

# C HAPTER TWO

*“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only who is at the  
Father’s side, has made him known.”*

(John 1:18 – N.I.V.)

## A HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

### 2.1 A FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH

Different hermeneutical methods are needed for reading the Johannine text (Van der Watt 2007:2-3). These cover a variety of questions related to the literary and theological structure, origin and meaning of the concepts used, origin of the Johannine group, and social-historical framework, among others. This utilising of different exegetical approaches helps to solve textual problems typical of the Johannine Gospel.

The Gospel of John is after all a multi-story phenomenon calling for a multi-disciplinary narrative methodology (Stibbe 1992:1).

In the research environment in which we are currently finding ourselves a hermeneutical framework should be developed that can be used as building block for theories of ecclesiological praxis. As it was discussed previously, no theological conversation can be left in an ivory tower of research alone.

The reflexive double-ring of theory and practice is compelling enough to take the next step to consider the research-implications and ask the practical, “what next?” questions as well. An important aspect of theological reflection is the ability to identify and analyze real problems and formulate theories that strive to provide adequate and valid solutions (Van Huyssteen 1987:187).

The exegetical research framework from which this study is conducted will include:

- A textual hermeneutic pertaining to the research question at hand.
- An ecclesiological hermeneutic to facilitate theories of ministry practice.
- An epistemological metaphor to integrate these into a comprehensive union.

## 2.2 UNDERSTANDING EXEGESIS

Exegesis (where exegesis and hermeneutics often serve as synonyms to each other – Porter & Clarke 1997:5-6) comprises three levels of understanding: the semantic, the syntactic and the communicative effect of a text. According to Porter & Clarke (1997:6), the classic goal of exegesis has been to articulate the meaning of a text as the original writer intended it to be understood by his/her contemporary audience. It remains the purpose to unlock the full meaning of the text (Jeanrond 1991:85).

The challenge to understand ancient texts is similar to and yet more complex than understanding day-to-day discourse (Green 1995a:1). As with ordinary conversations, the exegesis of the ancient text attends to a speaker, a receiver, a communication context and a message.

The medium of communication should be taken into account as well - be it verbal or non verbal exchange on the one hand, or direct or indirect contact with the written page on the other. Other factors – for example: difficult translations, environmental noise that dampens discussion, the turn of centuries that affects the interpretation of the text – play yet another role in the hermeneutical process. To read a text, therefore, is to be part of the communication process.

It also leads to a number of contradictions (Green 1995a:2):

- Interpretation of the text can differ from person to person.
- A bigger difference between spoken and written communication develops.
- In spoken communication, the listener can ascertain whether he/she has heard correctly, while it is impossible with written communication.

This leads to a multitude of interpretation possibilities (Porter & Clarke 1997:17-18) and the practice of using a specific exegetical method that is determined by the specific interests of the researcher.

Traditionally, biblical interpretation has emphasized “*getting the meaning right*” (Green 1995b:413). This is evident in the historical-critical methods of hermeneutics that focused on the science of interpretation (Meylahn 2005:16). Books of the Bible were often treated as resources of historical construction rather than works of literature in their own right (Powell 1995:239). This resulted in a diminished focus on the theory and practice of the interpretation of texts for new readers. The question of the contemporary meaning of biblical texts was seen as part of the “*edification*” of the church (Gillespie 1986:194).

Hermeneutic research too often only treated biblical texts as “archaeological mounds” by isolating individual pericopes, forgetting that each pericope is in relationship with others which together create a carefully designed whole (Stibbe 1992:89). The practice of reading should be construed in a different way in order to shape human praxis, or behaviour (Green 1995b:412).

This leads towards a text-immanent interpretation (Barton 1998:9) of Scripture which isn't so much concerned with the historical meaning and context of a text as the communicative implications for later readers.

The third millennium church faces several challenges regarding the character of Christian identity. The main question for these challenges is how the church's identity should be formed by Scripture in an era where postmodernism eroded the authority of the Bible (Meylahn 2005:7-8). This stems particularly from the diverse possibilities to interpreting Scripture that, *“within the postmodern context, stand next to each other each as valid as the next”* (Carroll 1998:59).

