I am asking two of you to step forward to act as new leaders. And to make sure that some of us survive, we need to have two different kinds of leaders who try to survive in two different parts of the forest. I believe we need to face this challenge by starting two tribes of Odders – and hopefully, one of these tribes will endure.’

His words enveloped the assembly of Odders like a heavy dark fog. The thought of dividing up and leaving their friends and relatives was heartbreaking. They all sat in deep silence for a long time as the wisdom of his strategy began to sink in. Over the next few days and weeks, the Odders began the painful process of choosing their two new leaders and separating into two different tribes. Finally, after two months, the members of the two

new tribes said their goodbyes, gathered up their young and their belongings and sadly went off to two distant parts of the forest. The first few years were filled with hard work, arguments, fighting and lots of grieving about their loss as each tribe tried to settle into a new life and a new way of surviving. Each tribe had to struggle to find a new identity, to develop new customs and to make it in a rapidly changing world.

After a few years it was clear that they had indeed picked two very different leaders and that they were evolving into two very different kinds of animals. They still looked the same. But the way they lived on the planet was very different.

The leader of one tribe had decided that the only way to survive was to take this business of survival seriously. He and his Advisors developed an ingenious, intricate 10-year Survival Plan. Their young were taught from birth to be hard-working and industrious. They mapped out their territory and made detailed observations of the behavior of their most dangerous predators. They took pride in their organization and adaptability. Their society began to run smoothly and efficiently. They all came to know that their survival was secure.

Young and old alike agreed that they felt good and safe whenever they would hear their leader or one of his advisors say, ‘You ought to get over there by that stream today and watch for wolves,’ or ‘You ought to start getting ready for winter’ or ‘You ought to gather some more food.’ In fact, they all liked the direction and structure so much that eventually they came to call themselves ‘The Oughtas,’ which delighted them greatly.

Miles and miles away in a distant part of the forest, the other tribe was struggling to find an identity of its own. Their leader had not been able to formulate such a clear plan because there was a battle going on inside of himself about their Old Ways and what he felt might be good New Ways. Their Ancestors, the Odders, had been hard workers, but they had also liked to play when their work was done. This new leader couldn't quite figure out how to do it at first. He had the Impulse To Work but also the Impulse To Play. And he wasn't exactly disorganized, but he wasn't exactly organized, either. Sometimes this was confusing to the other members of the tribe, but he was such a warm, generous leader, and he was willing to lead and make difficult decisions when they had to be made, that they all seemed to be able to manage anyway.

After many years this leader grew old and died, and everyone grieved deeply for their loss. Years after that, as they were remembering the Early Days and their First Leader, this tribe realized that they had something special. In fact, they were like no other species of animal on earth. They did the day-to-day things that all animals need to do to survive. They gathered food. They built their nests. They cared for their young. They still stuck together in their tribes. But they also had allowed that Impulse To Play to become a clear, solid part of their identity. To watch them at play day in and day out was almost mind-boggling. Scurrying around, wrestling with each other joyfully, scrambling up and down the banks of streams and rivers, swimming, diving, sliding down snow-covered hills at breakneck speed, landing uproariously at the bottom in a pile of fur and feet and whiskers and

laughter. To the outside observer it appeared that their only purpose on earth was to play!

And yet if all they did was play, they wouldn't have survived. It was so clear and so confusing! Somehow they were able to weave a baffling tapestry of work and play into a blur of daily activity that was almost beyond explanation. Play and silliness and laughter and joy were happening at the same time as the serious job of surviving in the wild. It was a wonder to behold. And when human beings finally started watching them to see what was going on, these humans finally figured out that one of the main reasons they had survived was that they had almost no natural predators. Why? Because their behavior was seemingly so erratic and unpredictable that their predators were absolutely confused. Hawks would watch them but could never figure out where they would be next. Wolves watched them but could never figure out where they would be next. None of the other animals could figure them out, so they just gave up and hunted more predictable prey.

Today we call this tribe that came to survive the great changes in the forest The Otters. They continue to live in the forest, going about the very serious work of hunting for food and caring for their young. They continue to play day in and day out, filling their workdays with laughter and joy and spontaneity. And they continue to baffle their predators as they slip and slide and frolic throughout their day.

The other tribe, the Oughtas, did not experience the same joyous fate. They survived for many centuries with their disciplined, structures Survival Plan. But as each new generation was born and matured, their society

became more and more structured and disciplined until one day, when it was already too late, they realized that their lives had become too structured. And then the inevitable happened. Their forest started to change again. New predators came on the scene. The weather changed again. Their society had become so unwieldy with rules and regulations that they were not able to respond to the changes. Within just seven short generations, the entire tribe of Ought as had become extinct. The last surviving Oughta, old and near death, carved a message on a giant tree in the forest, warning other animals of their fate. As he drifted into the peaceful calm of death, he prayed that the other tribe had survived.

Deep in the woods, in a far distant forest, you can still find that message carved on that huge old tree. It reads, ‘We worked too hard. We tried too hard. We couldn’t adapt to change. We had too many ‘oughts.’

(Friel & Friel 1990:117-120)

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In “**Marturia and the Gospel of John**” the following hypothesis is investigated:

Theological investigation of the μαρτυρία lexeme in the Gospel of John contributes significantly towards an understanding of an emerging, missional ecclesiology.

1.3 RESEARCH-PROBLEM: AN EMERGING PARADIGM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE WORLD

“The church is a modern institution in a postmodern world” (Gibbs & Bolger 2005:17). To adequately comprehend this accusation, it is necessary to understand what is meant with a Christendom Paradigm and with modernism. Mead (1991:8-29) attempted to describe societal changes by comparing world views, and he subsequently distinguished between the Apostolic Paradigm, the Christendom Paradigm and the Postmodern Paradigm.

1.3.1 The Church in an Apostolic Paradigm

“Apostolic Paradigm” primarily refers to the ecclesiological understanding of faith communities in the time of the apostles and directly thereafter. The church in the Apostolic Paradigm was a tumultuous time (Mead 1991:9). Jesus’ call to go serve and convert the world, care for the sick, the prisoner and the widow, the fatherless and the poor resulted in the development of different styles and structures (Mead 1991:10). Collegial and monarchical structures coexisted and communal experiments held sway in different places. Different functions and roles emerged. Some churches fought to retain links with its Jewish roots while others distanced themselves from that community. Thus, the turbulence resulted from the Christian

community's search for its identity in mission. From this, the Apostolic Paradigm emerged. The early church was aware of itself as a religious community surrounded by a hostile environment to which each witness was called to witness about God's love in Christ. They viewed themselves as bearers of the εὐαγγέλιον, the Greek word used to denote evangelism.

Moreover, they had the task to carry into a hostile world the good news of healing, love and salvation (Mead 1991:10). Green (1984:59) argued that εὐαγγέλιον was frequently used in this time as description for the good news about the Kingdom of God that was being personified in Jesus. Incidentally, εὐαγγέλιον can also be translated in a more contemporary idiom as "breaking story" or "headline news" (Martoia 2007:8). At the centre of this task, the local church functioned. It was a community that lived by the power and values of Jesus (Mead 1991:10). These power and values were preserved and shared within the intimate community through apostolic teaching and preaching, the fellowship of believers and ritual acts such as the breaking of bread and wine in the Eucharist. People only gained entrance into the community when the members of the community were convinced that the newcomers were in agreement with those values and were born into that power.

Kreider (1999:23) showed how these early churches attempted to nurture communities whose values would be different from those of conventional society. It was assumed that people would live their way into a new kind of thinking. Thus, the socialization, professions and life commitments of candidates for church membership

would determine whether they could receive what the Christian community considered to be good news.

The local church was an intense and personal community. To belong to it was an experience of being in immediate touch with God's Spirit. This was, however, not an utopian community. The New Testament epistles frequently describe schisms and conflict between church members. To the other side was the hostile environment that was opposed to the church community. Each group of Christians was an illicit community and in many places, it was a capital offense to be associated with or to be a Christian (Mead 1991:10-11).

The second aspect of the Apostolic Paradigm was the commission built into the story that formed the church (Mead 1991:12). They understood their calling as one of reaching out to the environment, going into the world and not be of the world, engaging the world. The local churches saw its front doors as the frontier into mission. They called it witnessing and this shaped their community life. The difference between life inside the community and outside it was so great that entry from the world outside was a dramatic and powerful event, symbolized by baptism as a new birth.

The community's leaders were involved in teaching and preaching the story and recreating the community in the act of thanksgiving as symbol of a new life in a new world. These new perspectives and possibilities were expressed in a symbolic and

social language that was familiar and addressed people's questions and struggles (Kreider 1999:15). The congregation members had roles that fit their mission to the world – servant-ministers carried food to the hungry and healers cared for the sick. As need arose, regional leaders were appointed or emerged to help connect communities. Hence, the prominence of itinerant teachers and trouble-shooters like Paul and Barnabas.

The local churches also perceived their mission to be the building up of its members with the courage, strength and skills to communicate the good news from God within that hostile world. Internally, it ordered its communal life, and established roles and relationships to nurture the members of the congregation in the mission that involved every member. The perception of the members was that they received their power to engage in this mission from the Holy Spirit (Mead 1991:12-13).

1.3.2 Premodernity and the Christendom Paradigm

The Christendom Paradigm, where the church occupied a central position within Western societies, ranged from the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 313 CE to roughly the midpoint of the twentieth century (Gibbs & Bolger 2005:17). The conversion of Roman emperor Constantine in 313 CE changed the status of the Christian faith radically and introduced the Christendom Paradigm. Before this, paganism dominated the Roman Empire (Viola & Barna 2008:6). Within seventy years the status of Christianity changed from persecuted faith to legitimate faith and

finally to state religion (De Jongh 1987:55). As a result, drastic changes in the Christian culture took place:

- In 321 CE the first day of the week was declared an official day of rest, although the name was kept to reflect the pagan heritage (Sunday);
- In 330 CE the feast of midwinter, on 25 December, was renamed Christmas to celebrate Christ's birth, but without any changes to the way the feast day was conducted.
- In 380 CE, emperors Gratian and Theodosius declared all subjects of the Roman Emperor to adhere to the faith as confessed by the bishops of Rome and Alexandria.
- Since 392 CE it was illegal to conduct any private services of non-Christian religions (De Jongh 1987:56).
- By 529 CE an edict of emperor Justinian made conversion – including the baptism of infants – compulsory for any member of the Roman Empire (Kreider 1999:39).

With this, the Christendom Paradigm was in full sway. The critical difference with the Apostolic Paradigm was that by law the church was now identified with the empire (Mead 1991:14): Everything in the world that immediately surrounded the church was legally identified with the church without any separation. The hostility by the environment was removed by making church and environment identical. Thus, instead of the congregation being a small local group that makes up the church it became an encompassing entity that included everyone living in the Empire. Now there was no boundary between church and the local community.

