



MARTURIA IN THE GOSPEL OF  
JOHN

*Towards an Emerging, Missional Ecclesiology within  
a South African Dutch Reformed context*

by  
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## ABSTRACT

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.*

The study is precipitated by the accelerated pace of change our society is currently experiencing. The technological developments of the past fifty years created a society that is totally dependent on the technology it developed. This dependence led to the developing of a new cultural paradigm in which the church is ill at home. Not only are the ecclesial structures ill-adapted to effectively minister to people who increasingly live in a different cultural milieu, but also the premises upon which its theology is built, has increasingly come under scrutiny.

The question of an emerging, missional ecclesiology is therefore not only a question of developing new ministry praxis. Neither is it a matter of reframing theological theses with new metaphors. A growing realisation exists of the need for theological research from the perspective of this developing new paradigm.

Theology needs to turn to Scripture in a quest for such answers and it is proposed that a *hermeneutic approach* should be taken towards this investigation. This exegetical study is conducted from a New Testament perspective, specifically

focusing on the Gospel of John. It is done through a sequential reading of the Gospel with special emphasis on the pericopes that contain the word-group, μαρτυρία.

Finally, the insights gathered from this study are systemized into a framework that aims to contribute towards the further development of an emerging, missional ecclesiology. It will be argued that ecclesiology serves as the integration point for reflection and practical missional ministry. As such, the church as object of investigation is the ultimate technological praxis, as the community of believers serves as the show-case of God's presence in this world, as sacrament of his redemptive mission, and as mediator of the governance in his kingdom.

## OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

In **Chapter One** attention is given to the changing cultural paradigm and the implications this holds for ministry as well as for theology. These changes are presented as the study's research problem. The Gospel of John is also introduced as a case study in the ongoing development of an emerging, missional ecclesiology as foundational cornerstone to a postmodern theological paradigm.

In **Chapter Two** the framework from which the hermeneutical study is undertaken, is established. A bird's eye view of the Gospel of John is attempted and a preliminary investigation into the μαρτυρία lexeme is also undertaken.

**Chapter Three** investigates the testimony of John the Baptist, as recounted in John's Gospel from John 1-4.

**Chapter Four** reads the second part of Jesus' public ministry, starting with John 5 and continuing until John concludes his narrative of this section of Jesus' mission in John 12.

**Chapter Five** studies John's account of Jesus' conversation with his disciples in John 13-17. It also reads John 18-21, which comprises of the Passion narrative and the Epilogue to the Gospel.

In **Chapter Six** the matter at hand will be the development of an emerging, missional ecclesiology as a result of the exegetical study of John's Gospel.

Finally, we **conclude** the study by exploring some issues that need further investigation.



## KEY WORDS

Gospel of John

Witness

Ecclesiology

Epistemology

Missional

Paradigm shift

Emerging

Christology

Testimony

Theological Theory

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# 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
<b>Scientific Insight</b>	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
<b>World view</b>	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
<b>Secular Authority</b>	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
<b>Technological Driving Forces</b>	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
<b>Communication Culture</b>	Oral story telling	Printed reading	Passive television viewing	Digital, interactive internet
<b>Scriptural Authority</b>	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
<b>Ecclesiology</b>	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
<b>Ethics</b>	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
<b>Worship Style</b>	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 church 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:

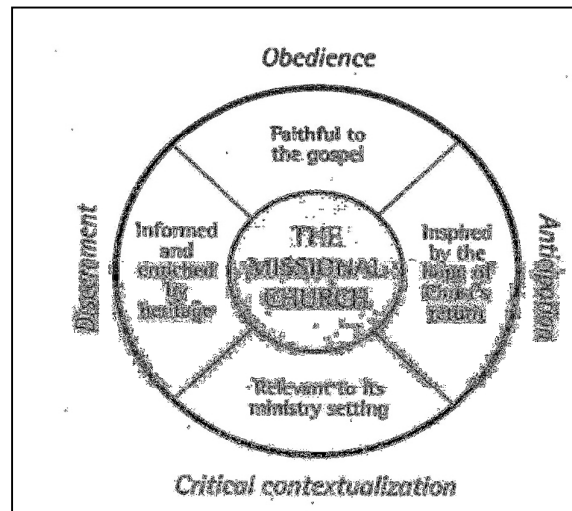


Figure 1 Reference points for missional churches (Gibbs & Coffee 2001:215)

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:

	<b>IDENTITY</b>	<b>GROWTH</b>	<b>SERVICE</b>
<b><u>INDIVIDUAL:</u></b> <b>GOD- IMAGERY</b>	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.
<b><u>GROUP:</u></b> <b>RELATIONAL IMAGERY</b>	A life of gratitude in the presence of God.	Leadership as gift of the body of Christ.	The church as a household.
<b><u>MINISTRY:</u></b> <b>MISSIONAL SERVICE</b>	<b>LEITOURGIA</b> Worship geared towards the glorification of the Triune God.	<b>KOINONIA</b> Gift-based ministry aimed at the edification of the congregation.	<b>MARTURIA</b> 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, ᾧ
  - 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, ᾧ
  - 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, ὄ
  - 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.

# 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:lxxviii; 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.

# C HAPTER THREE

*“Thus, John unfolds for us here on the lips of John the Baptist a whole christology.”*

(Brown 1971:58)

## JOHN THE BAPTIST (JOHN 1-4)

### 3.1 REVISITING THE STRUCTURE OF JOHN’S GOSPEL

The overall structure of John is fairly clear and generally recognisable (Painter 1997:574), since the particular situations in which the Johannine narrative unfold can be used as a criterion for the order and structure of the Gospel (Morris 1971:65-69; Van der Watt 2007:11-12). As shown in Chapter Two, events unfolding from John 1:19 up to John 12:50 can be grouped together as it represents John’s take on the public ministry of Jesus.

For the purposes of our investigation into the use of μαρτυρία, two chapters shall be devoted to Jesus’ public ministry, i.e. this chapter investigating John 1:19-4:54 and the next one looking into John 5:1-12:50.

The unity of John 1:19-4:54 is based on the common theme of the ministry of John the Baptist (Staley 1986:251). In all the pericopes that tell the story of John the Baptist the μαρτυρία-lexeme is used. This can be seen as a possible cohesive marker and as such allows the grouping together of these passages for the purposes of investigation. The thematic unity of John 1:19-4:54, as it will be expanded upon in due course, lies in the common theme of how the identity of Jesus as the Christ and how people recognise Jesus as the Christ. In this, the μαρτυρία word-group takes a very prominent position.

The specific pericopes containing the μαρτυρία-lexeme are:

- John 1:1-18.
- John 1:19-28.
- John 1:29-24.
- John 2:23-25.
- John 3:1-15.
- John 3:22-30.
- John 3:31-36.
- John 4:39-42 (detail consideration will be given to John 4:1-30 as this forms part of the context of the aforementioned pericope).
- John 4:43-54.

The Gospel's overall structuring follows a thematic-pictorial building-block pattern. It presents one theme after another and then returning later to an earlier previous thought to expand on it again. This makes it necessary to read the text synchronically, which means it will be read sequentially from verse to verse and chapter to chapter as the text now stands (Moloney 1993:2). Passages not included in the abovementioned list will only be glossed over.

### **3.2 INTRODUCING THE FIRST WITNESS**

John 1:1-18 has been called a defining text about the incarnation of Christ (Hirsch 2006:131). It forms an integral part of the Baptist's story as it introduces his testimony in an unequivocally clear way. The Prologue, however, doesn't primarily deal with the Baptist. It should rather be seen as a confession of faith, a vision of the world from the perspective of faith arising from the manifestation of glory by the Word who became flesh (Painter 1997:579), provides the rational basis of the positions which are taken for granted in the rest of the Gospel (Lindars 1990:96) and tells of the marvellous coming of God into human history through Jesus Christ.

We find here a poem presenting two different orders of being (a philosophical concept) distinguished by the measure of reality they possess. The one is the order of pure reality, transcendent and eternal, which is the very thought of God, and the other is the empirical reality. The Prologue beautifully demonstrates the incursion

into the lower, empirical order by the higher, transcendent order – an increasing dominance of light over darkness, being over not-being and truth over error (Dodd 1953:295). The word befitting this manifestation, is σάρξ (John 1:14; 3:6).

But how does one go about with an anomalous passage such as this one? We should at least make an effort to pay the poetical genre in which it was written, some respect.

### 3.2.1 Retelling the Story

*Thus, we should begin with the beginning. After all, that is where John started. Accepting that we are supposed to know something about the Old Testament, John recalls the creation story of Genesis 1. Through this back-story he reveals the real reason for God's creation: to speak it into existence; to make his words personal; to become a real part of it and by so doing to show his unrelenting love; and to show how true life can be found. Because the God of Genesis is also the God of John and He can be seen, touched, heard and spoken to. He who was, is and will be forever has also become ... human.*

*Alluding to the vast darkness covering creation, God spoke into it life and life became light, and light cast aside all vestiges of the darkness. Now all people can see how God looks, who He really is, and what it means to live in his loving presence.*

*Then there was this guy, an ordinary human being. He had a mission. He was to speak as well. But his words cannot create. It can only testify. His mission was to tell about the light, to share his knowledge of the Word, to reflect upon his personal involvement with God-who-became-human. He was to be so eloquently passionate about the Word who spoke creation into existence and then personally came to earth to shine a light in the spiritual darkness that remained, that everybody can see through his words how God on earth looks, and believe the testimony. His name was John, better known as the Baptist.*

*The thing with darkness, also, is that it creates doubt. It covers truth. It enslaves people through its ability to blind sight and heart. Darkness causes people to not believe. It causes them to reject the truth and choose the lie instead. It causes them to continue stumbling along through life, unable to see what riches life really holds. Darkness is very black closest to home. If you know the story of Genesis, as John expects you to, you also know how deceptively easy it is to fall for true-sounding lies. And if you believe any old thing you are removed from all light, living in the bondages of sin, eternally estranged from the Word who spoke you into existence.*

*Not anymore. If you accept the testimony of John you discover the light in the dark tunnel is actually at the door of the home of your real Father. If you take the light and live your life in its light, you receive a new surname, God's. If you make the connection between metaphor and reality, believing that this One is really who He claims to be, you are part of a heavenly family. And that's because God decided it will be so.*

*Therefore, what needs to be believed is that God, after speaking – the Word – became man, living on earth with us, exuding the real image and purposes of His spiritual self, giving Himself a true life identity.*

*Remember John’s testimony? He spoke about someone specific, somebody else we all saw. He practically yelled this guy’s true identity at us. He said: It’s Him! He is God! We discovered that He really is Him – He gave us grace like we could never have imagined. We lived under the law, expecting punishment. He gave life, forgiveness and the possibility to really see God.*

*His name is Jesus.*

### **3.2.2 Investigating the Prologue**

This - as set out above, then, is the strategy John had in mind when the author decided to include a poetic device before the prosaic part of the narrative (Moloney 1993:23-24). Now we are armed with enough information to adequately understand the story. We know what to expect: This pericope is all about “The Word” – or Jesus (Morris 1971:72). He is the hero of the tale (Stibbe 1994:6), although Jesus is only called “The Word” in two verses of the pericope (John 1:1, 14) and never again in this way in the rest of the Gospel (Phillips 2006:73).

It is only in here that John states absolutely and personally that the person Jesus is in fact the *λόγος*, the Word - spoken by God to reveal and create – incarnate (Dodd 1953:267-269; Klappert 1986:1114; Louw & Nida 1988:400). John verbally echoes the use of “to speak” in Genesis 1. The explicit linking of the metaphors of Light and Word provides the rationale of the Christology which is assumed in the rest of the Gospel, but not stated in the same philosophical terms as it is done in this pericope (Lindars 1990:74).

We must understand that the testimony of John the Baptist is helping us to grasp this fact. That is why, in John 1:15, testimony is presented through the historical present tense (*μαρτυρεῖ*), helping us to see it happened, John was there and now he will not keep quiet about it (Brown 1971:4). And the Baptist’s witness is continuing (Morris 1971:107).

The impression is strengthened by the use of the perfect tense in *κέκραγεν* (Brown 1971:15), having the value of a present tense, although appearing as something that is already happened and need to continue. Immediately this enforces the realisation that John wasn’t thinking along legal – or courtroom – lines when he uses *μαρτυρία*. He wants his readers to know the witnesses were people who were there, who saw it happen, who knew the persons involved, and who can attest to the truth of what he has written (Louw & Nida 1988:418).



As work of immense assurance and literary power (Lindars 1972:77), the Prologue thus describes the development of the plot of Jesus' public ministry (Culpepper 1998:116-117): While many did not accept Jesus who came to earth with the purpose to reveal God, there were those who believed in him and thus became God's children (Van der Watt 2007:12).

### **3.3 INVESTIGATING THE BAPTIST (John 1:19-51)**

#### **3.3.1 The Unity of the Narrative Sequences**

John 1:19-51 relates a succession of events taking place over a period of four days (Moloney 1993:53-55): John 1:19-28 – Day One; John 1:29-34 – Day Two; John 1:35-42 – Day Three; John 1:43-51 – Day Four. The unity of this as single narrative is suggested by the repetition of τῆ ἐπαύριον in John 1:29, 35 and 43. During the course of these four days, both “story time” and “plotted time” is featured – story time as the four successive days of the events depicted, and plotted time can be found through the Gospel's use of τῆ ἡμέρα τῆ τρίτῃ in John 2:1. The use of this specific wording possibly alludes to Exodus 19:10-19 (especially 19:16) where the phrase is used to stage the dramatic setting of the gift of the law given through Moses in Exodus 20 (Moloney 1993:55). Thus the time frame provided is more symbolic than chronological (Brown 1971:45).

Koester (1989:329) discussed John 1:19-51 as a single unit, showing how the different pericopes fit together structurally. The first two parts of this passage is organised as two passages each of approximately equal length (John 1:19-23, 24-28 and John 1:29-34, 35-39). Both in John 1:19 and John 1:24 John tells of the delegation from Jerusalem and refers to the Christ, Elijah and the prophet (John 1:20-21 & John 1:25). In the narrative pairs comprising John 1:29-39, τῆ ἡμέρα is repeated as well as John seeing Jesus coming or walking; the announcement, ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (John 1:29, 35-36) is made; and the word, μένειν, is repeated in John 1:32-33 and John 1:38-39.

The two narrative pairs are connected to each other through the presence of the Baptist, his reasons for baptising, the unknown character of the coming one (John 1:26, 31) and, more importantly, the Baptist's testimony.

### **3.3.2 Drama over Eschatology, while it's all about Jesus**

The telling of the Baptist's story starts quite dramatic. As he is busy with his ministry of repentance, a delegation from Jerusalem appears to investigate his ministry. This delegation from Jerusalem consists of priests and Levites - members of the party of the Pharisees (John 1:24) – to question him on his actions (John 1:19) and report back, probably to the Jewish religious authorities in Jerusalem (John 1:22). At the time John was on the other side of the Jordan River – probably seen from the

perspective of coming from Jerusalem near Bethabara – where he was busy baptising people (John 1:28).

The question they asked him (“who are you?”), could relate to his perceived identity or to his authority or to the social grouping to which he belonged. John testified unequivocally that he is not the Christ (John 1:20), creating the impression he answered them from the viewpoint of his identity. They followed their question up with a clearer seeking of his identity, by wanting to know if he is the prophet Elijah or the Prophet (John 1:21), and John denied both. The delegation demanded that he explain himself (John 1:22), upon which he used the opportunity to explain his position in this unfolding scenario (John 1:27) and, more importantly, show the Jewish authorities that they do not know the real Messiah (John 1:26).

Yet, John does not want his readers to focus on any legal drama. The scene gets introduced with the suggestion that the Baptist’s testimony, to which he referred in the opening sequence (John 1:15), is linked to and now being continued: “καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου ...” (John 1:19a – Lindars 1971:102). To underscore the idea that this is an opportunity to explain his testimony, John emphatically used the same word, ὁμολόγησεν, tautologically (Brown 1971:45), placing it on either side of its semantic opposite, ἠρνήσατο, to underscore the contrast that is created here (John 1:20). This word means either “*to profess one’s allegiance*” or “*to acknowledge a fact publicly, to admit or to confess*” (Louw & Nida 1988/1:419-420). John wanted us to grasp the clarity with which the Baptist acknowledged his non-identity, his role in the

play, his authority to minister – thereby leaving his readers with a clear picture of the identity of the Christ (Morris 1971:130).

The first sequence of the Baptist's testimony presupposes the reader's knowledge of eschatological expectation in Jewish religion (Newman & Nida 1980:30). By baptising people, the Baptist was performing an eschatological action, while preaching a message of divine intervention filled with eschatological concepts popular among Jews (Brown 1971:46). John's eschatological teaching was based on concepts current within Judaism and he employed these thoughts to show how Christ fulfilled them (Brown 1986:928).

As this testimony is not about himself, but about The One of whom John the Baptist testified about in the first pericope, the Gospel aims to introduce the character of the One who will fulfil the Jewish leadership's eschatological expectation (Moloney 1993:61). The Baptist's answer, Ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ Χριστός, should be understood as a reference to the expecting of a future Davidic king that would supposedly liberate Israel from foreign oppression (Newman and Nida 1980:30).

In John 1:21 the back-story of Jewish eschatological expectation becomes clearer (Newman & Nida 1980:31): The question whether John the Baptist could be the prophet Elijah is a reference to Jewish belief based on Malachi 4:5 that this prophet would return at the end of times to prepare the way for the Messiah (Lindars 1972:103). In any case, they had good reason to suspect John is claiming to be

Elijah. The synoptics' description (in Mark 1:6) of the Baptist's attire and diet correlate with Old Testament references in 2 Kings 1:8 and Zech 13:4 (Brown 1971:47). What they were trying to ascertain, therefore, was whether the Baptist fit in their concept of the intended Messianic precursor they wanted to associate with the Baptist (Moloney 1993:61).

As such, John refused to fit into any of their Messianic categories or that of his way-bearer, choosing instead to tell them that actually they do not know the Messiah (John 1:26). To achieve this, he claimed the role the Isaian voice presented through a quote from Isaiah 40:3, implying that his ministry was to present God to Israel. In the context of Isaiah 40, the Baptist's quote alludes to the role angels played in the good news of the arrival of the end of punishment for Israel's sins - They act like "a modern bulldozer" and level hills and valleys to make a "superhighway" for God's arrival (Brown 1971:50). God will be coming to show his might and therefore a road in the desert must be made for this appearance.

The delegation responded by questioning his baptism practice if he isn't the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet. With this, they probably shifted their questioning to the Baptist's authority (Brown 1971:51). In reply, the Baptist repeated and continued his earlier testimony (John 1:15). Instead of focusing on him, he turned the attention to Jesus, and He told them that among them are a person whom they do not know, he is to come after John but He existed before John.

Brown (1971:53) calls this a reference to an apocalyptic strain of messianic expectation where the Messiah's presence on earth would be hidden until he is shown unexpectedly to his people. The Baptist's authority (or power or status), therefore is of such a nature that he isn't worthy enough to perform a job associated with a slave for him (to untie his shoelaces for him – John 1:26-27). The Baptist's testimony is to reveal to his interlocutors the identity of this "hidden" Messiah. The Baptist's remark in John 1:26 isn't meant to be reproachful (Brown 1971:53) as he later told everybody that he also didn't know the identity of the Messiah, further underscoring the argument of a hidden Messiah.

### **3.3.3 Testimony, Hearing, Seeing and Believing – An Alternative Interpretation**

Another possibility in the quest to understanding this remark exists. Koester (1989:327-348) examined the juxtapositioning of faith and signs in the Gospel in order "*to discern a coherent view of seeing, hearing, and faith in the relevant portions of the gospel ...*" (Koester 1989:328). Maccini (1996:107) concurs and says the issue is whether people respond with belief or unbelief to Jesus' revelation in signs and words. In the narrative sequence ranging from John 1:19-51 the depiction of the Baptist and his disciples is in striking contrast to the delegation from Jerusalem. Their questions centred on the abovementioned messianic expectations and how the Baptist fit into this scheme of thinking. He "negatively confessed" that he is not the Christ, prophet or Elijah. Then the delegation challenged him on his baptism practice – once again falling back onto their messianic theological paradigm.

Against this backdrop, then, enters the remark of John 1:26 - μέσος ὑμῶν ἔστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἶδατε. Koester (1989:329) remarked that this reply suggests that the delegation's messianic paradigm didn't adequately prepare them to recognise Jesus as it raises the question of how someone recognises Jesus as the Coming One as well. John does, however provide information on how the Baptist and his followers came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. In this we then find a convincing argument for an implied ecclesiology where μαρτυρία plays a central role (Koester 1989:329-330):

- The Baptist's answer to the Jewish delegation (John 1:31, 33) acknowledges that he also did not know who Jesus was, but he was able to do so after God spoke to Him.
- In John 1:35-39 the words spoken to the Baptist were confirmed when he saw the Spirit descend and remain on Jesus. In John 1:34 the μαρτυρία-lexeme appears again (here as μεμαρτύρηκα). In this instance the Baptist presented his testimony as a conclusion to what he saw and heard, thereby confirming the fact that John uses the lexeme to indicate the Baptist's attestation that he was personally involved, he saw, heard and can guarantee the truth of the event. Thus, the Baptist can conclude about Jesus, ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

- In John 1:36 the Baptist repeated his remark about Jesus as Lamb of God, and this resulted in two of his disciples following Jesus (John 1:37) when they heard him say these words.
- In John 1:38 Jesus asked them what they wanted and, in stark contrast to the Jewish delegation's pressing questions concerning their messianic theology, they asked Jesus where He stayed, upon which He answered they must come and they will see (John 1:39).
- The text doesn't show anything extraordinary about this exchange, but in John 1:41 one of these men, Andrew, went to his brother telling him that he has found the Messiah.
- In a similarly ordinary way Philip is called (John 1:43) and he follows Jesus based on these words alone.

In turn, Philip told Nathanael that he found the Messiah, and Nathanael reacted sceptical, based on the reputation of Jesus' home town, Nazareth (John 1:45). Nathanael believed in Jesus, however, after he spoke to Jesus (John 1:48-49). This led Jesus to make the following insightful remark:



ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, ὅτι εἶπόν σοι ὅτι εἶδόν σε ὑποκάτω  
τῆς συκῆς πιστεύεις μείζω τούτων ὄψῃ. καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἄμην ἀμὴν  
λέγω ὑμῖν, ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ  
ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

(John 1:50-51)

In this last scene an interplay is found between Philip hearing Jesus making an out of the ordinary remark (πρὸ τοῦ σε Φίλιππον φωνῆσαι ὄντα ὑπὸ τὴν συκὴν εἶδόν σε – John 1:48) and him proclaiming Jesus to be the Son of God and the King of Israel (John 1:49), as well as in John 1:50-51 where Jesus remarked on Nathanael's faith based on what He said and the fact that he shall see greater things such as the heavens opened. As such, John successfully conveys the impression that through the testimony of John the Baptist, the true identity of Jesus was revealed (Lindars 1972:112). People believed the Baptist's testimony and got personally involved with Jesus. Through this relationship and the more intimate knowledge of Jesus, they made their own conclusions that He is indeed the Son of God.

For our investigation into an implied ecclesiology with μαρτυρία in a central position, the deliberate interplay in John 1:19-51 with the words, see, hear, speak, testify, and believe, is quite important. It also stands in contrast to the narrative sequence of John 2 that describes the miracle at Cana and the cleansing of the temple, where the chapter's concluding remarks – the off-the-cut observation by John about Jesus' attitude (John 2:23-25) – uses the μαρτυρία-lexeme to present a deliberate connection with the argument that believing in Jesus should rather be based on

seeing and hearing Him and the testimonies about Him. Nicol (1972:99) commented as follows about this interpretation possibility on John:

*... One is first struck by the fact that he is apparently critical of this kind of faith [based on the miracles of Jesus]. (a) He partly rejects it or regards it as of little value, (b) makes it clear that much has to be added to it, (c) but nevertheless maintains that the miracles have some significance as witnesses to Christ for those who need it.*

### **3.4 OF MIRACLES AND TESTIMONY (John 2)**

In John 2, Jesus' action in public places is used as a vehicle to reveal his glory as new Bridegroom of the feast at the end of times (through the miracle at the wedding in Cana) and the raising of His body after three days (through the cleansing of the temple). In this way He is declared as the new temple who makes God present and who fulfils and supersedes the role of the temple in Jerusalem (Dunn 1997:354). Incidentally, it is only John that tells the Cana story – it is unique to this gospel (Brown 1971:101). There is a definite replacement motif evident in this story, as the miracle provides a sign of who Jesus is, namely the one sent by the Father who is now the only way to the Father. All previous religious institutions, customs and feasts lose meaning in his presence (Brown 1971:104).

This section of John's story is concluded by a narrator's statement from John that Jesus didn't trust those who came to believe in Him based on his miracles (John 2:24) as He knows humanity. Not even the ongoing testimony (μαρτυρήση) about human nature will change how He views humankind. The interesting wordplay with ἐπίστευεν should be noted: It is used both in John 2:23 (meaning believe) and John 2:24 (meaning trust), in an imperfect tense denoting Jesus' habitual attitude.