Some danger signs present themselves due to these interpretational possibilities, particularly with regard to a reading of Scripture by superimposing theories culled from elsewhere, reading the Bible geocentrically – in other words, from the perspective of a person's own context and piety rather than from the context of God's revelation and His purposes (Wright 2009:23-25). If the Bible has lost its

authority and credibility, how could it be integral to the formation of the Christian identity of both believer and religious community?

Hauerwas (1981:53) provides an answer to this question: *“The authority of Scripture derives its intelligibility from the existence of a community that knows its life depends on faithful remembering of God’s care of His creation through the calling of Israel and the life of Jesus.”*

Scriptural authority should never be understood apart from the religious community in which it functions: A community, according to Hauerwas (1981:60), is a group of persons who share a history and whose common set of interpretations of that history provide the basis for common actions. The church is a community of faith which has been shaped by reliance upon the Bible, and which has made the Bible the foundational witness in its life (Fiddes 2000:46).

## **2.3 SOME HERMENEUTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Theological analysis involves both the processes of description and interpretation (Van der Watt 2007:27): Available and relevant material in a particular book on a specific topic is gathered and described according to the question what the text has to offer in relation to a particular theme or issue. This information should henceforth be interpreted within a proper methodological framework that corresponds to the nature of the New Testament book being used.

Logical relations between the different elements in the text should be explained and motivated, striving to understand not only what the original author wanted to say, but also why, how and on the basis of which presuppositions he is arguing a particular point of view.

In the process of hermeneutical analysis, extra-textual material such as the socio-religious context of origin, the social dynamics of described events, or the origin of concepts used, serve an important function (Van der Watt 2007:29). To prevent the analytical process from becoming predetermined by these factors, the analysis of theological content should be conducted descriptively by looking at the content under investigation in its interrelatedness.

The interpretation and understanding of this theological content should then be enriched by credible extra-textual information. In this way the text is able to function as a mirror that invites audience participation in the creation of meaning (Powell 1995:240).

Several exegetical processes exist to allow a text to serve as a mirror. These include, among others narrative criticism, incorporating the insights from diachronic exegetical studies, and metaphorical theology.

### 2.3.1 Narratology

Narrative criticism, or narratology, is based on the assumption that certain universal characteristics are found in all narrative texts (Tolmie 1999:1). Three basic principles, upon which narrative criticism is founded, can be distinguished (Powell 1995:240-244): Implied Author, Implied Readers, and the Normative Process of Reading. Narratives presuppose a storyteller, a story and an audience, and between the author and the reader stand the text of this story.

Narrative criticism makes certain assumptions about a normative process of reading in exploring the expected effects of texts on their implied readers. These assumptions include (Powell 1995:242-244):

- A narrative is to be read sequentially and completely with all its parts being related to the work as a whole;
- Readers desire consistency and make connections necessary to resolve apparent tensions within a text in favour of the most consistent interpretation;
- It must be assumed that readers know certain things referred to in a text. On the other hand, it must also be assumed that readers of a text do not know certain things forcing the researcher to take into account his/her own assumptions about extra-textual knowledge;



- Normative reading also expects readers to accept the dynamics of the story world that are established by the implied author. Thus, when a biblical narrative includes miracles, audible communication from heaven by God, etc, narrative criticism opposes the “demythologizing” of these elements by trying to determine what actual historical occurrences might have inspired the narrative.

Narratology further interprets stories from the perspective of the implied readers who may be assumed to accept the value system that undergirds the stories they read. This particularly affects the reading of New Testament texts, where it is believed that God’s point of view defines truth and that the Hebrew Scriptures are a reliable guide for determining this divine perspective.

To achieve this interpreted reading of a text attention should be given to the narrative elements with which the author establishes communication with his/her readers (Stibbe 1992:10).

The following can be seen as some of the most prominent narrative elements that can be used (Powell 1995:244-248):

- Ordering of Events.



