FROM SIGN TO SYMBOL: RE-INTEGRATING COMMUNION INTO THE COMMON LIFE OF BAPTISTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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KEY WORDS

Communion; Eucharist; Baptist; Common life; Symbol; Sign; Worship; Remember; Passover; Eschatological; Wholeness; Experiential learning; Presence; Community; Participation; Frontier; Mission; Practical theology.

I declare that From sign to symbol: Re-integrating Communion into the common life of Baptists in South Africa is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I.M.S.
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CHAPTER 1
AN EMERGING DISCREPANCY AMONG BAPTISTS

On entering the sanctuary and recognising the utensils of Communion on the table, a church member says to her friend: "Oh no! We're in for a long service - it's Communion today!"

A worship leader, preparing the order of service, decides to eliminate the scheduled Communion - he needs to explain the new building plan to the congregation. He is vaguely troubled by the fact that Communion has been deferred on several occasions, so that it was last performed over four months ago. But the congregation won't mind.

Old Mrs Bathurst asks the pastor to bring Communion to her in her dingy room which has become her confinement since her husband's death and her own fall. Pastor Jakes and a deacon travel across town, say a few words before reading, "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread..." Mrs Bathurst receives the elements, while sobbing quietly to herself.

1.1 AN OBSERVATION

Communion has fallen upon hard times in Baptist Churches. While it is still performed on a monthly basis, perhaps, as part of Baptist worship, its influence upon lives has either waned or has never really been appreciated fully. "It is hard to remember a time when Communion had any meaningful impact on me," a friend commented during casual discussion about the value of worship in his church. The value of his comment does not lie so much in its disclosure of his spiritual condition. Rather, it conceals a challenging question which is directed to all of us as to whether our experience of Communion is any different. His remark points to a sad possibility, which - if found to be widespread within the Baptist denomination, or even beyond - threatens to rob worship and Christian living of a significant movement for growth, wholeness and authentic praise.

At once the symbol of Christian unity and painful brotherly division, its place within ecumenical dialogue - so contentious and fraught with overlays of theological perspective and aspiration - is mostly far removed from its regular enactment by worshippers who adhere to a pattern of action and expectation which has accumulated over years of repetition.

Generations of pastors and religious leaders have expounded a sequence in such a fashion
that greater weight has been attached to the minutiae of legal exactitude than to its refreshing intentionality and redemptive charge.

Denominational authorities have managed to convey various doctrinal emphases as being worthy of vigorous defense in the face of what might be perceived as distorted, unbiblical counter-emphases. Hence, Baptists would aver that one of these emphases would be the insistence upon the authority of Scripture over all matters pertaining to faith and life. Another would be the Reformational conviction that there are two ordinances, only, to be celebrated by the church (instead of seven sacraments, as the Catholic tradition would claim), namely, Baptism and Communion. Membership in most Baptist churches is contingent upon the candidate's baptism, while Communion's importance is often stressed negatively, i.e. we conclude that Communion must be important because of the fuss that is made about who ought not to partake. One speculates whether enquiry would uncover a majority attesting to the necessity of Communion in the church's calendar of events, and whether the same majority would become belligerent if the celebration were to be altered in any substantial way. But just why Communion is necessary, or to what extent Baptists consider Communion to be crucial to their authenticity as Christian worshippers, or for Baptists to feel assured that they were growing towards maturity, is a question that warrants further analysis.

The details of the vignettes at the outset of this chapter are fictitious, but the underlying matter is a crucial one: Just how important is Communion to worshippers, really? With little imagination the specifics of the vignettes could be adjusted to uncover a reality with which worship-leaders, pastors and church members readily could identify. Probably most Baptists would insist that Communion is necessary for proper Christian worship. Most might even say that Communion is important also for Christian growth, but few of us manage to demonstrate an integration of the act with the fabric of our faith in such a way that one is convinced of its indispensible nature. The meaning of the act is just too often reiterated with slender scope for the creative appreciation of its wider significance and of its intimate connection to whatever else is performed during the week. In other words, the practice of Communion in
the churches calls such protestations of its importance into question. The disturbing
likelihood lurks that if Communion ever were to be eliminated from the practice of the
church, its absence would not make an awful lot of difference to the day-to-day life of the
worshippers!

Communion, it would seem, has come to occupy an increasingly discrepant position in the
corporate testimony of the Baptist Church. The present study sets itself the task of
investigating this broad allegation. Should the ambiguous position of Communion amongst
Baptists be verified, it may be difficult to probe the reasons, let alone the ways to remedy the
situation; nonetheless the study hopes to venture into this territory. For us to proceed, then, it
is necessary to sharpen the focus of the problem which later shall be investigated
scientifically.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Having provided a background to the problem, in which my initial interest in the study
has been indicated, it is appropriate, now, to specify more exactly what it is that will be
investigated. Consequently:

By means of a quantitative, exploratory approach to a sample of Baptist Churches in the Gauteng area of South Africa, this practical-theological study proposes to identify and remedy the discrepancy that is perceived to exist between Baptist insistence on the importance of Communion to religious life, on the one hand; and the actual significance, on the other hand, of the worship act for the common life.

Already certain terms have been employed that ought to be explained. To this we shall now
turn, before examining the presuppositional base that informs the research and the method
by means of which the investigation will be conducted.
1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.3.1 Practical-theological study

My approach to the research problem has been influenced by the view of practical theology as a theological operational science (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:38). Practical theology sets itself the task of scrutinising the religious actions of people and, from such a scientific investigation, theorising theologically about those actions, for the ultimate purpose of aligning religious action more closely to the intention and mission of God's prior actions in coming to people in their world. These remarks echo Firet's definition of practical theology as "the theological theory of operational systems that mediate the coming of God to man in man's world" (Firet, 1970 in Heyns, 1984:130). God's action in engaging with human life sets up an encounter which forever alters the prospects and transactions of human beings. As humans become radically affected by the encounter with God, they seek to re-enact the encounter in their communicative interactions with other people. The authoritative precedent by means of which their re-enactions are guided is the prior, composite act of God throughout his engagement with humanity, which has as its supreme instance the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures record the dynamics of God's engagement with us, and the church (Christ's body on earth) subsequently enfleshes it for us in and through the church's presence in the world.

Clearly, if practical theology is designed to examine the religious actions (operations) of people (for our purposes, Christian people), the study will proceed inductively. Hence, at a primary level, the thesis is organised around what are considered to be four fundamental questions of the discipline, as it endeavours to look in the first place at the operations of a select group of Christians with respect to Communion, viz. (1) What is being done when Baptist Christians celebrate Communion? (the descriptive function of practical theology); (2) What is being communicated when Baptist Christians celebrate Communion? (the interpretative function of practical theology); (3) How do these actions of Baptist Christians in celebrating Communion line up with the intention and purpose of God's prior actions in coming to mankind? (the critical function of practical theology); (4) If the actions of Baptist
Christians in celebrating Communion do not measure up to the prior actions of God, how can they be corrected so that they more closely re-enact God's purposes? (the remedial function of practical theology).

Intrinsic to the approach of this study will be an emphasis on the communicative aspects of Communion in service of the Gospel, which - as Pieterse points out when drawing upon Firet (1990) - is the 'identity criterion' of practical theology (1993:3). We appreciate that all we do or do not do bears communicative significance, and this conviction will be respected throughout the thesis. More than that, however, will be the attempt to explore how Baptists can enrich their communicative repertoire by paying attention to symbol which might otherwise be denigrated by their tradition.

To assist our investigation, I have drawn upon the model proposed by Rolf Zerfass (1974, in Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:35), for it offers a framework whereby it is possible to ask all four of the practical-theological questions given earlier and it permits us to give attention to the contemporary and the historical situations.

His model examines the interplay between an analysis of the situation and a reflection on the theological tradition, both of which have been instrumental in producing the current action (praxis 1). Such an examination yields certain principles which need to be systematised into a theory (practical-theological theory), which, in turn, will suggest certain
strategies of action (praxis 2). As one cross-checks the new praxis against both the theological heritage and the situational analysis, one can assess whether the improved praxis (reflected-upon action) is consistent with crucial insights from those quarters.

1.3.2 Worship
While the presuppositional base of worship will be discussed later, suffice to say at this point that 'worship' shall be used in this study to refer to an attitudinal orientation of life, manifested in word and deed, whereby believers both individually and corporately express their devotion, respect and co-operation towards a living God who initiated a loving encounter with them. Worship is thus the broad ambit in which certain worshipful 'acts' and 'events' are played out, especially within a congregational setting.

1.3.3 Act and event
An 'act' of worship refers to a combination of words and deeds designed to facilitate a single accomplishment, whereas an 'event' is used here to indicate a series of acts which, together, create a multi-faceted, thematic impact upon the worshippers. With respect to Communion, the difference between act and event can be likened to the difference between operation and operational field (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:13). The act of Communion (partaking of the elements) takes place within a particular context (denominational, cultural, sociological, geographical, historical, demographic) and it creates a context (one conducive to communication, healing, new lordship and so on). Both contexts merge, conflict and modify to make an event which exerts a powerful influence on the worshippers - an influence far greater than the sum of the individual acts of eating, drinking, saying, gesturing and singing.