John wanted his readers to understand that nothing was wrong with Jesus' miracles but He knew what was wrong with humankind (Nicol 1972:132-133). Jesus was looking for genuine conversion and true faith and not just enthusiasm for the spectacular (Morris 1971:206-207).

This unusual knowledge of Jesus by John is put to good use in John 2:25 to show how Jesus' knowledge stems from the fact that He actually is God, as the Old Testament (see 1 Kings 8:39) showed that only God is able to know what is in the thoughts of humankind (Morris 1971:207). This is why the use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme here is intentional. It demonstrates Jesus' ability to know humanity's attitude without having to base his knowledge on witnesses.

### **3.5 IN CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS (JOHN 3)**

#### **3.5.1 A Nocturnal Confusion**

The nightly conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus is introduced with the repetition of the previous pericope's last word, ἄνθρωπος, alluding to the fact that John's Gospel is actually continuing with the train of thought put forth regarding belief and wonders. As such, Nicodemus is depicted as part of a group of Jews who believes in Jesus partially and somewhat inadequately (Barrett 1978:208).

The clear identification of Nicodemus' status as a Pharisee and probably also a member of the ruling Jewish Council (John 3:1), underscores the idea that John intends to expand on the question of the Baptist's and later of Jesus' authority originally posted by the Jewish establishment, which the Baptist answered by testifying about Jesus' identity.

Nicodemus' opening remark thirdly stresses the continuation of the larger narrative line established up to this point as he confirms Jesus' Godly given status as teacher based on the σημεῖα he is doing (John 3:2).

Jesus' answer in John 3:3 is a typical stylistic figure in John (ἀμήν ἀμήν). Only in this Gospel the double amen is used, and it occurs 25 times. Its use is to emphasize what will follow and to confirm the truth of what is going to be said by Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980:51). It is therefore all the more surprising that the answer Jesus gave departs so radically from the statement posed to Him. Without addressing the matter of his authority – as implied by Nicodemus' remark – Jesus

launched into a discussion of the way a person will be able to see the kingdom of God.

For this He uses the metaphor of birth. John uses the phrase, βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, only in this pericope (here and in John 3:5). A more general use of βασιλεύς in the passion narrative explores the kingship of Jesus and the phrase here suggests Judaism's apocalyptic expectation of the miraculous vindication of Israel in the Kingdom of God and Jesus' criticism of their ignoring the necessity for inward conversion (Barrett 1978:207).

The kingdom is a common concept in John's Gospel and refers to God's rule in the lives of people rather than to a territory (Newman & Nida 1980:78). The intentional allusion to the Jewish belief in judgement, incidentally, also serves as a further stylistic contact between this pericope and John 1:19ff.

During the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, which has actually more the character of a monologue than a conversation (Lindars 1972:146), the following becomes apparent: A person has to be born a second time / from above to be able to receive / experience / enter / see the kingdom of God (John 3:3 – Barrett 1978:206; Newman & Nida 1980:78). Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus and reacted by questioning the possibility of being born again physically (John 3:4, 9 – Brown 1971:130; Van der Watt 1986/1:105).

According to Newman & Nida (1980:78) John characteristically uses words with a possible double meaning. This often serves as a means of transition in thought, based on the misunderstanding of the person with whom Jesus is speaking. Jesus here uses the misunderstanding as an opportunity to explain that what He means is referring to the necessity to be born from the Spirit along with a person's ordinary birth (John 3:5-7). The discourse stresses the point that the act of salvation depends on God's initiative and that the agent of salvation must originate with God through rebirth by the Spirit that only God can effect (Morris 1971:213; Van der Watt 1986/1:110; Lindars 1990:78).

John succeeds in this sequence to bring together two worlds – the Jewish expectation of the coming Kingdom and the Gospel's world that expresses salvation in terms of eternal life (Van der Watt 1986/1:107). The dynamic sense in which Jesus uses the concept of God's Kingdom shows he understands it as God's reign and not God's realm (Morris 1971:214). Jesus uses the example of the blowing wind as a parable to explain the inexplicable nature in the argument (John 3:7-8).

Here, we find yet another example of a double meaning as the word normally translated with wind also refers to spirit (Newman & Nida 1980:81). This metaphoric use tries to show the supernatural process of salvation that is invisible to the human eye and undeterminable (Van der Watt 1986/1:113).

### **3.5.2 The Use of *Μαρτυρία***

The stylistic change to the plural tense when using the μαρτυρία-lexeme (John 3:11) in contrast to the singular in the surrounding verses and the repetition of the theme of eternal life that also appears in John 3:36, connects this pericope to the story of the Baptist's testimony and the ongoing revealing of the identity of Jesus. The shift in verb tense here allows the reader to understand that Jesus refers to the collective testimony of Him as well as his disciples (Morris 1971:221).

According to Barrett (1978:211) this shift from singular to plural shows how Jesus associates with himself his disciples who have seen, believed and known. By deliberately using this lexeme, John's Gospel reminds us of the ongoing story of the testimony about Jesus that started with the Baptist, continued through his disciples and is now aimed at the collective of half-believing Jews of whom Jesus refuses to put any trust in their faith.

This is underscored by the fact that the final assertion mentioned in John 3:11 (τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἡμῶν οὐ λαμβάνετε) refers both to the ministry of Jesus and to the witness of the church (Barrett 1978:211-212). In this way, Jesus gradually changes from speaking about Himself to speaking about the testimony of the church (Nicol 1972:127), regardless if it is the author's theological school, the community for which he writes or any and every Christian to which the Gospel would reach out (Moloney 1993:115; Hägerland 2003:320-321).

Through this interesting word play, the possibility is opened up to read the text from the perspective of John's instruction, or general teaching, addressed to the faith community (Lindars 1972:155). Thus the narrative is seen through the lens of teaching about believing because the person knows Jesus on a personal level – through the testimony of those who were with Him and can personally attest to the truth of His words. One should always keep the process envisaged with the telling of the calling of Jesus' disciples in the back of our minds, since this could help us to see how a person's testimony, based on what has been seen and heard, can be the catalyst for somebody else's personal discovery of who Jesus is.

### **3.5.3 How to Become Part of God's World**

Jesus' reaction to the confusion of Nicodemus expands the argument presented in the previous passages by showing how people can become part of God's world. Jesus provides context on his words by stating that the nature of his remarks refers to earthly things, yet Nicodemus doesn't understand it. All the more will the incomprehension be if He speaks about heavenly things (John 3:12), or higher teaching (Morris 1971:222).

This is exactly why someone needed to come from heaven to earth to tell about these things. The only person who is able to talk about heavenly things is the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man (John 3:13). Jesus uses the expression,



Son of Man, frequently as self-designation, occurring in the Gospels over eighty times (Morris 1971:172). It is a literal translation from the Aramaic and means “man” or “the man.” Jesus uses it in a threefold way:

- It is a paraphrase of “I.”
- It refers to the heavenly Son of man, who will come in glory.
- It refers to the Son of man who suffers to bring humankind salvation.

The origin of the title, Son of man, should be sought in Dan 7:13, where a heavenly being was called “Son of man”. In John the term is always associated either with Christ’s heavenly glory or with the salvation He came to bring (Morris 1971:173). John understood Jesus’ usage of the title to express the fact that He is the one true mediator between heaven and earth, that He passes from one to the other and while living on earth He bestows on humankind the revealed knowledge and eternal life in which they, in turn, come to live in heaven (Barrett 1978:72-73). Through this all, the purpose of the title in this verse is to present Jesus’ credentials and heavenly origin (Brown 1971:133).

In the following argument the narrative alludes to the question of faith based on signs. Jesus uses the story of Moses putting the snake on a pole to cure people who

were bitten by poisonous snakes (Num 21:4-9) as a frame of reference. The chronology shifts to the future to emphasise the unique manner of exaltation: on the cross (Barrett 1978:213). It is uncertain whether John's Gospel only presupposes the knowledge of the crucifixion or if the somewhat shaded reference to this event is the narrative's way of expanding the overall argument of Jesus mission. As it is the case in John 2:12-22, we are led here to read the text from the perspective of Jesus' resurrection. The story wants us to grasp that the only sign worthy of causing belief is the one where Jesus is lifted up like the snake in the story of Moses – by looking at Him in this way, people will be saved (John 3:14-15).

Against this backdrop the use of μαρτυρία in John 3:11 shows us that Jesus' only testimony is about the things He knows and has seen, in heaven, having come from heaven Himself. As the verb is used in the plural and the allusion to His disciples is therefore implicated, it should also be understood as that they can only testify on what they know and has seen, namely their ongoing and developing relationship with the man Jesus, who came from heaven. This then is the only way to become part of God's world – believing the Son of man (his message and his death and resurrection) and receive spiritual birth through this faith (Morris 1971:224).

### **3.5.4 Loving a World that is Lost**

The shift in focus in John 3:16-18 provides the motive for which Jesus came to earth. It is all about God's love for a world that is lost, thus the Son is sent on a mission as

consequence of this love (Barrett 1978:215). Referring to God's love for the world is a distinctly Christian idea as it is part of the Gospel to believe God's love is wide enough to embrace all humankind (Morris 1971:229). Jesus didn't come to earth to judge, but to save.

This thought is paradoxical, as John states in John 9:39 Jesus came to the world for judgement. The resolution of the paradox lies in the fact that salvation presupposes judgement for those who do not believe, as the other side of the same coin (Morris 1971:231).

Although God's judgement is presented as a reality (John 3:18), the primary purpose of Jesus' mission is to provide the light by which people can live and do the things that should be done when someone is living in obedience to God (John 3:21). In this, faith is very important – and John presents this truth in a sentence construct where it appears both positively and negatively (Morris 1971:232): A person who exercises faith is not condemned/judged but the person who persists in unbelief has been condemned already. The emphasis on faith is produced by repeating the verb three times in this one verse – twice as πιστεύων, and thirdly as ἐπίστευκεν (Morris 1971:233).

The condemnation to which John refers in John 3:19, refers to the process of judging and not the sentence of condemnation (Morris 1971:233). The contrast between light and darkness links back to John's opening statement (John 1:1-4) and the contrast

between either accepting the light or rejecting it is used to describe the nature of faith itself. The emphasis on light (by being repeated five times in John 3:19-21) presents the twofold meaning it is employed here: Metaphorically light stands for “good” as darkness stands for “evil,” and as in the rest of the Gospel light also refers to Christ Himself. Thus this part of the narrative refers to Christ’s coming to humanity (Morris 1971:234).

Suddenly the reader is left with a decision to make: You either accept or refuse the saving revelation of the Father who sent the Son (Moloney 1993:119). Faith, according to this discussion, is to accept that Jesus actually came from heaven on this mission, to know Him and through Him to know God, and to live in the light Jesus provides on earth (John 3:18-21). A person who does the truth is the one who responds to the gospel invitation, the person who has life in Christ - the one on whom God has laid His hand – and that is the person who will not avoid the light (Morris 1971:235).

If we attempt to summarise the discussion with Nicodemus we see the following (Koester 1989:335): Nicodemus believed in Jesus because of the signs He performed, but he became baffled when Jesus started to speak about being born anew. The signs didn’t prepare Nicodemus to believe Jesus’ words, as genuine seeing implied one should enter the kingdom of God and having eternal life. This can only happen through a spiritual rebirth and a faith that receives, or accepts, Jesus’ testimony. Thus Nicodemus’ initial positive response to Jesus’ signs did not lead naturally to genuine faith.

Moloney (1993:109) has sympathy with Nicodemus, however, as he interprets the initiating verses (John 3:1-2) that Nicodemus came to Jesus to seek a confirmation of his convictions. Jesus then attempted to draw him beyond his own expectations. John leaves us with the impression that Jesus succeeded in moving Nicodemus past his initial inability to believe Jesus on the basis of his words, as he mentioned Nicodemus again later in the Gospel, in John 7:50-52 – where He came to the defence of Jesus in front of the Pharisees, and in John 19:38-42 - as one of the two men who buried Jesus.

### **3.6 RETURNING TO THE TESTIMONY OF THE BAPTIST (JOHN 3:22-36)**

#### **3.6.1 Setting the Passage in Context**

The narrative suddenly returns to the story of John the Baptist. John apparently protects the unity of the larger story corpus by linking this episode to the conversation with Nicodemus through the use of *μετὰ ταῦτα* (John 3:22). To Newman & Nida (1980:95) this pericope has only a loose connection with the preceding passages. They interpret the theme of this passage as how people flock to Jesus and become His disciples, although they admit it is not immediately apparent. For

them, this pericope establishes the theme by showing the superiority of Jesus over John the Baptist.

Yet they overlook the recurring use of phrases that also appear in the passage that previously told of John the Baptist, therefore they miss the continued focus on the Baptist's testimony and the unfolding of the implied integrity and character of Jesus throughout John 1:19-3:36. The repeated use of the following phrases in this section seems to re-iterate this:

- βαπτίζω
- ἐν ὕδατι
- μαρτυρία
- οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι
- σὺ τίς εἶ
- Ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ Χριστός

One of the exegetical challenges of the pericope of John 3:31-36 is identifying the speaker (Brown 1971:159). An abrupt change is made from John the Baptist's testimony to general remarks about the position of the One who comes from above.

Three possibilities exist as to who is speaking, and each possibility changes the interpretation possibilities of the passage (Newman & Nida 1980:100-101):

- The verses could be attributed to the Baptist, as he was the last first-person speaker in the narrative.
- The verses could be attributed to Jesus himself, as the style of the passage closely resembles his language in other parts of the Gospel.
- It could also be attributed to the writers of John because a parallel exists between this passage and John 3:16-21 in the sense that here we find the writers' commentary on the relation between Jesus and the Baptist in the same way as how they commented in 16-21 on Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus.

It can be argued that this passage represents the synopsis of the narrative that started in John 1:5, where the Baptist was first introduced. The same themes that formed the content of this larger section of text are repeated in this paragraph to provide a bridge to the rest of John's narrative on the identity of Jesus, his relationship with the Father above and his relationship with the people below who either believe in Him or don't.

### **3.6.2 A Conflict over Baptism**

John here returns to the Baptist's unique ministry of baptism and uses it as a framework for conclusionary remarks on the testimony of the Baptist. The tense in which βαπτίζω is used in John 3:22, suggests repeated or habitual action (Newman & Nida 1980:96; Moloney 1993:122-123). It seems that the text implies the passing of an amount of time between John's initial testimony and the telling of this event. The clues provided are Μετὰ ταῦτα (John 3:22) as well as οὐπω γὰρ ἦν βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν ὁ Ἰωάννης (John 3:24). The narrative includes specific information on the place of John's ministry (ἐν Αἰνῶν ἐγγὺς τοῦ Σαλείμ) and a chronological perspective placing it in a bigger contextual frame supported by the synoptic gospels, but only implied here (οὐπω γὰρ ἦν βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν ὁ Ἰωάννης).

The matter of ritual cleansing through baptism is presented here as a point of dispute between the followers of the Baptist and the Jews (John 3:25). The use of ζήτησις suggests that the dispute was not a mere discussion but more like a full-blown argument between the Baptist's disciples and Jews (Newman & Nida 1980:96-97).

Jesus is drawn into this argument (John 3:26). Some of the Baptist's followers went to him and brought it to his attention that Jesus is also baptising people. The narrative intentionally uses the μαρτυρία word group to draw attention to the fact that the Baptist reported only positively about Jesus, and now Jesus is doing what the Baptist is doing. It would almost seem as if Jesus is depicted as competition to the Baptist. The use of the perfect tense, μεμαρτύρηκας, indicates the continuing effect of



the Baptist's witness to Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980:98). It is as if his followers reminded him of the fact that he never ceased to speak positively about Jesus, and look what happens now. From this, however, one gets the impression that John wanted to tell his readers that the Baptist's testimony was not a once-off event as it would have been the case in a court case, but something he did frequently and continuously. The Baptist didn't cease to testify about Jesus.

Even in this conflict-laden situation the Baptist didn't stop to attest to the integrity of Jesus: "God gave Him the authority," the Baptist said – as this is how John 3:27 can be translated since the phrase, *ἐὰν μὴ ἦ δεδομένον αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*, is traditionally seen as "*merely a Semitic way of speaking of God*" (Newman & Nida 1980:98). "You have been there, you heard what I said. I said I am not the Messiah, but the one to go before the Messiah. Well it is He," the Baptist also said. Moloney (1993:125-126) asserts that this verse moves the narrative into the context of revelation, through the use of *ἀπεκρίθη ... καὶ εἶπεν*.

By referring to heaven, John refocuses the disciples' question from the greater authority on baptism to the source of all true gifts. As such, this is theological reflection and not merely a Semitism, providing the rest of John 3 as conclusion for the unity of the narrative between John 1:19 and 3:36 and creating an *inclusio* as greater probable basis for the inclusion of this pericope as part of the narrative of the Baptist's testimony.

The emphatic accent of ἀποὶ ὑμεῖς (John 3:28) should be read in conjunction with the use of μαρτυρεῖτε, as the use of μαρτυρεῖτε in this context may also be rendered as “you yourself heard me say” and perhaps more appropriately, “you can confirm with absolute certainty what I said as you were there” (cf. Newman & Nida 1980:99).

To further explain his role, the Baptist introduced another metaphor for comparison, and through this metaphor John’s Gospel also succeeds in providing some instruction about the character of testimony to the faith community for which he has written. The Baptist described how his function as preparer of the way is similar to that of the friend of the bridegroom at a wedding – he must listen to the groom’s arrival and joyously declare his presence to everyone (John 3:29). The narrative assumes here some knowledge of Jewish wedding practices of the time (Moloney 1993:126).

The exact meaning of the function of the friend listening at the door is not quite known, as the Greek phrase, ὁ ἑστηκὼς καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ, is a translation of a Semitism (Newman & Nida 1980:99). It possibly relates to the Jewish wedding practice where the groom proceeds to the bride’s house on the wedding day, accompanied by his friends with tambourines and a band (De Vaux 1973:33). The function of the friend, then, would be to announce the arrival of the groom at the house of the bride, indicating the start of the ceremony and festivities. With this as back-story, the Baptist probably tries to convey that his testimony is focused on ushering in the Messiah in a joyous way. Simultaneously, it also serves the purpose

to help the faith community reading about his testimony that they should act accordingly.

To this metaphor the Baptist adds the remark that he must decrease while Jesus must increase (ἐκεῖνον δεῖ ἀξάνειν, ἐμὲ δὲ ἐλαττοῦσθαι - John 3:30). The literal translation can be explained by John 1:30's view on greatness as here it must be considered in terms of importance - that is, the Baptist should become less important while Jesus becomes more important (Newman & Nida 1980:100).

### **3.6.3 Concluding the Testimony of the Baptist**

John rather abruptly departs from the testimony of the Baptist to provide his own commentary on the events that have transpired thus far (John 3:31-36). It continues the concluding thought of John 3:30 as well as referring back to the conversation with Nicodemus (Barrett 1978:224), in that one can only enter the world of God's kingdom through a birth from above. This is once again achieved by using ἄνωθεν, the word that created the initial misunderstanding with Nicodemus and forms the centrepiece of the perspective on God's reign (John 3:3, 31). The metaphor of heaven and earth as it was described in the first verses of the chapter is taken up again. The double meaning of ἄνωθεν seems to expand the reader's growing understanding of Jesus' identity and humankind's relationship with Him.

His testimony is on what he has seen and heard (John 3:32). This mirrors the remark Jesus made to Nicodemus in John 3:11-12 and here John uses this to expand the argument of John 3:16-20 that stated anyone who accepts - or receives or believes - this testimony will be saved. The use of *μαρτυρία* in these verses connects very directly with the idea that a witness was there and could see and hear what happened. This is probably why the tenses in *εώρακεν* and *ἤκουσεν* differ from each other, suggesting that the emphasis should be on seeing rather than hearing (Newman & Nida 1980:102). The passage focuses on the one sent from above who speaks, bears witness, gives authentic testimony, utters the words of God and it reflects a renewed interest in the word rather than the person of Jesus (Moloney 1993:128). This suggests a possible post-ascension focus on the ongoing testimony of the faith community who is continuing the ministry that Jesus started and is based on the example of John the Baptist's demonstration of authentic belief (Moloney 1993:129).

Through this, the acceptance of Jesus' testimony puts the seal on the belief of the one who accepts the testimony that God in fact exists. The use of the aorist participle shows John thinking of a decisive act whereby a person decides to accept Jesus and his witness instead of it being a continuous, day-by-day receiving of the witness of Jesus. Through this, the person sets his/her seal on the proposition that God is true (Morris 1971:245). Through this we can now see the interplay of metaphors – Jesus bringing light in the darkness, showing humankind how God looks, confirming his own Godly nature and showing how a person can have a new life by being born from above – through the testimony of the Baptist helps to identify what God really said (Newman & Nida 1980:103).

Thus, a seal is placed on the fact that God is true (ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής ἐστιν). Jesus, after all, was sent by God who gives the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). In this remark, John alludes to the testimony of the Baptist about Jesus' baptism, where God declared from heaven that the Messiah is the One on whom the Spirit rests (John 1:33).

Morris (1971:245-246) shows the implication of accepting this testimony in a very clear way:

*When a man accepts Christ he is not merely entering into a relationship with a fellow-man ... He is accepting what God has said. He is recognizing the heavenly origin of Jesus. He is acknowledging the truth of God's revelation in Christ. He is proclaiming to all his deep conviction that God is true.*

In John 3:34 the fact that Jesus was sent to do this, is pertinently stated. He comes from heaven and a person can only enter heaven by being born from above, or a second time, in a manner befitting the unique characteristic of heaven. It also alludes to the idea that His message is not accepted by all people, while those accepting it confirm the truthfulness of Jesus' testimony. It helps to understand that οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου δίδωσιν τὸ πνεῦμα implies God gave the Spirit completely (Newman & Nida 1980:104).

To this declaration John now presents the compelling argument that Jesus is loved by the Father, as John pictures a perfect unity in love between Father and Son (Morris 1971:247), to the extent that everything is given into Jesus' hands (John 3:35), therefore everyone believing in the Son receives eternal life (John 3:36). The verb, ἀγαπᾷ, is in the present tense and implies that the Father constantly and always loves His Son while the perfect tense of δέδωκεν indicates that what has been put in the Son's power remains within his power (Newman & Nida 1980:104-105). This can be put more forcefully: "*Jesus has complete authority to act in the Father's name*" (Barrett 1978:227).

Finally, the issue of God's judgement returns, as in John 3:19-20. In that context, a person has to act in truth as a matter of obedience to God and come to the light. Here one must act in obedience to Jesus to be exempt from the wrath of God. This represents a shift from mere belief in Jesus to total obedience to Jesus. The possession of eternal life here is put forward as a present experience of the believer (Newman & Nida 1980:105), suggesting that total obedience to Christ brings the believer into the family of God (cf John 1:12) in the current reality of the earth already. John is obviously not thinking of a single action in the future, but a pattern of life in the present (Brown 1971:162).

### **3.7 IN CONVERSATION WITH A SAMARITAN WOMAN, A VILLAGE AND A ROYAL OFFICIAL (JOHN 4)**

### 3.7.1 Jesus and the Woman from Sychar

With a masterful sense of drama and various techniques of stage setting, John has succeeded in forming this narrative into a superb theological scenario as one of the most vivid scenes in the Gospel (Brown 1971:176). The pericopes of John 4 relate thematically to the previous as well as following passages of John's narrative (Newman & Nida 1980:107): The mention of water in John 2:6-9 and 3:5 is expanded with the description of Jesus as the source of water in John 4. Lindars (1990:79) specifically argued that this passage presents Jesus, as mediator of the living water of divine Wisdom, as qualified to be the fulfilment of Samaritan hopes and, by implication, those of the whole world).

The mentioning of food in John 4:32-34 furthermore serves as the basis for further discussion in John 6. Especially the verses in John 4:1-4 serve as a transition from chapter 3, thereby linking the passages into one another as one thematic whole. Of particular importance to the larger conversation is the use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme in John 4:39. It therefore makes sense to provide an overview on the story of the Samaritan woman in search of contextual clues to the use of the word in this specific passage.

John 4:1 introduces the next episode of his narrative by starting with Jesus' discovery of the Pharisees knowing his disciples were baptising people. This

suggests that He was not directly involved in the previous discussion between the Jews and followers of the Baptist. It also creates the impression that the Pharisees did not approve of the practice of baptism, as John explicates that Jesus wasn't personally performing any baptisms (John 4:2). This pending conflict prompted Him to leave Judea to return to Galilee and the text thus places the story in the area of Samaria – the backdrop for John's next episode. Jesus and his entourage had to travel through this province to reach Galilee (John 4:3-4).

The use of ἕδει suggests a necessity because God's will or plan is involved, as in John 3:14, since it wasn't a geographical necessity for Jesus and his entourage to travel through Samaria (Brown 1971:169; Morris 1971:254; Barrett 1978:230; Stibbe 1994:19). It brought him to Sychar, a town with historic connections to Jewish history through the presence there of Joseph's well that was given to him by Jacob.