- Duration and Frequency of Events.
- Causal Links.
- Conflict.
- Characters.
- Characterization.
- Empathy.
- Point of View.
- Settings.
- Symbolism.
- Irony.
- Intertextuality.
- Structural Patterns.

These different aspects of a text should hence be taken into consideration to determine the possible intention of the message that is conveyed.

### **2.3.2 Diachronical insights**

Reconstructing the text can also be aided by the use of a diachronic approach. Also called source criticism (Stibbe 1994:1-2), this investigative technique looked at the flaws in a narrative and the interruptions to the flow of the story, providing evidence of more than one author. By utilising the insights provided by studies that followed this approach, we are able to better understand the different back-stories that function subconsciously in a text.

Since the decision is made to approach an ancient narrative with a text-immanent perspective – looking at the text in its final form as a work of literature – the contributing sources to the text help us to understand the social, cultural and sociological milieu in which the text developed and played a forming role in the different arguments made in the text.

After all, all language forms part of a specific social system. Accordingly, all language forms part of a specific social system. Accordingly, a researcher of ancient texts should also study the social functions that provide all language with a framework of significance (Gous 1993:70). A reader, with his/her own social system,

interacts with the social system of the text. This helps the reader to understand him/herself better (Barton 1995:73; Vos 1995:235).

According to Malina (1983:121-122), one should deliberately enter the social system of a text. This prevents horizon displacement. This approach consists of the study of a text by the concurrent use of exegetical and sociological disciplines, its principles, theories and techniques (Elliott 1982:6-8). It is risky to place too much emphasis on the sociological background of texts, as it can create speculative reconstruction. Therefore, a pure sociological approach to Biblical exegesis leads to the development of heuristic models, usable investigative designs that stay relative in nature. One can only make limited use of the sociological systems of text, developing an appreciation of the social context of a text, specifically to unlock the meaning of individual pericopes (Brown 1989:58).

### **2.3.3 Metaphoric Theology**

A third approach that will enable the development of a hermeneutic framework towards a missional ecclesiology is the study of metaphoric theology. According to Joubert (2007:84), the wider theological discourse of the past decades turned its attention more and more towards metaphorical theology. This grew from the realisation that metaphors provide a key to understanding general religious language. It is also realised that the core symbols of the Christian religion are expressed through metaphors (Koester 1995:6).

Narratives often employ figures of speech and other symbolic language that readers must understand in a way that transcends the most literal application (Powell 1995:247). Similarly, settings such as weddings and seasons may be infused with symbolic meaning. Symbols are connecting links between two levels of meaning in a story (Stibbe 1992:19). It serves as the connecting links between two spheres, the sphere of the symbol itself and the sphere which the symbols represent (Stibbe 1992:27).

Metaphors can never have fixed meanings and their effect cannot be predicted with any degree of accuracy (Vos 2003:182). Metaphors are explosive, and their force hurls people towards new insights and blasts open new worlds. Therefore, metaphors have certain functions (Vos 2003:183-189):

- Metaphors create tension by helping to understand the unknown in terms of the known. They create a bridge, an interaction between the matter and the image.
- Metaphors link related truths by drawing the attention to two realities that are linked in some way.

- All language is permeated by conventional metaphors, that is, metaphors based on everyday experiences that by implication structure the way in which people think and communicate with the world.

Metaphors therefore function within a network where primary meaning is derived from the total sentence and not words individually. Therefore, one should never lose sight of the fact that numerous metaphors are not confined to a single closed context but may be spread over the whole text.

A metaphor is a way to move from the known to the unknown (Nisbet 1969:4). Metaphors can be employed to serve as an operational model when it is employed reflectively and critically to deepen one's theoretical understanding of the reality it depicts (Dulles 1978:21) - on a technical level, every metaphor is supposed to contain a subject, or what is to be compared, and a predicate, or what gives the comparison, with a linking verb that creates the connection. Thus the structure of a metaphor is always S.L.P. or subject-linking verb-predicate (Chatelion Counet 2000:209).