The missionary frontier disappeared from the congregation's doorstep to become the political boundary of society itself, far away. The church functioned as an integral part of culture, both in its premodern and modern appearance.

The premodern culture in which the church functioned, found its philosophical foundations particularly in the dialogues of Plato and the works of Aristotle (Drilling 2006:3 ff). The high point of this culture was reached in the thirteenth century CE, which was also the turning point of premodernism when a decadent scholasticism started to take hold. The underlying assumption of the premodern culture is that all reality is hierarchically ordered, beginning with God, who governs the realm of being. Thus, the laws of nature, humanly created society, and the mind that thinks, knows all these run parallel to each other and participate in an orderly cosmos that is directed in some way by the divine.

Because of the influential position of the church, Christian thinkers succeeded in changing Plato's view of the eternity of matter into the Genesis-based belief that God created everything from nothing. Through exerting this Scripture-based influence on rational thinking, the onto-theological perspective of reality was extended to recognizing – even preconditioning - the rule of God in every dimension of nature, human and otherwise. Drilling (2006:3-4) showed, among others, the following implications of this development:

- The foundations of Christian interpretation of moral law were laid through the interpretation of the Decalogue into natural law and divine positive law and human law, along with the meaning and role of conscience;
- Church structures were established and it defined the role of the ordained and the place of the baptized – the laity – along with the civil jurisdiction of the diocese and parish.

Eventually Thomas Aquinas explicitly developed the idea that all things created come forth from God and are ordered toward a return to God (Drilling 2006:4). This resulted in Aquinas' famed two-step thinking process – An inquirer seeks first to grasp the inner essence or form of a subject by an act of understanding. To achieve this, the five senses are used. Secondly, the inquirer seeks to affirm or deny the actuality of objects whose essence or form has been grasped by an act of understanding. Everything that falls outside this scope is then rejected as imaginary as it doesn't fit into the objective order of being in its truth and goodness. Aquinas

thus formulated a correspondence theory of knowledge: what one truly knows corresponds with what actually exists and the mind is able to affirm that (Drilling 2006:4-5).

Mead (1991:14-22) attempted to describe the ecclesiological implications of this paradigm shift into premodern Christendom. First of all, congregation members were no longer personally engaged on the mission frontier. They were no longer called to witness in a hostile environment or supposed to be different from other people – as citizenship became identical with one’s religious responsibility, the logical thing to do. Second, the missional responsibility became the job of a “professional” on the edge of the Empire – the soldier and the missionary. Therefore, winning souls for God and expanding the Empire by conquest became the same thing. Third, it was expected of a Christian in his or her local context to be a good citizen and to support both the state and the church in reaching and converting the pagan outside the borders of the Empire (Mead 1991:14).

The continuing integration of the church and the premodern cultural paradigm changed the structure and form of the church’s mission immensely and it can be summed up as follows (Mead 1991:15-17):

- **Unity of sacred and secular:** Within the Empire, no distinction existed between things sacred or secular (Mead 1991:15). Bishops became secular leaders such as playing major political roles and kings took on religious

responsibilities, like Emperor Constantine calling the Council of Nicea in 325 CE (De Jongh 1987:62).

- **Mission as far off enterprise:** Mission now was a matter of foreign policy and the initiative for expanding the church became the responsibility of armies and politicians, and missionary orders and missionaries. The hostile environment was the pagan outside the borders of the Empire and these people were incorporated into the church by conquest (Mead 1991:15). The Empire also accepted the responsibility to protect the church from those who try to subjugate the church to the service of a false god.
- **Congregation as parish:** In the Christendom Paradigm, the local form of the church is no longer a tight community of convinced, committed or embattled believers who supported each other in a hostile environment (Mead 1991:15). It became a parish, comprising a geographic region that by default included everyone within its boundaries. Moreover, all institutions – such as schools, merchant groups or volunteer organizations - understood themselves as manifestations of a unified existence, at once sacred and secular. The parish pastor was also the community chaplain, the civil servant or the local holy person.
- **The drive for unity:** Because of the sheer size of the Empire-church, a kind of administration was needed and to manage this, it had to be unified (Mead 1991:16). Therefore, standard structures had to be developed with no space

for differences. Heresy and treason were viewed as the same thing and to be disloyal to the faith resulted in the same sort of punishment awarded to serious crimes. In the Christendom Paradigm, to be fully human was to be a faithful citizen of the Empire and a member of the Christian church who was obligated to support civil authority (De Jongh 1987:57).

- **The religious role of the laity:** People joined the church as a matter of birth. Therefore, the entire community was involved in the nurture of the faith: community festivals, the educational system, even the laws that defined the moral codes of society (Mead 1991:16), with emperor Justinian who revised civil laws and putting priestly and worldly authority on exactly the same level as equal and interrelated parts of authority (De Jongh 1987:56).
- **The calling of the lay person:** Ordinary people's Christian responsibility was well-defined: they had to be good, law-abiding citizens, pay the taxes that supported religious and secular institutions alike, and support the Empire's efforts of expansion and converting the pagan world through prayer.

1.3.3 The Christendom Paradigm in a modernistic society

The move from a premodern to a modern culture was precipitated by two factors (Drilling 2006:5):

- First, as a result of the emergence of humanism, a new acceptance of human creativity developed as it was discovered that the human imagination had always been part of being human. This led to the development of new modes of human expression, such as artistic, political, and philosophical and the Renaissance began.
- Second, the Thomist synthesis was broken apart by nominalist theology which was sceptical towards the inherent meaningfulness of things. The dominant view became that God can do as God wills, therefore reality is only what God decides to make. Names don't denote the inner meaning of things, but are mere terms that humans imposed on things to distinguish them from other things based on their differences – hence nominalism. These two factors succeeded in focusing all reality in the creativity of human minds in the present moment.

The full advent of modern culture was specifically catalyzed by two events (Drilling 2006:6). The first was the scientific revolution in the seventeenth century when the experimental method became the vehicle of a remarkable new moment in human creativity. With this, humans could take control as never before and direct it to their own ends. The second event was the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The experimental method became an agenda for all dimensions of life and human beings were challenged to take charge of life for themselves.

With these, control that once was in the hands of civil and religious authorities was wrested away. People increasingly became their own individuality and autonomy and felt more and more adept at determining their own destinies. Individual freedom and autonomy became the order of the day. The authority of church and state were criticized for its basis in obscure mysteries of faith as a front for control. Atrocious wars raged in the name of church and state in this time led to a quest for democracy as the political order of choice, effectively removing aristocrats and clerics from positions of power.

The Modern Culture was philosophically undergirded by the musings of Descartes and Kant and the idea that the mind must activate a procedure of doubt with the aim to reach absolutely certain truths, was born. This fit neatly in the methods of the new natural sciences who tried to assume nothing – a sort of doubt (Drilling 2006:7). The new natural sciences sought to be precise about the inner workings of objects of research by means of carefully constructed empirical experiments conducted upon particular elements comprising the research matter. This was a move away from the deductive method to the inductive method. Drilling (2006:7) showed that this rationalism and the idealism of Kant succeeded in creating a dark downside, namely the breakdown of all sense of common truths and values, and the consequent fragmentation of human social order.

Modernity positively succeeded in discovering the central role of the human subject in every instance of knowledge (Drilling 2006:8). This opens the way to the grounding of faith that was lacking in the premodern period. However, as modernism

failed to work out the turn to the subject in several of its expressions, religious faith – faith based on revelation – was banished from socially acceptable discourse of the important issues of the day. Modernity’s willingness to consider religion was clouded by its only concern with a God of reason and natural religion.

The influence of modernity had a profound impact on the functioning of the church in the Christendom Paradigm. Mead (1991:20-22) employed the same schema as with his description of the Apostolic Paradigm to describe the fragmented nature of the church in modernity as a result of the changes in society and the influence of modernistic reasoning:

- **The unity of sacred and secular:** Although the authority of the church became severely diminished, the social and political pressure to live out the Christendom Paradigm resulted in a kind of cultural religion that viewed national leaders as semi-religious figures and pledged a quasi-religious patriotism (Mead 1991:20). It was expected that religious people would not criticize government policy as it was viewed as rebellion against what is right and proper.
- **Mission as a far-off enterprise:** Churches in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were very motivated to do mission in the far-off pagan lands (Mead 1991:20). The clarity of this mission drove the pledging support of the people. Thus, education in the church became mission education, since religious

education was handled by the school system. The larger driving force, however, was to spread democracy and western culture to the backward heathen peoples.

- **Congregations as parish:** Pastors still functioned as chaplains of a certain geographic area, caring for everyone in the area but specifically looking after the people belonging to the congregations (Mead 1991:21). In this sense, baptisms and weddings were performed automatically without any thought to the religious preparation required. The ministry of the congregation was controlled and carried out by the clergy who were trained professionally in seminars.
- **The drive for unity:** As modernistic reasoning spread, the unity of the church came under severe stress, as each denomination thought it had the only true mission (Mead 1991:21). The differences between the church groups led to feuds and competition for converts and theological differences were resolved by the formation of alternative denominations, accelerating the break-up of the unity in the church that was typical of the Christendom Paradigm.
- **The religious place of the laity:** Lay persons continued to view themselves as loyal citizens, obedient to the authorities, paying their dues to church and state and not bothering about theological matters (Mead 1991:21). Their faith had to be strong and their commitment firm as it still was affirmed by the schools, social groups and community festivals. Lay persons still had to

support mission enterprises by prayer, generous giving and encouraging younger people to go into full-time service overseas as an employee of the denomination.

- **The calling of the laity:** The ministry of a layperson was identical with being a good, law-abiding, tax-paying, patriotic citizen (Mead 1991:22). Obedience to structures, institutions and leaders was paramount and everyone had the sacred duty to preserve the way things were, while avoiding personal immorality, disobedience or disloyalty. Your place in life was ordained by God and you should accept it.

1.3.4 Technological contours of the Emerging Paradigm

During the last fifty years – and more specifically during the two decades embracing the turn of the millennium – culture was transformed, the dynamics of relationships shifted and humankind’s brain processes became rewired (Miller 2004:1) as part of several shifts in the common modern day societal paradigm. Bellis (2009:1-5) compiled a timeline of modern day developments that helped shaped the world as we currently know it. Her list from circa 1950 includes:

During the 1950’s television started to gain widespread popularity in the United States and Europe, transforming it into the dominant media. Television broadcasts became the primary source of information, news, and entertainment. This decade

also saw the following: invention of the credit card (1950); super glue and video tape recorders (1951); issue of the first patent for a bar code and the first diet cold drinks sold (1952); air craft black boxes and transistor radios invented (1953), oral contraceptives, non-stick teflon pans and solar cells invented. McDonalds starts doing business (1954), optical fibre invented (1955), first computer hard disk used (1955), computer modem, integrated circuits and the laser are invented (1958), invention of the microchip and the birth of the Barbie Doll (1959).