This narrative includes a substantial amount of contextual indicators, such as: Jesus was tired from the journey and he stopped at the well to rest (John 4:6); it was midday and not the usual time of day to fetch water as it would have been extremely hot at twelve noon (Moloney 1993:138). This pertinent time indicator suggests that the woman is attending to her daily chores outside the scope of accepted social norms. As language derives its meaning from the societal system and cultural context in which the communication originally takes place (Malina 1993:xi), this inference is based on the following cultural markers regarding ancient Judean culture:



- A woman's place was in the home and she was supposed to appear in public as little as possible, especially not at the busiest times of the day (Malina, Joubert & Van der Watt 1996:7).
- The practice to fetch water would not have happened at twelve noon, but early in the morning or late at night (Brown 1971:169; Stander & Louw 1990:45).
- The values of the first century were driven by honour and shame, with shame referring to specifically women's mindfulness of their public reputation (Malina, Joubert & Van der Watt 1996:8; Moxnes 2003:52). Given the provided context of John 4:18, it would be safe to assume that this woman was socially outcast from her group. Brown (1971:171) as well as Barrett (1978:235) showed how the Jewish people were allowed only three marriages and if the same standard applied to the Samaritans, which would be quite probable, her life had been markedly immoral.

The woman's religious position and the animosity between Samaritan and Jewish people are made equally clear - John 4:7-9, 20-22 (Barrett 1978:232). Placed together with the social conventions of the time, that dictated the appropriateness of conversations between men and women (Barrett 1978:228; Stibbe 1994:17), the final corner stone of the point that John is aiming to establish, is provided.

The ensuing discussion initially centred on the metaphor of water. In this, the conversation with Nicodemus - that a person must be born from water and spirit - is brought to mind (John 3:1-21). As with Nicodemus, an initial question is asked (John 4:9). As with Nicodemus, Jesus answers indirectly, opting to reply with a metaphorical remark with an unclear double meaning instead (John 4:10): Jesus speaks of the water of life and the woman thinks of flowing water. Whereas the word for well in John 4:6 was πηγή John uses φρέαρ in John 4:11. To Brown (1971:170) this indicates a shift from Jacob's well as source for living water (as πηγή is closer to fountain in meaning) to Jesus becoming the source of living water with Jacob's well a mere cistern (φρέαρ). This, as with Nicodemus, results in a misunderstanding on the part of the Samaritan woman (John 4:11-12), who is mystified because she got stuck with the literal meaning of Jesus' words (Stibbe 1994:18; Steyn 2008:147-148).

The misunderstanding is continued, as with Nicodemus, to serve as vehicle for Jesus' exposition on living water (John 4:13-15). And, as in the case of Nicodemus where ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι was repeatedly used, John here employs the repetition of ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ (John 4:10, 13), as well as λέγει αὐτῇ (John 4:16, 21, 26), to indicate the importance of Jesus' statements.

The turning point in the dialogue between Jesus and the woman seems to be when Jesus laid out her marital pedigree in John 4:16-18 (Moloney 1993:148-149). It is one thing to speak about water that can take away thirst. It becomes something

completely different when a total stranger accurately tells you about your marital situation.

The discussion shifts from here-on to the person of Jesus and opens the door for John to make the theological point he intended. The theological point is this: The Samaritan woman is unaware of the gift that God is giving the world and she doesn't know Jesus' true identity, otherwise she would have asked for water that provides life (John 4:10). This water that provides life is never-ending and is in itself producing water similar to a spring that wells up with water, providing eternal life (John 4:14). This eternal life causes the believer to worship God because he/she knows who she/he is worshiping.

Jesus intentionally tries to draw the woman into a deeper level of understanding on his person and role, with remarks such as *πίστευέ μοι, γύναι*, in John 4:21a (Moloney 1993:150). The remark in John 4:22 about salvation coming from the Jews, must be placed against the back-drop of the early church's Jewish origin and the fact that the Messiah is most definitely a Jew (Morris 1971:270), as well as the fact that John wants to remind us that this is an encounter between Jesus and the non-Jewish world, one of the missional themes of Johannine ecclesiology (Moloney 1993:151).

A time will come when everybody will be worshipping through spirit and truth (John 4:23) and not at a specific place of worship, because God is Spirit and He must be worshiped in the world of the spiritual - John 4:24 (Lindars 1972:189). This is that

hour, and it means that “*the only acceptable act of worship* (δεῖ προσκυνεῖν) *can be the total orientation of one’s life and action toward the Father, sharing already in the gift of the Father* (ἐν πνεύματι), *a gift that is all it claims to be* (καὶ ἀληθεία)” (Moloney 1993:152-153).

The Messiah is somebody who will proclaim everything about God’s spiritual world and how to worship Him in Spirit and truth (John 4:25). He is the fulfilment of all the Old Testament can offer by way of worship, a fact that the woman recognised and acknowledged (Barrett 1978:228). In this we follow the Samaritan woman struggling to understand who is speaking to her, progressing in her understanding of who Jesus really is (Moloney 1993:155-156; Steyn 2008:148).

Koester (1989:335-336) pointed out the following about this story: The Samaritan woman encountered Jesus without any knowledge of his signs. The encounter was initiated by Jesus, contrary to her experience of Jewish men, but she persisted in the conversation and was struck by Jesus’ surprising knowledge of her personal history. Her message to the townspeople technically presupposes a negative answer, although the context indicates that she is verging on the brink of faith. This technically opposes Moloney’s thesis (1993:157-158) that the woman refused to believe completely as the discussion moved her away from the securities of her own knowledge and rejected Jesus’ word.

The impact of Jesus' self-revelation to the woman is of such a nature that John 4:28 tells us she left her water jar at the well and returned to the town immediately (Morris 1971:275). There she proclaimed to her fellow townspeople that she met a man who has explained her personal history, leaving her to wonder if He could be the Christ (John 4:29). John explicitly repeats the wording of John 4:25 here, reframed as a question (Moloney 1993:157). Her message had such an impact on the townsfolk that they went out of the town to the well to meet Jesus (John 4:30).

The passage comprising John 4:31-38 will not be discussed in much detail here. As a possible bridge-passage – which leads the reader from one section of a narrative to the next (Moloney 1993:176) - it could better be read with the passage in John 6 (Moloney 1993:159). It also fits with the Johannine fashion of conducting a spirally formed, pictorial narrative. As such, these passages do not contain any reference to the *μαρτυρία* word group, therefore it is deemed as outside the scope of our investigation.

The following remarks, however, will suffice to place this interlude into context with the Samaritan story: Throughout the Samaritan story the disciples play a minor role. It is as if they fade into the background during the course of the narrative. They go into town to buy food; they return to find Jesus in an inappropriate discussion with the Samaritan woman, yet they keep quiet; when the woman leaves to call her townspeople they urge Jesus to eat something, seemingly concerned about his well-being.

Through this all it is clear that they misunderstand the intended level of Jesus' discourse (Segovia 1985:82-83): When they misunderstood Jesus' reply to their urging that He should eat, they miss the point that He is conveying, namely that His actual food is nothing less than the mission entrusted to Him by the Father (John 4:34). Their quiet discomfort about Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4:27) has to be clarified: it is actually part of Jesus' mission (John 4:37, 38b). They are also called to take an active part in this mission (John 4:38a) and must therefore be glad with Him (John 4:4:36) as this mission of theirs is very much at hand (John 4:35).

### **3.7.2 Jesus and the Townspeople of Sychar**

The narrative unfolds in the following way (Moloney 1993: 168): In John 4:39 the people of Sychar came to faith, based on the testimony of the woman, specifically her words, ὅτι Εἶπέν μοι πάντα ἃ ἐποίησα. In this, she precedes the apostles as one of the witnesses to Jesus along with John the Baptist, performing what is viewed as the task of a disciple (Barrett 1978:243). In John 4:40 the Sycharites ask Jesus to stay with them, to which He complied. In John 4:41 it is reported that πολλῶ πλείους believed in Jesus because of his word (lit. διὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ').

Finally, in John 4:42, the Sycharites spoke to the woman and told her they do not believe because of her words any longer, but because of what they heard, and they know Jesus is indeed the saviour of the world.

The greater significance of this narrative can be found in the remark, ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου. It indicates a definite global and wider-than-Jewish scope to John's intention of introducing Jesus as the Messiah (Barrett 1978:246; Moloney 1993:151).

### 3.7.3 Healing the Royal Official's Son

John now continues telling the story of Jesus' journey back to Galilee (John 4:43), picking it up from John 4:3. The narrative implicates a clear link to the first miracle in Cana (Moloney 1993:177-178) with both having the same general pattern and similarities in context (Brown 1971:194):

- ἦλθεν οὖν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, ὅπου ἐποίησεν τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον (John 4:46).
- Τοῦτο [δὲ] πάλιν δεύτερον σημεῖον ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (John 4:54). This statement should be read in conjunction with John 2:11, ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν

τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανά. Specifically the word order, *πάλιν δεύτερον*, should be seen as an implication that the two signs form a logical complement to each other.

The interconnectedness of the two signs is a hint that the miracles in Cana presents an example of the type of authentic faith which is described throughout John's Gospel and forms part of the instruction being given on the community's understanding as witnesses to the Christ. The word order in John 4:50b seems to confirm this, as *ἐπίστευσεν* opens the sentence (Moloney 1993:186) and the absolute use of the word means, "he became a Christian" (Barrett 1978:248). The specific information provided in John 4:52-53 regarding the time of the son's healing, also affirms that the outcome of authentic faith and the fact that, as the Samaritans' belief led them to knowledge of Jesus, the official's belief in the word of Jesus was based on the word only (Moloney 1993:187). It is intentional that John repeated ὁ υἱός σου ζῆ three times, in John 4:50, 51 and 52, as the basis of the miracle – the boy living – came through these spoken words alone.

This is further confirmed by the off-the-cut-remark on Jesus' thoughts (John 4:44), as it was in John 2:23-25: both passages have a similar function in the Gospel, that is, to introduce into the narrative the story of someone with inadequate understanding of Jesus' real power - Nicodemus on Jesus as giver of eternal life and the royal official on Jesus as giver of life (Brown 1971:188). In this verse *μαρτυρία* is used in a similar argument as John 2:25, and if linked together the seemingly incomprehensible character of the remark here gets new meaning and significance. Finally, the remark



made by Jesus in John 4:48, Ἐὰν μὴ σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα ἴδητε, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε, seems to confirm the idea that these miracles could be seen as some sort of instruction on the nature of authentic, or life-giving word-based (Koester 1989:336), faith - hence the negative comment on the side about the inadequacy of the Jewish people's ability to put their trust in, or honour, Jesus.

Some further considerations seem to underscore the point: The official came from Capernaum to Cana because he heard Jesus came to Galilee (John 4:47). This presupposes some belief in Jesus' prophetic abilities and reputation on his side. The use of κύριος in John 4:49 seems to suggest that the official saw Jesus as an ordinary person with special powers (Steyn 2008:149). Even after Jesus put him off with a sharp rebuke (Stibbe 1994:19), he persisted with his request, in a way similar to the persistence of his mother in John 2:5 (Moloney 1993:185). It should be noted that τέρατα is used in John's Gospel in John 4:48 only, and then in a negative sense, thus strengthening the idea that John thought judged an overemphasis on wonders as a blinding factor in revealing who Jesus is (Brown 1971:191).

The outcome of the narrative is depicted as the coming to faith of the official's whole household, who only heard the official's testimony of his encounter with Jesus (John 4:53). The apparent intentional use of ὁ βασιλικός (John 4:46) shouldn't be misread. The word can refer to any of the following: He could be a person from royal blood, or a servant to a royal household, or a soldier of the Herodian king or the Roman emperor, or a royal scribe (Brown 1971:190).

Taking into account that references to the world of Judaism gradually disappear (quite similar to the progression in the story of the Baptist's testimony moving from him to his disciples to Jesus) and move to references to the Samaritan world and finally the reference to a royal official in Capernaum, a Judean border town where a Roman garrison was located, we can assume that the weight of this circumstantial evidence seems to suggest he was a Roman soldier in the service the emperor (Moloney 1993:182-183).

Jesus' remark in John 4:48 could be seen as an indicator that the official was part of the wonder-seeking crowd in Jerusalem (therefore making him Jewish). The plural use of ἴδητε indicates an audience wider as only the official (Morris 1971:290). Thus John seems to continue describing the move away from Judaism to a global perspective on believing in Jesus, although this is disputed by Brown (1971:197). Lindars (1972:205) noted that the word, οἰκία (John 4:53), is a word from the vocabulary of Christian mission, further confirming the notion that John had some instruction regarding the faith community's missional identity at the back of his mind.

Moloney (1993:188) made the following conclusion in support of the interpretation that the narrative teaches its readers about authentic faith over and against religiosity founded on the signs Jesus had done, and he bases it on the word play with the title of the royal official: The man is called ὁ βασιλικός in John 4:46, 49. Then he is called ὁ ἄνθρωπος in John 4:50. Finally, he is called ὁ πατήρ in John 4:53. From

the description of a political and social function, the move is made to present him a human, a man, and finally, when his family believes, he is the parent.

This seems to suggest to Moloney that John depicts authentic faith in Jesus not only as a personal commitment to the word of Jesus; it also leads other people to faith. Thus was the scheme with the first miracle in Cana, as well as the Samaritan woman and in this context, where commitment to the word of Jesus leads to faith in others (Moloney 1993:189). Brown (1971:197) concurs with this, saying, “... *while Jesus encountered disbelief or inadequate faith in Jerusalem, when He comes to Samaria, the Samaritans believe on the strength of his word. In Galilee, in both the first and second Cana stories, an understanding of Jesus’ signs leads the disciples and the official’s household to faith.*”

Another matter needs some consideration. The story continues his journey away from Judea (John 4:43), placing his sojourn in Sychar as an interlude in this trip. John puts this remark in Jesus’ mouth, repeating the sentiment of John 2:25, which is placed after the cleansing of the temple. This passage thus seems to also insinuate that the Judeans’ rejection of Jesus is stemming from the commotion he caused in the temple (John 2:12-22) – implying that Jesus’ disregard for Jewish tradition and laws - and supersedes faith in Him, even if it is based on His signs.

This theme is picked up again in the narratives following John 4, when John explicitly comments on the rejection of Jesus by his own people as part of the story of the

dispute over baptism - taking into account that the Samaritan narrative is presented as something that happened in the process of Jesus' going away because of the conflict that erupted.

Finally, when returning to the proposition that the Johannine narrative also contains instruction for the faith community to which it is addressed, the issue of John's possible teaching on a missional ecclesiology should be investigated again. John seems to be answering the question of their identities that was put to the Baptist by the Jewish establishment in John 1:19-25, and to Jesus by Nicodemus in John 3:2. He does this by introducing different members of the social group throughout the section that ends at John 4:54:

- οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευίτας (John 1:19).
- ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων (John 1:24).
- οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (John 2:18).
- ἦν δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων (John 3:1).
- μετὰ Ἰουδαίου (John 3:25).
- οἱ φαρισαῖοι (John 4:1).

- ὁ βασιλικός (John 4:46, 49).

The purpose of this repetitive use seems to be to reiterate that Jewish religion created an expectation that the Messiah needed to prove his identity by signs and wonders. It also seems to underscore the move from a deeds-based faith to a word-based faith. And it sets up the discussion of belief based on knowing Jesus in an intimately personal way as opposed to a religious system that only adheres to spiritual practices.

By finally bringing the repetitive and often unusual use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme into the discussion, ***it would seem that John wanted his community members to see a pattern of testimony developing, enabling them to become proficient witnesses to the reality of Jesus living inside them***, and that is based on receiving the faith through the testimony of people who knew Jesus personally (as they don't).

This last remark is affirmed by the way Jesus conducted the miracle spoken that this pericope spoke about. The royal official communicated an expectation that Jesus should be physically present to perform some sort of miraculous deed on his sick son (John 4:49). Instead, Jesus sent him home with the assurance that his son is healed (John 4:50). It is therefore quite intentional that John said the man believed Jesus' words and went home.

The story then explains how he discovers the exact time at which the fever left his son as being the same as when Jesus spoke the words (John 4:52). This apparent realisation that Jesus' words are enough to do a miracle moved him, along with his household, to believe in Jesus (John 4:53).

By including the phrase *καὶ ἡ οἰκία αὐτοῦ ὅλη*, John shows how this royal official's testimony regarding what Jesus said caused his family to share in his new-found belief in Jesus' identity as the One sent by God. In this case, it would seem that John intentionally omitted the use of the *μαρτυρία*-lexeme, to accentuate the actual miracle: people start to believe in Jesus based on His words only and on the testimony of those who personally know him and can attest to this knowledge.

### 3.8 CONCLUSION

What do we see on the Gospel of John's use of *μαρτυρία* up to this point?

In the Prologue to the Gospel, Jesus is introduced to the readers of John as the Word that became flesh and brought light into the darkness. He came to earth as human being and showed those who believe in Him how God looks like. And He helps those who believe to discover their place in the family of the Heavenly Father. Integral to this is the testimony of an ordinary human being, John, whom we later get to know better as the Baptist. He tells us about the incarnate Word, so that we can

come to faith. He helps us to discover who the Word is in his existence as ordinary human being, thereby discovering his name is Jesus.

The Baptist perceived his main purpose as way-bearer for the Christ. Through his ministry, he helps people understand the emptiness of their lives and their need for true faith and salvation. He also serves as testimony, still, of who the Christ really is. This testimony grew on him in a gradual way, from a vague understanding of the coming Messiah, and how he is supposed to proclaim the manifest arrival of the Saviour; to grasping that The One is actually in his midst already; and finally to discovering that Jesus truly is the Son of God.

Through the telling of the story of the Baptist's discovery of the Christ, John, the Gospel writer, uses the opportunity to ever so subtly instruct his congregation members on the true nature of faith. Faith is not following religious rituals. Faith also is not to believe in someone because of his ability to perform signs and wonders. Faith is to accept the word about the Christ, the proclamation given by the witnesses to Him. It is to grasp the knowledge that the idea of a coming Messiah actually has become a Person, somebody with a very clear and definite identity – namely Jesus of Nazareth. When one understands that faith is to put all your trust on this person, what happens when you observe his wonders is that it only strengthens your (newly found) faith and turn you into a witness yourself.

To be absolutely clear, John wants his community of fellow believers to have no doubt about whom the Christ really is. He therefore introduces several situations and witnesses to enlighten them on the nuances of believing in Jesus as the Christ. He tells us about some of Jesus' own disciples who started to follow Him on the basis of the Baptist's testimony. They spent time with Him, getting to know Him better, and immediately started to share their Messianic discovery with their family and friends.

John also tells us about a wedding where Jesus' mother order him about, ignoring his rebuke and standing astonished about the miracle He performed on water jars. As she and his band of followers already had some sort of a grasp on whom Jesus really was, this sign only caused them to put their ultimate trust in Him.

John shared with us how Jesus overturned the religious practices of his countryfolk by chasing everybody out of the temple. He then calmly re-interpreted the temple and his demonstration in the temple to explain that He must ultimately die to prove He is the Messiah, by ultimately conquering death.

John introduced a Jewish scholar and community leader, Nicodemus, into the story. This gentleman observed Jesus' actions and miracles and started thinking. He then went to meet Jesus, and discovered he doesn't understand things after all. True faith is to start living the reality that God has created. This is only possible when one transforms in identity through a spiritual birth that will enable earthlings to share in the world of God. This is only possible through faith. Faith isn't ritual or law, however,



but lovingly accepting that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, by completely trusting Him as the One who will carry you over the bridge to God's world, shines a light in this world and helps you live the life of a child of God even though you are still merely a human being. And for this, you cannot base your faith on signs or miracles, but by knowing The One personally.

John needed to share some more information about the Baptist and his testimony. He needed to tell us how Jesus' ministry started to look frighteningly like his own and it almost seems as if the two prophet-like figures are starting to compete with one another. But in true Johannine fashion, the Evangelist wanted the listeners in his community and his readers to know something more about how testimony works: Through your intimate and growing knowledge of the Saviour, whom you now know personally, other people are also starting to see Him, getting to know Him. In the process you are fading into the background until all that is left is Jesus and the people who heard about Him from you, putting their trust in Him alone. This is actually how God planned it. Your role as witness is to announce Jesus like a bridegroom is announced to the bride by his best friend. The bride isn't interested in you - she wants to marry the groom, after all. She listens to you until you tell her he is there, and then she rushes out to meet the love of her life, glad about his arrival.

John also wanted to show something about God's love for non-Jewish people. So he told the story of the Samaritan woman. He told us about her dubious personal history, her status as social outcast, her longing to belong. He shared how Jesus reached out to her, offering her real water of living faith, built on worshiping God in

total adoration because you know all about a life of true worship, especially since the Messiah is making this possible. And He showed her who the Messiah is. John shared how this woman risked her already no-grace status among her townsfolk to share with them this discovery.

The details of John's story are amazingly basic. He leaves a lot of things unsaid. We must see between the lines how Jesus knew about her husbands, how their very short discussion could have such an impact on her, how his disciples was left in the dark about his inappropriate social behaviour, and most importantly, how her fellow Sycharites came to believe her testimony ("There's this man, who told me about my past. Can he be the Messiah?") so quickly. But that's how it happened. Perhaps John wanted us, as outsiders, to see how easy it is to be a witness – you meet Jesus, He changes your life and then you tell everyone about the encounter in such a spontaneous way that they are drawn to investigate for themselves. As with the Baptist becoming less, the woman's fellow townspeople told her they now believe because they met Jesus and not because she gave her testimony.

Then John showed us one more miracle. This time it is a Roman soldier of some sorts who received the gift of faith. He heard about Jesus. He also heard Jesus is in the vicinity – in the neighbouring town to be exact. His boy is dying. He is desperate. So he undertook the journey personally to ask Jesus to come to his house. Jesus was rather rude to this desperate man. He told Him off about people wanting signs before they can believe. All he wanted was a chance for his boy. And he believed enough of the stories about Jesus to trust his wonder-working ability. So he just kept

on asking, please. Jesus sent him home with a promise that his request was granted. In my opinion it must have been a huge let-down, an anticlimax. Yet this soldier took Him on his word and went home. The rest, so the saying goes, is history – he had a healthy son and a family who crossed the bridge of faith towards Jesus.

So this is what John wanted to teach us: Faith is trusting in God completely. It is not waiting for miracles. It is built on knowing God personally. It is authentic when your testimony reflects your knowledge about Jesus and His integrity as The One being sent from heaven to such an extent that people around you literally see Him through the eyes of your words.

# C HAPTER FOUR

*“In ... one short sentence a vista appears of the metaphysical depths contained in the relationship between Jesus and his Father.”*

(Schnackenburg 1971:308)

## THE SECOND PART OF JESUS’ PUBLIC MINISTRY (JOHN 5-12)

### 4.1A POSSIBLE SCHEME FOR UNDERSTANDING JOHN 5-12

The second thematic block of the story of Jesus’ public ministry (John 5-12) tells in ever-growing detail how Jesus is giving eternal life and why. Simultaneously, this part of the story expands on Jesus’ identity by attempting to answer the question how one can be sure Jesus is the Christ.

These two motives show John’s pictorial story-telling ability. They are masterfully set against the backdrop of four different Jewish festivals (Newman & Nida 1980:336):

- **The Sabbath.** Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath (John 5), indicating his superiority over the Sabbath. In his teaching about the healing, Jesus identified himself and his activity with God and God's work.
- **Passover.** Jesus fed the multitude of people and revealed He was the life-giving bread that God had sent down from heaven.
- **The Feast of the Tabernacles or Shelters.** At this festival Jesus proclaimed Himself as the life-giving water and the light for the world, thereby fulfilling the meaning of the water and light ceremonies conducted during this feast.
- **The Festival of Dedication.** At this feast Jesus affirms that He is the One whom God has dedicated and sent into the world.

Thirdly, John here sets the stage for the Passion narrative by depicting the increasing animosity of the Jewish religious establishment of the time and their decision to get rid of Jesus:

- John frequently uses the word, *γόγγυζω*, to communicate the growing dissent among his audience (John 6:41, 43, 61; 7:32).
- His own followers started to reject his message (John 6:60, 66; 8:39).

- Jesus had to withdraw to Galilee as in Judea the Jews wanted to kill him (John 7:1, 25; 8:37, 40, 59).
- He was accused of having a demon (John 7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20).
- Several attempts were made to arrest Jesus (John 7:30, 32, 44; 8:20; 10:39; 11:57) and at times they wanted to kill Him (John 8:59; 10:31; 11:53).
- This should be read against the fact that the people who were following Jesus wanted to make Him king by force (John 6:15).
- The subsequent fear that Jesus' actions would lead to a revolution causing the Romans to destroy the temple and the Jewish nation (John 11:48) also plays an important part in this part of the story.

## **4.2 SETTING THE SABBATH AS BACKDROP FOR AN ARGUMENT (JOHN 5-6)**

### **4.2.1 What happened**

John opens the scene with the story of Jesus' healing of a man who had been ill for thirty eight years. This miracle happened on the Sabbath. Although John 5:1 tells us Jesus went to Jerusalem to attend a religious feast, no further detail is provided. The matter at hand is Jesus' authority to override the law of the Sabbath (Lindars 1990:79). Thus the vehicle for John's teaching is the Sabbath, enabling Jesus to explain why and how He gives eternal life, a phrase that is used the most frequently in John 5-6 (Van der Watt 2007:14).