1.3.4 Communion
Variously termed the 'Eucharist', the 'Breaking of Bread', the 'Lord's Supper', Communion is an event, during which time a series of acts is performed in a recognisable sequence. One of those acts is the partaking of the consecrated elements which is indicative of a participation in Christ and - in Him - with all the members of the congregation (Davies, 1986:182).
Furthermore, the event re-enacts the central covenantal story of the Christian religion. The dramatisation of the covenantal story moves beyond simple retelling for the sake of retelling; it achieves the purpose, it is hoped, of reinforcing Christian identity, and establishing and strengthening Christian community (terms which will be explained in a moment).

1.3.5 Ordinance and sacrament

Baptists recognise Communion to be an ordinance rather than a sacrament. The term 'ordinance' tries to stress three aspects: (1) It is a rite which has been ordained by Christ for the church to observe; (2) It is a rite which ought to proclaim the Gospel; (3) It is a rite of the church rather than of the individual (Hays & Steely, 1981:73). One should add a fourth aspect, particular insofar as an ordinance is differentiated from a sacrament: it is a sign which has no ability, in itself, to effect any change in the participant. It is a simple outward act (Parnell, 1991: 38).

The approach of this study will be to reject the term 'ordinance' as being inadequate to express the richness of the transformatory significance of Communion. At the same time, the term 'sacrament' in its extreme sacramentalism will also be rejected as transferring too much attention and power to human acts rather than to the One in whose honour the acts are performed. But a moderate understanding of 'sacrament' will be preferred, since the study wishes to approach Communion as a symbolic event that expresses and facilitates the mysterious encounter between God and humans. Communion, therefore, is understood differently to the manner in which White (1990:165) and Willimon (1979:149) depict it when they refer to the sacrament as a 'sign-act'. One agrees with them that, in the sacraments, God acts in loving self-giving and his love is made visible through the relationships of love in the community. In other words, the sacraments 'presence' God among people and, at the same time, draw people into special, God-ordered relationships one with another. But to speak of sign-acts, as White does, limits the event to a conveyance of data. In other words, sign-acts speak of something that is already formed and that simply must be conveyed; whereas there is more in Communion that touches on meaning that is created in the
moment. For that reason it would be better, as this study hopes to demonstrate, to speak of Communion as a symbol. The symbolic is more at home in a (moderate) sacramental, rather than an ordinancial framework.

1.3.6 Common life

Christian religious actions replay the inclusive actions of God whereby He elected to integrate a separated humanity into the Kingdom of God (a matrix of relationships that testify to the kingship of Christ and that make apparent the rule of God). The benefits of the kingdom are shared by all believers as they draw upon the resources of their heavenly King, in the pursuit of worshipping their King and in extending the kingdom to more and more of God's created order. As believers realise their identity as fellow subjects of the King and as ambassadors of the King (to mention only two aspects of our identity in Christ), a corporate awareness (community) is anticipated. Community speaks of interdependence, of mutual accountability, of group forces at work to set people free, to guard and protect them, to nurture, stretch and guide them. Believers, thus share a common Christian life, which is expressed and developed by Christian community.

The thesis title proposes that the study re-integrates Communion to the common life of Baptists in South Africa. A second layer of meaning to the term 'common life' begins to emerge. Christians live life that is not abstracted from the ordinary existence of everyone else. They share a life that is common, or ordinary, filled with the joys and stresses of the average person. This study desires that Communion exert influence in such a (common) life.

Both layers of meaning, then (common Christian life, and common ordinary life), are implicit in the study's sub-objectives here: (1) To see the educational role of Communion in the process of making common to all Baptists (and to other believers) the resources of our common identity as Christians and to provide a sequence through which believers are encouraged to deeper levels of maturity, (2) To see the ecumenical role of Communion in pressing Baptists to take up their responsibility within the wider community of believers, so
that this new life in Christ can begin to be experienced as more common amongst Christians
than Baptists might usually expect, (3) To see the ethical role of Communion in challenging
Baptists (and other believers) to put belief to work in their daily lives, so that the quality of
Christian community is attractive and inspiring, (4) To see the missionary role of Communion
in confronting the frontiers of unbelief, so that unbelievers are affected and drawn into
encounter with Jesus Christ (and so that resilient frontiers of unbelief in believers are won).

1.4 METATHEORY AND BASE THEORY OF COMMUNION

All of us, it would seem, have a perspective(s) with which we approach a particular subject.
This study is no exception, insofar as it represents a commitment to a series of perceptions
and interpretations. In keeping with the first of five principles characterising a general critical
hermeneutical framework for empirical research as outlined by Van der Ven (in Pieterse &
Dreyer, 1995:37), it is critical that practical theologians "adopt a self-reflective stance
regarding ideological imperatives and epistemological imperatives that inform their
research." In order to accomplish such a task, several matters will to be covered here:

(1) My understanding of the concept of metatheory and of base theory

(2) Pertinent metatheoretical principles behind Communion

(3) Relevant base-theoretical perspectives on Communion

1.4.1 Concept of metatheory and base theory

Pieterse (1993:51, 133) discusses metatheory in terms of two possibilities. First, a
metatheory is a theory in which various scientific points of departure, which practical
theology shares with other disciplines, are set out. Second, a metatheory has to do with the
paradigm within which a researcher works and which represents that researcher's view of
reality. For Pieterse, the most adequate metatheory with which to understand practical
theology is that of a communicative-action theory in service of the Gospel which he has
developed from Habermas.
Again according to Pieterse, a base theory, on the other hand, draws inspiration from the metatheory, but is directed to the aims of the subject (in our case, practical theology). It provides one with the practical-theological points of departure with respect to a specific field of study (Pieterse, 1993:51) and serves to understand the communicative processes of the praxis in our field of study (1993:133). Base theories are similar to practical-theological theories, since they bring to convergence metatheoretical positions, theological persuasions and empirical insights. Though Pieterse does not go on to clarify whether a researcher commences his investigation with a base theory, or whether he develops one as he proceeds, it seems to me that both a metatheory and a base theory need to be identified prior to further investigation, so that one is able to note what the driving forces are behind the scenes of a so-called objective study. A metatheory is not likely to alter substantially as a result of the study, while a base theory can very easily differ once the research has been completed.

This thesis will emphasise different nuances of Pieterse's explanation of both metatheory and base theory. For one, it is imperative that the paradigm within which I am working is clearly set out as the metatheory behind this thesis. The paradigm will enunciate fundamental theological and philosophical positions that make up my view of reality. Whether this paradigm shares anything with other disciplines or not is irrelevant to my explanation of a metatheory. Then, as these metatheoretical positions express themselves in expectations with regard to Communion, I shall be explaining my base theory.

Pieterse's remarks concerning metatheory (1993) and the model proposed by Zerfass (in Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:35) have merged in my thinking to produce a model which has exercised considerable influence over the ensuing explanation of the underlays of my research. For ease of reading, my adaptation of Zerfass' model is set out in the diagram below.
Figure 1.4
ADAPTATION OF ZERFASS' MODEL

Civilisational outlook
Cultural specifics
Theological trends
Philosophical streams

META-THEORY

Ideological currents
View of practical theology
Parallel meta-theories (other people's, other disciplines')

PRAXIS 1A

Historical guidelines
Denominational priorities

BASE THEORY

PRAXIS 1B

Prelim. situational review
Scriptural principles

PRAXIS 1C

Historical tradition
Denominational tradition

DELIBERATE RESEARCH

Empirical situational analysis
Scriptural tradition

PRACTICAL-THEOLOGICAL THEORY
(Principles)

OPERATIONAL THEORY
'Praktyktheorie'

PRAXIS 2
As can be seen from the diagram, one commences one's research with a vague notion of the way any religious action (e.g. Communion) takes place (praxis 1A). Because one's description of the way an action takes place is perceived through a particular framework (one's metatheory), it is necessary (albeit in embryonic form) to be aware of the constituents of that metatheory which is governing one's perspective of reality, viz. the outlook on life provided by one's civilisation, the specifics of one's cultural filters, the influence exerted by current theological, philosophical and ideological trends, one's view of the nature and function of practical theology as a discipline, and the influential correspondences that one's learning and experience of related (even non-theological) disciplines provide. (These matters are set out in chapter one of the current study.)

At that stage in the investigation, one could describe the action (praxis 1B) again, but with a more informed selectivity. Even so, one's analysis of the religious action (Communion) is controlled by a framework of expectation (base theory) that is peculiar to the religious action. The base theory is influenced by several factors, all of which have been assimilated throughout one's lifetime exposure to the religious action concerned: (1) a preliminary review of the immediate context of the religious action afforded by one's own experience, (2) historical guidelines, (3) denominational priorities, and, (4) scriptural principles. At this juncture one is able to describe the religious action (praxis 1C) with a fuller awareness of how one sees, as well as what one sees.

Deliberate research is now called for to uncover the historical, denominational and scriptural tradition that has shaped the religious action that is being observed within its community-of-faith setting. In addition, a scientific empirical situational analysis can be carried out, all of which is designed to discover the shaping forces that can be said to have produced praxis 1. (Chapter two of the current study will deal with the historical / denominational factors, chapter three will cover the empirical situational analysis and chapter four will survey selected scriptural principles.)
From here it is possible to draw various principles (practical-theological theory) which ought to be preserved in future enactments of the religious action (see chapter five of the current study). On the basis of such a theory, one proposes a strategy (operational theory), by means of which praxis 1 can be modified (chapter six of the current study). As Lemmer explains, in a tape-recorded seminar held at Unisa, an operational theory ("praktykteorie") is a remedial theory. To the extent that the principles of the operational theory are actually implemented, one then arrives at a new action (praxis 2).