The 1960's could be described as having the most significant historical changes humankind has seen. It includes the first person in Space (1961) as well as the first person to walk on the moon (1969), the start of the nuclear arms race, and the general agreement that young people born after the Second World War exerted their ability to influence common perception and culture. Some of the more important technological developments include: The halogen lamp (1961), valiums and non-dairy creamers (1962), the first audio cassette, fibre tip pens, silicone breast implants and the first computer game (1963), soft contact lenses and the compact disk (1965), electronic fuel injection for cars (1966), the first hand-held calculator (1967), the computer mouse and RAM – random access memory (1968), the first internet-like network operating, automated teller machines, artificial hearts and bar-code scanners (1969).

The 1970's could be seen as the decade of the computer: The invention of the floppy disk (1970), the dot-matrix printer, videocassettes, food processors, liquid crystal display and microprocessors (1971), the word processor and first video game

(1972), gene splicing, disposable lighters and the Ethernet or local computer network (1973), post-it notes and liposuction (1974), the laser printer and push-through tabs on cold drink cans (1975), ink-jet printers (1976), magnetic resonance imaging (1977), the first spread sheet (1978), cell phones, the Cray supercomputer, walkman and rollerblades (1979).

In the 1980's multinational corporations started proliferating. This decade also saw the following developments: the hepatitis-B vaccine is developed (1980), MS-DOS and the first IBM computer is created (1981), genetic engineering of the human growth hormone occurs (1982), the coining of the phrase “virtual reality” (1983), CD ROM and Apple Macintosh get invented (1984), Microsoft develops its Windows software (1985), high-temperature superconductors, synthetic skin and disposable cameras get invented (1986), the arrival of 3-D video games and disposable contact lenses (1987), digital cellular phones, the abortion pill, Doppler radar, and the Prozac antidepressant is developed as well as the issue of the first patent for a genetically engineered animal (1988), invention of High definition television (1989).

In the 1990's the internet exploded on the cultural scene. It also saw the following technological developments: the development of world wide web internet language and protocol - HTML and http (1991), the digital answering machine (1992), the smart pill (1992), the Pentium processor for computers (1993), HIV protease inhibitors (1994), JAVA computer language and DVD's (1995), Web television (1996), and Viagra (1998).

The first decade of the new millennium saw developments in the area of medicine and environmentally friendly products. It also saw the following inventions and developments: the artificial heart and liver and the introduction of the iPod (2001), the phone tooth, nanotechnology wearable fabrics and the date-rape drug spotter (2002), the first hybrid car, infrared screening systems for public places (2003), in 2004 translucent concrete – concrete with fibre-optic cables that can transmit light, and the Facebook social networking site (Yadav 2006) that has reached the milestone of having 300 million users in 2009, YouTube (2005), the Twitter micro-blogging site in 2006 (Malik 2009), smog-eating cement (2008).

From this all-too-brief synopsis it is apparent that the last fifty years were dominated by developments pertaining to communication, digital technology and digital social networking that integrate the first two. The impact of these developments is tremendous: It changed the way people conduct business and go about their work, it affects relationships and relational networks between people, it changes the way people gather, process and utilize information and it fundamentally transformed the way people interact with each other (Saxby 1990:3): Suddenly, information has become personal. Individuals have a large range of personal choices and opportunities for access to the distribution and reception of information. No longer are people passive receivers of information (Saxby 1990:259-299). More specifically, there is an increasing need for information as the basis for making decisions (Pettersson 1989:33).

The proliferation of new media causes a significant shift in focus from reading and writing to watching and listening (Pettersson 1989:77-78). The result is a society where-in the reigning culture, value system and norms are increasingly dictated by image rather than regulating. Even more importantly, the digital world is busy changing humanity's sense of time and history as this new world pulls the future into our consciousness while simultaneously extracting the best of the past (Miller 2004:76-77).

1.3.5 Epistemological Implications of the Digital Revolution

The implications of the digital revolution can be summarised as follows (Miller 2004:78):

- The digital culture's need for direct, uncontrolled and first hand experiencing is busy replacing the passive *gestalt* of television and printed media types.
- The dependence by the digital culture on networks and personal relationships is replacing television's bias towards collective stadium-event experiences.

- Digital culture's open source technologies, organisations and thinking mechanisms (such as Wikipedia) have disrupted printed media and television's tendencies for trademarking.
- The ability of the digital culture to revisit the past is replacing television and the printed media's rejection of the past.
- The digital culture's paradigm-based approach to complex issues and conflict is replacing the political approach by television and printed media.
- The integrated, multimedia language of the digital culture is replacing television and the printed media's visual language.
- The digital culture's integration of left brain and right brain processes is replacing television and the printed media's sole reliance on right brain processes.

We truly live in an ecotone between the modern era and a time we cannot yet define (Sweet, McLaren & Haselmayer 2003:18). The dynamics of this Developing Paradigm can be summarised with seven qualities (Miller 2004:4-7):

- **Interconnection:** We have entered a chain-reaction world of exponential outcomes where problems and opportunities are intimately tied together. Networks are emerging which seem to have a collective intelligence that defies older logic and sequential decision-making processes (Miller 2004:4-5).
- **Complexity:** Systems do not behave as a collection of spare parts anymore, but as an integrated whole. Any single change sets in motion an invisible ripple effect and old analytical tools fail to anticipate potential consequences of policy or action within complex systems of relationships (Miller 2004:5).
- **Acceleration:** With each new technology or concept, change seems to be accelerating. This results in change taking on a life of its own, and people start to feel out of control from time to time (Miller 2004:5).
- **Intangibility:** The world is changing from a society that measures value in terms of products that can be touched or held to a society that measures value in terms of intangibles like information, potential or reputation (Miller 2004:5).
- **Convergence:** This is the inherent property of the digital era. All information, be it print, graphics, sound or data, can all reside on a single medium – CD or DVD – because it is all reproduced through the common digital language of bits and bytes. Therefore, the boundaries that separated disciplines of

knowledge (such as physics, poetry, and metaphysics) are beginning to blur (Miller 2004:5-6).

- **Immediacy:** The time it takes to absorb and adjust to digitally paced activities is growing shorter and shorter. People are therefore under pressure to respond to the changes with immediacy similar to that required by fighter pilots in combat (Miller 2004:6).
- **Unpredictability:** In the old paradigm, physics taught that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. However, current complex and highly interactive systems are highly unpredictable. Since these systems are interconnected, the number of outcomes is exponentially multiplied, making it impossible to predict. In every instance, in complex systems its actions often create unintended and unforeseen consequences (Miller 2004:6-7).

The paradigm shift of the Developing Paradigm affects the following six areas (Gibbs & Bolger 2005:18):

- A shift towards a postmodern epistemology.
- A shift from westernization to globalization.
- A communication revolution towards an electronic-based culture.

- A shift in the economic mode of production with international, information-based and consumer driven economies.
- Significant breakthroughs in understanding the human biology.
- An increasing convergence of science and religion.

1.3.6 A Comparative synopsis of the different paradigms

The three paradigms can finally be compared in the following manner (Smit 2008a:108-110):

	THE CHURCH IN THE...			
	PREMODERN ERA	MODERN ERA	EARLIER POSTMODERN ERA	LATER POSTMODERN ERA
Scientific Insight	Basic insights, driven by an agricultural economy	Linear-causal, Newtonian physics	Quantum physics	Increasing integration of scientific areas



	The Bible is an accurate scientific document	The Bible contains little scientific insight	The Bible is an unscientific religious tract	Together with other faith documents the Bible uses the language of metaphysical science
World view	Creation in six days The earth is flat, stands on four pillars and the sun moves overhead	Was creation really in six days? The earth is round and orbits the sun	Creation took billions of years Earth is a small corner of an extremely large universe	Creation is an interdependent process Earth is a geometric unit that must be protected urgently
Secular Authority	The pope governs One empire Authority rests absolutely in the person of the ruler	The king or president governs Colonial empires Authority rests in the professional knowledge of an individual	Nobody that governs can be trusted Growth in ethnic nationalism Authority is shared	The multinational company governs The world is a digital suburb Authority is derived from the depth and integrity of interpersonal relationships
Technological Driving Forces	The plough and ox	The printing press, internal	The movie camera, magazine	The internet, cell phone and satellite



		combustion engine and ammunition	and music video	dish
Communication Culture	Oral story telling	Printed reading	Passive television viewing	Digital, interactive internet
Scriptural Authority	The preacher understands Scripture absolutely and explains it accordingly	Scripture is studied critically in order to analyse or teach	Scripture is studied pragmatically for practical application	Scripture is studied contextually for deeper insight in God's testimony; Believers are co-narrators; A fresh appreciation of the ancient discourse
Ecclesiology	Hierarchical The pope, priest or pastor is in control	Pastoral-shepherding The pastor is a professional caregiver	Charismatic-participatory The pastor is God's chosen one to unlock the congregation's gifts	Egalitarian-relational The pastor functions in a network of trust relationships and develops servant leaders
Ethics	Legalistic: Do what the pastor says	Legalistic: Do what the Ten Commandments say	Contextual: Do what fits best under the circumstances	Relational: Do what carries the approval of the group
Worship Style	Formal liturgical services with a	Formalistic liturgical services	Free worship and corporate praise	Diversity and participation with a

	focus on ritual and mysticism	with a focus on philosophical preaching	with a focus on how-to preaching	focus on narrative preaching
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1.3.7 The church as a modern institution in a postmodern world

The specific importance of the impact on the church by the technological revolution with the resulting developing postmodern paradigm is a focus area of this investigation. As quoted above, the accusation has been brought against the church that she is a modern institution in a postmodern world. The apparent demise of main stream churches worldwide seems to substantiate this accusation. Although numerical growth cannot be the only measurement of the health of the church (Mead 1993:12-13), it presents a compelling picture of the crisis that today's church is experiencing. The church at large has lost and is still losing members at an alarming and increasing rate (Geysler 2003:8).

The following snap shot is only the tip of the iceberg when one ventures into the area of ecclesial statistics:

- Organized religion in the United Kingdom has severely declined to the point where it is generally overlooked and ignored. Although the cultural attachment to Christianity in general lives on, many British people profess belief without taking part in organized religion. Crabtree (2007) noted that the Church of

England still remains a power within the UK, and still receives press attention
“although there are admittedly more scandal and shock, than awe or reverence.”