The pivotal argument is the fact that Jesus' healing on the Sabbath serves as a precursor to the eschatological acts which he is destined to perform. Through acts such as these, the future condition of eternal life is already accessible to believers.

The theme of life continues when John tells the stories of Jesus' miracles going about in Galilee. He specifies the miracles of the multiplying of the fish and bread, and Jesus' ability to walk on water. Woven through these stories is the discussion of Jesus as the bread of life. The central core of this message is that, through faith in Jesus, eternal life is mediated, therefore escaping eternal judgement (Van der Watt 2007:15). It also builds on a wisdom theme of the nourishment of the soul (Lindars 1990:79).

The narrative makes it obvious that Jesus' healing of the man was His initiative and not based on a request by the man himself (John 5:6-9a). Moreover, this healing took place on a Sabbath (John 5:9b). The man who was healed was confronted by the Jews because he was carrying his pallet on a Sabbath. He defended himself by referring to Jesus' command to get up and carry it. He didn't know who Jesus was, however (John 5:10-13).

When he met Jesus again, Jesus commanded him not to sin anymore (John 5:14) upon which he went back to the Jews to tell them it was Jesus who healed him (John 5:15).

This led to a confrontation between Jesus and the Jews as they wanted to punish Him for working on the Sabbath (John 5:16). Jesus defended Himself by stating He is working in the same way his Father is still working (John 5:17). This infuriated the Jews because Jesus called God his Father, thereby implying his equality with God (John 5:18). This scene provides the backdrop for the resulting theological discourse.

#### **4.2.2 What John wants us to understand**

Jesus' reply can be divided into two parts. In the first part of his response (John 5:19-30) He reasserts his position as God's Son with the ability to judge and provide life. In the second part (John 5:31-47), Jesus provides a list of witnesses to testify to the claims made in the first part of his response. To better understand the frequent use of μαρτυρία in this passage, it is necessary to explore Jesus' initial comments to the Jews.

The essence of Jesus' argument in John 5:19-30 is as follows (Newman & Nida 1980:153): The Son can do nothing of His own accord for His actions are wholly dependent on what He sees the Father doing. What He and the Father are essentially doing, is to provide life. But not only does He have the power to give life, the Son also receives the full right to judge. For all practical purposes the two issues are interwoven with each other. By referring back to the healing of the ill man, Jesus stated that the Father will show Him greater things than He already did. He then



expanded on this by saying the Father has the ability to raise the dead and give life. In a similar manner (οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς οὗς θέλει ζῶσσοιεἶ.) the Son is able to provide life upon His own choosing.

This ability stems from the fact that the Father gave to the Son the right to judge. With this, Jesus implies He is above the Jews' judging Him of "working" on the Sabbath as actually, He is the Judge whom they call upon as the foundation for their beliefs. This, furthermore, is the reason why the Son deserves honour. By refusing to honour the Son, a person is actually refusing to give honour to the Father.

The repetition of ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν (John 5:19, 24, 25) confirms that Jesus is elaborating on his argument. He now clearly states that people who hears His message and believes the Father will be exempted from judgement and move from death to life. The third repetition of ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν shows how Jesus ties the two arguments together: The time has arrived for the dead – or the spiritually dead (Tasker 1960:91) - to hear the voice of the Father, listen to it and live (Newman & Nida 1980:159). The Son received the ability to grant life from the Father as well as the authority to execute judgement, because He is the Son of Man. Jesus then alludes to the final judgement day when He will judge the dead – those who did the good (i.e. listened to His voice) will receive resurrection to life and those who didn't, to judgement.

#### **4.2.3 Witnesses that confirm Jesus' relationship with the Father**

In John 5:31-47 Jesus introduces a new direction in the argument when He says He cannot testify about Himself, since it will not be true. He can say only what God tells Him so that God will receive the glory (Lindars 1972:227; Newman & Nida 1980:162). Thus, He must present the witnesses to His mission and through this provide compelling evidence for the truth of the claims He just made. To understand this section we must keep in mind that the theological theme being developed is ultimately about one testimony: the testimony of God (Schnackenburg 1979:120).

In this narrative, the introduction of witnesses serves the purpose to verify and confirm Jesus' testimony. It should not be seen in the context of a legal proceeding where an accused is put on trial and has to produce witnesses to his defence (Brown 1971:223; Newman & Nida 1980:163).

The witnesses to the truth of His claims are listed as different aspects of the witness of "another" in John 5:32 – i.e. of the Father (Brown 1971:227):

- First of all, the abovementioned ἄλλος testifies on Jesus' behalf (John 5:32). This is a rather veiled reference to the Father and could rather be made explicit through translation (Brown 1971:224; Lindars 1972:228; Barrett 1978:264; Newman & Nida 1980:164). Morris (1971:323) makes an important contribution towards our growing understanding of μαρτυρία in the Gospel, especially regarding the witness borne by God:

*Witness commits ... He no longer has the freedom to come down on either side of the issue at hand. He has burned bridges. He has destroyed his freedom. Now it is something like this that God has done in Christ. Jesus is the supreme revelation of God. If we want to know what God is like, we must look to Jesus. God has gone on record that this is what He is like. He has committed Himself in Jesus.*

- The Baptist's testimony also attests to the truth of Jesus' claims (John 5:33-35). He serves as a lamp in the dark and his presence was initially welcomed by the Jews. Jesus doesn't need to base his claims on the testimony of a human, however (Newman & Nida 1980:164; Ridderbos 1987:237). He only refers to John as a tangible reference point for the Jews to believe more readily and to be saved, as salvation comes through believing in Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980:164-165).

Yet the Jews were willing to accept what the Baptist said for a little while (lit. ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠθελήσατε ἀγαλλιαθῆναι πρὸς ὄραν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ αὐτοῦ.) instead of basing their faith on the One whom the Baptist testified about (Barrett 1978:265). The fact that Jesus called upon the Baptist's testimony, was to enable his listeners to take his message to heart, accept it and make the leap of faith, or - as said in his own words – ἵνα ὑμεῖς σωθῆτε (Hendrikson 1959/1:207).

- The next witness Jesus calls to support his claims, is the works the Father enabled Him to do. It is difficult to present an action as a witness, however, since only a person can act as a witness (Newman & Nida 1980:166). Yet, through His deeds Jesus proves the Father sent Him. This is much more important than the testimony presented by the Baptist, as this provides Jesus with a delegated divine authority (Barrett 1978:266). The plural use of τὰ ἔργα calls attention to the various impressive things that God has enabled Jesus to do (Newman & Nida 1980:166).
- Again the Father is presented as a witness to Jesus. The verb, μεμαρτύρηκεν, is used in perfect tense, indicating the continuing or present effects of the action, therefore implying the Father's witness did not stop yet (Newman & Nida 1980:166). The Jews, as it is the case with everybody else, didn't hear his voice and are unable to see Him in person. Since this is the case, the message coming from the Father is presented by the one whom He sent (Jesus).

Jesus thus points out the sad reality that they are unwilling to internalise the teaching about the Father as they do not believe in Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980: 167). The point Jesus is making establishes that one should believe in Jesus first and then that person will receive the direct testimony from God (Barrett 1978:267).

- Finally, the Scriptures are presented as the last witness to testify about Jesus. Jesus is specifically referring to the Old Testament, being the Jewish Bible of

course. The argument presented by John is that the Jews believed that studying the Scripture will help them find eternal life, since they regarded biblical studies as an end in itself (Barrett 1978:267).

In this they miss the point of the Scriptures. The Scriptures actually testify about Jesus, the One who brings eternal life. Studying the Scriptures was supposed to lead the Jews to Jesus, but it didn't (Barrett 1978:268; Newman & Nida 1980:168).

Jesus does not claim honour from people, and He can see through the Jews' rejection, since they don't have God's love in themselves. This is an important point Jesus is making, as He goes on to show how the Jews are willing to accept a person who presents himself based on his own credentials, yet they reject Jesus who presents Himself based on the one and true God's credentials.

The reason for this is because they are focused on honouring each other and actively seek it for themselves as they belong to the same world as the unbelievers (Barrett 1978:269). They are not focused on God and His glory at all. This search for glory is a means of self-assurance and only when this self-assurance is shaken, a person will be willing to make an act of faith expressive of his dependence on God. The rebellion of Jesus' antagonists is therefore a rebellion common to the world (Brown 1971:229).

Jesus' final argument in this narrative returns to the Jews' obsession with Moses. Morris (1971:323) views Moses as one of the witnesses presented by Jesus to testify for Him. This is a reference to the first five books of the Old Testament, as it was believed that Moses wrote them. Jesus will not accuse the Jews on their refusal to believe, since Moses will do it. They failed to obey his commandments, having taken these commandments as an end itself (Barrett 1978:270). The books of Moses (those upon which the Jews base their faith) told about Jesus and if the Jews really believed what was written in it, they would have believed Jesus. The whole of Scripture actually reveals God and His redemptive purpose for humankind, and this is what is fulfilled in Jesus (Lindars 1972:233).

But the Jews chose to interpret Moses' books as a final system of religion. This makes it clear that they do not really believe what is written in the law. This becomes the ultimate reason for their rejection of Jesus' message.

At the core here is Jesus attacking the Jews misguided legalism based on their interpretations of the Old Testament law books. This causes them to focus on outwardly acts of piety and on keeping a social system in tact where one person tries to be more spiritually legalistic than the other in an effort to increase his social standing. The heart of the message contained in the Old Testament laws is missing in this, thereby causing the Jews to reject Jesus as Messiah.

#### **4.2.4 Continuing the story**

John 6 tells the story of two more miracles: the multiplication of the bread (John 6:1-15) and how Jesus walked on water (John 6:16-21). It also follows Jesus' discourse on the first of these miracles presenting Him as the bread of life (John 6:22-59).

In the final passage of John 6, the story is told of the rejection of Jesus' message - by his disciples (John 6:60-71). From this point onwards the growing confusion and hostility about Jesus is increasingly put forth in the story.

#### **4.3 THE STORY OF THE FESTIVAL OF THE SHELTERS (JOHN 7-8)**

##### **4.3.1 Jesus is rejected by his own family**

It is in the context of this rejection and the growing political atmosphere that the first situation sketched in John 7 tells of Jesus' own brothers rejecting him and how He reacted to this.

The passage sets the scene for the misunderstanding and hostility Jesus will face in Jerusalem (Newman & Nida 1980:219). The impression is created that Jesus was visiting with people in place after place in Galilee (περιπάτει - John 7:1), thus depicting him as actively busy with ministry and not merely walking about (Newman

& Nida 1980:220). This withdrawal of Jesus from the public eye had the implied benefit that it allowed Jesus to be with his disciples (Hendrikson 1959/2:3).

By referring to the Festival of Tabernacles (John 7:2), the impression of wider interpretation possibilities for μετὰ ταῦτα is strengthened, since this festival took place approximately six months after the Passover mentioned in John 6:4. The Festival of Tabernacles - or Shelters - was celebrated yearly as the most important and crowded religious festival on the Jewish religious calendar (De Vaux 1973:495-496).

Apart from being a chronological marker in the narrative, the mention of this festival in the passage also serves the purpose of underscoring the magnitude of the unbelief of Jesus' brothers – the sarcasm they demonstrated gets greater significance as the reference to the festival shows how they actually mocked Jesus over their insinuation that He is trying to attract attention with his ministry (is Jesus aspiring to high public office, perhaps?) – This with being a very large festival and all. Hendrikson (1959/2:4) suggested that the specific reference to this festival was also because certain remarks of Jesus, in John 7:37, 8:12 and 9:7, are connected to the ceremonies of the feast.

The reference to Jesus' disciples (John 7:3) should be read in a wider sense as that it refers only to his immediate circle of followers. As his brothers' remark should be read in conjunction with the previous passage's telling of some of his followers leaving him, Jesus' brothers could be implying that his appearance at this feast



should help him to win these deserters back (Newman & Nida 1980:221). The underlying theme of people basing their faith in Jesus, because of his miracles (John 2:23-25), seems to be in play here as the mention of his works could suggest an expectation on the part of his brothers of some mighty demonstration of his power (Hendrikson 1959/2:5; Tasker 1960:102). The use of *μετάβηθι* with the possible meaning of “transfer of activity” seems to support the idea (Schnackenburg 1979:139).

But His brothers were being mostly sarcastic. This notion is strengthened by the remark in John 7:4 when they told Jesus that He should go public with his ministry, as they suggested He had aspirations to be known as a public figure (*καὶ ζητεῖ αὐτὸς ἐν παρρησίᾳ εἶναι*). And as John states in John 7:5, they did not believe in Him.

In reply, Jesus spoke about the right timing (*καιρός* – occurring only in John 7:6, 8 – Barrett 1978:313), which has particular emphasis on a particular moment or period in time rather than using it as a chronological sequence (Hendrikson 1959/2:5; Newman & Nida 1980:223). This would suggest that Jesus’ decision on going to Jerusalem or not is predestined by divine decree (Tasker 1960:103). To the contrary, his brothers had the freedom to go there any time they wished as it would make no difference whether they go or not (Hendrikson 1959/2:6). Brown (1971:306) argued that in general *καιρός* has a deeper theological importance as decisive salvific moment than *χρόνος*.

The use of *καίρως* then suggests that Jesus' refusal to attend the feast should be read in association with the increasing hostilities reported against him as well as in conjunction with the previously stated message that Jesus only does what the Father is doing. It isn't on the agenda to use this particular feast as an event for public ministry, as Jesus' going into Jerusalem would probably result in Jesus' incarceration or even death. This, after all, is the time for the manifestation of the Son of Man at the moment of the Passion, and awaits the time appointed by the Father (Lindars 1972:284). Jesus must be circumspect to avoid running into troubles that could hinder his mission (Morris 1971:393).

The defining remark in this passage occurs in John 7:7 as Jesus explains how his brothers' presupposition (John 7:4) actually is false. Jesus is unable to "recommend" himself publicly, or to the world (*ὁ κόσμος*), since the people in the world have no basis for hating Jesus' brothers. They stand in opposition to God and his purpose (Newman & Nida 1980:223), represent the realm of evil, humankind's alienation from God's way of life, and the manifestation of the hostility towards God and Jesus (Hendrikson 1959/2:6). The continuous or progressive action implied by the tense of *μαρτυρῶ* as well as the emphatic inclusion of *ἐγώ*, suggest that Jesus was thinking about the overarching theme in the message of salvation, as explained in John 3:16-21 (Schnackenburg 1979:141; Ridderbos 1987:299). This message is the one that was rejected.

In John 7:8 Jesus then reaffirmed his understanding of timing and said that his decision to stay away from the feast was in accordance with the timing planned by

God (Newman & Nida 1980:224). Jesus did what He said he would be doing: He stayed behind in Galilee (John 7:9). The context of John 7:10 confirms the notion of Jesus acting in accordance to God's will, as this verse, being part of the next scene in the narrative, said how Jesus did go to the festival but secretly and on his own initiative (Newman & Nida 1980:225).

### **4.3.2 Continuing the Story**

All through John 7 peoples' differing reactions to the message of Jesus are noted. The confusion that reigned among the people is also shown by describing what they believed and what they didn't believe (e.g. John 7:12; 7:20; 7:26; 7:32; 7:40-41; 7:52). Part of this confusion was that Jesus offered a new way into the family of God - through faith. It created questions about those who worship in the synagogues and were law-abiding followers of Moses (Van der Watt 2007:15).

Lindars (1990:79) grouped John 7:1-8:30 into a single discourse. It combines the theme of the necessity of Jesus' death with the question whether he has the proper credentials to be the Messiah. He started his explanation with a strong description of his identity, when He promptly stated that He is the light of the world and whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life (John 8:12).

The presence of the Son of God brought confusion among the people who observed his ministry. It was especially evident in the things they believed and didn't believe.

Chapter seven of John's Gospel shows this confusion with perplexing clarity (Van der Watt 2007:15). People thought Jesus was a good man while others believed He was leading people astray (John 7:12). Some said Jesus is demon-possessed (John 7:20). People wondered whether He was the Christ (John 7:26). Some felt He should be arrested (John 7:32). Others came to believe He is really the prophet or Christ (John 7:40-41). Some argued no prophet would come from Galilee (John 7:52).

Jesus contributed to this confusion by offering faith as a new way into the family of God. This led to the questions about the fate of those people worshipping in the synagogues and who were law-abiding disciples of the laws of Moses with regards to their position as members of God's family. These questions on the real identity of the children of God in the light of the presence of Jesus are dealt with in the following chapters of the Gospel.

John 8 is introduced with a strong description of Jesus' identity as the light of the world. The discussion shifts from theoretical considerations of the qualifications for messiahship to what Jesus' special relationship to God really means (Lindars 1972:312-313).

John discusses the question of people's identity as children of God and shows how the answer to the question lays in their behaviour, as the way a person acts shows what he/she really is. A child does what his/her father does (John 8:38-39) and his/her deeds reveal true family allegiance. Jesus' opponents proved themselves as

liars and murderers since they tried to kill Jesus (eventually succeeding) through false witness. Thus they are not children of God but of his antagonist who was a murderer and liar from the beginning (John 8:44).

#### **4.3.3 Determining the truthfulness of Jesus' testimony (John 8:12-20)**

It would seem that *πάλιν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων ...* (John 8:12) is a continuation of the discourse from John 7:52, yet it is resumed without any apparent explanation (Barrett 1978:335). Jesus returned to the earlier, frequently used metaphor of light – this is the metaphor with which John's Gospel was introduced in John 1:4-5 and remained of great interest and importance to John (Morris 1971:438; Lindars 1972:315).

The phrase, *τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου*, can be translated as “the One who gives light to the people of the world,” while the phrase, *ὁ ἀκολουθῶν ἐμοί*, can be understood as “whoever becomes my disciple” ((Newman & Nida 1980:264). Similarly, *τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς* could be translated as “the light that shows people how they may live.” In John's Gospel light is not a mere component of the universe; it is active and saving. In itself, light has life and gives life (Barrett 1978:337). Light is personified and in this passage the person associated with light, is identified as Jesus.

The use of the present participle (ὁ ἀκολουθῶν ἐμοί) has an important contribution towards better understanding the point that Jesus is trying to make. This participle conveys the idea of a continuous following, implying that Jesus thinks of wholehearted discipleship and not casual adherence. It is the same word used in John 1:37 where the story of Jesus' first disciples is told (Morris 1971:438) and the second half of this verse forms a promise to faithful disciples (Lindars 1972:316). The idea receives some further impetus when taking into consideration that John also uses the future tense, ἔξει, when he tells us this following of Jesus will result in the receiving of the light of life.

Agreement exists that this passage forms part of the story of Jesus' attendance of the Festival of Tabernacles - mentioned in John 7:2 (Brown 1971:343; Morris 1971:436; Lindars 1972:315; Barrett 1978:335). The continuation here of that story is somewhat obscured by the parenthetical inclusion of the story of the adulterous woman (John 7:53 - 8:11), a passage which, incidentally, is not regarded as authentically part of John's Gospel (Hendrikson 1959/2:39).

The high point of the festival of the Tabernacle includes a ceremony with lights as symbolic depiction of a religious memory from Jewish history. To Christians it was important that Christ fulfilled all the spiritual truths to which these feasts pointed (Morris 1971:437). At the end of the Festival of Tabernacles the candelabra that was lit was put out, making Jesus' statement all the more profound in its apparent symbolism. This is further confirmed when taking into account that the lighting of the candles for this festival took place in the "Court of the Women" (Lindars 1972:315).

This is the place where Jesus was most probably teaching when He proclaimed that He is the light of the world.

Unexpectedly, the theme of light and darkness is temporarily dropped, resuming again in John 9:5. John chooses to focus instead on the response of the Jewish authorities about Jesus' statement. They objected by saying that a person's claims about himself/herself are irrelevant and untrustworthy, falling back onto Jewish legal code. Morris (1971:439) correctly argues that this is a way of ignoring the main question in favour of a technicality, as they do not wish to be convinced. Jesus offered a twofold refutation to this: Unlike other people, He knows his origin and destiny and is therefore capable to be a true and reliable witness about himself.

Furthermore, it only appears that He witnesses and judges alone; He is in fact inseparable from the Father, and their combined witness should be acknowledged as valid by anyone accepting Mosaic Law (Barrett 1978:333). This intimate union between Father and Son has the implication that the Father's witness and the Son's witness to himself are actually indistinguishable (Lindars 1972:316). With this, the origin and end of Jesus in God justify his activity in presenting testimony about the truth and in judging.

The Jewish authorities again challenged Jesus' remark, now through attacking his authority. This becomes the subject matter of the rest of chapter 8 (Barrett 1978:338; Newman & Nida 1980:265), while using *μαρτυρία* in a strict legal sense. This explains

why they could say Jesus' remark is unconvincing. The demand of the Pharisees furthermore implies that they wanted Jesus to provide witnesses to prove his claim that He is God, knowing full-well it cannot be done. In any case, and with reference to the previous verse, light would no longer be God's Word if it demanded authorities recognised by people to confirm its authenticity (Barrett 1978:338).

Jesus' second reply indicates that He is denying their dismissal and affirming his own position (Newman & Nida 1980:265-266). Furthermore, He made a clear point of his intention to give his own testimony. If He did not make these statements the truth would never be communicated to people, who are dependent on the self-knowledge of the Saviour (Barrett 1978:338). More specifically, He may offer his own testimony since it is true and valid because it is confirmed by the Father who verifies it (Brown 1971:340). In John 8:14 Jesus remarked, ὅτι οἶδα πόθεν ἦλθον καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγω, hereby taking up the theme of his origin and destiny. The conversation that follows traces the Jewish authorities' complete ignorance of the origin, destiny and significance of Christ (Morris 1971:440; Ridderbos 1987:340).

The reason why the Jewish authorities do not know where Jesus came from or where He is going, stems from the fact that they make judgements on a purely human way (ὁμοίως κατὰ τὴν σάρκα κρίνετε,) – by human standards, or by using human methods of judicial procedure, only (Brown 1971:340; Morris 1971:441; Lindars 1972:317; Barrett 1978:338; Newman & Nida 1980:266). To make judgements after the flesh is no judgement at all. If judgement is to be understood the way the Jewish authorities understands it, Jesus isn't making any judgement.



Moreover, Jesus didn't come to find people guilty of transgressions, but to save them from the slavery of their sins (cf. John 3:17; 12:47). Though Jesus' next remark (John 8:15) seems to affirm other comments He made about not being the judge (John 3:17), it also seems to contradict the fact that He indicated that indeed He is here for judgement (John 9:39). When Jesus does present judgement, it is in the name of and as the agent of God (Barrett 1978:338): "... *His judgment is performed on a different plane and is not subject to the same standards*" (Lindars 1972:317). Newman and Nida (1980:266-267) argued that the heart of the message in John's Gospel is to proclaim to the world that it is judged in the light of who Jesus really is.

No contradiction between Jesus' remarks, past and present, is intended, since Jesus is trying to show his perfect unity with the Father (John 8:16). Any judgement He makes, is not his own, in a purely human way; Jesus' judgements are made on the basis of his absolute relationship with the Father. Therefore, any judgements Jesus make, actually originates from God as He participates in the acts of judging. Jesus characteristically added a reference to his mission in what He says (καὶ ὁ πέμψας με). The Father sent him, but it was done in such a way that He is not left alone – the Father is still with Jesus. The emphasis is on the mission of Jesus and not the nature of the relationship between the Father and the son (Morris 1971:442).

Jesus next refers to Mosaic Law that dictates legal procedures when a person is on trial (John 8:17) and appeals to it. The laws He refers to, Deut 17:6 and 19:15,

require that two persons other than the one actually concerned provide testimony (Newman & Nida 1980:267). When their testimonies concur, they confirm the truth of the matter. The emphatic use of τῷ ὑμετέρῳ seems to depict Jesus as hostile or superior to Mosaic Law, but should be rendered to mean, “The Law that you yourselves accept” (Brown 1971:341). As a matter of fact, Jesus adopted Jewish legal theory in order to blow it to pieces (Schnackenburg 1979:194). Jesus reinterprets this Mosaic Law when He changes its wording from saying: the Law accepts the testimony of two witnesses, to saying: the Law accepts the testimony of two men (Morris 1971:442).

Jesus makes himself one of the two witnesses, in John 8:18, and uses the Father as the other witness. More specifically, He states that the Father sent him, indicating a close union between the two of them. In both instances the verb is used in the continuous tense, indicating that Jesus understood this action to be something that was started and hasn't stop yet (Morris 1971:443). Once again the Father is described in terms of his sending of the Son. The use of ἐγώ εἰμι alludes to revelation type of language with a chiastic linking to με πατήρ at the very end of the verse (Lindars 1972:318).

Jesus' remark leads – in John 8:19 - to another, typically Johannine misunderstanding allowing Jesus to provide further teaching on the matter (Newman & Nida 1980:268). The opportunity revolves around the origin and departure of Jesus, and of his parentage, especially since the Jewish authorities thought Jesus

was referring to his earthly father, therefore they want to speak to him to obtain his corroborating testimony.