1.4.2 Pertinent metatheoretical principles behind Communion

1.4.2.1 Civilisational outlook

Since the researcher comes from a Western background, it is inevitable that his perspective towards Communion will be influenced by a Western outlook on life (either in co-operation with, or in reaction to such an outlook). Several tensions feature in the Western approach. First, the western mind seems to respect orderliness and linear, logical development, even while it admires the creative, lateral thinker. Second, and in keeping with an insistence on productivity, a group activity would be expected to have a definable goal, lest time is wasted by aimless, non-quantifiable gatherings; yet, at the same time, a great deal of energy is expended in the pursuit of entertainment and leisure stimulation.

These twin tensions are felt as one tries to facilitate a time of Communion which has a definite theme without becoming overly directive, which is creative without lapsing into vague silliness, and which is given sufficient time to rescue it from inconsequence and to bring out its rich meaning, but not allowing it to become too long and boring.

1.4.2.2 Cultural specifics

Studying Communion from a white, western background adds a cultural bias which, amongst many other things, anticipates that group intimacy and transparency will be difficult to achieve, or should not even be attempted. Displays of emotion should be controlled at all times and the use of symbols should be treated with caution, since people vary in their ability
to comprehend and appreciate the symbolic in life. The present study, however, will
endeavour to resist this cultural specific on the grounds that the Gospel intends for us to be
drawn together in such a way that we begin to see each other more fully, with our attractive
and unattractive characters, so that ministry can penetrate more effectively.

1.4.2.3 Theological trends

While Communion may be approached, perhaps, from another position, this study chooses
to do so from an evangelical one. Certain expectations, then, will be considered important
regarding the sovereignty of God over all of life, the final authority of Scripture in terms of
which we conform our lives and our corporate worship, the total depravity of humanity which
envisages that a person's essential life-orientation is opposed to God, the full and complete
atonement for sin in Christ's death, the receipt of salvation by God's unmerited grace through
faith, the need to proclaim the Gospel to all people without diminishing any of the
implications of the Gospel (social, political, environmental, domestic, individual) and the
visible, personal return of Jesus Christ to usher in the new heaven and the new earth (Elwell,
1984:379).

To expand on the evangelical position which will be held throughout this study it might be
necessary to elaborate under certain standard doctrinal headings, as appear below.

Revelation. God has chosen to reveal himself in both a general, non-salvific sense and in a
special salvation-adequate sense. By means of three modes of special revelation (historical
events, the biblical record and the incarnation) God provides post-New-Testament humans
with all that we need to know about the character and actions of God, so that we are in a
position to determine what the purpose of God is in creating the universe. The Scripture
provides us with the most reliable tool for the interpretation of events and experience,
because it offers us both information (precepts) about God and, more importantly, an
interpretive framework by means of which we can think biblically. God's supervision of the
process of inscripturation means that while there may be technical error within the contents
of the Bible, due to human participation in its formulation, the direction and principles of salvation set out through the Bible are without error.

Taking such a position carries implications for Communion. First, the practice of Communion can accommodate items or expressions which have no direct biblical warrant, but it can never countenance items or expressions which run counter to the direction or statement of Scripture. Second, if the process of inscripturation is accepted as above and if detailed descriptions of Communion are largely absent from the biblical record, it would be fair to assume that God is not as particular, in the end, about the detail of an action as he is about purpose-related action. There is frequently no single correct way, and this is especially true of Communion.

God. According to Erickson (1985:263), God can be discussed in terms of what he reveals himself to be. His attribute of greatness classifies a variety of sub-characteristics by which we can speak of God, viz. God is spirit, God is personal, God is living, God never ends and God is constant. His attribute of goodness incorporates his holiness, righteousness, justice, truth and love, while his trinitarian presence can be, at once, immanent and transcendent. Furthermore, God is revealed not only as the one who is, but also as the one who does, and in this connection we are affirming that God has acted in creating inanimate and animate objects for his own glory and in providentially keeping his creation intact, especially in restraining the effects of evil (Erickson, 1985:345).

Accordingly, Communion will strive to reflect the fulness of the God we serve. God, it would seem, is concerned with authentic worship: that his character and purpose be accurately represented, that his people respond honestly and appropriately to him within their cultural register.

Humanity and Christ. The pinnacle of creation is humankind who has been made to reflect the character and actions of God. From such a high and noble status, humankind fell as sin
wreaked its absurd chaos across every aspect of wholistic human nature and plunged the
destiny of man into limitedness and futility. Differences within the human race (racial, sexual,
chronological-developmental) have become the source of friction and the context for the
manifestation of evil, as people have duplicated the essential sinful intention of
independence from their source of well-being (God). As part of God's resolve to provide for
his creation against any eventuality, Jesus Christ, the God-Son and the God-man, played out
a critical drama which clarified the divine character and testified to God's ability to rule his
creation even in the face of evil. Christ's action also demonstrated God's power to reunite
humanity formerly alienated from God, from each other and from the rest of the created
order.

Communion stands in direct contrast to the usual experience of humanity, for it must
challenge separateness, while at the same time reinforcing the basic difference between
belief and unbelief which cannot be erased except by the atoning and reconciling action of
Christ.

Salvation and the Holy Spirit. In the process of appropriating the completed work of
Christ, humans are called to repentance and faith by the work of the Holy Spirit, who makes
real and applicable the presence and purpose of God. As people turn away from a
life-orientation of independence, and rely upon Christ's actions in dying and rising again,
they become united with Christ. Human individuality remains distinct in this transaction,
while at the same time finding that it is now directed towards the purpose of God. Humans
who are so realigned are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a life that is progressively
transformed into the likeness of God. From the moment of conversion, they are justified and
the remainder of their lives embodies a sanctifying movement towards Godlikeness, which
will ultimately only be fulfilled beyond this earthly life (glorification). Those, of course, who do
not co-operate with the call of God to turn from their life of independence doom themselves
to the eternal perpetuation of such separation (hell).
Communion plays its part in an ongoing calling of people to repentance and faith and, as such, has a confrontational character both for believers - in the process of being transformed - and for unbelievers.

The church and the Holy Spirit. It is the privilege and responsibility of the church (the association of fellow-believers around Christ as He is made present by the Holy Spirit) to proclaim in every creative and ethically sound manner possible the marvel of Christ's salvation to all people. The presence of the church is designed to re-embody the presence of Christ on this earth during the absence of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. By making available spiritual gifts, the Spirit provides the resources for the church to carry out its divine mandate of going into all the world, making disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything Christ proclaimed (Mt 28:18-20). The unity of believers will confirm the reality of Christ's having come to free men from alienation before an observant world and thus it is important for the church to live out its inheritance and direct its efforts to the conversion and subsequent maturation towards Godlikeness of as many unbelievers as possible.

Communion which is expectant of the Holy Spirit's leading and involvement will surely invite variety, innovativeness and participation rather than stifling predictability and spectatorship.

The end times. The church's mandate pertains to a limited period only, until Christ's promised second coming is realised. This personal, physical, visible, unexpected and triumphant return will bring to an end world history as we know it, after which the final judgement will take place from which the final destiny (heaven for believers; hell for unbelievers) will be made clear by Christ, the Judge.

As the church celebrates Communion with an eschatological perspective, people will be inspired to hope and to act in anticipation of good things still to come. Communion thus engenders godly action in the world, rather than morbid passivity.
1.4.2.4 Philosophical streams

It goes without saying that any study is a product of its time and so the ensuing discussion of Communion will reflect and contend with prevailing philosophical streams. Four streams are worthy of mention here. First, secular society (and the church as well) has come to understand that each of its members must operate as individuals and that each person is entitled to decide for himself/herself how life is to be lived. Though individual action is always constrained by group laws, the influence of the group is perceived as an intrusion upon the freedom of the individual. The church, too, finds it hard to function as a group as a result of the effect of individual need and preference and when persons feel affronted by the claims of a church group it is considered right and proper to leave the group.

Second, and closely allied to the previous point, there is a tendency for people to regard religious belief as a private affair, not to be displayed or brought into comparison with the religious belief of another. The church's educational and evangelistic ministries suffer denigration as this kind of view takes root in the church, to the point that it can be considered rude to challenge a person on a point of inconsistency between their profession of faith and their actual practice. In this regard, Kretzschmar's thesis (1992) on the privatisation of faith among Baptists is of interest particularly with respect to their social consciousness.

Third, and again akin to the first point above, people living in our century have become preoccupied with their own existential being, often to the neglect of their corporate identity. Thus the Christian's spiritual standing is assessed in terms of how the individual might be growing in his/her abilities and insights, without due consideration for assessing spirituality in relational terms.

Lastly, the effect of postmodernism (especially deconstructive postmodernism) with its view of the 'non-fixedness' of reality (Cobb, 1990:156) has, in the opinion of this study, served to relativise many of the absolutes of a former era (Sweet, 1990:163). While it may have stimulated a criticalness which can be useful, it is feared that the nett effect could easily be
that we each must create our own sense of reality, which places humanity very much in charge of his world and his destiny. The metatheoretical position undergirding this study insists that reality can be approached, but never fully grasped because of our human finiteness; nevertheless, a fixed, reliable reality is posited inasmuch as God is 'fixed' (constant), reliable and setting certain standards which are not under negotiation with his creation.