Another approach to metaphors is the typological. This approach is more of a conceptual framework that classifies occurrences in terms of the characteristics it shares with other occurrences (Mouton & Marais 1989:138). Thus it serves as frame of reference for observation and data-capturing, making the eventual analysis easier. This approach to metaphors has a defining function in the creation of theological

theories, as it enables believers to provide sense and purpose to their faith framework (Gerkin 1991:17) and provides a way for them to align their lives according to Biblical intent.

## 2.4 AN OVERVIEW OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

The Gospel of John has a clearly stated purpose: “... *these are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so that believing you will have life in his name*” – John 20:30-31 (Brown 1971:lxviii; Morris 1971:39; Lindars 1972:24; Barrett 1978:134; Schram 1990:25; Stibbe 1994:6; Zumstein 2004:32; Van der Watt 2007:6). Yet the gospel seems to have an incomprehensive way in developing the themes and characters of its narrative (Van der Watt 2007:25) to achieve this purpose. The same themes that appear throughout the Gospel are being returned to in a spiral fashion. This is a frequently used literary device, known as inclusion, and gives the narrative an impression of coming full circle (Stibbe 1994:1).

As John's Gospel is wholly structured along the lines of an *inclusio*, it is necessary to arrange the interrelated topics through a responsible process of theological analysis and interpretation that can provide a clear summary of the message of the Gospel.

John's Gospel is composed of different episodes that follow each other sequentially in time, and in themselves these episodes are composed of actions in chronological

sequence as people respond to each other. At the same time the narrative also includes several passages of hortatory discourse that provides the Gospel with a definite prescriptive address (Schram 1990:24). Thus, it would help us in our investigation if we investigate the logical flow and content of the narrative.

This unique way of presenting the message of Jesus, Son of God (Van der Watt 2007:6), makes John's Gospel a document with a very specific purpose (John 20:30-31). Christologically, to believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and – Soteriologically - to have eternal life in his name through believing (Morris 1971:39-40; Van der Watt 2007:10). The more specific aim of the Gospel was to aid *“non-Christians who are concerned about eternal life and the way to it and who may be ready to follow the Christian way if it is presented to them in terms that are intelligibly related to their previous religious interests and experience”* (Dodd 1953:9).

A vast treasure trove of resources for the unlocking of the Johannine themes exists. It can mostly be found in the Gospel itself (O'Day 1995:344), as well as in the Johannine epistles (Von Wahlde 1995:379). However, it is difficult to unlock these resources as the Gospel is a heterogeneous document with the worlds of text and context tangled with each other. The Fourth Gospel's theological and historical complexity accordingly creates an obstacle to any unilateral or simplistic explanation (Schnelle 1992:1). A few examples will suffice:



- The problematic of the conflict with the Jews in John's Gospel shows that conditions towards the end of the first century CE, when the strained relations between church and synagogue were close to disruption, should be taken into consideration when studying the Gospel (Lindars 1990:19). One of the social functions of John's narrative was to bring encouragement, vindication and purpose to Johannine Christians in the wake of the traumatic associalization which the controversy with Jewish figures produced (Stibbe 1992:61).

John's story of Jesus is also the story of a community in crisis and the narrator used his narrative and its literary devices to address the pressing social needs of his day while telling the story of Jesus.

- The Johannine narrative should furthermore be studied against the background of the Old Testament and Graeco-Roman narratives, as it shared in many of the subtleties of the Hebrew and Graeco-Roman cultures (Stibbe 1992:11).
- It is also necessary to become acquainted with the sort of people who comprised the Johannine church as well as understanding the range of the wider audience to which the Gospel might be addressed (Lindars 1990:45).

- To understand the Gospel adequately we also need to know how the Johannine Christians relate to other Christian communities in the first century. One avenue of research is to compare the Johannine writing with the thought of the various social and religious groups of the ancient world, looking for any point of contact with their writings (Lindars 1990:45). This could determine what kinds of people belong to the orbit of John's thinking.