Jesus' answer focused on a basic theme in the Gospel, namely that a person can only know the heavenly Father through the Son; if you do not know the Son you cannot possibly know the Father (Morris 1971:443). Knowing shouldn't be understood as being acquainted with, since Jesus meant here that they should really be in a more intimate relationship with Him (Newman & Nida 1980:268).

These themes are taken up in the remainder of the discourse (Barrett 1978:339). The fact that the Jewish opponents demanded that Jesus produce his Father, proves that they do not understand Jesus himself (Barrett 1978:340). If they had, they would have known from where He came and where He is going, and they would have known the Father also. Now, they have no knowledge of the Father at all (Morris 1971:443).

The pericope ends with providing some geographical information. There were thirteen different offering boxes in the temple. The room in which these boxes were placed could possibly not be accessible to the general public, and no public teaching could be done there (Barrett 1978:340), so it seems improbable that Jesus was teaching there. Perhaps it was meant to be understood as a room close to the court where the women was allowed in the temple, as women had access to these offering

boxes (cf. Mark 12:41-42). This language reflects the vague use of prepositions of place in koine-Greek (Brown 1971:342).

The impression is created that Jesus was interrogated by the Jewish authorities in some sort of a trial, as the place locator in John 8:20 places Jesus very close to the hall where the Sanhedrin met (Morris 1971:444). He wasn't arrested however, and John interprets this theologically: this failure isn't due to a lack in resolve or opportunity, but because the predestined time for Jesus' arrest hasn't arrived yet – therefore rendering his enemies powerless to do anything.

#### **4.3.4 Continuing the Story**

The resulting debate after this passage centres on the claim of being true children of God. For Jesus, the basic answer lies in one's behaviour, as who one is becomes apparent in what one does (Van der Watt 2007:15). Jesus refused to accept human witnesses as proof of his credentials by declaring that the legal requirement for two witnesses to support a case is met by the agreement between himself and the Father. This opened the way to understanding the importance of the crucifixion, as the cross demonstrates the unity between Jesus and the Father, John 8:29 (Lindars 1990:80).

In the discourse of John 8:31-59 Jesus argues that a child only does what his father is doing (John 8:38-39), therefore one's deeds reveals his/her family allegiance (Van

der Watt 2007:15). A child of God will act like a child of God. Because Jesus' opponents tried to kill Him – and eventually succeeded – they proved themselves as murderers and liars, and followers of God's opponent who was a murderer and liar from the start (John 8:44). The point of this contrast comes to the fore in John 8:51-52. Only Jesus, as God's Son, can give eternal life, because he has life in himself as he indeed is pre-existent (John 8:58). The Jews – who have the Law as well as being descendants of Abraham – do not have the capacity to give life which is claimed by Jesus and which will be demonstrated in his death and resurrection (Lindars 1990:80).

Again Jesus' argument is not left unchallenged (Van der Watt 2007:15-16). When He healed the blind man on a Sabbath, He is called a sinner because He broke Mosaic Law (John 9). This man came to Jesus' defence when he argued that nobody could do such miracles if God wasn't working through him. The Jewish leaders rejected this perfectly logical argument also and through this act illustrated their untruthfulness. They even expelled the healed man from the synagogue and John used it to describe their own spiritual blindness (John 9:40-41). The main point was adequately illustrated though (Van der Watt 2007:16): It is not legalistic synagogue worship, but faith in Jesus that guarantees membership of the family of God.

The narrative in John 9 serves as preparation to the climax in John 10, by contrasting the sight which Jesus gives with the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees (Lindars 1990:80). First Jesus explained why His opponents have no chance of becoming children of God on their own – it's because He is the only door of the

sheepfold of God (John 10:7, 9). If a person wants to be part of the fold of God, they should use this door (Van der Watt 2007:16). Then they will have a shepherd who will give his life for them (John 10:11, 15) as they now belong to Him (John 10:14).

## **4.4 JESUS IS REJECTED ... AGAIN - JOHN 10:22-30**

### **4.4.1 Some background remarks**

John 9 recounts another miracle performed by Jesus – the Sabbath-day healing of a blind man. The story is used as vehicle to convey the blind man's testimony of his belief in Jesus, the ironical remark that the Jews do not know where Jesus comes from (as they did not want to acknowledge his ability to perform the miracle) and the blind man's statement that Jesus must come from God (John 9:33). This all is recounted before Jesus offered the man the choice to believe in Him as Christ (John 9:35-41).

Martyn (1979:27) regarded John 9 as seminal to unlocking the Johannine community's circumstances. He argued that the narrative provided insight into some definite situation in the life of the church, with John 9:22 as key to the understanding of the community dimension. The fact that the blind man's parents refused to testify for fear of being expelled from the synagogue is anachronistic. Jesus' lifetime knew nothing of expulsion from synagogues and this statement therefore reflects the context of the Johannine community late in the first century, where other historical

sources cited the Jewish practice of expelling Christians from their synagogues. Martyn concluded that John 9 depicts a two-level drama (Stibbe 1992:58), for the description of the healing miracle also depicts incidents within the Johannine community to which the Gospel was directed.

The first part of John 10 is devoted to the parable of the sheepfold, in which Jesus explains that His relationship with His flock is based on them knowing Him and their ability to hear His voice. He further used the metaphor of Him being the door through which the sheep must go to be safe from evil and harm. He is the door by laying down His life for his sheep because He and the Father know and love each other. Because of this intimate relationship between Jesus and the Father, He is able to take up His life again after it was laid down.

#### **4.4.2 Still more rejection of Jesus**

Two parallel accounts form the basic outline of the final part of this chapter. John 10:22-30 revolves around the question, are you the Messiah? The question is answered by Jesus referring to his followers as sheep, invoking the Old Testament image of King David as shepherd of the people thereby affirming the messianic overtones of the image of Jesus as the good shepherd. John 10:31-39 develops the analogue between shepherd and sheep further when Jesus speaks about the security of the sheep by affirming that no-one can snatch them away from Him.

John 10:22 creates the impression that Jesus actively attended the different religious festivals of the Jewish religion. Newman and Nida (1980:337) place this feast during approximately December which means that several months have passed since John's telling of Jesus' attendance of the Festival of the Shelters, which is placed from September to October of each year. This feast commemorated the sanctification of the temple in 165 BCE after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanus (Hendriksen 1959/2:120; Morris 1971:516; Lindars 1972:366; Ridderbos 1987:426).

It can be viewed as a festival dedicated to the renewal of worship in the temple (Schnackenburg 1971:304). The feast's dating in December and the central role light and candles played also suggests a pagan connection in connection with the celebrating of the winter solstice, but this isn't reflected by John's Gospel.

John describes a form of activity to introduce the actual issue he is depicting by telling us that Jesus was walking along the temple passageway, called Solomon's Porch, when he was accosted by some of the Jewish authorities (Newman & Nida 1980:338). In Acts, Solomon's Portico is described as the place where the early church met before their expulsion from the temple and synagogues (Lindars 1972:367).

As if Jesus hasn't previously answered their questions about his identity, the Jewish authorities now demanded that He clearly states if He was the Messiah. The only time when He did clarify his true identity to somebody was in John 4:26 when He told



the Samaritan Woman directly that He is the Messiah (Schnackenburg 1971:305; Barrett 1978:380; Newman & Nida 1980:339) and in somewhat veiled format to the man he healed from blindness, in John 9:35-37 (Morris 1971:519; Barrett 1978:380).

Thus it would seem that the Jewish authorities who demanded an answer from him didn't necessarily figure out his identity from his past deeds and teachings. Being traditionally Jewish, it is also very probable that they couldn't fathom the answer positively, as their idea of the Christ was that of a political king of Israel who is in rebellion to the Roman government (Hendriksen 1959/2:120).

Jesus' reaction was to focus on their (spiritual) unbelief, since the deeds He did in the Father's name testify about him. He not only told them about his exalted origin and nature, He also proved it with his words being accompanied by his works (Hendriksen 1959/2:121). This is therefore a reminder of the argument in John 5:36 on the witness of the works he had done - made more compelling by the miracle of giving sight to the blind man in John 9 (Lindars 1972:368). After all, a lack of faith equals a lack of spiritual understanding (Hendriksen 1959/2:121), and this open hostility – the failure to believe - is the sin of which they are guilty.

John must now put two things in perspective: He needs to show that Jesus is aware of the fact that the Jews definitely cannot believe, in view of the John 9-discussion on spiritual blindness, so there is no point in answering their question (Lindars 1972:368). He also has to provide an answer for the benefit of the reader and to give

the grounds for the final rejection. The previously discussed metaphor of the sheep has moved the discussion into a deeper level of understanding, so the answer can best be given on this basis. This answer is provided in John 10:30.

John 10:26 therefore serves as a link to return to the theme of the good shepherd. He returns to remarks He made in John 10:4, where He said the sheep follow Him because they know his voice, and John 10:14, where He said He knows his sheep (Newman & Nida 1980:340). In John 10:8 the sheep was described as the true believers, so much so that they do not heed thieves and robbers, but the shepherd's voice instead (John 10:16). One can therefore appreciate that because unbelief is understood as a refusal to hear and obey, it can be expressed here simply by saying, ὅτι οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐκ τῶν προβάτων τῶν ἐμῶν (Lindars 1972:368).

Furthermore, the reference to eternal life (John 10:28) refers back to verse 10 with the added fresh dimension of verses 14-18 on the sacrifice of the shepherd. Since Jesus lays down his life for his sheep, and takes it up again, He is able to give them eternal life.

Lindars calls this verse one of the great theological statements of the Gospel, as it surpasses the metaphorical dimension of the imagery. Returning immediately to the pictorial imagery of the Gospel, with the phrase, καὶ οὐχ ἄρπάσει τις αὐτὰ ἐκ τῆς χειρός μου, John refers back to John 10:12 showing how the safety of the sheep is ensured

as Jesus displays two characteristics of an ideal shepherd – his sacrifice for his sheep and having an intimate knowledge of them (Lindars 1972:369).

John 10:29 provides some difficulties in translation (Hendriksen 1959/2:124; Lindars 1972:369; Newman & Nida 1980:340), but in essence the text expands on the thoughts presented by the previous verses, that stated Jesus' followers (the sheep) knows his voice, that He gives them the sort of life that belongs to the world of the Father and that nobody can steal them away from Jesus. Thereby the safety of the sheep is traced back to the plan of the Father, as Jesus' knowledge of the sheep was traced back to his own relation with the Father in John 10:15 (Lindars 1972:368). The Father is the ultimate reality, so the security of the sheep is impregnable.

Finally, in John 10:30, Jesus makes the explicit statement of his unity with the Father. This oneness should be understood in ethical terms (Lindars 1972:370) as it grows from Jesus' obedience to the Father, by which He is able to do the same deeds as the Father (Newman & Nida 1980:341). Elsewhere in the Gospel the oneness between Father and Son is expressed as a unity of nature or being. Here the unity is emphasised by Christ reflecting the Father in all that He says and does as they are essentially one (Hendriksen 1959/2:126; Morris 1971:522).

Speaking to his Jewish opponents while standing in the portico of Solomon in the temple, Jesus points to himself and claims He is the visible presence of God among

them (therefore replacing the temple), bringing the argument over his messianic claims to a conclusion (Moloney 1996:147).

It can also be called mutual indwelling (Lindars 1972:371), implying the unity to be essential and permanent and not a passing and temporary concurrence of a common mind and purpose. Later, in John 17, this oneness between Father and Son is depicted as the prototype and model of oneness to which the community of believers also should aspire (Schnackenburg 1971:308).

## **4.5 ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ IN THE FINAL PASSAGES OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY**

### **4.5.1 Some background remarks**

John 11 recounts the final miracle included in John's Gospel. Here, He raises Lazarus from death. Put against the backdrop of the ongoing rejection of Jesus by the Jews, Jesus' remark of the purpose of the miracle that is about to happen, becomes all the more significant: Αὕτη ἡ ἀσθένεια οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς θάνατον ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ δι' αὐτῆς (John 11:4). This should also be read in conjunction with Martha's confession, ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος (John 11:27). The commotion caused among the Jews by this miracle forced Jesus further into hiding (John 11:54), as the decision was formally made to capture and kill Him (John 11:49-53).

The final narrative depicting Jesus' public ministry recounts the journey from Ephraim – where Jesus stayed after the raising of Lazarus – to Jerusalem, where Jesus and his disciples were headed to participate in the Passover (John 12:1). Thus the stage is set for the private conversation between Jesus and his disciples (John 13-17) and his capture and execution and resurrection (John 18-20). The narrative of this journey includes Mary, sister of Lazarus, anointing Jesus' feet. This most probably enables John to more clearly introduce Judas Iscariot as antagonist of the story, as he was previously introduced into the story line (John 6:70-71). Here the description of Judas Iscariot includes the remark that he took money from the common money box since he was a thief (John 12:4-6).

In chapter 10 the question is asked whether the opponents to Jesus have a chance to become children of God on their own (Van der Watt 2007:16). Jesus takes the opportunity to explain that He is the door of the sheepfold of God and a person can only enter God's sheepfold if they use this door. Furthermore, by entering through this door, they have a shepherd that is willing to lay down his life for them as they belong to him. They will follow the Son of God, the giver of life, the light of the world, the Good Shepherd. No-one will be able to steal them out of the hands of the Father or the Son. Thus, the answer to the question (can one become a child of God without Jesus?) is no. Again the Jews rejected Jesus' message as they refused to believe in Jesus or his works (Van der Watt 2007:16).

Jesus made a lot of claims about knowing God and leading people to Him, but how can one be sure He is really the only source of eternal life? As deeds form the key to answering these questions, Jesus' identity must be proven by his deeds. This is what John chapter 11, the story of the raising of Lazarus from the grave, is about. Nestled within the story is the remark, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they will die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26). The message is clear: Jesus has the power to give life and He made Lazarus alive to prove it.

#### **4.5.2 The Entry into Jerusalem**

The story recounts the large crowd Jesus is attracting, due to the raising of Lazarus (John 12:9-11). As these things go, word spread of Jesus' "ultimate miracle" in Jerusalem for the Passover and ὁ ὄχλος πᾶν ἠθροῦν gathered to welcome him into the city (John 12:12-19). John's Gospel suggests that this welcoming bears the markings of the triumphant entry of a victorious king into his capital city, as they took branches of palm trees with them and he interpreted this triumphant entry as the fulfilling of the prophecy made in Zechariah 9:9 (Brown 1971:462; Barrett 1978:416). The definite reference to palm branches seems to underscore this, since palm branches are associated with a victorious ruler (Schnackenburg 1971:374).

Only in John's Gospel is Jesus explicitly called the king of Israel, by the crowd welcoming him into the city (Newman & Nida 1980:395). As such, the actions of the

crowd seem to have political overtones, as if they were welcoming Jesus as a national liberator (Brown 1971:461). The entering into the city on the back of a donkey is a prophetic action designed to counteract this nationalistic overtone (Brown 1971:463).

The crowd is called large, and this should be ascribed to the fact that people flocked to Jerusalem for the Passover as pilgrims (Newman & Nida 1980:396), adding weight to the fact that they responded to the testimony of those who witnessed the “stupendous miracle” (Morris 1971:588) of the raising of Lazarus (John 12:17).

Here the use of ἐμαρτυρία depicts the eyewitness accounts given of this event, attesting to its truthfulness and creating the setting against which Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem should be interpreted. The verb is used in the imperfect tense and indicates action in progress (Newman & Nida 1980:400), therefore implying that the witnesses to Lazarus’ raising couldn’t stop talking about it in their ongoing conversations about Jesus (Moloney 1996:186).

We can infer some additional understanding to the use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme in this specific context: One of the outcomes of being a witness to Christ, it would seem from this event, is that a person’s testimony is carried so convincingly because of its truth and the personal involvement with the situation being described, that the receivers of the testimony are propelled into investigative action of some sort.

This event serves as the final motivation for the Jewish authorities' decision to kill Jesus: ἴδε ὁ κόσμος ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ ἀπῆλθεν (John 12:19).

### 4.5.3 Continuing the Story

In the final passages of John 12 Jesus spoke to some Greek speaking Jews who wanted to meet Him (John 12:20-26). This event is used as vehicle for Jesus' proclamation of His imminent death and the theological reason for His death, namely that it is like a grain falling in the ground and bearing this fruit: anyone who willingly loses his earthly life will receive eternal life, in John 12:24-25 (Moloney 1996:187).

The following event that is recalled, is the voice from heaven (John 12:27-36) stating that Jesus will be glorified, allowing Jesus to tell His followers that He will be crucified (John 12:33). Jesus then departed from the temple and John commented on the Jews' unbelief as fulfilment of prophecies from Isaiah. This John also used as basis to show that even some Jewish authorities came to believe in Jesus but kept quiet out of fear of persecution from the Pharisees. John couldn't refrain from some value comments, however, as he interpreted their silence as loving the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43).

The final pericope of John 12 can be viewed as a summary of all things Jesus taught during the course of His public ministry, as recounted by John's Gospel (John 12:44-50). To believe in Jesus is to actually believe in God and seeing Jesus enables a



person to see God. Jesus came as light of the world and not as judge because His primary mission is to save the world. Jesus' words will be the ultimate judge, as people who rejected his message will be judged as such. This is possible because Jesus didn't speak on his own accord, but received His authority from the Father. Moreover, He received a specific commandment from the Father and it is ζωὴ αἰώνιος (John 12:50).

## 4.6 CONCLUSION

Jesus has the ability and the authority to provide life. He received this from the Father, and in this He is totally dependent on the Father. Jesus also has the right to judge, and this He received from the Father as well. Since He came to earth to provide life in the fullest sense, Jesus wants people to believe in the Father. Believing in the Father enables them to move from death to life. To achieve this, Jesus presents witnesses to his mission, providing compelling evidence of the truth of his claims.

These witnesses are the Father, John the Baptist, the works Jesus are doing while on his mission, and the Scriptures of Jewish religion. Refusal to accept these stems from a person's unbelief in God. Therefore, if a person truly believes in God, he/she will accept and believe Jesus' testimony. Unfortunately, the Jewish adversaries to Jesus were so stuck in their legalistic clinging to the laws of Moses that they failed to recognise the testimony these Scriptures presented about Jesus.

The list of witnesses also helps contemporary readers of John's Gospel to grasp something of the basis of their own testimony. As they believe the message presented by Jesus, they know the Father and hear his voice. And like John the Baptist, they are also standing in line as witnesses to Jesus. And as the people of Jesus' day could see his works, the believers of today can also testify to these works as they can see evidence of Jesus' continuing mission on earth today. And just like the Jewish faithful they can search the Scriptures as they also have access to the full body of Biblical literature today.

At the core of Jesus' testimony is his mission to save those who live in the darkness of unbelief, causing them to be enslaved to sin. Jesus presents himself as the true Mediator of the Father's saving grace, even though this testimony is rejected by the religious people of his time. Jesus is able to be the Mediator because He and the Father are inseparably united and their testimonies are indistinguishable from each other.

In the shepherd narrative of John 10 Jesus presents His testimony through a pastoral metaphor. This is done to demonstrate the real outcome of believing his message. Those who accept his testimony and meet him as Saviour, discover the Father as true Shepherd of a flock that cannot be harmed. They are cared for, looked after and this enables them to flourish. It happens through the sacrifice Jesus is making by laying down his life for these sheep.

Finally, Jesus' works are quite spectacular. This is aptly demonstrated by him raising Lazarus from the grave. People couldn't stop talking about it. Those who were

present at the event testified to those who were not. And even if they did not believe in Jesus because of his message, they certainly were willing to crown him king because of his miraculous abilities.

This last reference to testimony in Jesus' public ministry – in John 12 –depicts a lasting impression of John's use of the lexeme. He transferred the legal meaning of testimony into the religious domain to give it new content: People who see Jesus in action, who listen to his message and who get to know him are in an excellent position to tell other people about what they saw and experienced. In fact, it is an integral part of John's implied ecclesiology that a living faith community will serve as witness to the God it personally knows, loves and trusts.

# C HAPTER FIVE

*“Jesus has made majestic claims. But who is he to make them?”*

(Hendrikson 1959/1:205)

## **JESUS’ CONVERSATION WITH HIS DISCIPLES (JOHN 13-17); THE PASSION NARRATIVE (JOHN 18-20); THE EPILOGUE (JOHN 21)**

### **5.1 AN OVERVIEW OF JESUS’ MINISTRY TO HIS DISCIPLES**

The second major section of the Johannine narrative after the section on the public ministry of Jesus is set during a single evening over dinner, before He was taken captive and crucified. At this meal Jesus spelled out his vision for his followers: *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* - John 13:34-35 (Van der Watt 2007:17). John starts the narrative with Jesus washing the

feet of his disciples to demonstrate how He understands this principle. The ensuing discussion came to be known as the Farewell Discourse.

The discourse can be subdivided into three parts (Van der Watt 2007:17-18):

- **A first discourse in John 13-14**, ending with the words, “*Rise, let us go from here*” (John 14:31). These two chapters serve to assure the disciples that they are indeed on their way to the Father because Jesus is “*the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6), as long as they stay in a close relationship with Him. They will not be left orphaned if Jesus goes away, because He will stay with them in different ways:
  - He will be with them through the Spirit of truth, their special Helper who will be sent to them (John 14:16-19, 26).
  - His words and works will be a constant reminder of His presence with them (John 14:10-12, 23-24), being as close as He possibly can to them, making this experience possibly through the practice of prayer and the promise of giving them everything they according to the mission they share with Him (John 14:13-14).

- Finally, He will make His presence felt, as Jesus and his Father will “make home with everyone who loves Him and keeps his commandments” (John 14:23; 14:15, 21).
  
- **A second discourse comprising John 15 and 16.** In John, 15-16 it is explained why the disciples must keep their relationship with Jesus intimate. The first image being used is that of a vine and its branches (John 15:1-17). Only such an intimate relationship with Jesus will produce fruit that pleases the Father (John 15:8). As it was in Jesus' case, not everyone will appreciate their fruit, and they will be hated just like Jesus. They might even be persecuted and killed, but they can be assured that they are not left alone. The Spirit, their special Helper – or Paraclete – will guide and lead them (John 16:5-15).  
  
As a result, their sorrow will change into joy, as indeed the Father and Jesus are always with them. There appear to be some overlapping between John chapters 14 and 16.
  
- **Finally, the prayer of Jesus in John 17.** John 17 contains Jesus' prayer to his Father. It has the character of a report-back from the Son to the Father of the mission that was undertaken (Van der Watt 2007:18) and the thematic progress in the prayer is evident:

- John 17:1-5. Jesus remarks that He accomplished the work that the Father sent Him to do (to give eternal life to all those who belong to the Father). He is now ready to return and to be glorified.
  
- John 17:6-8. The result of the mission was that many received the message of Jesus and indeed believed, forming a community of believers.
  
- John 17:9-19. What must now happen to those believers? Jesus asked not that they be taken out of this world, but that the Father should protect them so they can continue with Jesus' mission.
  
- John 17:20-23. Jesus also prays for those people who come to faith through the word and message of his disciples. He asks for loving unity among them and unity with the Father and Son.
  
- John 17:24-25. Jesus explicitly asks that eventually all believers should be where He is, with the Father in glory.

The only passage in these Farewell Discourses to contain the μαρτυρία-lexeme is John 15:18-16:4. The absence of the lexeme in this section is striking, given the frequent use of the word group in the previous chapters of the Gospel.

## 5.2 ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ IN JESUS' MINISTRY TO HIS DISCIPLES

General agreement exists with the beginning of this section at John 15:18, but apparently there is differing opinions to its ending (Newman & Nida 1980:490). It is difficult to break-up chapters 15 and 16, as various themes and emphases interlock with each other (Smith 1986:52). Although John 15:26-27 introduces a new subdivision, the persecution theme of the previous verses link thematically with John 16:1-4a, making the introduction of a new pericope at verse 26 difficult. As a whole, this passage deals with the world's hatred for the disciples, the reason being the world's hatred towards Jesus.

It is important to understand that the remark of Jesus about "the world" hating his disciples - in John 15:18 - imply people on earth who oppose God, because they are aligned with the power of evil (Barrett 1978:479; Newman & Nida 1980:491). The verb *μισέω* is repeated twice in this sentence and the second time it is used in the perfect tense (*μεμίσηκεν*) to indicate the enduring character of this action. The world's hatred actually has a long history and it is not about to end soon. John describes the contrast between Jesus' disciples and the world in absolute categories (Newman & Nida 1980:492).

The disciples do not belong to the world as they are chosen from it by Jesus, thereby providing the reason for its hatred: they are now part of the world to which Jesus belongs and this stands in direct opposition with the ideals of the world. Moreover,



they share in Jesus' mission, and as the previous discussion focused on their love for Jesus and each other, the antithesis of love – hate must also be explored (Lindars 1972:493).