1.4.2.5 Ideological currents

Any religious action carried out during 1999 in South Africa is affected by the current ideological trend in favour of democratisation of all peoples. With the country having emerged from a dark period of social engineering (apartheid) to face a different experiment in social engineering (democracy), the ways in which Christians relate to each other and to people of different religious persuasions inevitably will be measured against the register of greater democracy and individual freedom. The church can never insulate itself (even if such a course were to be preferred, biblically) from the rest of the world; thus pressure could be brought to bear in various forms upon Communion to adhere to the trend towards democracy.

Akin to the ideological trend above stands a second: the abhorrence our society bears towards discrimination. Questions will surely be asked by Christians as to the legitimacy of excluding anyone from the Communion Table and the insistence upon an answer is likely to be coming, not from pure biblical motive, but perhaps more pertinently from the trend towards non-discrimination.

As a group's consciousness is influenced by its context (persuading it to be more democratic and non-discriminatory), it will be touched by yet a third ideological trend, this time towards a greater inclusion of the female perspective and interest. Feminism has raised itself against all forms of male dominence, and the church - with its male leadership, its gender-biased language and its subtle preference for a male outlook on history - is often regarded as a
resilient enclave of male superiority. Religious actions within such a climate will, no doubt, reflect the current turmoil of opinion about the place of women and the needs of women.

Though feminist opinion may be offended by the style of this thesis, the writing will not adopt a non-sexist approach to language, believing that certain conventions of the English language that limit the options (he/she; his/hers) to only one form is the easier and less clumsy course. No aspersion upon females is intended by this preference.

1.4.3 Relevant base-theoretical perspectives on Communion

Following on from the metatheoretical position taken above, several base-theoretical perspectives need to be stated as well, in order to clarify the approach of the researcher. If the Scripture is to be respected as the most reliable tool for the interpretation of experience and events, then it follows that Communion is an event that must be preserved, since Christ instructed that his followers celebrate it to remember him (1 Cor 11:24). What Christ has ordained for us to keep for perpetuity must have substantial motivation and must surely have to do with his mission in human history ("This cup is the new covenant in my blood").

Communion, we know, emerged from Jewish roots (Passover). These origins need to be respected, without them becoming a bondage for non-Jewish culture groups. There is freedom to re-position Communion within the system of symbol and sign that is not Jewish. Such a stance regards Communion as having relevance for all types of people (the Jew and non-Jew, the mature and the immature, young and old, male and female, black and white, the introverted and the extroverted, and so on). There is even a place for children (one negotiated differently to that of adults, perhaps), just as there is a place for unbelievers. Essentially Communion is reserved for the intimacy of the believing family, but it can have curiosity or confrontational value for unbelievers, as it witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition, Communion draws in the full range of human emotion (happiness to sadness; hope to hopelessness) as it brings the whole church - across denominations - into conversation and fellowship. Potentially it has the ability to unify, to the same extent (given its use in history) as it has to divide! Clearly, from what has been mentioned thus far, it is
believed that Communion is the possession of the church not of the individual, lest the individual bends Communion around his/her private notions of priority and value. In this connection, one wants to acknowledge in the sacrament a formative value: formative of community, transformative in its challenge to new maturity. In keeping with such a value, therefore, Communion should never lose its confrontational character (otherwise it would cease to check the limited comprehension which we humans have of the purposes of God), neither should it lose its pastoral significance as a means of sustaining, guiding, reconciling and healing people.

Humans, it would seem, tend to forget even the most positive of experiences. Thus, believers need to be reminded of the central story of their faith, and hence there is a necessity for repetition. Repetition can be achieved around the meal-act, which combines the commonness of an ordinary phenomenon with the specialness of an extraordinary occasion. In so doing, Communion offers the security of sameness, alongside the refreshment of innovative additions and supplements, and both facets can be exemplified by the administration of Communion being carried out by any believer, irrespective of ordination or not. What is important is that all believers accord to the Holy Spirit the freedom and authority he deserves to co-ordinate the event as he sees fit.

1.5 OPERATIONALISATION OF THE STUDY

As was pointed out earlier under the research problem, the present study proposes to conduct its research by means of a quantitative, exploratory study of a sample of Baptist Churches in the Gauteng area of South Africa. Several concepts require elaboration.

1.5.1 Quantitative. The study will be characterised by an attempt to understand the experience of Communion as registered by various participants at services of worship. Mouton & Marais (1990:159) employ three components of research (concepts, hypotheses, observation) as criteria to compare qualitative and quantitative research methods, pointing out, as they do so, that quantitative research endeavours to minimise conceptual ambiguity.
by increasing denotative specificity. The hypotheses of quantitative research tend to be formulated before the research commences and are stated in the form of a research question, while the observation is characterised by a high degree of detachment by the researcher in more tightly structured environments that yield ‘scalable’ (quantifiable) results. Unlike qualitative study, quantitative research contends that objectivity is possible (Pieterse, 1993:63).

1.5.2 Exploratory study. In deciding that the nature of the study is an exploratory one, the following considerations have been taken into account. The research area is relatively unknown and therefore one is aiming to assemble new insights into Baptist Communion and to clear the way for a more detailed investigation once the central concepts and hypotheses have been determined. It is true that the study ventures into the territory of causality (the domain more rightly of an explanatory study), for it suggests a relationship between the research phenomenon and several factors that inhere in Baptist perspectives. It endeavours to ascertain the identity of those causal factors and to point to ways of modifying the relationship in terms of an underlying theory of the intention of Communion (Mouton & Marais, 1990:42; Dreyer in Pieterse et.al., 1991:213). Though the present study may lean towards an explanatory study, it should be noted, with Babbie (1989:82) that most studies contain elements of all four objectives (descriptive, exploratory, explanatory and predictive - Dreyer in Pieterse et.al., 1991: 213).

1.5.3 Sample of Baptist churches in the Gauteng area. It was decided that churches to be researched would fall within the provincial boundaries of Gauteng. The reason for the limitation was three-fold:

(1) Gauteng is the area in which the researcher resides
(2) Gauteng is generally regarded as a critical province, politically and economically
(3) Gauteng is the principal region for the training of Baptist pastors, with the Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa based in Randburg, Gauteng

Instead of adopting a low-intensive survey of many churches in this region, it was further decided to conduct a high-intensive survey of a small number of churches. Thus two
churches were targeted, with the intention of surveying a high majority of the congregation in each of them. The two churches were selected in the following manner. A profile of a 'typical' Baptist church was compiled, by soliciting the detailed opinion of three long-standing pastors, one of whom served at that stage on the Baptist Union Executive and was close to retirement after a lifetime of service within the Baptist Union in South Africa. (The profile is given in Appendix 1.) The difficulty with the compilation of such a profile stems from the wide differences that exist between Baptist churches. One of the Baptist Principles, upon which Baptist churches are founded, is that of the autonomy of the local church. The result is that local churches are not compelled by a central denominational body (the Baptist Union) to conform to any profile. As much as there are similarities (doctrinal, stylistic, architectural etc.) that might link churches and identify them as 'Baptist', there are many contrasts as well. Acknowledging the generalisations inherent in such a profile, nonetheless, a profile was drawn up. Using the profile, then, the same three pastors were asked to identify three churches that they felt came close to the status of 'typical' Baptist church. The following churches were named: Randburg Baptist, Honeyridge Baptist, Benoni Baptist, Rosettenville Baptist and Waterkloof Baptist. From the list, the researcher chose a church in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg (Honeyridge Baptist) and one from the east Rand area (Benoni Baptist), since both seemed to be located in different types of residential areas and were likely to reflect differing perceptions of Communion.

Within each of those churches, as many households as possible (traditional nuclear family households, as well as non-traditional households containing single-parents, single adults living alone, or singles clustered in communal living arrangements) were polled. Using church records, an 'Attenders List' (list of registered church members, as well as regular adherents, or non-members) was identified, from which names of individuals (sampling units, 328 in all) were selected, according to a stratified-random-survey method.
1.5.4  Testing key concepts

Having set out the alleged discrepancy between Baptist insistence that Communion is vital, versus the actual necessity of its re-enactment, and having defined various terms (para. 1.3 earlier), it is necessary, here, to indicate how the discrepancy was tested, or operationalised (see Congregational Questionnaire in Appendix 2).