The other method involves studying the Gospel for references to contemporary conditions and provides important clues to the context of the Gospel and the time when it was written.

- The Johannine community struggled to redefine its faith in a variety of social contexts in the course of the last twenty five years of the first century of the Common Era (Von Wahlde 1995:379). It should be accepted that the fourth Gospel is firmly rooted in the general environment of this era's primitive Christianity (Dodd 1953:3-133; Lindars 1990:46-66).
- The writers were also acquainted with several non-Christian concepts. John's Gospel was fully knowledgeable with Rabbinic Judaism (Brown 2003:138-139) and perhaps even the Qumran sect (Moloney 1993:61; Brown 2003:139-142) and in touch with Hellenistic Judaism as represented by Philo (Brown 2003:129-130). They also could have had contact with the higher pagan

thought of the time as represented by Hermetic literature (Brown 2003:130-132).

It also had exposure to the Gnostic thinking of his time (Brown 2003:116), but this is reflected in the Johannine literature more by contrast than by affinity as John remained a stubborn obstacle to docetism (Hill 2004:467).

- It can also be argued that John was written for Greek speaking Christians, of which a notable group would have had Jewish roots as they were banned from Jewish communities and synagogues (Wengst 1981:80; Koester 1995:19).
- John was also written as a response to social crises (Stibbe 1992:56-61). Accordingly, the focus on the social setting and the Johannine community's functioning there-in opens more interpretation possibilities (Rensberger 1989:15).

From these complex origins it might be possible to attempt a reconstruction of the different phases of the Johannine community's history from the chapters of the Gospel, as the chronology of the narrative could probably mirror the history of the community (Brown 1979:20-21).

In John's Gospel the narrator appears throughout in the third person, standing outside the action with a privileged view and understanding of the words and works of Jesus. In this role, he succeeds in binding the different themes and situations presented in the Gospel together. This happens, among other things, through the following:

- He can see inside Jesus' mind and serves as authoritative interpreter of Jesus' words.
- He observes from a post-resurrection viewpoint under the influence of the Old Testament and the Spirit-Paraclete (Stibbe 1992:20).
- He provides explanatory remarks, such as to explain names (John 1:38, 42) and symbols (John 2:21, 12:33, 18:9); to correct possible misunderstandings (John 4:2, 6:6); to remind readers of related events (John 3:24, 11:2); to re-identify characters in the narrative (John 7:50, 21:20).

John frequently presents other characters that are saying and doing things they do not fully comprehend, but which the reader fully understands. It is closely related to John's use of dualism, where irony is employed in the dualism between misunderstanding and understanding, darkness and light (Stibbe 1992:18). There is a common pattern in John's narrative in which Jesus' hearers misunderstand something He has said, taking something He meant metaphorically in a literal sense,

leaving the narrator to clarify the ambiguity (Steyn 2008:142). Irony is used repeatedly in the fourth Gospel to lead readers into that dimension of truth regarding Jesus which most of the characters in the narrative world seem to miss (Stibbe 1992:27). According to Duke (1985:156), irony in the Johannine message is so crucial that a reader will not be able to grasp the Gospel if he/she doesn't grasp the irony.

The author of John shows a preference for structuring material into units of seven and/or three. This is evident through the following: Seven discourses, seven signs or miracles, seven ἐγώ εἰμί, sayings with predicative nominatives; Three Passovers, Pilate's threefold protestation of Jesus' innocence, and the three equal sections of the passion narrative (Stibbe 1992:17).

Finally, John's Gospel can be grouped into the following thematic blocks (which, incidentally, also form the outline that will be followed for the hermeneutical investigation further-on in the study):

John 1:1-18	-	Prologue
John 1:19-12:50	-	Jesus' public ministry
John 13-17	-	Jesus' conversation with his disciples
John 18-20	-	The death and resurrection of Jesus
John 21	-	Epilogue

## 2.5 A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ LEXEME

In the Gospel of John, the μαρτυρία-lexeme is used particularly in the service of the Johannine concept of faith. In the Johannine Gospel, all faith is seen as a response to testimony. John therefore adopts the above-mentioned words specifically to express the event of the divine communication of revelation in all its aspects (Schnackenburg 1972:227).