In John 15:20 Jesus provides a shimmer of hope on this negative picture of the followers of the world. Where-as the depiction of the world's attitude towards Jesus and his disciples has been completely negative, Jesus seems here to be fine-tuning his view somewhat (Newman & Nida 1980:493). Some people from the world will obey the disciples' teaching just as they obeyed that of Jesus (lit. εἰ τὸν λόγον μου ἐτήρησαν, καὶ τὸν ὑμέτερον τηρήσουσιν).

It would seem that He wanted to show that all is not just lost, since the purpose of keeping his word is, after all, to show to the people of the world the light and how to start living in it. Through this, Jesus also showed his disciples that they can expect success in their mission and not rejection only (Lindars 1972:494).

John 15:21 provides the motive for this hatred and persecution: ἀλλὰ ταῦτα πάντα ποιήσουσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου, ὅτι οὐκ οἶδασιν τὸν πέμψαντά με. There are two reasons for this persecution: First, the disciples are part of the world of Jesus (lit. for Jesus' name's sake), and secondly, the people of the world do not know the One who sent Jesus, in other words they do not know the Father (Newman & Nida 1980:494).

From John 21:22-25 the world's guilt is discussed as something that grows out of this persecution: The world hated Jesus - it will hate His followers as well. The world is persecuting Jesus - it will persecute His followers as well. The world didn't believe Jesus' word (or message, or teaching), it will similarly not accept the words of His disciples. Moreover, Jesus spoke to the people of the world and did works among them, therefore they now have knowledge of their sin and this takes away any opportunity for an excuse (Newman & Nida 1980:494-495). If Jesus did not come to earth to proclaim God's message, the world would not be guilty of sin.

As it is, the world has seen what Jesus did and it heard his teaching, making them guilty because by rejecting Him and his message they demonstrate their hatred of both Jesus and the Father who sent Him (Newman & Nida 1980:490-491, 495). This helps us understand the nature of Jesus' message: He came to proclaim the truth of people's bondage in sin and the resulting guilt they are suffering because of it. He also came to show them the way out of this bondage by doing the things that was unique to his Messianic character. Yet this way was rejecting, making the people of the world even guiltier.

John 15:26-27 reveals the source of strength for disciples during times of persecution: The Helper, Spirit of truth, who comes from the Father, will enable them to endure. The first reference to the Helper was in John 14:16 and further. There He was described as someone who will convict the world of sin, as He is a teacher, a witness to Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980:466-467). Note, however, that the words for witness do not occur anywhere in John 14 and this usage is inferred from the content

of the discussion. It is better to suffice with a general understanding of the function of the Holy Spirit by thinking along the lines of Him being a Helper to the disciples of Jesus, a meaning that is emphasised by John 16:26.

Newman and Nida (1980:497) referred to the complex locational relations in the clause, ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός, showing that the role of Jesus as the agent is primarily causative. It can thus be translated as “I will cause him to go from the Father and come to you.” This leads to understanding the testimony of the Helper as testimony about Jesus, specifically in the understanding that the Paraclete will unceasingly continue to testify about Him (Barrett 1978:482).

The text strongly implies that the Spirit is personal (Brown 1970:689). The causative clause of John 15:26 helps us to understand the intricate relation between the testimony of the Paraclete and the testimony of Jesus’ disciples. The Paraclete testifies about Jesus, since He comes from the Father and was with Jesus from the beginning – even before creation. He is sent to earth to bear witness about Jesus, thereby reinforcing the score of testimonies about his identity and mission. Furthermore, He is able to do it, because of the fact that He has intimate knowledge of, and functioned in, an intimate relation with Father and Son (Morris 1971:683).

Similarly the disciples, are sent by Jesus to bear witness about Him as they, too were with Jesus from the beginning (that is, the beginning of his earthly ministry – Lindars 1971:497; Newman & Nida 1980:498; Ridderbos 1997:527). Underscoring

the point is the emphatic use of the pronoun, ὑμεῖς. Moreover, by repeating the words of John 13:16 in John 15:20, Jesus seems to have transferred His mission onto the disciples. Thus, their testimony must be understood as that they were there, they know Jesus personally and furthermore, they continue to do and say what He did and said. They must accept responsibility of this task as it cannot be evaded (Morris 1971:684).

Moreover, their testimony cannot be separated from the testimony of the Paraclete since the Paraclete is invisible to the world and can only be heard through the testimony of the disciples (Brown 1970:700). The relation of this witness is similar to the relation between the Father and the Son (Beutler 1972:366).

If we put these two verses in the context of the discussion of the μαρτυρία-lexeme in John 1:19 - 4:54, we find that the same overall theme is repeated here: To bear witness is to be able to attest to Jesus' identity and credentials based on the fact that you, as witness, know Him personally and are able to provide sufficient information about his heritage, character, actions and even integrity (Brown 1970:701). The Spirit can do it, since He was with Jesus and the Father from the beginning of time. And Jesus' disciples must do it, since they were with Jesus from the beginning of his earthly ministry.

The promise of the Counsellor enables the disciples not to have their faith shaken in the midst of hardship and persecution (Newman & Nida 1980:499). This more

specifically means He will protect them from losing their faith in times of persecution. John now returns to the earlier theme of persecution (in John 15:18-25) and in John 16:2 he describes some of the hardships Jesus' disciples will face. The idea that references to ἀποσυνάγωγος in John 9:22, 12:41 and here in 16:2 reflect conditions after 85 CE, as was occasionally argued (cf Smith 1986:53), is somewhat one-sided (Hengel 1989:114-117). The Christians' expulsion from the synagogues was a lengthy process that started even before Paul, with the martyrdom of Stephen. Moreover, the suffering of the communities of God in Judaea weren't isolated events, but widespread and repeated. Hengel (1989:117) concluded that the narrative in John 16:2 was meant to describe the general context of the whole post-Easter community, since the beginning of the church.

As it is, Jesus wants his disciples to appreciate the degree of animosity towards them, as He describes how the persecutors will think they are doing a service to God by expelling them from the synagogues (Newman & Nida 1980:500). John also reiterates the cause of the persecution as the world knowing neither the Father nor Jesus (John 16:3). The phrase used here, οὐκ ἔγνωσαν, actually denotes a constant truth as it is used in the aorist tense – meaning something like “they have never known the Father or me.”

Jesus is telling these things to them in advance, so that they will be able to withstand the pressure to leave the faith. John 16:4a uses the expression μνημονεύητε αὐτῶν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶπον ὑμῖν, not to suggest that the disciples will forget what Jesus said, but to think about what he has said (Newman & Nida 1980:500). Jesus speaks, after all, of

things which the church will remember and understand only in the light of its subsequent, post-resurrection history (Smith 1986:54).

## 5.3 ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ IN THE PASSION NARRATIVE

### 5.3.1 Some Background Remarks on John 18-20

John's narrative of the crucifixion events largely follows the chronological sequence of the other Gospels, but contains several unique differences. Chronologically, Jesus was captured and questioned by the high priest as well as the political ruler of the area – Pontius Pilate. He was then sentenced to death by crucifixion, buried, but rose on the third day, and appeared to his disciples (Van der Watt 2007:18).

Van der Watt (2007:18-19) pointed to the following differences in the passion narrative between John and the Synoptic Gospels:

- John's version of the crucifixion is not a story of suffering. Jesus is portrayed as the one with the true power, even though He seemed powerless – having everything under control (John 18:35-38). In John 19:11, He said to Pilate that Pilate wouldn't have power unless it was given to him from above. That reflects the statement He made in John 10:17-18.

- Jesus' innocence and kingship are clearly declared in the Johannine account. Upon listening to Pilate, one hears two things, he does not find Jesus guilty of any crime and he constantly talked about Jesus' kingship. He even wrote it down as a title on the cross (John 19:19).
  
- John integrated the crucifixion narrative with his theology. It becomes apparent when one looks at the themes Jesus talked about during the events of the night:
  - Jesus drinks from the cup the Father has prepared for Him, He does what the Father asks (John 18:11).
  
  - He has no hidden agenda and speaks openly for everybody to hear (John 18:20-24).
  
  - He is a King, but his Kingship is not from this world and that is the truth (John 18:34-38).
  
  - The power does not lie with Pilate but comes from above (John 19:11).
  
  - Jesus cared for His mother and introduced her to the community of believers (John 19:26-27).
  
- John used irony as a style figure in his narrative. Jesus' opponents were ignorant of the real power game taking place. Although they thought they were in charge, the true power laid with Jesus. Ironically, they crucified Jesus

under false pretences and should be the ones crucified. Even more ironically, the cross became Jesus' throne, as was declared by the title on top of his cross – this is the King of the Jews (John 19:19). The cross thus acted not as an instrument of suffering and humiliation, but as the glorification of the Son of God (John 12:18; 17:1-5).

Although the Gospel of John is frequently thought of as the Gospel of the incarnation, the decisive factor for the argument that Jesus gives eternal life is the death of Jesus (Lindars 1990:81). It is in his death that Jesus really proved that he is the pre-existent Son of God (Lindars 1990:81-82): Jesus' death has a voluntary character. Though he was condemned to death, Jesus did it voluntarily, because he could retract his message. As he lay down his life out of his own will, he has the same power to take it up again. In John 10:17 Jesus states that the Father loves him because he accepts death as a freely willed choice to obey the charge given by the Father.

By giving his own life for his sheep, Jesus demonstrates the Father's will for the salvation of all people (John 10:29) as he is one with the Father (John 10:30); John also places great emphasis on the demonstrative aspect of the cross (John 8:28) and the argument starts as early as John 3:14 where the idea of the lifting up of the Son is first introduced. It refers to both the cross and Jesus' exaltation to heaven, therefore alluding to Isaiah 52:13 where the Suffering Servant is exalted after his humiliation even to death. The world can see the exaltation of Jesus through the crucifixion which is the demonstration of Jesus' moral union with the Father.



At the same time, Jesus' death is the supreme moral victory in the flesh. Jesus' personal preference and his fears are completely subordinated to the will of God (John 12:27-30). Through him, the devil's grip on humanity is broken and victory over the "prince of this world" is declared. This cosmic victory simultaneously ushers in the eschatological age; Finally, John portrays Jesus' death similar to the traditions of earliest Christianity as an atonement sacrifice. The testimony of John the Baptist (John 1:29, 35) refers to this. Jesus also says he gives his life for the life of the world (John 6:51), for the sheep (10:11, 15) and for his friends (John 15:13).

### **5.3.2 Finding the pivotal point of the Crucifixion**

The pivotal point of the crucifixion can thus be found in Jesus' union with the Father. As such, it opens the way for believers to enter into a personal relationship with God through Jesus (Lindars 1990:82). The cross becomes the high point of the revelation of God's love and this love effects salvation. Salvation in the Johannine sense can be defined as being saved from sin, where sin is a refusal to accept Jesus as the Christ, Son of God – John 16:9 (Van der Watt 2007:52). Such a refusal results in evil behaviour and it can be seen visibly: hate, murder, lies, theft, seeking self-honour, etc. Therefore, it is not the deeds that count, but the lack of a relationship with God (Van der Watt 2007:53).

Furthermore, salvation is attained through faith – *“a self-sacrificing, intellectual and existential acceptance of the message and person of Jesus to the extent that it completely transforms a person’s thoughts and deeds in accordance with Jesus’ message and leads to an obedient life of doing what a child of God should do”* (Van der Watt 2007:55). When it occurs, a person is included in the family of God and is born “from above.” This makes it extremely important that a person will recognize Jesus for whom he is and, to this regard, the cross-events serve the purpose of defining when a person recognizes Jesus (Van der Watt 2007:56).

The effect of the cross-events as pivotal point for salvation is demonstrated by the story of the unbelieving Thomas. Koester (1989:343) discusses the resurrection appearances as the culmination of the disciples’ coming to faith. By using repetition, the narrative creates three-part dramatic sequences which climax when a character recognizes that Jesus is alive. First, the beloved disciple saw and believed (John 20:8). “Believe” is used in an absolute sense, so it must be assumed that the disciple believed in Jesus’ resurrection, especially when read in conjunction with John 20:9 by way of contrast, Mary also saw, but she only believed when she heard Jesus’ voice.

This sets the stage for the third part of the story, when Jesus appeared to the group of disciples, initially with Thomas absent. As with the beloved disciple, who believed when seeing Jesus, and Mary, who believed after hearing Jesus, the disciples came to faith upon seeing him. However, Thomas made seeing and touching Jesus a

precondition for believing, as had the sceptics in Jerusalem – John 2:18 – and the crowd in Galilee – John 6:30 (Koester 1989:346).

The contrast is further accentuated when comparing Jesus' response to the disciples and to Thomas. To the disciples he said, εἰρήνην ὑμῖν (John 20:21) and to Thomas he said ὅτι ἐώρακας, με πέπιστευκας μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες (John 20:29). This extends the possibility for subsequent generations of believers to know Jesus through the testimony of those who came to believe without actually seeing him. Thomas could touch Jesus as proof of his resurrection, while those after him will not be able to do so (Van der Watt 2001:445).

John's Gospel therefore uses the story of Thomas' unbelief as basis for the testimonial character of faith, making the reading of the Gospel an existential experience (Van der Watt 2001:446).

### **5.3.3 Jesus before the High Priest - John 18:19-24**

The heated context of the night Jesus was arrested and tried forms the setting of this pericope. Jesus was brought before the high priest and he questioned him on his disciples and teaching. No mention is made of questions regarding Jesus' messiahship and the accusation of blasphemy, which was, according to the Synoptic Gospels, the pivotal points of the trial (Newman & Nida 1980:559). Jesus replied by referring Caiaphas to those who heard him speak for an answer. The gist of the

argument is that He spoke openly in all the public meeting places - in the temple and in synagogues – where people come together, implying that what Jesus said, is no secret.

Moreover, the high priest should question those who heard what He said and not Himself. This section, according to Newman and Nida (1980:560), must be understood against the backdrop of Jewish legal procedures of the time – it was improper for an accused to be asked to testify against himself (Morris 1971:755-756). Jesus was therefore demanding that the trial be conducted in legal fashion, with proper witnesses. However, the proceedings descended from the illegal to the abusive (Barrett 1978:523).

This resulted in one of the temple guards to hit Jesus as His answer was deemed an inappropriate way for addressing the high priest (Newman & Nida 1980:561). In this context the use of μαρτύρησον is almost irregular to the rest of John's Gospel, as Jesus uses it in the negative: *Εἰ κακῶς ἐλάλησα, μαρτύρησον περὶ τοῦ κακοῦ: εἰ δὲ καλῶς, τί με δέρεῖς* (John 18:23). The first part of Jesus' reply to this admonishment was to deny that He violated the law of Exodus 22:28, which prescribes the proper respect for God and His appointed leaders (Lindars 1971:550-551).

The request is thus to produce witnesses that can attest to the fact that He did anything wrong (Newman & Nida 1980:561).

In this context the μαρτυρία-lexeme seems to be used explicitly in strict legal sense, indicating that Jesus demanded proof of Him transgressing Judaic law (Morris 1971:757). Since John uses the technique of double meaning frequently throughout the narrative, the temptation exists to ask if Jesus wasn't also trying to show He never violated any laws during the course of his ministry.

If the different translation possibilities of μαρτυρία are taken into account, this incident suggests the following: Jesus is reaching the end of his ministry, with his final glorification (as He pronounced His coming death to be) imminent. He is asked about his followers and teaching and His reply is to evoke the testimony of those who heard Him speak. His remark, ἐρώτησον τοὺς ἀκηκοότας τί ἐλάλησα αὐτοῖς: ἴδε οὗτοι οἶδασιν ἃ εἶπον ἐγώ (John 18:21), alludes to one of the possible meanings of μαρτυρία (to be present and able to supply information of what was said or what happened).

Therefore, Jesus' reaction to the officer hitting Him while using μαρτυρία in a negative sense (“μαρτύρησον περὶ τοῦ κακοῦ”) creates an impression that He wants His inquisitors to look for testimony that will contradict His public ministry and teaching (Lindars 1971:551). Moreover, it suggests the possibility that Jesus is passing the baton to those who were present by involving them in the questions regarding His ministry and teaching. This is somewhat underscored by his challenge to the officer to bear witness to anything He could have answered wrong. It's almost as if John wants us to hear: “I spoke openly and in places where every Jewish person could hear me. Let those who were there come and testify on what I said to see if anything is wrong with that.”

This interpretation actually presupposes a total disregard of Jewish legal procedure as it is described by Newman and Nida. It could be put forth as plausibility however, since some of the background information provided by John contains certain discrepancies: John 18:13 states that Caiaphas was high priest that year and his father-in-law was Annas. Furthermore, John 18:13 states that Jesus was first taken to Annas. In John 18:24 it is said that Jesus was taken to Caiaphas, without saying anything more about what happened during that trial. Yet, in John 18:19 it is said that Jesus was questioned by the high priest, implying that Annas was high priest, as Jesus only gets sent to the high priest later in the evening.

And in John 18:28 it is clearly stated that Jesus was taken from Caiaphas' house to the palace of Pilate. Ridderbos (1997:582) suggests that we are not dealing here with a formal trial before the Sanhedrin, but with a hearing solely arranged on the personal authority of Annas. The context of this pericope as well as the way in which the facts are represented here, makes this clear.

Thus the context in which Jesus appears before Annas is either highly suspicious since he acts as high priest while he is clearly not, or Annas is a highly influential figure at the time and this inquiry wasn't a trial. It could also be that John had his facts wrong and told the story as he remembered it without trying to set this confusion straight for his readers. To return to the theory of the use of the μαρτυρία lexeme in the passage under consideration, the following: if the questioning by

Annas wasn't a legal procedure – since he was not really the high priest – the temple guard hit Jesus because He did not show proper respect, only. Jesus' reply to this, speaking directly to Annas and ignoring the guard – as Newman and Nida suggested - would not then make any sense to invoke correct legal procedure.

It is obvious that Jesus reacted to the questioning of Annas and not the hit through the face He received. Since we already came to the conclusion that John used the μαρτυρία word group in its widest possible sense, we can consider the possibility that John actually was using the event to continue with his subtle instruction on true discipleship and the living out of authentic faith through testimony.

Remember also that Jesus, in his conversation with Pontius Pilate, never directly answered the governor's questions (Newman & Nida 1980:570), but engaged in an actual theological conversation over his identity as the Christ with him, sidestepping the demands of ancient legal customs. It is therefore quite possible that we have in this specific narrative an intended word play aimed at the readers, that functions within the scope of the larger narrative.

#### **5.3.4 Jesus before Pilate - John 18:28-38**

After a short interlude telling about Peter's third denial of his affiliation with Jesus, John picks up the narrative of the case against Jesus when He is on His way to Pontius Pilate. The narrative of this trial appears in John 18:28 - 19:16a and it is

possible to divide this into seven shorter units, balancing the scenes between three scenes on either side of a central scene in which Pilate doesn't figure prominently, as this is the scene where the soldiers mock Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980:564). The first scene (John 18:28-32) and the seventh scene (John 19:12-16a) take place outside the palace.

In this first narrative (John 18:28-32) the Jews' agenda of killing Jesus is made evident as they demanded the death penalty for Jesus (John 18:31). John's inclusion of the information about the Jewish authorities' refusal to enter Pilate's palace because of religious purification reasons (Lindars 1971:555; Morris 1971:763), seems to underscore the fact that the conflict centres on Jesus' message and Jewish legalism.

Pilate's first question to Jesus implied that he was expecting a political trouble maker (Σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων - John 18:33). The notion that Jesus is busy handing over the baton of his ministry to his followers is subtly strengthened by His response, as He wanted to know from Pilate whether it is his own thinking or whether it is what was said about him (in other words, whether the testimony presented to Pilate implied that Jesus presented Himself as Jewish king). Newman and Nida (1980:569) observed that Jesus was called king of the Jews only in this text and it is an important designation in the deployment of the rest of the narrative.



Pilate's reaction (μήτι ἐγὼ Ἰουδαῖός εἰμι) implies the lack of any real knowledge of Jesus other than the information given to him by the Jewish authorities (Newman & Nida 1980:569). As said before, Jesus didn't answer Pilate's question directly. He chose the opportunity to describe the nature of his kingdom (ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου), thereby affirming that the origin and nature of his royal authority is not of human origin, making the nature of his rule different from that exercised by the rulers of this world (Newman & Nida 1980:570). Pilate repeated his question, this time expecting a positive answer only (Lindars 1971:559).

Jesus answered indirectly yet again, implying His origin is other-worldly and his mission in this world is to bear witness to the truth. Truth is a central concept in John's Gospel and should be understood as meaning "what is true" or "what really is" (Newman & Nida 1980:571). In this context μαρτυρία is used. Jesus stated that He testifies about the truth, since He came from another world on this specific mission and only those who is of the truth, will hear his voice (Morris 1971:770-771). This is a participial construction and can also be translated as "whoever belongs to the truth hears my voice."

Pilate's very famous, postmodernistically relative reply, "What is truth?" left the matter in the air, open for interpretation, since the matter is not explored in John's Gospel any further. We can safely assume that Jesus didn't use μαρτυρία in a legal sense. As the context indicates He is referring to testifying about his supernatural origin, it is plausible to understand the remark as a pertinent reference to his identity as Son of God, and his mission to bring in everyone who accepts his message. In

the sub text of this conversation it seems that Jesus' deliberate interplay with phrases such as μαρτυρήσω τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, and ἀκούει μου τῆς φωνῆς, want to convey the idea that the witnesses to the truth should continue to bear testimony of Jesus' Kingship.

### 5.3.5 Witnessing Jesus' death - John 19:31-37

John ends his account of the crucifixion of Jesus with a very emphatic remark on what he saw (John 19:35). Not only does he repeat words from the μαρτυρία lexeme two times in a single sentence, he also repeats words from the ἀλήθεια word group twice in the same sentence. It is almost as if John has put a deliberate interjection into his account of Jesus' death.

The impression this creates is that he wanted to be absolutely clear that he witnessed the event, that he is convinced of the reality of it happening and that he does not want any uncertainty about it.

He wanted his readers to be absolutely sure that Jesus really was dead. This is underscored by the final remark of this sentence: ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύ[σ]ητε. With this, he connects his testimony about Jesus' death to the purpose of his gospel (John 20:31). Newman and Nida (1980:595) noted that John wanted to convey a theological significance with this specific appeal to an eyewitness-report (see also Morris 1971:818-819).

## 5.4 ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ IN THE EPILOGUE

### 5.4.1 Some Background Remarks

The final chapter of the Gospel deals with two issues: the restoring of the relationship between Jesus and Peter, and the way John would die. The setting is at the sea of Tiberias and in meeting them there, Jesus first demonstrated how they could rely on his power and presence in their further endeavours. Then He restored the broken relationship with Peter who denied Him on the night of his crucifixion and commissions him to look after his flock. After this, Jesus commented on Peter's question about the future of the beloved disciple, thus ending the Gospel narrative.

Finally, John concludes his Gospel. The final pericope in the gospel relates the rumour about the disciple whom Jesus loved and creates the impression that he lived to a very old age, thus necessitating this inclusion in his account of Jesus' ministry. These final verses also create the impression that this disciple has come to the point in his own ministry that he was involved in the writing down of the story of Jesus and he now wants to affirm the fact that he actually was present at the events being described.

## 5.4.2 The sharing of the testimony as final thoughts – John 21:24-

25

The repetition of the μαρτυρία lexeme here, as in the case of Jesus' crucifixion, serves an emphatic role: to make it clear that what he said, is true and there should be no uncertainty about it (Morris 1971:880-881). In John 21:24 the initial reference to the testimony is made in the present tense and stands in contrast to the past tense of ὁ γράψας ταῦτα, indicating that the witness on whose testimony the Gospel depends (or the part of the Gospel referred to in περὶ τούτων), was still alive at the time this verse was written (Newman & Nida 1980:638).

These verses tell us nothing of the authorship of John's Gospel however, only that it was partially based on the testimony of an unknown eyewitness. The use of οἴδαμεν suggests the presence of a group of people, including the writer of verse 24 (Smith 1986:74-75). This leads to the conclusion that John's Gospel was probably written in several stages as the result of a group effort with perhaps four to seven individuals working together – including a “beloved disciple” and “an evangelist,” one elder and a seer named John – who were eyewitnesses to some, or all, of the events recalled in the Gospel (Hill 2004:1), making this a theological document rather than a historical account of Jesus' life (Lindars 1971:640-641).

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

In the second part of John's Gospel, a surprisingly small amount of story space is awarded to the μαρτυρία-lexeme. It is surprising when put against the backdrop of the very frequent occurrences of this word in the first twelve chapters of the Gospel. Nevertheless, the few passages making use of this word group provide us with an increasingly clear picture of an implied Johannine ecclesiology.

One of the outcomes of Jesus' mission on earth is to expose the people who refuse to live in God's light for what they really are: haters of God. Not only do they refuse to acknowledge God, they also choose to live a life leading to increased animosity towards God's people. Thus the church must know: Be part of God's family and the world is going to hate you for that. This hatred is not just negative feelings or verbal accusations, but also active efforts to undermine and destroy the mission of the church. The people of the world do not like the message of the church at all. Luckily the children of God can find solace in the knowledge that it is not personal. They are hated because of God. They belong to God, and the hatred is aimed at God, thereby causing the church to suffer.