Through the medium of the questionnaire, the sample units were questioned regarding their view of each of the following notions:

(1) The importance of the Communion

(2) The extent to which they feel a distinctive identity arises from Communion

(3) The extent to which Communion is individualistic versus corporate

(4) The way Communion is experienced, in terms of:
   - Mood
   - Instructional value
   - Variety
   - Comprehension
   - Artistic value
   - Symbolic register
   - Thought patterns
   - Participation

(5) The essential meaning of Communion

(6) The inclusivity of Communion

(7) The mission-orientatedness of Communion

As can be imagined, the results proved interesting. To these results we will turn, after a brief historical survey of trends in Baptist thinking which reveals an approach to Communion.
2.1 NOBLE PROTESTATIONS

Baptists regard Communion highly, it would seem. One official publication of South African Baptists understands Communion in terms of what is distinctively Christian: the *South African Baptist Handbook* contains a Statement of Belief, passed at the Baptist Assembly in Durban in 1924, in which stand the words: "We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ appointed two ordinances - Baptism and the Lord's Supper - to be observed as acts of obedience and as perpetual witness to the cardinal facts of the Christian faith... that the Lord's Supper is the partaking of bread and wine as symbolical of the Saviour's broken body and shed blood, in remembrance of His sacrificial death till He come" (*The South African Baptist Handbook 1995 - 1996*: 314; my emphasis). It is probably for the reason that Communion is so distinctively Christian, rather than distinctively Baptist, that the same Baptist handbook omits this ordinance from its ensuing Statement of Baptist Principles (the list of distinctives which set Baptists apart from other denominations) (*The South African Baptist Handbook 1995 - 1996*: 315). Hays and Steely, two Baptist theologians, would seem to concur with the elevated status of these two ordinances when they observe that "It has been a tradition for most of the Christian Church throughout its history that the observance of the sacraments [ordinances] is the Church's highest moment of worship" (1981:73). They go on to say that Baptists would not dissent from this opinion. They cite as motivation: (a) the fact that none less than Christ himself commanded the observance of both Baptism and Communion, (b) the fact that the ordinances are inextricably connected to the message of the Gospel, and (c) the fact that the ordinances were given to the Christian group - not the individual - as a treasured possession. It would appear, therefore, that Baptists profess to hold Communion in high regard - even as an expression of the highest moment of worship - since it is an act of obedience to Christ and because it draws its life from, and declares, the core value of the Christian faith.
2.2 A DIFFERENT PICTURE

One would expect to find such an estimation of Communion filtering through Baptist literature in this country. Such is not always the case, especially if one consults two publications that carry some measure of Baptist endorsement (both booklets are written by a senior figure in Baptist circles, both booklets are promoted by the Baptist Publishing House "for constant use in the churches" and one of the booklets bears a foreward written by a former General Secretary of the BU). Communion here is discussed as part of what it means to be a Baptist and what it means to hold a Baptist vision for Southern Africa, but the emphasis in both publications is on what differentiates Baptists from other traditions and on how the sacrament should be administered. Little scope is given to an explanation of the meaning, importance or relevance of Communion for Baptists in our country (Parnell, 1980:65-68; 1991: 37-41). A similar pattern is found in a Southern Baptist publication which is given wide distribution in our country (Hobbs, 1971:88-91). A loose overview, so far, seems to suggest that the Baptist mind gravitates to issues of nomenclature (sacrament vs. ordinance), to various sacramentalist views versus a Baptist position, and to issues related to who may participate in Communion and how it is to be administered.

2.3 AN EMERGING IDENTITY

Yet such interests are not just the product of South Africa's recent segregationist mentality. There is a long history of Baptist struggle for identity, often in the face of life-threatening odds. Such a heritage is not likely to disappear quickly, and it may even become an underlying denominational feature that operates as an unconscious but cherished distinctive. "What is grows out of what was, and today takes its significance, at least in part, from yesterday" (McBeth, 1987:495). Though a greater number of events might have contributed to Baptist history during the twentieth century than all previous times combined (McBeth, 1987:495), it would appear that certain fundamental orientations to life and society were branded into the Baptist mind in the earlier centuries, and certain key attitudes to worship and the church from an earlier church history were subsumed into a history which Baptists have come to call their own.
The Baptist outlook was born in struggle and, itself, has given rise to further intensification of that struggle. From its earliest days, and like other denominations, the Baptist movement has known persecution and contention. Yet, unlike other groups, those early experiences of ostracism and being compelled to survive against various odds seem to have bred in their cumulative history a passionate commitment to uncluttered truth (although in South Africa that this truth has had grave social blindspots), a fierce individualism and limited group consciousness, and an expectation of isolation and hardship. It is the purpose of this section of our study to explore this claim through a short historical survey.

2.3.1 A survey of Baptist history

2.3.1.1 A starting-point

When Baptists give account of their origins, various strands of thought emerge. One strand traces its beginnings to the Early Church, finding there certain mainline beliefs (perhaps, for ease of reference, contained in the Apostles' Creed) which they share with all other Christian groups. Another strand would argue that Baptists are more distinctively characterised by their commitment to Reformational principles, most prominently propounded by Calvin. A third strand would prefer to honour sixteenth-century Anabaptists for the rise of the Baptist movement (Kretzschmar, 1992:77), while a fourth and probably a more popular strand would seek to identify Baptist genesis with the Separatist surge in the England of the seventeenth century (Hays & Steely, 1981:9). Though this study will tend to favour the fourth strand, it is perhaps true to say that all four strands comprise the heritage of Baptists, thus making them a group that shares much with other denominations and traditions in the Christian family, as well as presenting them as a people who emphasise certain aspects of the faith more strongly than other Christians might like to do. All four strands knew struggle and they all were forced to fashion an identity out of the crucible of opposition, reaction and constraint. All four became convinced of the necessity of departing from the tradition of the times, of walking a different path from the rest, even if that path were to involve severe personal cost.
The Early Church moved away from the Judaism and the Judaizers of the first century, and they suffered expulsion from the synagogues and violent assault on their lives. Luther resisted the cluttered and corrupt ecclesiasticism of the Roman Catholic Church of the 16th century and, through key figures (such as Melanchton, Zwingli, Bucer, Calvin, the Scandinavian brothers Petri, the Englishmen Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer), Luther set in motion a tide of radicalism that sought to purge the church of all abuses and traces of insincere religious expression.

2.3.1.2 Pre-Reformational developments regarding Communion

(a) From meal to ceremony

Efforts to restore Communion during this period of reform centred on several issues that were many centuries in the making. The celebration of the Lord's Supper had come a long way from its early beginnings in an ordinary meal set within the ambit of the Jewish Passover. Of course, neither Christianity nor Judaism, before it, was unique in holding special meals. As Keating explains, the Roman empire had its guilds, clubs and societies which involved common meals and close social interaction (1969:3). The mystery religion, Mithraism, which contended with Christianity before eventually fading from the religious scene, had its 'eucharist', in a somewhat closer parallel to Christian Communion than pagan religions held their feast days in honour of patron gods (Keating, 1969:5, 13). Jewish celebrations also focussed on a deity, and drew in wider social and familial concerns, especially at the Passover (Keating, 1969:21). The Pharisees and Sadducees, however, became preoccupied with matters of exclusion at their meals, and the Essenes became anxious about insular matters of not eating impure foods (Keating, 1969:34, 31).

After the Ascension of Christ, the Christians gathered regularly to share a full meal (sometimes referred to as a 'love feast' or agape meal), the important part of which gradually became the giving of thanks ('eucharist') for the bread and the wine. Willimon believes that the eucharistic prayer was modelled on the Jewish 'eucharistic' prayers, with the prayer in Hippolytus seen as a christianising of a Jewish table blessing (1980:36). Associated with
these fellowship meals was the care of the needy, notably the widows in the community (Baker, in Davies, 1986:341), but abuses due to the selfishness, inequalities and deflected focus of the celebrants soon tarnished the loving character of the occasions. The apostle Paul was quick to point these out in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11). It would seem, nonetheless, that the eucharist remained embedded in the love feast until the time of Ignatius (c. 110 A.D.), but became detached from the ordinary meal by the time of Tertullian at the end of the second century (Keating, 1969:59, 74), on its way to becoming a ritualised sequence as we have it today. Certainly by the end of the fourth century, love feasts held in sacred buildings were deliberately discouraged by decree of several church councils (Laodicea 363 A.D., Carthage 397 A.D., Orleans 541 A.D., ‘Quinisextan’ Council 692 A.D.) and finally outlawed on pain of excommunication (Keating, 1969:151, 154, 155). Agape meals might have been banished from official church gatherings, but they survived in other forms in birthday celebrations, marriages, funerals, and dedication feasts. However, early Baptists did try to reconnect the agape meal with Communion during the seventeenth century for two reasons: (a) It was the primitive model and therefore closer to the original way, (b) It was necessary to refresh the congregation before it was dismissed (Winter, 1960:197, 201). The attempt did not last beyond the end of the century.

As time passed, then, the eucharistic prayer was detached from the interactive context of the agape meal and moved increasingly towards ceremonialism. Such a trend merged with another trend which regarded the Eucharist no longer as an event grounded in ordinary life, but rather as something mysterious and other-worldly. One must take into account that, during the fourth century, the Early Church was embroiled in several serious theological disputes over the nature of the godhead. Certainly crucial features of the Christian faith were clarified as a result, but at issue for the Eucharist was the question of who exactly were Christians worshipping. In reacting to the heresies of Arius and others, the Eucharist (the Supper at which God was present) took on a sense of wonder and distance. As Willimon comments, “Heresy was defeated - at some cost to the liturgy” (1980:43). Humans like to spiritualise what they often do not understand, and this propensity facilitated the inclusion of
a host of peripheral and perhaps distracting components (e.g. the veneration of saints). Later, as other theological issues were debated, such as the enigma of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, these too had a great deal to do with fostering an attitude of awe, especially for the consecration of the elements.

(b) From people to things

The shift from household utensils (baskets and jars) to liturgical vessels (patens, gold or silver chalices, ciborium, monstrance) testifies to the altered perception that the elements were sacred and therefore needed special containers (Foley, 1991:60). After the ninth century, the sacredness of the elements was further emphasised when the leavened bread was replaced by unleavened wafers (hosts). Five reasons can be given for the change: (1) Ordinary home-made bread was no longer good enough, (2) The laity who made and brought the bread to the church were increasingly felt to be unworthy to be handling something so sacred, (3) Fewer people were participating in the Eucharist and therefore less ordinary bread was being brought from home, (4) The connection between the Eucharist and the Passover with its unleavened bread was strengthening, and (5) The practice of the priest placing the bread directly on the tongue of the recipient necessitated 'mouth-sized' bread to be produced (Foley, 1991:83). The irony of the trend was that in an attempt to honour the presence of Christ - seen more and more to be resident in the elements - the elements themselves and the vessels holding the elements became more important than the worshippers with whom Christ had desired Communion to be celebrated (Foley, 1991:86). In addition, to the largely uninformed worshippers, the specialness with which the elements were treated implied that there must be special powers vested in the elements, thus preparing a fertile seedbed for superstition (Stookey, 1993:78).