The following table explores the frequency of μαρτυρέω in the Gospel of John:

μαρτυρέω	μαρτυρία
John 1:7	
John 1:8	
John 1:15	John 1:19
John 1:32	
John 1:34	
John 2:25	
John 3:11	
John 3:26	
John 3:28	
John 3:32	John 3:32
John 4:39	John 3:33
John 4:44	

John 5:31	John 5:31
John 5:32	John 5:32
John 5:32	
John 5:33	John 5:34
John 5:36	John 5:36
John 5:37	
John 5:39	
John 7:7	
John 8:13	John 8:13
John 8:14	John 8:14
John 8:18	John 8:17
John 8:18	
John 10:25	
John 12:17	
John 15:26	
John 15:27	
John 18:23	
John 18:37	
John 19:35	John 19:35
John 21:24	John 21:24
<b>32 TOTAL</b>	<b>12 TOTAL</b>

As this clearly shows, usage of the word group in the Gospel of John is limited to the two basic words pertaining to testimony, μαρτυρέω, μαρτυρία. The impression also exists that μαρτυρία is used almost exclusively in conjunction with its verb.

The uniform usage of the basic verb and noun suggest that a closer look be taken at the different forms in which the words are used, in an effort to establish the different translation possibilities in the respective contexts. As John preferred to use the verb more than the noun, it makes sense to investigate the occurrences of μαρτυρέω.

OCCURRENCE	VERB FORMAT
John 1:7 – μαρτυρήση	Past subjunctive, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 1:8 – μαρτυρήση	Past subjunctive, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 1:15 – μαρτυρεῖ	Present indicative, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 1:32 – ἐμαρτύρησεν	Past indicative active, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 1:34 – μεμαρτύρηκα	Perfect indicative active, 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular
John 2:25 – μαρτυρήση	Past subjunctive, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 3:11 – μαρτυροῦμεν	Present indicative, 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural
John 3:26 – μεμαρτύρηκας	Perfect indicative active, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person singular
John 3:28 – μαρτυρεῖτε	Present indicative, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person plural
John 3:32 – μαρτυρεῖ	Present indicative, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 4:39 – μαρτυρούσης	Present participle, genitive feminine singular
John 4:44 – ἐμαρτύρησεν	Past indicative active, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 5:31 – μαρτυρῶ	Present indicative/subjunctive, 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular
John 5:32 – μαρτυρῶν	Present participle, nominative masculine singular
John 5:32 – μαρτυρεῖ	Present indicative, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 5:33 – μεμαρτύρηκεν	Perfect indicative active, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 5:36 – μαρτυρεῖ	Present indicative, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 5:37 – μεμαρτύρηκεν	Perfect indicative active, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 5:39 – μαρτυροῦσαι	Present participle, nominative feminine plural



John 7:7 – μαρτυρῶ	Present indicative//subjunctive, 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular
John 8:13 – μαρτυρεῖς	Present indicative, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person singular
John 8:14 – μαρτυρῶ	Present indicative/subjunctive, 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular
John 8:18 – μαρτυρῶν	Present participle, nominative masculine singular
John 8:18 – μαρτυρεῖ	Present indicative, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 10:25 – μαρτυρεῖ	Present indicative, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 12:17 – ἐμαρτύρει	Imperfect active, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 15:26 – μαρτυρήσει	Futurum indicative, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 15:27 – μαρτυρεῖτε	Present indicative, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person plural
John 18:23 – μαρτύρησον	Past imperative, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person singular
John 18:37 – μαρτυρήσω	Past subjunctive, 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular
John 19:35 – μεμαρτύρηκεν	Perfect indicative active, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
John 21:24 – μαρτυρῶν	Present participle, nominative masculine singular

To obtain further clarity on the subject matter, a few cursory remarks on the Greek verb usage is necessary. Even though such knowledge is presupposed for this study, these remarks enable the research process to present a better understanding of John's repeated use of certain modes of the verb in the lexeme. It can also clarify whether this usage is stylistic or technical.