- In Europe there is reportedly an exodus from the church at an average rate of 35,000 people per Sunday (Nel 2003:18).
- In both the United States and the United Kingdom, the decline of traditional denominations has been thoroughly researched (Gibbs & Bolger 2005:19). Statistical research from as long ago as the 1980's confirmed that society no longer reflects a churched culture (Callahan 1990:13), as study after study and the steady decline of most mainline denominations confirm this fact. The percentage of adults in America identifying them as Christian dropped from 86% in 1990 to 77% in 2001 (Robinson 2006). Nearly 100 million people living in the United States of America are without a connection to a faith-based community, while approximately fifty percent of them were formerly involved in the church (Barna 2002:29).
- In South Africa the Afrikaans (reformed) mainline churches in South Africa sank back to representing 6,7% of the population from their previous dominant role in the country (Dreyer 2009:4). These churches are the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk), the Netherdutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk) and the Reformed Church (Gereformeerde Kerk). In the past twenty years these churches lost 75% of its

youth – or its baptised but unconfirmed members, and 30% of its adult or confirmed members - with the exception of the Dutch Reformed Church whose adult membership declined at a smaller percentage (Dreyer 2009:5).

The most observable symptoms of the inadequacy of the current theological paradigm are the visible ones – the dwindling numbers of mainline churches. Yet, one should also look at the testimonies of church-inflicted hurt by church leavers, as well as the shifts in ecclesial practices and paradigms, like the following:

- After centuries of being the dominant and state sponsored religion in the Western world and being captured in an evangelical-sacred cocoon (Geysler, 2003), people within the confines of the church have openly started to question the church's authority and reject a culture traditionally associated with the Christian religion (Mead 1991:14).
- McLaren (2002:12) writes about the negative perceptions existing about evangelism and says it is understood as selling God, placing people under pressure, shoving your ideas down someone's throat, threatening the person with hell and excluding everyone from God's grace except those who agree with you. According to McLaren (2002:13), "*this is the reputation evangelism has for most people.*" Shore (2007:14-15) offers a succinct perspective that enlightens this changing paradigm: The time has arrived for Christians to stop wasting the energy they currently spend on converting people who have

already heard the gospel message, and haven't acted on it, and replace it with loving these people unconditionally. If someone on their own accord opened the door to Christ the responsibility remains to "usher God in" and let Him do the work, but if a person hasn't opened the door themselves, we should stop trying to blow the door down anyway.

- Reacting to the western church's pre-occupation with the rationalism of modernity, a significant number of believers is either practicing a buffet-style adaptation of spirituality in general or abandoning the Christian faith altogether. By doing this, they are creating Westernized forms of that historic religions that provide immediate access to transcendental reality, offer the means to self-realization, and de-emphasize self-discipline or the place of legitimate suffering (Gibbs & Bolger 2005:22).
- There are one hundred million unchurched people in the United States that provided three primary reasons for their decision to quit being active in a church (Barna 2002:30-32):
 - They disliked the hypocritical behaviour of people in the church.
 - They were repulsed by the strict and inflexible beliefs of the church.

- Although they did not dislike anything about their church in particular, the church simply wasn't compelling. They felt they were wasting their time.

Yet, a majority of them considered their religious faith to be very important. They believed in the existence of a Deity who originally created the universe but they felt He is not still ruling over this world (Barna 2002:72). They accepted the historicity of Jesus, but believed He was also a sinner and they denied his physical resurrection (Barna 2002:73).

- In his research focusing on persons leaving evangelical, Pentecostal churches in New Zealand, Jamieson (2002:16) found that these church-leavers left because of i) the changing societal culture that contemporary Western dwellers find themselves in, specifically in relation to the erosion of the influence of modernity and the increasing influence of the developing paradigm; ii) the structures, beliefs and faith practices of evangelical, Pentecostal churches; and iii) the faith development of the church-leavers that are influenced by the developing paradigm. These persons do not leave the faith, but the church and faith culture in favour of alternative expressions outside of organised religion (Jamieson 2002:153).
- Silviso (2007:13) discusses the theological transformation taking place as being spiritual without being religious. It focuses on practical, everyday Christian life and he identifies the essentials of this paradigm as i) discipling nations and not just people; ii) the marketplace is redeemed by Christ and

must now be reclaimed by His followers; iii) labour is the primary expression of worship on earth and this makes every believer a minister; iv) the primary calling of Christians is not to build the church, but to take the kingdom of God where the kingdom of darkness is still entrenched in order for Jesus to build His church; and v) the primary social indicator of the success of this transformation is the elimination of systemic poverty (Silvoso 2007:28-29).

- Belcher (2009:185) quotes extensive research among eighteen- to forty-year-old Americans that showed how these people view Christianity as hypocritical, sheltered, too political and judgemental. Their impressions stem primarily from the church, which uses the wrong methods to address the culture around it.

The growing popularity of Jesus and the fascination with personal spirituality are symptoms of the developing postmodernistic paradigm shift in a culture that emphasizes the individual at the expense of the community (Robinson & Wall 2006:3): current cultural trends seem to encourage personal, even private spirituality while outrightly rejecting the difficult task of forming and sustaining faith communities and religious institutions. While this trend was quite visible for a very long time, it has now become abundantly clear that the movement of organised religion to the margins of society is not necessarily the unavoidable first steps of an ongoing process of secularisation (Van der Ven 1993:136-140), but a paradigm shift away from traditional ways of being church and theological thinking towards something radically different (Viola & Barna 2008:xxv).

Yet, the search for God is therefore as strong as ever (McLaren, 2000:68). Sweet (1999:408) stated that “*the wind of spiritual awakening is blowing across the waters,*” with the Holy Spirit working in a grand way on a global scale in the current postmodern paradigm. People are searching for God, for Jesus, for individual spirituality ... but not for the church or anything resembling organized religion (Sweet 1999:408; Robinson & Wall 2006:2-4).

People increasingly tend to reject the church’s way of thinking and talking about God and Jesus, as it is perceived as a language that make God seem smaller than their experience of the presence of God (Sawyer 2007:42-43). It is naïve to think all Christians are in the church, or that people not attending any church are unbelieving (Nel 2003:26): There are quite a lot of people with serious attitudes towards God, Christ and even the church. However, they also feel it isn’t worth the effort to be part of a church anymore. Increasingly, these people are turning their backs on traditional religious expressions and creating new spiritual traditions and home-made spiritualities (Sweet 1999:410).

Barna (2005:13-15) investigated the trend in the United States of a “*sub-nation of people*” – 20 million strong – who are living out their spirituality outside the parameters of traditional religious institutions. They left churches that play religious games, eschewed ministries that compromise or soft sell the sinfulness of human nature, and refused to follow leaders casting personal visions instead of God’s. In contrast, they zealously pursue an intimate relationship with God. Barna calls it an under-the-radar but seminal renaissance of faith.

This renaissance of faith are based on older approaches, rooted in Scripture, borne out of a desire to return to God with authenticity and fullness (Viola & Barna 2008:xxv). This subsequently leads to a shift from lifeless, institutional forms of faith to house churches, marketplace ministries, cyber churches, independent communitywide worship gatherings and intentional communities (Viola & Barna 2008:xxvi). The “secret message of Jesus” wasn’t to start a new religion, but rather one that would give birth to a new world, with practical implications for everyday living (McLaren 2006:4).

The fresh longing for God in postmodern times resonates with the concurrent search for understanding in the ancient texts of the Bible. This journey stems from the doubt in the conventional understandings of Jesus’ message, emerging from the conviction that whatever the essential message of Jesus’ message is, even if it overturns conventional theology, a better understanding will be worth the discomfort (McLaren, 2006:6).

The church lost her (previously) privileged position as a global institution and protector of truth, and now finds her increasingly on the margins of society (Bosch 1991:364; Gibbs & Bolger 2005:17). It would indeed appear that her inability to adapt and stay a relevant witness in changing cultural situations has left her in a theological crisis (Regele 1995:48): Conditions facing the church in the twenty-first century seem to pose a threat to her existence (Hirsch 2006:17) – But it can also

provide extraordinary opportunities for rediscovery that reorientates the church to these complex challenges in ways that are resonant with ancient energy.

These opportunities are indeed investigated with eagerness. Among other developments over the past few years, a reactionary movement developed in the late 1990's and has eventually become known as the Emerging Church (Belcher 2009:9).

1.3.8 A new understanding of being church emerges

The emerging church developed in the late 1990's as a discussion among evangelical pastors who were disillusioned by the state of the church at the time (Belcher 2009:24). Mangum (2007) described the Emergents (where "emerging church" and "emergent" serve as synonyms to each other) as follows:

'Emergent' is a loosely knit group of people in conversation about and trying experiments in forwarding the ministry of Jesus in new and different ways, as the people of God in a post-Christian context. From there, wide diversity abounds. 'Emergents' seem to share one common trait: disillusionment with the organized, institutional church as it has existed through the 20th century (whether fundamentalist, liberal, megachurch, or tall-steeple liturgical). Its strengths: creative, energetic, youthful, authentic, highly relational. Its

weaknesses: somewhat cynical, disorganized, sometimes reckless (even in the theological ideas willing to be entertained), immature.

Gibbs and Bolger (2005:28) defined the emerging church as follows: “*Emerging churches are missional communities arising from within postmodern culture and consisting of followers of Jesus who are seeking to be faithful in their place and time.*” They also defined emerging churches as “*communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures*” (Gibbs & Bolger 2005:44). For Hammett (2006) the central premise of the emerging church movement is that churches must change to respond to postmodern culture. Although the movement did not intentionally develop as an organization, it evolved into a broad spectrum of worldwide groupings that share common characteristics.

The Emerging Movement was founded on a premonition of the torrent of change affecting church and culture, including shifts in social consciousness, globalization, economics, increasing mobility, plurality and social fragmentation (Scandrette, 2007:23). The movement also was an improvised support system for people desperate for connections with others experimenting with new ideas about faith and community (Scandrette, 2007:24). Another key to understanding the movement lies in a stated permission to be deconstructive, as a healthy rethinking of faith (Scandrette, 2007:25-26).

The participants joined each other on a journey of friendship, especially by maintaining connections through technological ways of connection, when face-to-face meetings were impossible (Pagitt, 2007:19). Crucial to understanding the movement is the focus on conversations between real people that committed to be caring friends to each other (Scandrette, 2007:25). The groupings derived their identity from the meaning of the word “emerge” – “the primal humility, vulnerability, and passion of a search for way with God together in the world we live in” (Scandrette, 2007:23).

1.3.8.1 Theological contours of the Emerging Movement

Niemandt (2007:61-144) attempted to provide the theological contours of the Emerging Movement. He followed in the footsteps of Gibbs and Bolger (2005:45) in describing nine faith practices that churches in the movement have in common:

- They identify with the life of Jesus Christ and focus strongly on the Kingdom of God.
- They intentionally transform secular life by relinquishing the dualism of spiritual and worldly.
- They strongly accentuate the church as a fellowship.