(c) From corporate to individual event

Along with the tendency to extract the eucharistic moment from its origins in the Passover (family) context and its spontaneous love-feast interaction, there came an increasing desire to organise the worship (Macy, 1992:30). Nevertheless, Justin Martyr's account of how
Christians worship (his writing most likely prompted by allegations of homosexual orgies and cannibalism) stresses the corporate nature of Christian celebrations (Stookey, 1993:65), but as pressure mounted from a hostile environment and corrupting heresies, the early Christians turned to the pattern of surrounding structures of leadership to safeguard the worship. Thus, by the third century, the overseers or elders had taken on the task of conducting the worship, especially the Eucharist (Macy, 1992:31). As social events (notably Constantine’s raising of the status of Christianity) gave greater prominence to the overseers and priests, more and more of the worship of God was handed over to them to perform, on behalf of a people who beheld the spectacle of worship rather than participated in it. All eyes were focussed on the actions of the priests who, with backs to the congregation and facing the elevated altar, offered worship in a manner reminiscent of the priests of old offering sacrifices. Genuflection, the rosary, individual prayer books kept the congregation busy during the services, but the activity was private, subjective and individualised rather than corporate. The elevation of the host, signalled by the ringing of the bell, became the object of devotion during a service that encouraged adoration of Christ rather than communion with him. For the majority, the centre of one’s piety was removed from the Mass to private devotions (Willimon, 1980:57). The effect was to undermine the corporate sense of participation and involvement. As Willimon comments, the central fact of this period of history was “the dissolution of the worshipping community” (1980:52).

(d) From living his presence to living presence

An earlier community of believers had striven to live his presence in their daily lives. The Eucharist had been an occasion to reaffirm the life of Christ living through his people, such that the Eucharist was “the community acting in faith and charity” (Macy, 1992:53). It was not uncommon for early believers to seek opportunities to share with those in need at a time of Eucharistic celebration. But as Greek Platonism influenced the church, the preoccupation shifted from Christ present through actions that are worthy of him, to one of how exactly he was present. ‘Real’ things were not so much what could be sensed, but rather what could be grasped by the mind. ‘Essences’ (or ‘substances’) were always more real than sensory data
(the 'accidents') (Macy 1992:41). A growing abstraction set in whereby believers would ponder Christ's words, "This is my body .... This is my blood" (Mk 14:22, 24) and come to the conclusion that, in the Eucharist, believers were joined to the very nature of Christ (Hilary, bishop of Poitiers), or that through contact with Christ's body in the Eucharist, Christians shared divine immortality (Cyril of Alexandria) (Macy, 1992:44,45). Though they seemed to be the same people after eating and drinking the elements, their essence had changed in much the same way as the essence of the elements changed from bread into flesh and from wine into blood.

The more definitive explanation of quite how the change to the elements came about was left to the Middle Ages when the doctrine of transubstantiation crystalised and was entrenched at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.

(e) From remembering Christ's sacrifice to repeating the sacrifice

The developing conception of Christ's presence in the Eucharist spawned another inter-woven concept that later became obnoxious to the Reformers. If the bread and the wine became the body and blood of the Lord, then the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine brought the events of Calvary into the present, no longer by means of re-enactment, but by means of repetition. If the events of the cross could break the power of original sin, then the events on the Eucharistic altar had the power to cancel actual sin in the lives of the those who were brought to the altar. Actual sin, committed after baptism, needed to be paid for in some way, but there would be countless people who would die without being absolved from their post-baptismal sins. A belief, based on the apocryphal writings of 2 Macc 12:39-45, emerged that such people would enter purgatory (a place of temporary punishment and of purification), until their sins had been dealt with. For such people, it was conjectured, it would be possible to cancel their sin - or at least shorten their stay in purgatory - if another, living, Christian offered Eucharistic sacrifice in the name of the deceased. Priests were then engaged at a fee to perform such Masses, with the result that a way had been opened up for another spiritual-economic abuse (Stookey, 1993:72).
2.3.1.3 **Reformational reaction**

Luther's reforms were not primarily liturgical, though when, after six years, he came to revise worship, he did so according to a principle of deletion, rather than of creative exchange (Willimon, 1980:61, 64). His reforms included the following:

(a) The Mass was not to be seen as a propitiatory sacrifice (see para. 1.3.1.2 (e) above). Man's works - even of worship - were futile if they intended to add anything to the finished atonement of Christ on the cross. The Eucharist, therefore, was a human *response* to a divine gift in Christ (Willimon, 1980:63).

(b) The doctrine of transubstantiation was altered by stressing Christ's ubiquity (he is present everywhere at all times, but is truly, really and especially present in his full nature in the elements). Somehow the body and blood of the Lord were present along with the elements, thus bringing about a "consubstantiation".

(c) The simplification of the words used in the Eucharist to the recitation of biblical words of institution and the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper.

(d) The Eucharist's importance was highlighted for everyone, in a way that encouraged a more frequent partaking of both bread and wine.

(e) The Eucharist was a pedagogical opportunity, rather than an experiential one.

Zwingli went even further than Luther in his reforms, largely as a result of his doctrine that God was spirit and that nothing non-spirit (material) could be a means of salvation. Consequently, he eradicated any trace of material religion - removing statues, stained glass windows, art works, altars, music and vestments, and preferring to replace them with an extravagant measure of preaching and teaching. Communion was nothing more than a memorial sign, testifying to a person's faith in Christ's work. Christ was not physically present, but as believers used the signs of the elements to rise above the material they were able to commune with Christ who was Spirit. Ironically, in an attempt to heighten the importance of Communion by undermining its popular associations with the weekly Mass, Zwingli achieved the dubious accomplishment of an infrequent Communion (at best four times a year), and when it was celebrated it was overburdened with instruction.
Calvin, whose influence cannot be underestimated in Baptist thinking on the subject, regarded Communion as a sacrament which was:

[A]n outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will towards us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety towards him in the presence of of the Lord and of his angels and before men (Calvin, 1960:1277).

Believers are already joined to Christ and Communion simply confirms that union to our fallible human perceptions. The sacrament builds faith because it “sets forth Christ to us” (Calvin, 1960:1292) and testifies to God’s covenant of good will, but it is to be received in faith: “They [sacraments] avail and profit nothing unless received in faith” (Calvin, 1960:1292). In fact, Calvin laid the stress unequally upon partaking in faith, rather than the partaking accomplishing the purpose of generating the faith of the celebrant: “For them [the non-Calvinist advocates], eating is faith; for me it seems to follow from faith” (Calvin, 1960:1365). Positioned between Luther and Zwingli, and influenced profoundly by the neo-Platonism of Augustine, Calvin was convinced that Christ was really present by virtue of the Holy Spirit’s connecting of believers to the (spatially fixed) body and blood of the risen Christ: “Even though it seems unbelievable that Christ’s flesh, separated from us by such great distance, penetrates to us, so that it becomes our food, let us remember how far the secret power of the Holy Spirit towers above our senses.... the Spirit truly unites things separated in space” (Calvin, 1960:1370). The believer participates really and experientially, albeit spiritually.

Despite his attempts to restore Communion to a weekly observance, he was successful only in instituting a monthly practice.

As one reflects on the early Reformers, one notes the impact they had on the pre-Reformational developments. Communion was not about Christ being sacrificed all over again (see para. 1.3.1.2e above), neither was Christ's presence a matter of transubstantiatory change (see para.1.3.1.2d above). To some extent, they pulled
Communion back from a preoccupation with things rather than with people (see para.1.3.1.2b above) and rescued it from the superstition adhering to the elements and the liturgical utensils. They did not appear, however, to be successful in altering the increasing individualism, and even though the ceremonialism was simplified, Communion was still subject to a (new) form of ceremony and, though it was celebrated more frequently and by more people, it never became a weekly observance.

The Reformation spread across Europe and eventually to England. Of direct significance for Baptists (if we are to pay attention more deliberately to the fourth strand of thinking regarding Baptist origins) were the changes taking place in England during the 17th century.

2.3.1.4 Socio-religious changes in seventeenth-century England

The fortunes of the Protestant cause in England through the years 1534 - 1603 (from King Henry VIII to Queen Elizabeth I) vascillated between state support and vehement state opposition, and finally reached a compromise under Queen Elizabeth.

Substantial Protestant pressure upon the "Elizabethan Settlement" came from a group known as the Puritans, whose desire it was to see a church purified of Popish features. They did not wish to break with the Church of England but rather to carry the Calvinist reforms even further. Some Puritans objected, et.al., to kneeling to receive the elements at the Lord's Supper, since this might have shown adoration for the bodily presence of Christ in the elements. Others preferred a greater stress on the memorial character of Communion, but not in the Zwinglian sense (Latourette, 1975:814). Parliament reacted by eventually passing the Conventicle Act in 1593 designed to eradicate the dissident influence and compelling its proponents to choose between conformity or banishment.