All is not lost, however, since people who belong to the world still hear the voice of the church proclaiming the light and God's presence and come to faith. After all, how will God be successful in his master plan of salvation if the message of love cannot be heard at all? This shimmering of hope in an otherwise bleak vision will also spill over to the lives of the members of the faith community. In tough times, they will find comfort in this reality and it will provide them with the power to go on in the mission Jesus entrusted to them.

Furthermore, they are not alone. Jesus sent the Helper to stand in our midst. The Paraclete, whose job it is to bear witness to Jesus, will provide us with adequate emotional resources to never lose this hope we have. And He will strengthen our own testimony, since we speak with one voice – the voice of Jesus echoing through the centuries, with the message of love and salvation and life coming from above.

The story has to be told to its end, as well. Therefore we find ourselves in the inner sanctum of ancient Jewish power. With pregnant horror we are forced to observe the travesty that calls itself Jesus' trial, hearing the accusations and seeing the conduct of people who truly believe they are acting in God's way. We observe how Jesus is interrogated and watch his replies, while being unable to step in and shout out his innocence. Had his own disciples, bar one, not also deserted Him in this hour? And that one is standing outside at the fire, lying to everybody about his association with Jesus, denying Him.

We hear how Jesus masterfully plays with words, even when He is fighting for his own life. We hear Him challenging the so-called high priest and his guard on the witnesses they cannot produce that He is guilty of blasphemy. We accompany Him to the residence of the Roman governor, where He clearly shares His kingship of heaven, his mission to earth and his testimony to the truth – that only He can bring life to this broken world. Then, with absolute shock and horror, we hear the uproar of

Jesus' fellow Jews that they want Him crucified and nothing less, even though the governor can find nothing to convict Him of.

We stand at the side of the cross, where his mother is weeping out her desperate sorrow. We see Him die, graciously quick, and we confirm the testimony of the beloved disciple that he is indeed dead. And three days later we share in the joy of Jesus' resurrection, the clear evidence of his empty grave and the instruction on authentic faith given to a highly doubting Thomas.

We finally stand at the beach, watching Jesus restore his friendship with Peter. And we sit with the author of this Gospel, sharing in the testimony that became the book of John.

In all this, we hear the recurring thought of a community that is called to share in the mission of Jesus. We are one. We are to love one another. We are to live lives of unparalleled quality, different to the standards of the world – more humble and self-sacrificing. And intentionally testimonial: As we have been there when Jesus started his ministry we still are there today, through the continuing testimony to his Divine identity, royal mission and true purpose – to shine his light in this dark world so that we can see how His Father really looks. None of this would have been possible if we weren't taught how to follow in his footsteps, believe in his words and share in his testimony. Especially do we share in his testimony, that declaration of his true



identity and character that ignites the spark of faith in the souls of people who are desperately looking for God.



# C HAPTER SIX

*“The church is called to mission for the integrity of mission, not for the sake of church growth.”*

(Callahan 1990:19)

## TOWARDS AN EMERGING, MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY

### 6.1 TOWARDS AN ANCIENT FUTURE

After reading through the Gospel of John, some feelings of admiration and awe should suffice. We have, after all, taken a bird’s eye view on one of the witnesses of the history in which God established his covenant with humanity (Barth 1963:26). Through our sequential reading we have become involved with an eyewitness of the deeds done in his time, and a hearer of the Word spoken in his time.

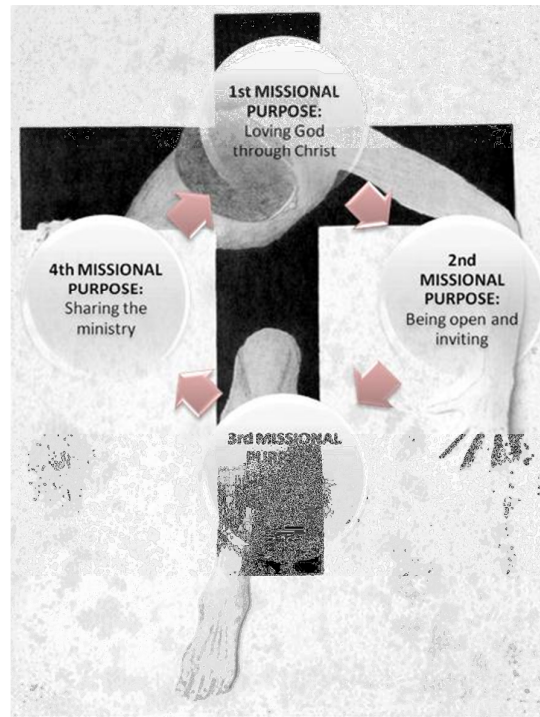
When we start with exegesis we need to remind ourselves that the end in view is not a tidy system in a book to be available as a “correct answer,” but

*“... the life of witness to the love of God, through all of which the church is built up and energised for mission, the believer is challenged, transformed and nurtured in the faith, and the unbeliever is confronted with the shocking but joyful news that the crucified and risen Jesus is the Lord of the world. That is letting Scripture be Scripture” (Wright 2009:40).*

As such, we should bear in mind that the Gospel of John is a living writing. This means it was a writing that evolved from an original oral tradition, and its development was necessitated by the history of the community, alive with interest in the life and ministry of Jesus (Westermann 1998:75). We still share in this interest, today. The question therefore is how we can be able to share the testimony of this faith community in a manner that we ignite the same interest in the life and ministry of Christ.

Perhaps we could take our cue from ancient Mediterranean culture itself: The future was experienced in the present; tomorrow is tackled when it arrived; the past thus served as a mirror held up to the present and problems were solved in the light of the past (Malina, Joubert & Van der Watt 1996:105).

In an effort to adequately structure the resulting ecclesiological paradigm – reframed on the study conducted in the Gospel of John’s use of μαρτυρία – the following schematic depiction of the parameters of this paradigm can be utilised:



**Figure 2** *Parameters of a paradigm for emerging, missional ecclesiology*

The background drawing shows a person climbing through the cross of Jesus into a new life, thus depicting our identity in Christ and the process of being born from above. The four missional processes necessary to become a community of believers that will foster this new life in Christ is super-imposed over it to draw attention to the reality that an emerging, missional ecclesiology is not a means in itself but dependent upon the salvation work of Jesus. The drawing was made by Hayward (2008). He gave this as the motivation for his drawing: *“It captures for me the idea of the narrow way and the way of the cross somehow being the same. I was compelled to draw it.”*

The four missional purposes are interrelated to each other. None of them can exist without the others and it supposes resulting ministry practices that form a cyclical process to create an ongoing ecclesiological homeostasis. Each ministry practice is an ecclesiological development of one or more of the discussed μαρτυρία-pericopes. An effort is made to create a sustainable theological theory from the insights gathered in the study, knowing full-well that no simplistic leap between text and current context should be made or over-elementary principles deduced from the exegesis. In this we take our cue from John's Gospel's introduction of the lexeme into the different narratives and the instructional scope it opened up to the way he communicated the meaning of the word group within each narrative section. This means a placing of the different μαρτυρία-pericopes as instructional material for specific ministry practices. The effort, however, is preliminary in scope and through ongoing research it should be more thoroughly developed.

## **6.2 FIRST MISSIONAL PURPOSE: WORSHIPPING GOD THROUGH KNOWING CHRIST**

### **6.2.1 Hermeneutical Framing**

It should be noted that “foundational core” tries to sufficiently capture the overarching Christological theme of John's Gospel message. Ecclesiologically, this means that the church's reason for existence is because Christ is, and since Christ was (i.e. He came to earth in all his humanity), we are. The church is witnesses to this history -

that is our purpose. We serve this purpose and its message when we build faith communities that worship God through our personal relationships: specifically with Christ, but also with each other and definitely with people outside the community of believers.

*Although the evangelist demands what amounts to a dogmatic stance from his readers who must profess Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, he does not do this simply as a test of intellectual orthodoxy. He does this 'that through this faith you may have life in his name.' Unless Jesus is the true Son of God, Jesus has no divine life to give. Unless he bears God's name, he cannot fulfil toward men the divine function of giving life (Brown 1970:1061).*

With this statement, Brown puts into words the radical nature of the message of the Gospel of John. For John the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the exalted Christ is connected in the most intimate way with the identity as Christian faith as a whole: Only if the Redeemer was truly human could He bring salvation to humankind. Therefore it is necessary to maintain the humanity and historicity of Jesus, up to and including his death on the cross, if the proclaimed message was to touch human beings in their historical situation and lead them to faith (Schnelle 1992:229).

The references to the passion that permeate John's Gospel as well as the repeated emphases on the humanity of Jesus show that John did not merely want to describe a revelatory event in mythical form but he wanted to depict the revelatory way of the

Incarnate One. Moreover, through the resurrection, Christianity's faith in Jesus' victory over death is depicted (Brown 1970:966). There is no doubt that the writers of the four Gospels believed in the empty tomb and that Jesus' body was raised to glory (Brown 1970:967). To all four this is the climax of the ultimate revelation by the Incarnate One (Morris 1971:828).

Here-in lays the purpose of the Christian community's ongoing testimony. John recorded the Easter events as he regarded them theologically and historically true, but to his mind it is not the last word - the risen Jesus is not to be regarded as the old Jesus all over again. Sight plays its part, but the Christian life is ultimately lived by faith (Barrett 1978:562). After all, the stories about Jesus' resurrection in John 20 contain important statements for future believers and serve the central purpose (John 20:31) to John's writers' presentation which was set for the whole Gospel (Schnackenburg 1982:301).

These stories help future believers more clearly to understand the nature of the act of faith by which the life in Christ may be appropriated (Lindars 1972:595). John wrote at a time when the resurrection was in the past already, but he interpreted the present experience of the church in the light of them (Lindars 1972:598). The essential point for him was that the Christian is in a vital personal relationship with the risen Christ, the mutual indwelling expounded in the narrative of Jesus' ministry to his disciples. The resurrection narratives are handled in such a way as to lead to the response of faith by which this relationship is established. Thus the resurrection narratives are not so much proofs as pointers towards the interpretation of the

Christian experience of life in Christ, who is the same Lord who revealed the Father and died and was glorified (Lindars 1972:599).

The Christian message consists of telling about Jesus Christ. This message is not merely a religious proposition or dogmatic argument, but altogether an act of worship, based on an intimate, personal relationship with the One who became human. In this sense, then, the testimony of the Samaritan woman meeting the Christ and coming to know him (John 4:7-26) provides the foundational, hermeneutic basis to the faith community's life of ongoing testimony. Christ is the Giver of living water (John 4:10). The believer who receives this living water has in himself or herself a spring welling up to eternal life (John 4:14), which means the current existence in which the believer exists, is transformed by the water into living life to its fullest.

From this it can be metaphorically inferred (by playing along with John's words for well and spring) that the community of believers exist as a well from where the living water is flowing, remaking a stagnant vessel of containment, the well, into an overflowing hub of eternal life, where life is lived to its fullest extent in the here and now. At the very core of the full life is the new perspective on worship (John 4:21). Worship is no longer an act to be performed in a specific place, but a relationship with the only person who can produce the living water. To worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23) is to depict the new community of believers in her life-creating and life-giving power through the Spirit of God involving them in the fullness of God's grace

(John 1:16) and made possible by meeting the Mediator of this grace in Person, i.e. in Jesus (Ridderbos 1987:193).

In John's Gospel, the motif of witness functions to confirm the dignity of John's message (Schnelle 1992:231). The witness publicly affirms what he or she heard, a process that confers a special degree of truth and reliability on the matters that the witness address:

- The Baptist testifies to the incarnation of the Logos (John 1:6-8, 15, 19-34).
- Jesus testifies to heavenly things (John 3:11, 31-32).
- The Father testifies to Jesus (John 5:31-40; 8:12-20).
- The Paraclete testifies to Jesus (John 15:26-27).
- The Beloved Disciple testifies to Jesus' death (John 19:34b, 35).
- The Beloved Disciple is made the author of the Gospel, whose true witness is confirmed by the Gospel's editors (John 21:24).



The following ministry practices, among others, result from this missional purpose:

- The ministry of corporate, public worship and testimonial preaching.
- The ministry of facilitating personal and public prayer.

### **6.2.2 The ministry of corporate, public worship and testimonial preaching**

The focus of this ministry is the corporate testimony that God exists and deserves the honour and glorification of the faith community. It is also the public proclamation of the identity of Jesus. The focus of preaching in this setting is not necessarily instructional or with the sole aim to teach, but also to serve as an exposition of the ongoing testimony to the identity and presence of Jesus Christ in the particular time and context in which the faith community is functioning.

John's Gospel presents the central reason for the church's existence and the core of an emerging, missional ecclesiology, in John 1:1-18. He furthermore suggests to his readers the idea that the church should be witnesses to the reason of her existence by introducing into his argument the testimony of John the Baptist. We have a compelling word picture indicating that this testimony is not supposed to be an

individual affair, but - derived from the remark that all believers are children of God (John 1:12-13) - we can come to the assumption that witnessing to Jesus as Son of God is a combined effort with a distinct public character. As a first ministry practice, then, Christians should come together publicly to proclaim their faith in Jesus and testify about it to each other.

A **second** hermeneutic indication on the corporate character of the church's testimony stems from the narrative of John's testimony when he testified to the arrival of the bridegroom (John 3:22-30). Through this, he inferred the celebratory character of a wedding onto that of a worship service. The way we publicly celebrate the coming of the Messiah as a joyous feast and celebration, serves as testimony to God's presence in our lives.

**Thirdly**, we can associate with Jesus' practice to attend the Jewish feasts and his re-interpretation of those feasts as another hermeneutic foundation (John 8:12-20). By adhering to important dates and occurrences that shape our relationship with God – notably, then, the celebration of his resurrection on the first day of every week – we call to mind our ongoing testimony of who He truly is. This brings to the foreground Jesus' remark of him knowing his origin enabling us to present to an unbelieving world the testimony about the Father.

We can **finally** take the triumphal entry into Jerusalem as a hermeneutic prompting to include corporate worship into an emerging, missional ecclesiology (John 12:12-

19). Although John demonstrated through Jesus' entry the Jewish people's nationalistic celebration, it was re-interpreted through the inclusion of the remark about the ongoing testimony of the people who were present at Lazarus' raising about the event. We are herewith enabled to re-imagine worship and church services through a lens of proclaiming the triumphant entry of God into our world as king.

### **6.2.3 The ministry of facilitating prayer**

In the second ministry of ecclesiological interpreting John's instruction on μαρτυρία, we find a hermeneutical marker showing towards the corporate practice of prayer. Prayer is usually understood as an internally personal practice of speaking with God. Yet, when John remarks in John 2:23-25 that Jesus knows humankind and needed no witness attesting to humanity, we find a confirmation of the intimate character of prayer: Jesus actually knows the heart of men and women. As the narrative here contrasted this knowledge with the masses' coming to faith because of His signs, we find an ecclesiological instruction to present testimony of authentic faith. A theology of prayer cannot be investigated here as it falls outside the scope of our investigation.

John also showed us how an asking for miraculous intervention by Jesus (John 4:43-54) was greeted with incredulity on his side, and the subsequent provision in the official's request. We discussed how John's remark on Jesus' testimony about not being honoured by his own people, served as a link to the comment in John 2:23-25,

further explaining what authentic faith means in contrast to a “seeing-is-believing” belief system.

What we can include here is showing how the narrative also serves as typology for prayer:

- Initially approaching Jesus in faith.
- Expecting a reply but receiving a put-down.
- Accepting Jesus’ word alone without seeing any immediate results.
- Eventually seeing the request answered.
- Putting it in perspective with the context of the making of the request.
- Renewed faith.

## 6.3 SECOND MISSIONAL PURPOSE: BEING OPEN AND INVITING

### 6.3.1 Hermeneutical Framing

In Chapter 4 of this study we discussed the use of μαρτυρία in Jesus' parable of the sheepfold (John 10:22-30). This pericope tells of the demand by the Jewish authorities that Jesus clearly states whether He is Messiah. In his reaction He invoked the testimony of the Father and stated that the authorities do not believe this testimony because they are not of Jesus' sheep (John 10:26). The remark is followed up by the allusion to the intimate relationship between Jesus and his flock ("My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" - John 10:27) with the provision of eternal life added into the fray to show how Jesus will protect his sheep. Finally, in John 10:30, Jesus makes it clear that He is in total unity with the Father in heaven.

This testimony of Jesus' identity as Messiah and the use of a pastoral metaphor, building on the Jewish collective of understanding how a shepherd and his flock operate, provides a basis for the first missional purpose of an emerging ecclesiology. Actually, it turns the metaphor around to view its meaning from the perspective of the flock, since it is the flock that derives its identity from really knowing the shepherd - in this case knowing that Jesus (the shepherd) and the heavenly Father share exactly

the same mission. A few elaborating remarks on this metaphor, and how it hermeneutically serves this first missional purpose, is therefore necessary.

According to Brown (1971:391) and Van der Watt (2000:56) the imagery in John 10 can be divided as follows:

John 10:1-5(6)      An account of events in a sheep pen

John 10:7-10      Explaining the gate

John 10:11-18      Explaining the shepherd

John 10:25-30      Explaining the sheep

In John 10:1-5 the reader is introduced to the imagery of sheep farming through a depiction of events taking place in a sheep pen. The point of the story is clear (John 10:1-3a): To approach the sheep, a proper way exists and this is through the gate opened by the keeper. The relationship between the sheep and shepherd is accentuated in John 10:3b-5 (Brown 1971:392).

Jesus used a common image when He used the metaphor of the shepherd and the flock. Richer families employed hirelings to tend to their sheep, while poorer families ascribed a family member to the task (Stander & Louw 1990:135). Oftentimes a collaboration of owners used the same fold to house their sheep. These folds only had one entrance. To protect the sheep, the shepherd slept with them in the fold. These sheep folds were without roof, so thieves could enter by climbing over the walls. The sheep of different owners didn't get mixed up as each shepherd knew his sheep. A close relation developed between shepherd and flock due to the large amounts of time the shepherd spent with them (Louw & Nida 1990:140). Thus the shepherd immediately knew if something is wrong with members of the flock.

An important aspect that will enable a better understanding to Jesus' use of this particular metaphor is found in the way the shepherd looks after the flock in the field (Stander & Louw 1990:141). The sheep were kept together by shouting something or throwing a stone in their direction. The shepherd never drove his sheep on in front of him, but rather walked up ahead with them following him, reacting to his calling.

In John 10:7-10 Jesus drew on the imagery of this metaphor and called himself the door. This indicates a specific relation between Jesus and the sheep/disciples with relatively little information provided about the true identity of the sheep (Van der Watt 2000:67). That Jesus didn't associate with the shepherd instead seems to reiterate the uniqueness of this application of the metaphor. One possible interpretation is that Jesus' association with the gate is aimed at the reference to the thieves who want to steal the sheep (Brown 1971:393). Another possibility is that Jesus uses the door as

a reference to the salvation He provides (Brown 1970:394). Van der Watt (2000:68) illustrates how the first possibility is viable as the idea of the door is a legitimising factor, is thematically prominent in John 10:1-2 and a natural choice for metaphorical application.

Jesus therefore fulfils the same role to those who belong to him as the door has for the sheep – identifying the legitimate shepherd. In referring to the thieves and robbers, Jesus shows us how several different people preceded him in depicting themselves as saviour, therefore the metaphor of him being the door accentuates that He is the only One through whom authentic salvation becomes possible (Van der Watt 2000:70). Yet the door is depicted not only as the entry point of the sheep, but as Brown (1970:394-395) argued, it also serves as illustration of what happens when one moves through the door. It brings salvation and a person who moves through the door finds life and sustenance (Van der Watt 2000:73).

In John 10:16 the ecclesiological implication of this metaphor is made clear. Jesus' remark, *καὶ ἄλλα πρόβατα ἔχω ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τῆς αὐλῆς ταύτης: κακείνα δεῖ με ἀγαγεῖν, καὶ τῆς φωνῆς μου ἀκούσουσιν, καὶ γενήσονται μία ποίμνη, εἰς ποιμήν*, shows a possible redactional move at a later stage in the Gospel's development to enlarge the scope of the Johannine community's understanding of their own mission (Brown 1970:396). John semantically activates the truths established in John 10:1-5 here by means of intra-textual reference (Van der Watt 2000:86). This brings the entire question to the extent of the significance of the salvation and death of Christ in proper perspective: This shepherd will die for everyone.



John 10:17-18 links thematically to the previous verses in the repetition of the phrase, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν μου τίθημι ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων in John 10:15, ἐγὼ τίθημι τὴν ψυχὴν μου, in John 10:17, and ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τίθημι αὐτὴν ἀπ' ἑμαυτοῦ in 10:18. Through this, John shows how Jesus' death is identical to glory and victory as it will reveal to all people (including his disciples) who he really is. His deeds are based on his relationship with his Father, and true identity will become evident when he will die and rise from death (Van der Watt 2000:87). Says Van der Watt:

*“Because he will die and rise from death, his death as Shepherd does not imply the end of his relationship with his disciples, but the **beginning** of a new relationship, which is based on the realization by the disciples of why Jesus is truly the **good Shepherd**.”*

Thus it brings us to the ecclesiological purpose to be established. The metaphor of the sheep is continued in the pericope that contains the word group we investigated. It is clear from the whole discussion that the depiction of Jesus as good Shepherd is not intended as a pastoral metaphor, meaning the metaphor as used in John's Gospel is not intended to be understood as pertaining towards the care of the flock.

Rather, it depicts the way people are introduced into the flock – through the voluntary death of the Shepherd. It depicts the purpose with which Jesus reveals His true identity – to provide true life to his flock. And it demonstrates the scope of his

mission – including all people and not only a select few. This is made evident by the discussion of the reason why the Jews reject Jesus’ message in 10:26-28: the sheep are in a relationship with Jesus and they benefit from his works, but the Jews are not, as they lack such a relationship (Van der Watt 2000:88).

The intertextual relationships between the different pericopes activate this message, even if the metaphor isn’t explicated anymore. By introducing the concept of Jesus’ works testifying on his identity as Messiah, John links the coming glorification of Jesus with the missional practice of sharing this message in such a way that its hearers are able to grasp its implications so that they are able to believe it.

Thus ***the pastoral metaphor becomes a missional metaphor***, through pastoral testimony by the sheep themselves. The implied ministry practices of this missional purpose would include, among others:

- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of hospitality to all people who make contact with the members of the faith community.
- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of caring and kindness, of showing compassion to the ill, destitute and infirm, poor and powerless, regardless of their church affiliation.

### 6.3.2 Ministries of hospitality

The narrative of John the Baptist's ministry in John 1:19 - 2:51 provides us with a hermeneutic key to a way of ministry leading to Jesus: The Baptist attracted a crowd of people. Among them were investigators from Jerusalem with the intention of placing the Baptist in the context of their belief system. In every encounter with them the Baptist testified to the identity of Jesus, and John's Gospel shows how he showed his own faith journey as an integral part of his testimony ("I didn't know, by now I see").

The way it is told, shows us how the Baptist chose against polemic, preferring testimony instead. Later John's Gospel shows how these same figures went to Jesus directly.

When the Baptist's disciples heard his testimony on Jesus, at the event where Jesus was present and baptised, they left John for Jesus. Apparently Jesus showed them hospitality and invited them to stay, which they did. This resulted in them getting to know Jesus better as well as them going to their own friends and family members with the message of the Messiah. The cycle repeats and these men also went to Jesus and started spending time in his presence.

In this we find an ecclesiological ministry practice that could be replicated. Ministries of hospitality towards strangers and members alike, involve an organised strategy to open the church community up as an inviting place of safety for people to investigate the claims of Jesus being Christ and through ongoing testimony of this, introduce people into a faith-based relationship with Jesus.

### **6.3.3 Ministries of caring, kindness and compassion**

The story of the woman at the well (John 4:1-30, 39-42) is actually more than an intellectual conversation on worship. The narrative provides enough indications of an approach geared towards life change through compassion than meets the eye: The woman is suffering socially and emotionally. She is isolated. She has a history of pain and hurt in her life. She is searching for God, but continuously misunderstanding the message, probably because of her painful past and ostracised present. We also know Jesus was selective in telling unequivocally that He is the Messiah.

Yet, to an unknown woman gathering water in the heat of the day, He disclosed his true identity. She reacted through testimony: this man knows who I am and what I did. Come see!

The ministry practice is rather evident: By showing compassion in hurt, Jesus presented the life giving water of His identity and enabled a hurting individual to have the testimony of the Saviour. Furthermore, her testimony had such an impact that her townsfolk investigated her claims and also came to meet Jesus personally.

In practice, the church must intentionally create ministries that can show compassion to the sick and ailing, hurting and destitute, and through this testify about the living presence of Christ. As Jesus' choice to travel through Samaria is depicted as intentional, we can accept that the instructional understanding of this text includes a strategic ministry emulating this deed of his.

## **6.4 THIRD MISSIONAL PURPOSE: LOVING ONE ANOTHER JUST AS CHRIST DID**

### **6.4.1 Hermeneutical Framing**

It has been noted that the use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme is conspicuously absent in the passages that are telling of Jesus' ministry to his disciples (John 13-17). Thus it necessitates a cursory overview of the content and message of this narrative block, which has been called the fifth act of the Gospel (Thyen 2005:582). At the core of this "farewell narrative" is Jesus' instructions to His disciples on their conduct after he has left them.