- They practice openness towards strangers.
- They abundantly share in servanthood without expecting anything in return.
- They function through participation by congregation members.
- They focus on creativity.
- Their leadership develop through networking instead of hierarchical structures.
- They present ancient religious truths in a contemporary manner.

Gibbs and Bolger (2005:43-44) stated that, in combination, the first three faith practices create the other practices mentioned by Niemandt. With this, they meant that the life of Jesus and his engagement with his culture, as embodied in community and given verbal expression in the Sermon on the Mount, should be seen as prescriptive for Christians.

1.3.8.2 Diversity in the Emerging Movement

Stetzer (2006) distinguished between three categories of emerging churches. He coined the terms Relevantants, Reconstructionists and Revisionists, where **Relevantants**

are churches that make their worship, music and outreach specifically contextual to the emerging culture; **Reconstructionists** reject organizational church models, embrace incarnational or house models, and experiment with alternative leadership models; and **Revisionists** are questioning issues such as the substitutionary atonement, reality of hell and the nature of the Gospel itself.

According to Patton (2008), the emerging movement developed into five groupings where people tend to emerge either ecclesiological, sociological, theological, epistemological or political.

Ecclesiological emerging thinkers attempt or desire to return to some traditional elements of the Christian faith that draw upon a more experience based worship. This is evidenced by less formal structure of gatherings or formal church time; allowing freedom of expression without the traditional restraints of more program oriented gatherings. It is also seen in the upsurge of house churches, a disdain of mega churches and the use of artwork as expressions of faith, amongst others.

Epistemologically emerging thinkers demonstrate a desire for an epistemic humility that recognizes the shortcomings in modernistic enlightenment philosophy bent on striving for absolute knowledge and certainty in all things. This gets evidenced by suspicion towards all truth claims; a willingness to question personal traditions at the deepest level; an appreciation that learning happens in community while biased in context; denial of man's ability to have absolute certainty, as this is

reserved for God alone; scepticism towards traditional sources of information and authority, amongst others.

Theologically emerging thinkers call into question many traditional Christian doctrines, sometimes resulting in agnosticism toward the particular doctrine, marginalization of the issue, or a settled humble conviction concerning the issue. It is evidenced in a missional focus concerning the spread of the Gospel – “Christians do not go to church, they are the church;” aversion towards systematic theology since this implies a seemingly forced system of harmonization that is seemingly inconsistent with both human ability and divine revelation; and a willingness to see value in multiple theories of the atonement, not just the traditional view of substitutionary atonement, amongst others.

Sociologically emerging thinkers engage in and integrate with culture and society in traditionally unorthodox ways. This stems from the belief that culture is not necessarily evil, but can be part of God’s common grace. Therefore, the Gospel can be shared in places and ways that are seen as taboo for many of the evangelical or fundamentalist communities. This characteristic is bent upon the view that loving one’s neighbour and sharing the Gospel is not limited to our words, but is more powerfully expressed through actions.

This is evidenced by churches holding their services in a brewery or a pub; intentionally looking like the culture, e.g. dress, coloured hair or tattoos; talking like

the culture by getting rid of Christianese language and less sensitivity to vulgar language; focusing on bringing justice, such as liberation of the oppressed; and a willingness to traverse the Christian sub-culture taboos such as drinking, and smoking, amongst others.

Finally, **politically emerging thinkers** sympathize with many of the more traditionally liberal political concerns. It is evidenced through non-identification with any political party; an anti-war or more pacifistic stance; and supporting environmental concerns, amongst others. Some of the more radical concerns also includes approval of homosexual marriages, support for women's right to choose, etc.

1.3.8.3 Growing unease with the Emerging Movement

Recent discussion on emerging terminologies reflects a growing uneasiness with what it stands for. This critical introspection stems from the growing theological diversity among the members of the different emerging church movements and the realization that the broadening usage of the terminology creates confusion (Kimball 2008). This leads earlier exponents of the emerging church movements, such as Jones (2008), to state the following: “...*there are some countries and circles where I am no longer using the word. The word no longer communicates what I want it to so, even though I will still be in support of Emerging Church ventures ..., I will no longer be using the word for myself and the ministries that we support.*”

According to Sayers (2008c), five specific mistakes have been made by adherents of the emerging missional church movement. These are:

- **The emerging missional church failed to define what is meant by **attractional**:** This term is used to describe the way churches have acted in a non-missionary manner by expecting people to just show up at their church meetings. These churches did away with anything that looked attractional, or attractive, such as programs, services and worship. Successful missionary churches actually understand that they should find the balance between missionary efforts and attractional events that can inspire and create social energy.
- **The emerging missional church failed to define what is meant by **incarnational**:** The incarnational approach to mission was developed by missionaries who wanted to communicate the Gospel to cultural and ethnic groups outside the western culture. This approach worked excellent when used in groups with defined cultural rules, traditions and fully formed world views. But in a western cultural setting, where sub-cultures tend to be interest based, forming around common activities and hobbies rather than a culture or worldview, being incarnational tend to become problematic and reactionary as western culture's worldview was deeply influenced by Christian values and biblical viewpoints.

- **The emerging missional church is overly defined by a reaction to mass culture:** Sayers (2008a) attempted to show the influence of mass culture on the emerging church movement as opposed to it being a theological movement. The emerging church movement could be seen as a reaction against the church growth movement's focus on marketing techniques and corporate culture in churches and the homogenised ecclesiology as advocated by exponents of the church growth movement. According to Sayers (2008a): *“The emerging church for many of its adherents did not so much grow out of a theological re-examination, or a well thought out ecclesiological reaction. It grew out of a shared feeling of ‘not fitting in’ the mainstream Christian milieu, which felt too much to many like mass culture.”* Hammett (2006) concurred with this observation and noted that the emerging church movement's zeal for reaching the postmodern generation made them vulnerable to the consumerism they found distasteful and characteristic of modernity, as the philosophical undergirding of the church-growth movement.

- **The emerging missional church failed to understand “Low Fuel Tank Faith:”** According to Sayers (2008a), a huge crisis exists in especially the evangelical church. This crisis revolves around three key elements: Young adults leaving the church and the faith in droves; people within evangelical or charismatic churches feeling burned or disillusioned or disheartened or cynical; and Christians across the charismatic or evangelical spectrum are struggling to live out their faith.

This observation is confirmed by Jamieson (2002:11) who wrote: “... *it appears, at least in the West that these ... churches also have a wide-open back door through which the disgruntled, disillusioned and disaffiliated leave.*” Sayers concluded that missional movements would only get as far as people are brimming over with excitement about their faith.

The emerging missional church wed itself to “Gen X” Culture: Sayers (2008b) argued that the emerging church movement grew out of the culture that defines (American) persons born between 1964 and 1984 (collectively named “Generation X”), reflecting many of its shared values. It is specifically the attitude of cynicism, causing them to introspect and discuss the nature of truth, pervading Gen-X culture that is shared by the emerging church. Hammett (2006) showed that a new style of worship and alterations don’t necessarily guarantee winning young people from the Gen X demographic. More important is the Gospel, expressed clearly in the preaching of the word and the lives of those in the church, communicated lovingly and patiently in worship and witness.

Finally, Belcher (2009:27-31) reflected on his participation in the emerging church discussion since its inception, and he noted the following reservations:

- The practice of generationally targeted ministry as adopted by emerging churches leads to a “church within a church.”

- The rejection of denominational roots in favour of independent congregations causes emerging churches to lose accountability towards the larger body of Christ, as well as protection for the congregation in cases of misconduct and general oversight.
- Emerging Churches tended to over contextualise their worship to reach the culture around it, causing their worship to look too much like the world and was not countercultural enough.
- There is a serious lack of gospel centeredness in gatherings of Emerging Church adherents. They talked a lot about obedience, mission and the need to reach the culture, but little discussion occurred on the centrality of the cross for forgiveness and the enabling power of grace to live for Jesus.

The Emerging movement strived to reinterpret the Christian mission in a new cultural paradigm. It would seem that this loosely-constructed grouping also started a move to deconstruct traditional Christian theology in light of the new philosophical paradigm that undergirds cultural postmodernism. Since Christian theology has a distinct character, it seems almost improbable to base a new epistemological paradigm on philosophy or literary sciences alone. A process has begun to re-think theology as a whole.

1.3.9 The quest for an emerging theological paradigm

The study of culture is a highly significant issue that addresses the relationship among Christ, the Gospel, the church, and culture itself (Gibbs & Bolger 2005:16). However, it is just as necessary to investigate whether the developing cultural paradigm necessitates a new theological paradigm as well. The question is intrinsically connected to theology as a whole, since it asks if we are able to communicate the redeeming message of the gospel in such a way that it is heard in all aspects of the society we find ourselves in (Van Huyssteen 1987:1).

1.3.9.1 Understanding the nature of paradigm shifts

A paradigm can be described as a scale model of a huge, complex or incomprehensible state of affairs and can be described as providing a road map to reality in the quest for better understanding the incomprehensibilities (Smit 1997:9). A paradigm nearly always has a fixed set of rules that define boundaries and establish guidelines for success (Barker 1985:14). The term “Paradigm Shift” is originally coined by Thomas Kuhn who likened the scientific embrace of a new paradigm to a person wearing inverted lenses, finding the same constellation of objects thoroughly transformed in many of their details (Kuhn 1996:122).

Kuhn's thesis can be summarised as follows: Within a given scientific field its practitioners hold a common set of beliefs and assumptions, agree on the problems that need to be solved, the rules that govern their research and standards by which performance is to be measured. Paradigms, however, aren't necessarily unchangeable. When several of a scientific discipline's practitioners start to encounter anomalies or phenomena that cannot be explained by the established model, the paradigm starts to show signs of instability (Hairston 1982:76).

For some time the practitioners try to ignore these inconsistencies and contradictions or make improvised changes to counter the immediate crises. If enough anomalies accumulate to convince a substantial number of practitioners to start questioning the traditional paradigm with which they solved their problems, a few innovative thinkers devise a new model. And when enough practitioners become convinced that the new paradigm works better than the old one, they will accept it as the new norm (Hairston 1982:76).

1.3.9.2 The birth of a theological paradigm shift

Theology was traditionally practiced as a single unit, without distinction between any sub disciplines (König 1982:1). For the first eighteen hundred years of the church's history, the typical church theologian was simultaneously Bible scholar, historian, and systematic theologian. The concept of investigating Christian teachings at the hand of a scientific method originates in the twelfth century CE and is attributed to

either Abelard or Gilbert of Porraea, and in the thirteenth century the description, theological faculty, is first used at the University of Paris (König 1982:3). Studying theology as an integrated practice started to change with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' explosion in scientific knowledge.