2.3.1.5 The Separatists

While the Puritan lobby was becoming more vocal, another movement of dissent - this time in favour of separation from the Church of England - got underway. Increasingly convinced
of the impossibility of purifying the official church, these 'Separatists', either through pragmatism or principle, elected to form their own independent congregations where they could implement so-called biblical practices, some of which were that the church should comprise regenerate Christ-followers rather than 'cultural Christians', that the local church should be permitted to select its own leaders, and that the local church should govern itself. By the 1550s, Separatist churches were in operation, but not without state harassment and the imprisonment of its members. Many Separatists, noting the wave of antagonism, took advantage of the opportunity to leave the realm and head for Holland, where further refinement of their beliefs at the hands of Dutch theologians (notably Jacob Arminius) and Dutch Anabaptists contributed to the formation of Baptist views (Kretzschmar, 1992:83), and where contact with Anabaptist commitment must surely have inspired courage. Members of the London Separatist Church, under the leadership of Francis Johnson, left for Amsterdam in 1593 where they set up the Ancient Church and later produced the True Confession (1596) which formed the model for the later Particular Baptist confession of 1644 (Lumpkin, 1969:81), a confession that was reasonably influential in the history of modern Baptists.

Another notable group of Separatists, who had been meeting in increasing numbers in Gainsborough in the Midlands of England under the leadership of John Smyth (with Thomas Helwys and John Robinson), split up to avoid prosecution. Both groups (the Robinson group and the Smyth-Helwys group) left for Holland in 1607/8, but once there the finer differences between the groups became apparent, some of which would eventually propel Smyth beyond the boundaries of mere Separatism towards a Baptist position, for he would soon arrive at the point of insisting on an intelligent confession of faith, expressed in believer's baptism, as a benchmark of true church membership, and not infant baptism, to which most of his fellow-Separatists still clung. By so doing, argues Kretzschmar, his indebtedness to Anabaptism should also be acknowledged (1992:85).
2.3.1.6 General Baptists and Particular Baptists

Sadly, Smyth's theological indecisiveness eventually led to a break with his colleague, so that Helwys dissociated himself from Smyth's journey into obscurity and took the group back to England in 1611, where they established what historians regard as the first (General) Baptist church in England, at a place called Spitalfield, London. Within a few years, Helwys's Separatist views landed him in prison where he died in 1616 and John Murton, who took the lead after Helwys, followed shortly afterwards, where he too died in prison in 1626.

One would have expected that persecution from the state for Separatist views would have eased when it came to more moderate Separatists. Henry Jacob (1563-1624) adopted a semi-Separatist line in his unwillingness to condemn the Anglican Church completely. Yet even his views held sufficient threat to warrant the authorities committing him to prison. Upon his release, Jacob joined the exodus to Holland. Notwithstanding the company of many ardent Separatists, he remained loyal to the perspective that the Church of England was a true church, though he did concede that there were true churches of England and the false Church of England (McBeth, 1987:41). Upon his return to England in 1616, he formed a church in London (often referred to as the JLJ church, the name being drawn from the surnames of the three pastors who led it over the years: Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey). This church would later result in the first Particular Baptist Church. By 1633 the church began to reappraise the validity of infant baptism administered by the Anglican church, and members began to seek re-baptism (Hays & Steely, 1981:14). After several splits in the JLJ church during the 1630s, a consensus emerged by 1641 that biblical baptism was to be by immersion. By 1644 the First London Confession (a Particular Baptist confession written to distinguish Particular Baptists from General Baptists and Anabaptists) specified that baptism should be dispensed "onely upon persons professing faith..." and that the "way and manner of the dispensing of this Ordinance the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water; it being a signe, must answer the thing signified...." (Lumpkin, 1969:167).
The discussion, thus far, of the emergence of General Baptists and Particular Baptists from Separatist roots - and almost certainly influenced heavily by Anabaptist sources with respect to views of the church, of baptism and of church-state relations (Dowley, 1990:403 & Latourette, 1975:778) - is not meant to imply that Particular Baptists were simply an outflow of an earlier General Baptist precedent. As McBeth points out, "The Particular group, emerging about a generation later, represent not just more Baptists, but Baptists of a significantly different kind" (1987:39). Both reacted to the prevailing religious trends of the day, but the separatism of Smyth and Helwys (the General Baptist line) was absolute, while the separatism of Jacob through the JLJ church (the Particular Baptist line) was moderate. Theologically, too, there were differences between the two Baptist lines: the General Baptists favoured an Arminian approach; whereas the Particular Baptists tended to be Calvinist. According to McBeth, modern Baptists draw more of their beliefs and practices from the Particular Baptist line, but find that any strict Calvinistic tendencies are mellowed as a result of the (more Arminian) General Baptist background (1987:40).

2.3.1.7 Consolidation, expansion and decline

If the distinction between General and Particular Baptists was beginning to clarify, so too were certain denominational beliefs with respect to the Trinity, Scripture, the Atonement, the church, ministry, the relation of the church to the state, religious liberty, Baptism, Communion and the future hope (McBeth, 1987:69). Though the period of 1640-1660 was a time of social and political turmoil in England, whereby Anglicanism lost control to Presbyterianism with its Westminster Confession of 1647, for Baptists it was a period of consolidation and expansion, with Baptists gaining respect and influence (Hays & Steely, 1981:15). Many new churches were planted, confessions of faith were issued and a multitude of books and tracts were distributed (McBeth, 1987:111). It was also during this time that Baptists engaged enthusiastically, and with considerable impact, in public disputations. Not only did they expose vast numbers of people to Baptist views, but the exercise developed a polemical, direct approach to the defence of their standpoint. Whereas Baptists took every opportunity to draw non-Baptists into debate over issues of baptism, the authority of
Scripture or the nature of the church, they also carried out a vigorous in-house debate over such issues as the atonement, laying on of hands, singing as a legitimate part of worship, predestination, the Christian's obligations to the state, falling from grace and open versus closed Communion (McBeth, 1987:65).

With respect to Communion, the issue raged around whether professing Christians could partake of Communion regardless of the nature of their baptism (Open Communion), or whether only those Christians who had undergone Believer's Baptism by immersion ought to be given access to the Table (Closed Communion) (McBeth, 1987:81). The sharpness of the contest and the underlying fears that a relaxation of the intimate link between Baptism and Communion would undermine the requirement of regenerate church membership was epitomised by the major seventeenth-century exchange between William Kiffin (1616-1701), who stood for Closed Communion and John Bunyan (1628-1688) who championed Open Communion. Kiffin triumphed and entrenched the dominant practice among both General and Particular Baptists of Closed Communion. Despite some deviations (Tull, 1982:191), Closed Communion persisted until the late seventeenth century (Patterson, 1969:29), after which Open Communion crept back into favour. Patterson cites four reasons for the later swing towards Open Communion: (1) The anti-Calvinistic influence of Robert Hall (1728-1791); (2) The legal victory of George Gould which removed the threat of court action against a church which practiced Open Communion in violation of its trust deed; (3) The figure of Charles H. Spurgeon whose church endorsed Open Communion; (4) The trend among pastors and congregations towards accommodation (1969:29).

Ironically, despite the contesting attitudes to Open Communion or Closed Communion, it would appear that, during actual worship services, so much time was taken up with prophesying, preaching and praying that Communion became a very small item (Winter, 1960:202).
During the 1660s to 1680s, Baptists entered a period of their most intense persecution. No doubt because of the Baptist concern for religious liberty which had been gaining its voice through preceding decades and because of the involvement of Baptists in the overthrow of king and Anglican Church, Baptists were regarded with great suspicion. By unfortunate association, a non-Baptist rebellion of Fifth Monarchists in 1661 and a resurgence of Anabaptists links, brought down on Baptists severe repressions. Baptist services were forbidden, pastors were incarcerated to the extent that churches could rarely keep their pastor for any length of time, restrictions came into force against Baptists in society (Clarendon Code of legislations), Baptists families were imprisoned (notably John Bunyan) and neighbourhood reprisals were carried out by gangs (McBeth, 1987:114,118). Thankfully the wave of persecution with the Act of Toleration (1689), making way for considerable (albeit incomplete) religious freedom for dissenters. It is alleged that, leading to the Act, Baptists played a major role by their teaching, printing and their personal heroism (McBeth, 1987:122), but the effort was not without cost and exhaustion. For the most part of the following century, Baptist witness in England went into decline: General Baptists compromised essential doctrines of Christ and the atonement and eventually faded into oblivion; Particular Baptists turned more and more to a destructive hyper-Calvinism.

2.3.1.8 From the eighteenth century into the nineteenth century

Affected (amongst other things) by the evangelical awakening of the Wesleyan movement, the Particular Baptists rediscovered their evangelical heart temporarily during the latter eighteenth century before further decline during the nineteenth century depleted their spiritual vitality. Spurgeon was one leading personality who attacked the flagging denomination in what became known as the Downgrade Controversy (1887-1892). Though opposed by John Clifford, an Arminian General Baptist, Spurgeon accused the churches of doctrinal and moral deterioration (McBeth, 1987:303), principally - though not entirely - because Baptist churches were departing from Calvinism in favour of a rationalistic theology and a flirtation with biblical criticism (Nichols, in Kretzschmar, 1992:144). Kretzschmar makes the point that both Spurgeon and Clifford were socially aware and active, though
Spurgeon gave weight to the personal life of the individual, whereas Clifford was keen on a more corporate social integrity (1992:145, 147).