From a narratological perspective it is evident that John uses John 13-17 to present a significant development in the plot of the Fourth Gospel (Tolmie 1995:189-190). He specifically uses this section to provide the implied reader of the text with a comprehensive ideological perspective on discipleship.

For the purposes of our discussion we adhere to the demarcation of this block provided by Thyen (2005:x-xi):

John 13:1-38      Jesus washes the feet of his disciples

John 14:1-31      Jesus' first Farewell to his disciples

John 15:1-16:3      Jesus' metaphor of the vine

John 16:4-33      Jesus' Farewell and more information on the Paraclete

John 17:1-26      Jesus' Prayer

The most notable part of this discourse is the introduction of Jesus' teaching on loving one another with an act of service and Jesus' application of his deed (John 13). In John 14:1-31 Jesus explained his imminent departure and promises that He will leave behind the Paraclete. In John 15 Jesus introduces the metaphor of the vineyard to further expound on the commandment of love He gave in John 13.

His attention then turns towards the hatred the world will show the disciples and He uses the explanation to comfort them with the Holy Spirit's presence and to exhort them to faithfulness in ministry as they share the testimony to the Father, like the Spirit. In John 16 Jesus consoles them on his departure again and explains in clear terms where He will be going.

Finally, in John 17, He prays for his disciples, and in this unity prayer He passes the final responsibility of his ministry to the disciples and, after them, all believers. In essence the whole passage is set in the form of a discussion between Jesus and his disciples, looking forward to the actual life of the church, when Christians knew themselves to be united with Christ through their possession of the Holy Spirit (Lindars 1972:442).

The introduction to this discourse is an act of service and not of might, as Jesus' decision to wash his disciples' feet was considered a menial task reserved for slaves (Lindars 1972:446). Thus, the tone is set for the teaching He wants to impart on his disciples as the verses of John 13 explicitly introduces the commandment to love

one another in a way that emulates the example He set for them (John 13:14, 34-35). If we ignore for a moment the interlocutory passages about Judas Iscariot's treason, the whole of John 13 demonstrates the way in which the members of Jesus' movement should act towards each other – by acts of self-sacrificing love.

Some ecclesiological important clues are left in our midst. Jesus is given the titles of Lord and Teacher, as titles of respect (John 13:13-14), and He doesn't repudiate it. He actually bases the introduction of his commandment of love on being called this (Lindars 1972:452). Moreover, if He sets the example, as Lord and Teacher, He expects his followers to follow it (Thyen 2005:593).

The actual commandment to love one another is not new, as it forms part of Jewish law (Lindars 1972:463-464). Stylistically John uses an *inclusio* technique, linking his description of how Jesus loved his disciples in John 13:1 with the commandment here by using the same verb, ἀγαπᾶν. The implied newness of this commandment lies therefore in the fact that by demonstrating this self-sacrificing love, Jesus' disciples show that they are active followers of Jesus (Thyen 2005:608-609). In this, they also keep the spirit of Jesus alive among them as they continue their life in this world (Brown 1970:612).

Furthermore, it alludes to the covenant language of the Old Testament, found in Exodus 20 and especially in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Brown 1970:614). This covenant language has a very specific corporate dimension, as a new brotherhood and



sisterhood has been created on the basis of Jesus' work for men with a new relationship within that brotherhood (Morris 1971:633).

This makes this commandment with its implied marking of the disciples' identity – as belonging to Jesus – a matter of ecclesologically exploring the implications for the church's ministry modus. It has implications for discipleship as this mutual love is the proof of Christian discipleship (Barrett 1978:453).

Most importantly, the commandment to love grows from the experience of Jesus' love and this experience is the prerequisite and impetus for the creation of a new community for the sake of this new experience (Schnackenburg 1982:54).

The implied ministry practices of this missional purpose would include, among others:

- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of small group ministry.
- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of intentional faith development through the practice of spiritual disciplines by all members.

## 6.4.2 Small group ministries

The image Jesus invoked when he answered the questions of Nicodemus, forms part of the metaphors pertaining to the church as family. In John 3 the discussion centred on entering God's world and Jesus' argument was based on the reality that a person must be born from above. This can only happen through faith – believing that Jesus has the ability to make this supernatural birth possible. He further argued that the Father's love for the world is the driving force behind this mission and that faith enables a person to also live a life of obedience, marking him/her as believer.

Wedge into this argument is the linguistic leap from individual (singular tense) to communal (plural tense) when Jesus introduced the concept of the testimony on what is known (John 3:11). In our discussion we concluded that John's narrative wanted to involve the church corporately through these words of Jesus. This provides the basis for ministries that demonstrate and model family life, enabling people to be born from above, in faith, in a nurturing environment.

These ministries have at the core the testimony that new life in Christ enables a person to experience the love of the Father and grow in obedience to God. It therefore makes an excellent case for the strategic implementation of small group ministry in a congregation.

### 6.4.3 Intentional faith development

In John 5:31-47 Jesus presents the witnesses attesting to his identity. In the discussion on this pericope we came to the conclusion that Jesus wanted his hearers to find confirmation and verification of his identity. We saw how the conviction with which He shared his testimony can be corroborated by these witnesses.

On an instructional level we find a typological account of faith development to grow in one's own conviction and resulting testimony of Jesus' identity. By introducing the Father as witness, we learn how our own dependence of the Fathers' provision leads to a testimony of God actively involved in our lives and a greater conviction of the reality of the Unseen in our world. By allowing the light of the Baptist to shine for a while, we learn how the witness of the people of faith who went before us, provide us with the perspective on a history of witnesses who knew Jesus.

And by recalling Jesus' deeds we not only attest to His mission and glorification, but we also create an ongoing discourse on the continuance of his deeds in our own lives. Finally, by studying the Scriptures we have the ability to externalise our testimony by our growing ability to understanding the Word of God.

What can be seen in this narrative is a list of resources for faith formation, to increase the conviction of our testimony that Jesus is truly the Christ. Ecclesiologically this should be translated into strategic ministries to enable congregation members to intentionally adhere to practices of faith formation.

## **6.5 FOURTH MISSIONAL PURPOSE: SHARING THE MINISTRY**

### **6.5.1 Hermeneutical Framing**

It is especially the testimony of the Paraclete who actualises and makes present the Johannine witness to Jesus Christ. Through the Paraclete the productive interpretation of the past in relation to the problems of the present is made possible by the Paraclete (Schnelle 1992:232). He remains with the community forever (John 14:16-17), teaches it and reminds it of all that Jesus has said (John 14:26). He shares all that is received with the community, reveals the future and glorifies Jesus (John 16:13-14). The Paraclete takes from the fullness of Jesus' revelation and gives it to the community (John 16:15). This makes Him the basis for the Johannine ability to make present what is past and is the Spirit-enabled interpretation of the Christ-event, continuing to work within the community of believers borne from the testimony of the Gospel (Schnelle 1992:233).

The Paraclete makes possible a legitimate reinterpretation of the work of Jesus, as Jesus speaks through Him and eliminates the distance between past and present. The close combination of the testimony that makes present what is past with the fiction of historical eyewitness is not a contradiction; through the Paraclete, time horizons are dissolved into a unity. In John, the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the resurrected Christ is protected by making no further distinction between the two.

This elimination of the distance between past and present as function of the testimony of the Paraclete, thus serves as the fourth missional purpose of our emerging ecclesiology. It opens the doors for future generations of believers to not only share in the testimony to Christ, but also in the responsibility of the ministry of Christ. As it is argued in Chapter Two, the distinction between professional clergy and receiving laity has disappeared, making every member of the body of Christ a minister. The issue at hand is therefore no longer the activation of the laypeople, but the development of Christian leaders who, through their personal testimonies to Christ, will serve as ambassadors for Christ in this world, especially outside the confines of the congregational context. Some theological perspectives on leadership are therefore necessary.

Leaders share a characteristic, and that is the ability to make things happen (Engstrom 1976:20; Maxwell 1993:1). More specifically, they have the ability to help other people in a specific environment to reach their best potential in contributing to the task at hand. Christian leadership is wholly dependent on a person's identity in Christ and should therefore not be understood institutionally (Richards & Hoeldtke

1980:37). In ecclesiological terms a leader could best be described as a person who with wisdom gained through experience builds relationships with other believers to enable them to grow spiritually (Richards & Hoeldtke 1980:92). As such, leadership is the art to help people find fulfilment in their fundamental life quests and help these persons grow beyond themselves (Callahan 1990:64).

Leadership can be distinguished on five levels (Maxwell & Dornan 1997:5):

- The most basic level is the formal appointment a potential leader received in an organisation.
- From this initial level onwards a person's leadership grows through the granting of permission to act beyond the boundaries of influence of his/her job description in influencing people.
- The third level of leadership is found in the level of productivity when a leader successfully assembled a team who work together harmoniously.
- On the fourth and fifth levels the leader is able to establish and develop other leaders (fourth), which are also able and busy establishing and developing other people as leaders (fifth).

Since the church is ministering in a time of transition, the specific demand on its leadership ability dictates the ability to manage transition (Smit 1995:12). In this sense leadership is to be understood as the growing insight into and direction-giving of processes that directs the faith community and her ministry towards a shared vision of the future. This asks for specific attention to four aspects:

- Presence – or the ability to represent God with authentic love with people.
- Vision casting – the ability to help people to live from the reality of the resurrection of Christ.
- Facilitating – the ability to help a faith community to develop processes and structures to promote their community life and ministry in the world.
- Energizing – the ability to unlock the energy that is present in a faith community to enhance the mission of Christ.

It finally leads to the growing conviction that leadership in the faith community is aimed at moving people onto the agenda with which God operates (Blackaby & Blackaby 2001:20).

Hjalmarson (2006) probably succeeds in describing the demands on Christian leadership the best when he says leaders must discover that:

- Leaders do not lead people, but they lead with them.
- Leaders do not lead with certainties anymore, but with discovery, co-operation and faith.
- Leaders do not lead from a position of authority anymore, but from the emptiness caused by their dependence on Jesus.
- Leaders do not lead as managers anymore but as mystics and poets that articulate a common future.
- Leaders do not lead from the centre anymore but from the fringes of society.

The implied ministry practices of this missional purpose would include, among others:

- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of leadership development.



- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of developing personal testimony as an individual life practice of witness to Christ, also resulting in member-driven ministries of evangelistic outreach in the community.

### 6.5.2 Leadership development

Embedded in the narrative of Jesus' ministry to his disciples is the solitary reference to the μαρτυρία lexeme (John 15:18-16:4). The context of this passage is the hatred of the world that will be shared by the disciples. Jesus showed how the Paraclete serve as ongoing witness to his mission as they were together from the beginning of time and how the disciples share this testimony as they were with Jesus since the beginning of his earthly ministry.

With this cursory remark Jesus showed how believers will be able to hold fast onto their faith in times of tribulation: by intentionally sharing in the Godly ministry to the world. As we have discussed we do not live in a Christendom Paradigm any longer. This calling is therefore not to be understood as faithfulness and submission, but as intentionally missional. Every believer is included in this remark of Jesus – this becomes especially clear when the high priestly prayer in John 17 is read.

Ecclesiologically, congregations should strategically develop ministries to empower their members to find the adequate place and mode of living their testimony. This is a wider discussion than getting members involved in the ministries of the specific congregation. This entails a process of enabling Christians to share their witness as a practical lifestyle, through their chosen professions and voluntary activities in the community and based on the verbal testimony that stems from their relationship with Christ. It is, therefore, a process of leadership development of all members, as all members are called to share in the ministry of Christ.

### **6.5.3 Testimony through Public Discourse**

Several of the μαρτυρία passages in John demonstrate a purpose of enabling faith in the hearers of the testimony. As John stated, the purpose of the Gospel is to share Jesus so that people can believe and have life in Jesus' name (John 20:30-31). It is therefore all the more important to see how John relates this purpose to the word group he so frequently used to instruct his readers in the finer nuances of the practice.

The narrator's remark made in John 3:31-36 shows us how Jesus' testimony of heaven leads to people confirming that God is truthful (John 3:33), therefore attesting to the true identity of Jesus and the purpose of his mission to earth. Testimony to this results in people believing the message, receiving eternal life and living in obedience to Christ.

The alternative possibility of understanding John's use of *marturiva* in John 18:19-24 opens another avenue of instruction for the believers' community: In the public discourse, where Jesus' message and following is questioned, his followers' testimony should be of such a nature that it either reveals its untruth or attests to the authenticity of the witnesses. This means that when faced with public scrutiny, the faith community should testify to Jesus in such a way that nothing can be brought against Jesus.

The testimony of the beloved disciple in John 19:31-37 is clear-cut: He was there and saw Jesus dying. He can give testimony of the event and through his testimony he enables faith and people believing in Jesus.

Finally, the redactional comment in John 21:24-25 that this witness' testimony is true, provides a clue of how the subsequent generation of believers associated with the testimony provided by the eyewitnesses. They accepted it, even expanded on it, and shared it to enable yet more people to come to faith.

Ecclesiologically we find in this a missional purpose: Congregations should strategically include ministries that enable their members to verbalise their faith as a testimony in public discourse. Furthermore, congregations should establish ministries that engage with the community this testimony with the sole purpose of facilitating the process of people coming to faith in Christ.

# C H A P T E R S E V E N

## CONCLUSION

### 7.1 MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY AND AN EMERGING THEOLOGICAL PARADIGM

The investigation into the contribution of μαρτυρία in the Gospel of John guided us to the insight that *an emerging, missional ecclesiology at its core should be a narrative process*. Let us now attempt to conclude the discussion on the developing of such an ecclesiology as possible theological theory for the church's ministry in our day and age.

#### 7.1.1 At its core, the community of believers finds its identity in the revelation of God's identity

God has made himself known as a Father, who created this world and loves this world. The purpose of Him reaching out to humankind is to invite them into his

family. God is doing this by embarking on a mission to bring light into the darkness that engulfed this world. This darkness is the result of humanity's sinful rejection of God. God's mission entails Him coming to earth as a person who can communicate his loving intention to humankind. In the Prologue to the Gospel, this person is introduced to us as Jesus.

Throughout the Gospel, Jesus teaches that faith is to accept his true identity and the purpose for which He came to earth and to put ultimate trust for life and death in Him. His own testimony was that the things He does and says are mere metaphors to drive home the fact that faith is acquired by a personal relationship with Him. If you don't know Him, you won't believe Him and then you don't have eternal life.

### **7.1.2 Faith Communities share in the testimony of the witnesses to Jesus**

John's Gospel presented several witnesses to the identity of Jesus, most notably that of John the Baptist. It is somewhat unclear why the Baptist is introduced as a central figure in all the Gospels, apart from the fact that he served as a bridge between Jewish theology on the Messiah and that He had a ministry similar to Jesus, but without the miracles.

Yet, in John's Gospel, he is introduced from the onset as one of the most important bearers of knowledge about Jesus. He came to testify that Jesus indeed is sent by God, and that Jesus will take away the sins of the world, and that Jesus is to be worshiped because He is God.

Although The Baptist is the only person in whose mouth the word *μαρτυρία* is explicitly laid, the Gospel shows us a host of witnesses who not only support his testimony, but also elaborate on it: the disciples witnessing his first miracle; Nicodemus through his lack of understanding; the woman at the well in Sychar; the royal official and his family; the unbelief of the seriously ill man who got healed; the multitude receiving the miraculously multiplied food; the blind man who did believe; Lazarus who was raised from the grave; the soldier who slapped Jesus due to his supposed impertinence towards the high priest; Thomas the disciple who couldn't believe it before he saw it; and, finally, the writers of the Gospel themselves.

The golden thread weaving through these witnesses is the use of the word group, *μαρτυρία*, and how John's Gospel teaches its readers that these witnesses can only attest to events that they have seen and been part of, thus rendering it authentic. Thus, faith is communicated through people who, because they know Jesus, can testify to his reality and the necessity of his mission. This, in essence, means that testimony is communication. Nothing the church does have any meaning unless it is accompanied by the message of who Jesus is.

Nothing the church community says will have any testimonial value unless it is accompanied by the authenticating relationship to Jesus demonstrated by the lives of the witnesses.

### **7.1.3 Faith communities share in the attitude of Jesus**

The absence of the use of the μαρτυρία lexeme in the telling of John's ministry to his disciples, is striking. It appears only in John 15:18-16:4. Yet this underscores the fact that the church's testimony is in fact rooted in the sharing of Jesus' identity. That is why The Paraclete is introduced to be present in the lives of Jesus' followers. On the one hand, His mission is to strengthen their faith in the midst of hardship and persecution.

On the other hand, He serves as witness to Jesus, since He was with Jesus from the very beginning of time. And the disciples also share in this witness, as they were with Jesus from the very beginning of his mission on earth. John's Gospel elaborates on this unity by first of all showing how Jesus' followers can be nothing less than what Jesus was.

Their lives should be inundated with the exact same value system of love and sacrifice as that of Jesus. Their behaviour towards each other and people outside the community of believers should show the same loving care as Jesus showed.

And, finally, the unity of their communion with each other is in essence a mirror of the unity between Father and Son.

#### **7.1.4 The church has no message if she does not accept the reality of Jesus' glorification**

In the final part of John's Gospel, the proof of Jesus' Divine identity is given. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus staked his godly claim on the fact that He will be able to show He is indeed God, and that will be done by dying and conquering the grave. In the mind of the Gospel, this final act of humiliation is the exact opposite of its intended purpose. While the Jewish adversaries thought they would get rid of Jesus by killing Him, He presented it as the high point of his self-revelation as God.

That is why, in the telling of the Passion story, John's Gospel used the μαρτυρία-lexeme twice – initially to conclude the thread of teaching on how one should testify (by presenting the challenge to testify on Jesus' lies to the aggressive soldier in the high priest's house, and secondly to attest to the fact that Jesus indeed is quite dead.

Why, then, did John not use this word to also tell of Jesus' resurrection? As the focus with one's testimony is on not seeing and believing but on knowing and believing, John utilised the story of doubting Thomas as demonstration of the communication



of faith. The church will have no other claim than that which is based on the testimony of those who actually were there. And if they cannot believe, their testimony is absolutely fruitless.

Thus it is simple: If we fail to accept the resurrection, like Thomas, we fail to accept the testimony leading up to this event. And then nobody will believe our ongoing testimony either. We have absolutely nothing but the conviction of the primary witnesses to Jesus mission, who believed in Jesus' bodily resurrection. This conviction provides the ongoing energy the church needs to live in a relationship with Jesus: After all, the testimony of the witnesses is that He is alive.

## **7.2 DID THIS STUDY REACH ITS INTENDED RESEARCH PURPOSE?**

The study aimed to achieve better understanding into the changing cultural paradigm of which the contemporary church forms part of. The stated premise was that an investigation into the word-group pertaining to testimony, in the Gospel of John, will be able to contribute to the developing of an emerging, missional ecclesiology.

As such, the study conclusively showed the wider, non-legal use of this word-group in John's Gospel. It also demonstrated John's Gospel's instructive aim by

interspersing the word-group into the narrative with the pertinent motive to equip its readers to their own better testimony of the identity and ministry of Jesus Christ.

The study wanted to contribute to the theological epistemology through the development of a theological theory of a missional ecclesiology. The hermeneutical investigation greatly aided in the conversation of a missional ecclesiology. In conclusion, we should explore three ecclesiological paradigm shifts necessary to continue our testimony to Christ into a changing culture.

### **7.2.1 A shift from exposition to narrative**

Wright (2009:25) calls for this shift in reaction to current culture's "*failure to read Scripture for all it's worth.*" McKnight (2008:22-25) uses the metaphor of a blue parakeet appearing between wild sparrows and causing confusion to explain how our inadequate reading of the Bible leads us down a different path as the one intended by Scripture writers. The relevance of this paradigm shift lies in the way all theology is practiced. It is necessary to liberate the reading of the Bible from a simplistic cause-and-effect approach to personal piety, or a naive realism and positivism (Deist 1994:363).

By reading the books of the Bible according to their literary genre, for example, or by understanding the social world of the ancient mid-East, or by incorporating contemporary psychological, sociological and other human science perspectives into

theological deliberation, or finally to accept Scripture's authority as faith document and not as scientific metatheory, will enable the contemporary faith community to engage its immediate environment with authentically humble credibility. This shift then has the potential to contribute to the conceptual thinking of people reading the Bible.

The context, in which this must happen, is that of engaging in narrative. Martoia (2008:140) states this excellently:

*... Our story will change when it is laid inside the larger, grander, more compelling and completing story of God ... A fuller understanding of the story will change the conversation with those interested in starting the journey ... When we invite people to come to Jesus through a transaction of buying into certain expositions and reciting a prayer, the mechanical feel of such an exchange makes it hard to feel as though we are entering into a relationship.*

## **7.2.2 A shift from cognitive teaching to holistic faith formation**

Starting with the pastors of a congregation, this shift moves the focus of congregational ministry away from understanding to life formation. As the pastor uses his/her training to equip and deploy God's people in ministry (Ogden 1990:97), the congregation moves from listening to messages of edification to intentionally practicing life skills aimed at strengthening their relationship with Christ.

Scazzero (2003:19) stated: *“Unless we integrate emotional maturity with a focus on loving well into our discipleship, we are in danger of missing God’s point completely – love.”*

Being disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to learn to be like him (Willard 2006:24-30). This is a process starting with knowledge, continuing through changing attitudes and ending with changed behavioural patterns. This process can be described by utilising the metaphor of a triangle:

- One side of the triangle is the faithful acceptance of everyday problems. Through faithful endurance of life’s trials, the community of believers reaches an assurance of the fullness of heaven’s rule in their lives.
- The second side of this triangle is the interaction with God’s Spirit in and around us. The presence of the Paraclete can always be recognized by the way He moves the Gospel community toward what Jesus would be and do.
- The third side of this triangle is found in the intentional practice of spiritual disciplines. This almost mechanistic effort enables the members of the believing community to engage in practical faith formation by introducing into their daily routines spiritually oriented behaviours to emulate the life of Christ in their own.

### **7.2.3 A shift from designated offices to missional leaders**

In the context of the unity of the church and her dependence on Christ, the paradigm shift that is as necessary today as it was twenty years ago, is the shift from institution to organism. Whereas “church” still refers to a building and not to a group of individuals called to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world, the concept of people brought together in Christ by God as a Gospel community invites visions of community, of the missional nature of this community, of good news to the poor (Hamman 2005:13).

This shift requires missional leadership. A leader is someone in whom the future shines through in support of the present in spite of the past, making it an art (Sweet 2004:11). Our understanding of leadership needs to be turned upside down as we have to learn to listen more than to what we see.

Missional leadership, then, is the process where leaders lead from spiritual discernment by daily engaging in faith forming practices, listening and communicating with each other and the members of the community in the context of the Biblical narrative, confirming an atmosphere of risk, is sold out to the challenges of a missional era and have the competencies necessary to lead teams (Keifert 2006:96).

Smit (2007:600-601) identified the following shifts in the discourse on the paradigms of leadership:

- Leadership is more about behaviour that can be acquired than natural instincts.
- Ecclesial leadership differs qualitatively from organisational leadership, necessitating a theological-ecclesiological base theory first.
- Leadership in the church must increasingly focus on calling, as this is derived from the church's dependence on the *missio Dei*.
- Church leadership functions in a time of transition and should thus be focused.
- A necessary question in the ecclesial leadership discourse involves the matter of spiritual gifts and its functioning in the church.
- The matter of organisational management needs to be addressed by the church, not on an ad hoc basis, but through interdisciplinary networking with management sciences.
- Finally, church leaders need to be personally developed through coaching and mentoring.

### 7.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THIS RESEARCH

The following suggestions can be made:

- The less-than-frequent use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme in John 13-20 is rather striking. It is therefore suggested that further investigation be conducted in this part of the narrative, specifically with a view of broadening the understanding of John's Gospel's implicit ecclesiology.
- The Johannine epistles continue the frequent use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme. Thus it is suggested that a similar study be undertaken into the use of this lexeme as well as its interrelation with the Gospel of John, and possibly also John's Revelation, since these all form part of the *corpus Ioannum*.
- It is finally suggested that the praxis be further investigated in view of the ecclesiological markers that were developed in this study.
- If Christ is standing at the foundational core of an emerging, missional ecclesiology and this is demonstrated through a life of worship, more research is necessary in the forms of public expressions this life of worship should create.

## 7.4 RETURNING TO THE PARABLE OF THE OTTERS

To conclude this study, I want to return to the parable about change with which we started the conversation. It was originally penned by John and Linda Friel (1990:117-120) as an aid in their practice of helping people psychologically grow from co-dependency. Yet, taken from this original context, this parable serves as a metaphor for the current future the church of Christ is facing: Everything around is different; we can go on as always, trying to provide old answers to new problems, becoming obsessed with survival. Or we can learn to adapt, learning to relax about the incomprehensibilities and in the process acquire new skills from the answers we get because we started asking different questions at the new problems we are facing.

The Otters serve as a reminder that we, the church, too, could be extinct soon, replaced by another species, and left to the memory of fading history.



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