The indicative mode of a Greek verb is used to present events as a fact (Cronje *et al* 1988:1-20). The present tense is a zero-time verb and is used in contexts where:

- An event happening in the present is shown.
- The run of events happening in the present is shown.
- An event that happened in the past is merely shown.
- An event that will happen in future is shown.
- A timeless statement is made.
- A planned or attempted action in the present is shown (Cronje *et al* 1988:2-68).

By using the imperfect mode, events happening in the past are presented (Cronje *et al* 1988:1-30) with the aim of sketching background or décor to a narrative (Cronje *et al* 1988:1-34). The imperfect tense also depicts a previous event as continuing or repeating itself (Cronje *et al* 1988:2-57). It is used in contexts where:

- The continuation of an event in the past is shown.
- The repetition of an event in the past is shown.
- An event is described as background to another event in the past.

- A planned or attempted action in the past is shown.
- A condition in the past is shown (Cronje *et al* 1988:2-69).

The difference between the imperfect mode and ordinary past tense lies in the fact that the aorist presents depicted events that happened in the past as a statement of fact (Cronje *et al* 1988:1-79). It is used in contexts where:

- An event occurring in the past is shown.
- The beginning of an event in the past is shown.
- The writer of a letter refers to his/her own writing in the present.
- A generally valid statement is made (Cronje *et al* 1988:2-69).

The verb form in the future indicative active mode is used to present events that will happen in the future (Cronje *et al* 1988:1-72). It is used in contexts where:

- An event happening in the future is merely mentioned.
- A generally valid statement is made.

- An event as well as an order is presented (Cronje *et al* 1988:2-70).

By using the perfect indicative active mode of a verb, the speaker or writer wants to present the state of affairs either in the present or the past (Cronje *et al* 1988:2-70).

When a Greek verb in active mode is used as participle, either it has one of two functions, to serve as an adjective that characterizes another noun or as a verb that depicts a specific condition of an event (Cronje *et al* 1988:2-150). When used as adjective in a specific context:

- A present participle is used to depict the run of events.
- A past participle is used to merely mention an event with no regard to repetition or duration.
- The perfect participle presents the state of affairs of an event (Cronje *et al* 1988:2-160-161).

When used to depict the specific condition of an event, the time mode of participle depends on the verb in the main sentence. When used in this way, the participle depicts relative time. It is then used as follows:

- The present participle depicts events happening simultaneously with those in the primary verb.
- The past participle depicts events that happen before those of the primary verb.
- The perfect participle depicts the state of affairs when the events in the primary verb are taking place.
- The future participle depicts the purpose of the events that are described through the primary verb – in this case, it serves as an alternative to the infinitive form of a verb (Cronje *et al* 1988:2-166).

To discern whether the participle is used as an adjective or to present the specific condition of an event, it must be established whether the participle is used as an attribute (Cronje *et al* 1988:2-174).

When used in passive mode, Greek verbs use the grammatical subject of the action to refer to the receiver of the action and refer to the agent of the action by using the preposition *ὑπό* and the noun in its genitive mode (Cronje *et al* 1988:3-22). When the agent is not a person, the noun depicting the agent is in dative mode (Cronje *et al* 1988:3-23). The passive mode of a verb is only visible when used in the perfect or past tenses (Cronje *et al* 1988:3-32). Most verbs in their medium mode are translated as the corresponding verb in its active mode (Cronje *et al* 1988:3-113).

When used in subjunctive mode, the verb is used in the following ways in secondary sentences (Cronje *et al* 1988:3-165):

- As another way for sentences depicting a purpose. It is then used in conjunction with ἵνα and ὅπως.
- In indirect speech the subjunctive is used in conjunction with ἵνα.
- When used in a conditional sentence, the subjunctive mode of the verb is in conjunction with ἕάν.
- As a secondary sentence depicting time the subjunctive mode is used in conjunction with ὅταν.
- In a relative secondary sentence, the subjunctive mode is used in conjunction with ὅς ᾗ.