Since 1797 the theology of the Old Testament and New Testament was researched separately when Bauer's book, "*Theologie des Alten Testaments*", was published (Hasel 2001:172). Combined with the subsequent expansion of the university as well as modernism's secularization of institutions that started to give shape to everyday life (Osmer 2008:231), this forced theological faculties to rethink their diminishing position among other scientific schools of education. Through arguments presented by Friedrich Schleiermacher, theology was organized as a scholarly enterprise specializing in philosophical theology - determining the "essence" of Christianity, historical theology - utilizing Biblical sciences and church history, and practical theology – focusing on theory and practice (Osmer 2008:233). From here on it was impossible for any theologian to have an adequate knowledge of all the subjects associated with theological study as it served as the starting point of theological specialization.

The practice to present different theological subjects as part of an academic faculty devoted exclusively to the study of theology grows from the centrality of Jesus Christ and the faith in Him (König 1982:13-15). Central to all theology, therefore, is the revelation of God and studying it. Theology consists of the study of the revelation of God, specifically the revelation that God has given to us, its content, implications and

the results thereof. Stated in other words, theological study is the process of theoretical justification (or explanation) - in a credible and critical manner - about the Christian religion (Van Huyssteen 1987:2). The question, “How do people get to know God?” is at the centre of theological reflection (Koester 1995:1). And in all of this, the Bible plays a central and integral role, as it forms the heart of the Christian faith (Smit 2006:7).

In every age the church has had to listen to God through the Bible to discern a pattern of living the gospel in a way that is appropriate for that age (McKnight 2008:129). This practice of discernment can also be understood as an ongoing conversation around the stories, concepts and language of the witnesses to God in the Bible. This enables us to connect with the people of our own time who are instinctively yearning for a connection to God (Martoia 2007:39). In the middle of this ongoing practice of discernment stands the church, a two thousand year old institution founded on and rooted in the religion of the Hebrew people and the message of one of its members, Jesus of Nazareth. The church is the common witness to God’s mission to this earth through Christ: By being aware of the communion with Christ and with each other Christians are compelled to give a visible witness together (Bosch 1991:463).

Following the contours of the biblical witness, Christians tell the story of God’s actions in human history through their testimony. They testify about God’s goodness, a goodness He has made known, revealed and which defines His purposes (Güder 2000:29). The church and its testimony are grounded in a particular history, apart

from which Christians has no universal message to proclaim. As such, it can be argued that “*the local church is the hope for the world*” (Hybels 2002:27). Moreover, the Christian faith is intrinsically missional - otherwise it denies its reason for existence (Bosch 1991:8-9).

If the above is true, then why should we pose the question of the church’s ability to be relevant in the emerging postmodern paradigm in the first place? Is the mere fact of the continuing existence of the church through two thousand years worth of paradigm shifts not enough evidence of her ability to adapt to new circumstances? The initial answer is actually in the affirmative, but then it is a qualified affirmative. It is God’s mission to the earth that’s at stake and not the church’s survival. The testimony of the church’s two thousand year existence is merely a reflection of the fact that God is busy in this world and not about to stop working.

The church’s adaptability enables her to be part of this mission, starting with the leap from Jewish sect to global religion, as recorded in Acts chapter 15, through every major paradigm shift in history, and including the challenge to rethink her mission in today’s changing culture. This becomes more apparent when we take into account that the Bible itself is a testament to the hermeneutical activities of its writers, taking existing faith traditions - verbal as well as written – and interpreting it for new circumstances (Smit 2006:11).

Biblical texts were written to preserve faith traditions in current crises with the aim of providing continuous stability: *“Primarily, the documents of the Bible are faith documents, yet they reflect the effort of leaders to produce, maintain and direct faith”* (Kenney 2000:1). The Bible can also be described as a story of God’s faithfulness to creation and to humanity, a story that culminates in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is God’s faithfulness that brings Christian faith to life and thus serves as the basis for theological reflection (Osmer 1992:15-17). Especially the New Testament scriptures show the practice of the early church to interpret Old Testament writings in light of the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus while trying to explain and understand their faith communities’ particular circumstances. Scripture doesn’t debate the existence of God, but retells the story of his deeds in the history of humanity through the testimony about God’s goodness, a goodness that is made known by God Himself, and that defines His purposes (Güder 2000:28-29).

Since the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century a church culture was produced that was closely aligned with the recently developed book technology. Linear progression of thought, highly reasoned exegesis, and expository preaching illustrated this culture’s focus on the written word. In the process, the church removed the symbolic, mystical and experiential in favour of logical and linear ways of thinking and living (Gibbs & Bolger 2005:19-20). In this rationalistic scheme, the only criterion for legitimate science is human reasoning, as the researcher must be able to ask questions without any limitations so as to enable him/her to reach conclusions after honest and open-minded investigation (Deist 1994:2).

1.3.9.3 Towards a postmodern theological epistemology

Today it is obvious that the square peg of modernistic theology cannot fit in the circular hole of a developing postmodernistic context. As mainstream western culture diverts from its spiritual heritage and its society becomes increasingly pluralistic, churches face a missional challenge, one that is increasingly cross-cultural in nature. The general decrease in involvement with the church, however, puts the question of the relevance, importance and meaning of the church itself on the agenda (Nel 1994:16-17).

The reasons are theological as well as cultural in nature, but it starts with the loss of the church's involvement with God and God's world. The church must search its own soul since it cannot exist in isolation from culture (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:54). Mittelberg (2000:24) observed that *"a major part of the problem is that many churches have been around so long that they lost sight of the primary purposes for which they were created in the first place."* It is especially true that twentieth century European theology had not dealt with the missionary nature of the church for over a thousand years (Güder 2000:9).

The resulting quest for a developing, or emerging, theological epistemology should therefore be based on the growing insight that the developing postmodern paradigm also affects the encyclopaedic paradigm of theology. This becomes more apparent when the following shifts are taken into account (Osmer 2008:236-240):

Natural science is no longer seen as the paradigm case of rationality and scholarly research. Scientific research staked its authority on the claim to objectivity and universality. This is being replaced by the shift towards an understanding that science is an interpretive activity, drawing on the models and methods of particular research traditions that change over time.

The implication for contemporary theological research is that we no longer have to take over the standards and research methods of cognate fields, but have the freedom and obligation to articulate our own subject matter and forms of scholarship (Osmer 2008:236).

The second shift is from specialized autonomy towards an affirmation of the importance of cross-disciplinary forms of research and thinking. Contemporary research problems and social systems are seen as too complex to be fully comprehended by a single discipline. In a similar way theological disciplines are reclaiming their own voice and perspective but as part of a cross-disciplinary conversation with other fields of theology and various non-theological dialogue partners (Osmer 2008:237).

In the modernistic paradigm with its primacy on natural science, research ideals were committed to the values of universality, consensus and progress. Put in other words: scientific theory deals with the logical aspect of science; research

methods deal with the observational aspect; and statistics offer a device for comparing what is logically expected with what is actually observed (Babbie 1989:17). It is also said that research is a critical process for asking and attempting to answer questions about the world (Dane 1990:4).

The recognition that science carries out its work in a context – specific research conditions that change over time – resulting in diverse and even competing paradigms within the same field at the same time becoming more and more commonplace necessitated a paradigm shift in the research ideals itself (Osmer 2008:237). Now, pluralism and well-reasoned disagreement across different perspectives are viewed as academic strengths and signs of vitality. Scholarship also doesn't progress in a linear, cumulative fashion but makes imaginative leaps and paradigm shifts instead.

In the theological encyclopaedia, each discipline was seen as part of the larger whole, with its own distinctive contribution to be made (Osmer 2008:238). Each discipline contributes a part of the research process and then hand the problem over to the next discipline. However, the rediscovery of theology's distinct subject matter freed many theologians to reconsider the relationship of their research to Christian practice. This means that theological research should ground itself in and orient itself towards contemporary Christian practice in the church and public life. It begs an integrated approach towards the practice of all theological research. This insight receives further impetus when considering the fact that scholarship itself is a form of practice.

Thus, scholarship cannot be removed from practice as if it exists apart and isolated from practical matters. It is especially pertinent to the reality that scholarship is embedded in constellations of value, interest and power that structure the scientific field, institution in which they work and the social systems that impact the lives of people affected by the research undertaken (Osmer 2008:239).

This produces a paradigm shift to double reflexivity – researchers reflecting on their own field of expertise and their perspectives as form of scholarship and secondly reflecting on the contribution of their research on the interlocking natural and social systems in which life is lived (Osmer 2008:240).

The Christian faith indeed needs a new theological paradigm that explores the very nature of the church's testimony as shaped by Jesus and his mission. More specifically, the church needs an emerging, missional ecclesiology, as our current pluralistic, postmodernistic context is highly sceptical about the claims of Jesus as the Son of God. A brief must be presented, with arguments being advanced and defending witnesses brought forward under the power of the Holy Spirit, to give the Christian case a proper hearing (Trites 1986:1048-1049).

Gibbs and Coffee (2001:216) provide a schematic description of this new paradigm. To be thoroughly missional, churches must address each of the following four reference points with all the tension that it produces:

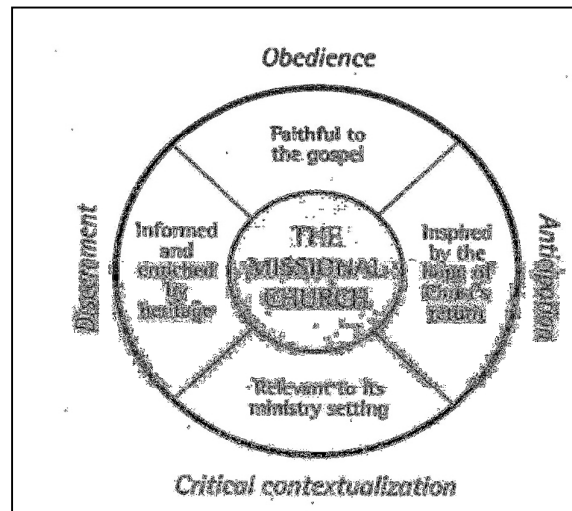


Figure 1 Reference points for missional churches
(Gibbs & Coffee 2001:215)

That is why the church is called to be faithful to the Gospel, while being constantly aware that it reads Scripture through its own, specific cultural lens. The church's prophetic task remains, however, to speak God's word, using understandable language and appropriate means into a world of rebellion and confusion. Thus, at the heart of an emerging, missional ecclesiology lays Scripture. Scripture serves as ancient mirror to discern possible contributions to our continued sharing of the mission of God. We have the responsibility to continue the move forward according to and in the freedom of the gospel of Christ, making it our duty to discern and articulate how believers can live up to the gift and responsibility of this gospel in our present situation (Gehring 2004:301).

1.3.9.4 Exercising Missional Leadership

The modernistic distinction between mission and evangelism seems to have skewed the church's ministry into a theological equivalent of the Christendom Paradigm. The church of the first (and subsequent) Christian generation was a genuinely missionary church and could count on the anonymous and unchronicled witness of all the faithful: *“Every Christian in Biblical times was a witness. Where there were Christians, there would be a living, burning faith, and before long an expanding Christian community”* (Neill 1986:21-22).

Until the sixteenth century the theological understanding of mission was exclusively in reference to the doctrine of the Trinity – the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Spirit by the Father and the Son (Bosch 1991:1). After the sixteenth century it was used to delineate the spreading of the Christian faith among people who were not members of the church. During the course of modern history this spreading was more associated with western nations' colonialist expansion into the two-thirds world and the bringing of their own, superior faith, than with presenting the gospel message. The spreading of the faith among people living within the borders of western – presumably Christian – nations was termed evangelism, the spreading of the gospel among people who no longer believe, to restore their faith and bring them back into the community of believers (Bosch 1991:409-410).

Currently, mission and evangelism mostly serve as synonyms of each other. Our interest obviously doesn't lie with evangelism as such, but the development of a theological theory of the missional church. The discourse about a missional church also further developed into a more nuanced view, searching for epistemological markers - transferrable theological principles – to develop an increasingly encompassing theological theory of the church's participation and integral part of God's mission to the world.

Therefore, the focus of investigation must also include studying the biblical corpus in search of a fuller picture of being missional. This includes investigating other possible contributing word-groups, possible narratives in the larger biblical discourse, and understanding the literary devices utilised to convey the messages put forward by the writers of the Bible. The purpose of this all is to exercise what Roxburgh (2009) calls missional leadership: *“It's about learning to become the one who calls forth, calls back into life and gives voice to the screaming voices, the choruses of voices out there in our neighbourhoods and communities.”*

As some consensus exists on the idea that the local church should function as locus for practicing theology (Schreiter 1985:22; Mudge & Poling 1987:158; Mead 1991:57, 1993:44; Gibbs & Coffee 2001:100), this move toward missional leadership has become an ecclesiological matter altogether, while intentionally becoming interdisciplinary in its approach.

1.3.10 Defining Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology functions as an umbrella term for the different ways the church is approached as subject of theological investigation (Smit 1997:34; Robinson & Wall, 2006:4).

Van der Ven (1993:10) understood ecclesiology as a theological theory of the church, to be distinguished from a sociological theory through its formal object. This formal object is the depiction and clarification of the church with regards to her future from the perspective of the gospel message.

Nel (1994:11) described the church as a dressing window of God's reign in its specific community. Later Nel (2006:13) wrote the church is called by God as chosen creation and continued genesis. The church must therefore function as the new humanity that was born as first fruits of God's love and that functions as one of God's gifts to the world as sign that He is still busy in this world. Ecclesiologically the church should only be busy with God's kingdom – to know the King, love Him and serve Him.

Dingemans (1996:218) understood ecclesiology as theological co-ordinate that integrates the tension between ancient message and contemporary culture.

Van der Watt (2000:438) described ecclesiology as the social gathering of the people of God where the church functions as God's family, with everything it implies.

For Hirsch (2006:285), missional ecclesiology is the area of theological study that explores the nature of Christian movements, and therefore the church, as they are shaped by Jesus and his mission. The attention is chiefly on how the church organizes and expresses itself when mission is the central focus.

Ecclesiology should therefore be understood as a hermeneutical theological theory, based on the testimony of Scripture, upon which the church develops and builds its operational practices. The authority of Scripture is after all built on the testimonies of and stories about God, with the command to its readers to allow these testimonies to form their lives through the leading of the Holy Spirit (Wright 1991:21). As such, the Bible has a normative function and its testimony must be taken into account in the formation of contemporary theological theories.

It remains a challenge to combine the social and narrated worlds of the text in the attempts to assert its meaning in a contemporary theological theory (O'Day 1995:345). To this regard the formation and nurture of Christian communities remains the crucial task when reading the New Testament theologically (Fowler 1995:408). Theological reflection has at its core the purpose to serve the church, which has the task to live the faith (Burger 1999:9-10).

Such wise reading of Scripture requires the transformation of peoples' lives and that of the common life of the Christian communities in which these people find themselves. This transformation into communities of wise readers must be understood in conjunction with the work of the Spirit (Fowler 1995:409).

The church, as community of believers, must therefore be understood as a missional community – witnesses of the ongoing work of God in this world. Their testimony can only be based on God's revelation - as preserved in Scripture. This is authenticated by organized redemptive deeds and missional structures towards society that stem from their subsequent spiritual formation as the result of this ongoing interaction between God and community. Bosch (1991:519) said:

It is not the church which undertakes mission; it is the missio Dei which constitutes the church. The mission of the church needs constantly to be renewed and re-conceived ... The missio Dei purifies the church. It sets it under the cross – the only place where it is ever safe ... Looked from this perspective mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.

The “enfleshing of God” through the mission of Jesus is so radical and total that it qualifies all subsequent acts of God in the world and serves as a theological prism

through which the entire missional task to the world should be viewed (Frost & Hirsch 2003:35).

Frost & Hirsch (2003:36-37) noted four theological implications that the incarnation has on the church's missional task:

- The Incarnation embodies an act of profound identification with the entire human race, as Jesus' human form was his true form and figure. Thus, God is showing the extent to which he loves humankind (John 3:16) and his will to experience unconditionally what it means to be human.
- In Christ, the divine took on a local habitation and name. It wasn't a momentary theophany, but constituted an actual dwelling among people (John 1:14). The life of God incarnate became through this a spreading complex of personal being centred in Jesus and annexing his companions.
- In Jesus, God came into direct personal contact with the human race which He so loves. He became one of us. This presence of God through Jesus will define God's mission to the world. The Incarnation is an event in heaven as well as on earth. In Jesus God meets each human being personally. This makes the possibility of a personal relationship with God a reality.

An attempt to present an integrated ecclesiological scheme was previously undertaken (Smit 1997:178). This schematic presentation of “ecclesiological markers” was subsequently revised (Smit 2008b:167) to look like this:

	IDENTITY	GROWTH	SERVICE
<u>INDIVIDUAL:</u> GOD- IMAGERY	A covenant community called together by the Father.	New life through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.	Empowerment by the dynamic inner work of the Holy Spirit.
<u>GROUP:</u> RELATIONAL IMAGERY	A life of gratitude in the presence of God.	Leadership as gift of the body of Christ.	The church as a household.
<u>MINISTRY:</u> MISSIONAL SERVICE	LEITOURGIA Worship geared towards the glorification of the Triune God.	KOINONIA Gift-based ministry aimed at the edification of the congregation.	MARTURIA Witnessing through one’s life aimed at the expansion of God’s new world.

1.3.11 Conclusion

In an effort to grasp the complexity of the challenges facing the church in the twenty first century, ***the research problem that presents itself is the implications of the cultural paradigm shift on the church’s mission and theology.*** These implications cannot be sufficiently addressed since the church is still rooted in a scholastic, modernist scientific paradigm. These insufficient efforts result in mounting

problems challenging the church to collectively start thinking from a new theological paradigm altogether.

The new theological paradigm is not adequately developed yet. Theological and ecclesiological theories that tried to account for the paradigm shift have been met with mixed results and reaction. It was either too pragmatically cultural or inadequately grounded in Scripture. Growing consensus exists about the need to understand the church as missional at the core. This is a return to the apostolic age where the early church functioned as a minority movement in society and lived the testimony of Jesus as integral part of her identity.

As more than two thousand years have since passed, this apostolic paradigm must be interpreted in view of the current cultural paradigm, thus necessitating a comprehensive ecclesiological theology based on grounded hermeneutics.

1.4 JOHN'S GOSPEL AS HERMENEUTICAL SOURCE FOR A MISSIONAL THEOLOGICAL PARADIGM

1.4.1 Why the Gospel of John?

The question of a Johannine ecclesiology is a critical field of study within Johannine research (Brown 1966: cv). Not only is classic ecclesiological

terminology (people of God, Bride, etc) absent from the Gospel, it also shows signs of an individualised Christianity (Beasley-Murray 1991:102) - with a visible focus on individual faith to obtain life - at the expense of the corporate-collective character of the rest of the New Testament where it is carried by the concept, the kingdom of God. The word ἐκκλησία doesn't even appear in John's Gospel (Beasley-Murray 1991:102; Van der Watt 2000:438; Potgieter 2000:2). Little explicit ecclesiological terminology appears in the Gospel and this leaves the impression that the historical context in which the Johannine community lived, should rather be investigated (Potgieter 2000:9-10).

John's Gospel has been successfully depicted as a “*two-level drama,*” in which the Gospel simultaneously tells the story of Jesus and of the Johannine community” (Koester 1991:52). This two-level story tells of Jesus as the crucial manifestation of a cosmic struggle between light and darkness, John 1:5 (Lindars 1990:13): The historic circumstances of Jesus' ministry forms the stage on which the ultimate cosmic drama is played out and Jesus' victory, John 16:33, is the act in which the light finally overcomes the darkness and God's plan of salvation for humanity is achieved.

In John's Gospel and 1 John, the *ina*-clauses – without any consideration of the tense – is utilised for the instruction of the members of the community (Kümmel 1975:229). This leads to the conclusion that John was written primarily to confirm and secure the Christian community in its faith. As the Gospel is carefully planned with a series of set pieces, each leading up to a dramatic climax – and it is controlled by dialogue or dramatic monologue – the readers are engaged on the side of Jesus

and are personally confronted with the decision which is set before Jesus' audience, making this text a very challenging one (Lindars 1990:13). Thus, John's writing has perennial power. This intentional involvement of the readers is aimed at them meeting Jesus personally as Lifegiver (Brown 1989:63).

It is exactly why this two-tiered narrative presents the possibility of an ecclesiological hermeneutic within a missional epistemology. The Johannine Christology confesses Jesus in a distinct way as the Christ that was proclaimed by the church (Thompson 1996:21). In the Fourth Gospel, all other theological issues – such as redemption, eschatology, pneumatology, and ecclesiology – are brought in direct connection with the Christology, necessitating a study of the distinctive ecclesiology of the Gospel (Beasley-Murray 1991:15; Bailey & Vander Broek 1992:172-173). All Christians acknowledge that in Jesus Christ God was fully present and moved into our world in an act of humble love the likes of which the world has never known.