When used in a primary sentence, the subjunctive mode of the verb is used as follows (Cronje *et al* 1988:3-165):

- In past subjunctive mode with μή to depict a negative command.

- In past subjunctive mode with οὐ μή to depict definite denials.
- In 1<sup>st</sup> person singular or plural to depict deliberative questions.
- In 1<sup>st</sup> person plural to depict its hortative use.

Greek verbs can finally be used in optative mode. This mode is used to depict an event as possibility or an uncertainty (Cronje *et al* 1988:4-132). The optative mode of a verb only appears in present or past tense. When used in a primary sentence, the optative mode of the verb depicts a wish. When used in a secondary sentence, the optative depicts either a condition or indirect speech (Cronje *et al* 1988:4-136).

When depicting a condition, the optative presents events as an improbability in a fixed construction with εἰ. In indirect speech, the optative is used to present a possibility or uncertainty (Cronje *et al* 1988:4-137).

From this, the following tense usage of μαρτυρέω can be surmised:

Present Indicative	13	Imperfect Indicative	1
Present Imperative	0	Imperfect Imperative	0
Present Subjunctive	0	Imperfect Subjunctive	0
Present Optative	0	Imperfect Optative	0
Present Participle	5	Imperfect Participle	0
Future Indicative	1	Past Indicative	2

Future Imperative	0	Past Imperative	1
Future Subjunctive	0	Past Subjunctive	4
Future Optative	0	Past Optative	0
Future Participle	0	Past Participle	0
Perfect Indicative	3		
Perfect Imperative	0		
Perfect Subjunctive	0		
Perfect Optative	0		
Perfect Participle	0		

It is clear that John showed a preference for simplified verb usage. He prefers to use the indicative mode of the verb to any other possibility. It could betray mere technical usage, enabling the research process to the meaning and context to specifically focus on the appearances of μαρτυρέω where the verb mode digressed from the general indicative use.

John was aware of the classic understandings of the word-group. He infused it with specific meaning to fit his theology however, and it can be seen in the following three aspects (Coenen 1986:1045):

- Witness is testimony to or of Christ in pointing to Jesus (John the Baptist as well as the Scriptures);
- Witness is testimony to or of Christ in Jesus' testimony of Himself.



- Witness is testimony to or of Christ in referring to Jesus in the proclamation of the disciples.

One should be aware, however, to build a theological superstructure into biblical words that they were not intended to bear. This is especially true when taken into account that these words are used in a specific context as part of a larger narrative. If we ignore this, we run the risk of misunderstanding the Bible (McKnight 2008:56). Our textual hermeneutic will therefore be reading through the text of John's Gospel as a unit, while investigating the instances where the μαρτυρία lexeme appears. Wherever the text expects the search for broader context to enhance the understanding of the word usage, attention will be given to the related questions.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we looked at the hermeneutical processes necessary in the quest for a theological paradigm that can adequately answer the challenges of the developing cultural paradigm. The whole epistemological scope of theology as academic discipline is involved in this quest, as postmodernism initiated an academic paradigm shift away from a rationalistic focus on verifiable knowledge.

The proposed method of exegetical study combines narrative criticism with metaphoric research and some diachronic analysis of John's Gospel within the context of a text-immanent approach that utilises a sequential reading of the text. The specific pericopes in which the μαρτυρία lexeme appears are investigated closely to obtain a clearer understanding of its meaning and the ecclesiology implied by its usage. The Gospel of John was thus explored through a bird's-eye view. The primary purpose was to achieve an orientation point for the discussion on John's understanding of the testimony of Jesus and His followers.

The second part of the conversation should be geared towards the development of a missional ecclesiology based on the insights gleaned from the Bible reading. This should be presented through an integrative metaphor, enabling us to contribute a better understanding of the developing theological conversation about the church's position in the new world developing around us.