The Gospel is furthermore a well-structured, closely-knit text in which the material is thoroughly interrelated (Van der Watt 2007:3). Therefore, any detailed investigation into passages, or themes, or words, should be done in conjunction with the whole of the Gospel.

The power of the oratory in John's Gospel is largely determined by its ability to create a linguistic, textual, imagistic world that addresses the needs and yearnings of a concrete religious community. It is in the encounter of tradition and community,

story and theology that the Fourth Gospel first found its voice (O'Day 1995:345). We are able to learn from this unique voice of John some crucial things about being missional church to people living in a time of transition.

The explicit use of symbolism in John's Gospel is an obvious characteristic, and differs from the use of parables in the synoptic Gospels (Dodd 1953:133-134). This further necessitates the task to consider the nature of the symbolism in the Fourth Gospel. Especially in light of the two-tiered character of the Gospel – describing the world from above coming to the world on earth - it makes sense that the Gospel cannot be read as a logical treatise with a central message (Van der Watt 1995:311-312).

The pictorial character of the Gospel and its emphasis on metaphoric imagery provide a key to understanding the message better, as stated by O'Day (1995:344):
“analyses of the structure, symbolism, irony, and imagery of John have enabled us to discern the distinctive voice of the Fourth Gospel ...”

John's depiction of Jesus' life and ministry unfolds pictorially in a two-tiered world of contrasts, with metaphors such as light and darkness, life and death, truth and lies. These contrasts form the theological presupposition for John's message (Van der Watt 2007:30) and provide the backdrop for his theology, the reason for the coming of the Son and provide a motivation for why there is hate instead of love and lies instead of truth in this world.

1.4.2 Μαρτυρία and The Gospel of John

The Fourth Gospel excellently shows how people are drawn to Jesus and God through testimony (Koester 1995:2). The revelation about God is given through Jesus' words and deeds, and the words about Him. For John, this testimony is carried by symbolic language, theological application of historical fact and metaphoric discourse. This is one of the theological building blocks of the Johannine symbolism – the fact that in his incarnation Jesus utilised earthly symbols to make God known. These symbolic deeds and words testify to such an extent that people are able to see the Creator (Koester 1995:2).

The word-group, testimony (or witness) - along with the word-groups pertaining to proclamation and evangelism, forms three of the core New Testament phrases that undergird the missionary identity of the Christian religion (Green 1984:56). It is all the more significant that the primary Greek word-group pertaining to witnessing is used extensively in the Gospel of John. Some 43 of the 73 instances of the verb, μαρτυρέω, appear in John and the Johannine letters, and 21 of the 37 instances of μαρτυρία, appear in the Johannine corpus (Schnackenburg 1972:227; Coenen 1986:1042). In contrast, μαρτυρία doesn't occur in the Gospel of Matthew, three times in the Gospel of Mark and once in Luke, while μαρτυρέω occurs only once in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and not in Mark (Morris 1971:89). According to Hendrikson (1959:76) the use of this word group is *“almost confined to the writings of*

John.” Because of this frequent usage, ***it seems obvious to suggest that the concept of witness has a more central theological significance to John than to other New Testament writers*** (Schnackenburg, 1968:251; Coenen 1986:1044).

Yet it would seem as if research on this word group has previously restricted itself to understanding John’s use of μαρτυρία as exclusively in a legal sense, as the word group found its origins in the realm of justice (Strathmann 1933:479). Beutler (1972:43) argued that the lexeme played a subordinate role in John as he was borrowing the meaning of the word from Jewish and extra-biblical Greek juridical literature and using it solely in that context. According to Maccini (1996:32) the entire sweep of John’s narrative drama takes the form of a cosmic trial between God and the world, with Jesus at the centre, with the use of the marturiva lexeme playing a central role in this trial. Thyen (2005:76) agreed with Beutler and called the lexeme a peculiarly heaped presence that is almost always used in a strict juridical sense.

This view is not shared with all commentators however (cf. Barrett 1978:159; Ridderbos 1987:56-57). Strathmann (1933:480) also noted that the μαρτυρία lexeme has a totally general application apart from its use in the legal sphere. It is therefore necessary to investigate the different translation possibilities of the word group.

Moulton (1978:18, 218, 258, 382, 388, 441) grouped the words pertaining to testimony as part of the lexeme derived from μάρτυς, ὁρος. He provided the following possible translations:

- ἀμάρτυρος, ου, ό
 - Without testimony or witness
 - Without evidence

- ἐπιμαρτυρέω, ᾠ
 - To bear testimony to
 - To testify solemnly

- μάρτυς, υρος, ό
 - A judicial witness, deponent
 - In general: a witness to a circumstance
 - In the New Testament: a witness, a testifier to a doctrine
 - A martyr

- μαρτυρέω, ᾠ
 - To testify, to depose
 - To give evidence
 - To bear testimony, testify
 - To bear testimony in confirmation
 - To declare distinctly and formally
 - Passive: To be the subject of testimony, to obtain attestation to character
 - To make a solemn appeal

- μαρτυρία, ας, ή
 - Judicial evidence
 - Testimony in general
 - Testimony, declaration in a matter of doctrine
 - Attestation to character
 - Reputation

- μαρτυρίον, ίου, τό
 - Testimony, evidence
 - Testification
 - Testimony, mode of solemn declaration or testification
 - Testimony; matter of solemn declaration

- μαρτύρομαι
 - To call to witness
 - (Intransitive) To make a solemn affirmation or declaration, asseverate.
 - To make a solemn appeal

- συμμαρτυρέω
 - To testify or bear witness together with another
 - To add testimony

- συνεπιμαρτυρέω
 - To join in according attestation

- To support by attestation
- To confirm, sanction

- καταμαρτῶρέω
 - To witness or testify against

- ψευδομαρτυρέω
 - To bear false witness
 - To give false testimony

- ψευδομαρτυρία, ας, ἡ
 - False witness
 - False testimony

- ψευδόμεαρτυρ, ὄρος, ὁ
 - A false witness

According to Louw & Nida (1988:418), μαρτυρέω, μαρτυρία, μαρτύριον and ἐπιμαρτυρέω is similar in meaning: “*to provide information about a person or an event concerning which the speaker has direct knowledge – ‘to witness.’*” They deemed it possible that ἐπιμαρτυρέω is somewhat more specific in meaning than μαρτυρέω, but this cannot be determined from New Testament texts.

A second meaning of μαρτυρέω exists, namely “*to speak well of a person on the basis of personal experience – ‘to speak well of, to approve of.’*” As noun, μαρτυρία has the meaning, “*the content of what is witnessed or said – ‘testimony, witness’*” (Louw & Nida 1988:418).

A different meaning for μαρτυρία is also “*that which is said about a person on the basis of an evaluation of the person’s conduct – ‘reputation.’*” They also included συμμαρτυρέω (to provide confirming evidence by means of a testimony), ἀμάρτυρος (pertaining to not having a witness), συνεπιμαρτυρέω (to join one’s witness to that of others), καταμαρτυρέω (to witness against someone or some statement), ψευδομαρτυρέω (to provide a false or untrue witness), ψευδομαρτυρία (the content of what is testified falsely) and ψευδόμαρτυς (one who testifies falsely) in the lexeme (Louw & Nida 1988:418-419).

This overview clearly indicates that μαρτυρία has various possibilities for translation and as such the Gospel of John should be investigated against the background of the theological motif John had when he employed the word so frequently.

1.5 CONCLUSION

In this section the contemporary world in which we live was investigated. The investigation centred on the cultural paradigm shift that is currently taking place in western society, the traditional *heimat* of the church. Traditionally, society was

culturally enmeshed with the church and its influence – or hold – on values and norms. Religion was all-encompassing and served as the ultimate reference point in all matters for every member of society. This included the way scientific research was done, as the Biblical world view was accepted as scientifically correct, true and adequate for all forms of science.

In response to the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment – historical events pertaining to the arts (in the fourteenth century), theology (in the sixteenth century) and science (in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) - this superior position of the church was increasingly challenged. A process of secularisation started to take place that initially reduced the church's influence on society, then it contracted the expansive role the church played in society and finally it questioned the primacy of the Christian religion itself.

The twentieth century saw a second paradigm shift that was brought about by the explosion in technological advances made possible by the discovery of the computer, among others. Particularly in the area of media technologies this explosion served as a radical departure from the Newtonian cause-effect way of reasoning and a systemic, integrated and comprehensive way of processing knowledge started to become the dominant expression of contemporary culture. The impact of this developing multimedia paradigm, often called postmodernism, is visible in the general value systems governing communities, the laws that are passed and retracted by governments, and the debates waged in public and academic discourses.

The church didn't escape this paradigm shift unscathed. The effects of modernism reduced its public influence to shambles, while the postmodern impact on the church increasingly seems to challenge its traditional theology. The secularising symptoms of modernistic societies – decline in church attendance and involvement – and postmodern societies – a public exodus from the church in favour of alternative religions or spiritualities – is forcing the theological debate to look its modernistic premises squarely in the eye.

The question which is presenting itself all the more loudly as a research problem, is whether theology's traditional deductive-inductive approach to Scripture study is adequately representing the testimony of the Bible, especially when this way of doing theology is stuck in a modus of postulating theorems and inducing generalised rules and norms that should be accepted as singular truth derived from Scripture.

These questions arise as a direct result of the abovementioned explosion in the scientific corpus that includes knowledge to challenge and even contradict traditional Biblical teaching. The theories of evolution and the Big Bang and the creation narratives of Genesis One and Two serve as a point in case.

It is finally the sad reality of our day that more and more ordinary people leave the church (Nel 2003:19). The changing cultural paradigm has led to changing attitudes towards the church, and people are even starting to feel antagonistic towards the church instead of indifference only. People leaving the church display three possible attitudes (Nel 2003:21):

- People still believe, but they do not belong to a church anymore.
- People do not believe anymore and they don't belong to a church anymore.
- People do not care what the church does and says, as they have no real contact with any religious institution. All that's left is a vague sort of spirituality.

As Nel (2003:22) observed, because people have an inborn tendency towards being religious, they develop an own spiritual life that can be very, very far removed from the Christian religion. Is this perhaps the final curtain call for the church as we know it?

We also investigated the reason why the Gospel of John can facilitate a shift in the theological epistemology towards a missional ecclesiology, based on the frequent use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme in the Gospel. We saw how the necessity for a hermeneutic investigation into this lexeme arose from the disparity in John's

understanding of the word group. One group of researchers viewed John's understanding as exclusively within the legal context, while others saw a wider, more definite theological understanding based on John's christologically oriented soteriology.

To participate in the discussion on the shift towards an emerging, postmodern way of doing theology, it is therefore necessary to investigate the different pericopes in which the μαρτυρία-lexeme appears in conjunction with the broader narrative that forms its context. This asks for a hermeneutical investigation of some sorts.