Spurgeon's Calvinism led him to keep the substitutionary and atoning death of Christ for each person clearly in mind, despite the prevalence of a Zwinglian memorialism amongst most of his fellow Baptists. Remembrances of the anguish of the crucifixion ensured that the intimacy of the believer's soul-union with Christ would be increased. By the Holy Spirit, the individual Christian encountered the grace of the risen Christ, and his/her experience of fellowship with Christ was assured. This fellowship was not purely spiritual (anti-material), for in the sacraments Spurgeon believed there to be a link between the material and the spiritual (Walker, 1988:135, 138).

Clifford, by contrast, took as his starting-point the socialist vision of "a brotherhood bound together in sacrificial service under the Christ of Calvary" (Walker, 1988:139, 148). Understandably, then, the value of Communion had to do with fostering devotion in the heart of the individual, but more importantly, it was a means of fostering love between Christians (Walker, 1988:144). Like Zwingli, Clifford disdained any connection between the material and the spiritual, for which Spurgeon argued, thus promoting a low estimation of Communion. As Walker comments, "Baptists who heeded him could only conclude that the Lord's Supper was a poor servant of the Christian life" (1988:143).

Clifford won the day, for Baptists at the time were turning away from a strict Calvinism. Even when Spurgeon was later appreciated, especially in South Africa, it was for the individualised aspects of his theology. The trend towards a privatised, somewhat irrelevant Communion was gaining ground.

If Baptist witness in England degenerated, their counterparts in America experienced growth and advance. However, since our study here is focussed on Baptists in South Africa, who
were mainly drawn from English Baptists (McBeth, 1987:332 & Hudson-Reed, 1977:9), our
survey of developments will pursue events in South Africa.

2.3.1.9 **Baptists in South Africa**

With the group of approximately 4000 settlers who landed on the South African coast in
1820 was a small band of English Baptists who, with their first leader, William Miller,
established the first denominational work in the country in the town of Grahamstown. From
the outset it should be noted that the Baptist contingent came as settlers, not as missionaries
(Kretzschmar, 1992:172), a fact that did not predispose the work to religious concerns so
much as to colonial ones of safety and stability. From its inception the infant church appears
to have been troubled by at least two controversies: (a) the simmering Calvinist-Arminian
controversy that had come to a head in eighteenth-century England, (b) the Open / Closed
Communion issue. Whatever might have been the majority persuasion initially, the first
controversy - described by Hudson-Reed (1977:10) as “fierce” - resolved itself into a more
moderate stance on the part of the growing Baptist witness in South Africa. Admittedly,
today, there are a few churches whose ethos is decidedly hyper-Calvinistic, and even in the
rest of the churches, there are groups who would like to see a deliberate endorsement of
their Reformed position; nevertheless, the general attitude seems to be a moderate one on
this issue. For this, one is most grateful, especially when one notes that the Calvinist-
Arminian controversy was the cause of the very first church split in a South African Baptist
church in 1849 (Hudson-Reed, 1977:16).

The Open/Closed Communion controversy has existed in one form or another since the very
beginning of Baptist ministry in South Africa. Judging by a church minute of 1857, the first
Baptist church in Grahamstown seems to have advocated Open Communion (Hudson-Reed,
1977:17), but opposition to this position intensified with the arrival of German Baptists
between 1857 and 1859. The Germans were a more close-knit group than the English
(Hudson-Reed, 1977:39) and berated their own leader, Hugo Gutsche, for associating in the
1890s with the largely English (Open Communionist) Baptist Union. The issue was resolved,
denominationally, by making it a matter of choice for the local church, rather than a matter of denominal ruling (Hudson-Reed, 1977:67). Here again, a characteristic Baptist method of settling intra-denominal conflict is evident, one which is used to good effect even today and one which is consistent with a Baptist principle known as 'autonomy of the local church'. This principle gives freedom within an inter-dependent framework (Baptist Theological College, Baptist Principles, [sa]:14) and is further evidence of the roots in Particular Baptist preference for the local church being regarded as an autonomous whole rather than the General Baptist conviction that the local church is in some sense a branch of the larger church (McBeth, 1987:76). Sometimes that inter-dependence has extended beyond the Baptist family, with some of the earliest records of cordial relations existing from as far back as the mid-1800s. At one point (1907), the possibility arose of five denominations combining to form a single church union, but eventually nothing came of the proposal through no fault of the Baptists (Hudson-Reed, 1977:34, 75, 81). Apart from this effort, it would seem that by and large Baptists have been keen to co-operate, but have not actively sought out interdenominal opportunities with any sustained passion. This has been unfortunate with respect to matters social and political, for South African Baptists may well have gained from and contributed to other denominations in the church's fight against many of the social ills that plagued the country right up to the present. Baptists have expressed concern over deteriorating race relations in several Assembly motions and open letters over the years, but never to the extent that any active resistance to the state has been proposed. Instead, as Hudson-Reed (1977:103) notes, the liquor question has been next in priority to the racial one. Curiously, it has been the temperance issue (such a major topic of reform in 19th century England - McBeth, 1987:301) that has found an enduring place in the Communion pattern of Baptists before any thoughts of social justice and reconciliation, for it is more common today to find that the Communion wine is replaced with grape juice in a Communion service than it is to find an emphasis on reconciliation between people.
2.4 HISTORICAL THEMES

2.4.1 Persecution

It has already been said that the Baptist faith emerged through struggle. To take a stand against the status quo was a costly business and the history of Baptists testifies to the fact that they were forced to endure the confiscation of property, physical suffering in the form of being whipped, having their ears cut off and their noses slit. Several Baptists were executed, but, as McBeth points out, many many more “had their death hastened by being crowded into filthy and disease-ridden prisons” (1987:101). In the face of such widespread onslaught, one would not be surprised if mere survival became a primary anxiety. As leaders were removed by repressive state measures, much of the leadership of the church fell to lay-people to perform, with the exception of Communion (McBeth, 1987:119). Whether the celebration of Communion became infrequent throughout the period of persecution, or whether it was removed to the safety of the home and administered unofficially by family members is hard to ascertain. That the infrequency or even temporary elimination of Communion does not seem to have troubled the church unduly is apparent from the lack of specific documentation dealing with the subject. But then, as McClendon notes:

“These [Baptist] communities have been preoccupied with the harsh struggle to survive and have not had the leisure for theological reflection... Most of their leaders were soon dead; their literary production was sharply limited to instruction for the faithful, to polemic and apologetic confessions, and (most significantly) to historical narratives (1982:21).

Persecution has surely been one of the most influential factors to have shaped the early Baptist approach to the faith and, with it, the practice of Communion. Baptists have felt that they have needed to dissent from the traditional ways of religious practice and have called down upon themselves the wrath of religious and state authorities. In one sense, this mentality of dissent has remained with Baptists to the present and may account for a certain ease with which Baptists can accept that they will never be in the mainstream of popular favour.
2.4.2 A spirit of independency

As persecution, especially at the hands of other followers of Christ, did its work, Baptists were forced to understand themselves as needing to exist separate from others who might also call themselves Christians. The need to survive against all odds meant that, if they were going to depend on anyone in a church, they would need to be reasonably sure of the commitment to Christ on the part of those people. Consequently, a greater emphasis on the regeneracy of the membership became a distinctive feature of Baptist identity (Torbet, in Dalton, 1969:12). Understandably, certain clear professions of faith - centring around Believers' Baptism, rather than Infant Baptism - became important indicators of a highly elusive certainty. Only those who had demonstrated commitment were admitted to the closed membership of the church, and it was this group that would be strengthened in their fellowship by the sacrament of Communion.

The historic Baptist doctrine of the church also took on another feature which was fostered by dissent and persecution. Believing that all true Christians were members of the church universal, and at the same time disturbed by the possibility of being dependent on a larger body that was inflicting such pain on its recalcitrant members, Baptists insisted that the local church represented the universal church in its locality, and that it enjoyed all the necessary powers of self-government (the Baptist principle of the autonomy of the local church). In this way, Baptists could disengage from the institutional church and find its life in a loose affiliation between local churches (Maring & Hudson, in Dalton, 1969:12). Hence Baptists have developed 'Unions' that have little - if any - powers to impose on a local church, but can provide the forum for local congregations, voluntarily, to venture out of their self-sufficiency. McBeth, commenting on the formation of the first Baptist Union in England in 1813, says:

[F]rom the first the union sought to safeguard the freedom of local congregations.... Even so, widespread support was not forthcoming.... The spirit of independency prevented many churches from cooperating meaningfully with any denominational body (1987:292).
The spirit of independency has been a feature of the Baptist mindset, and with it has gone the allure of withdrawal into a comfortable individualism and self-protectionism. In addition, the overall structure of Baptist worship is affected, for Baptists have been caught in the conflict of wanting to develop a ‘Baptist’ way of worship, while at the same time not wanting to impose an order of service on fellow-Baptists. What has resulted has often been an impression of chaos and lack of reverence (Dalton, 1969:7).

2.4.3 Open vs. Closed Communion

Associated with the importance of a regenerate church membership and with an independent spirit has been the dilemma of whether to practice Open or Closed Communion. We saw how the matter flared during the seventeenth century in England and how the debate came with the immigrants to South Africa. The practice of Communion in a local Baptist church reveals a great deal about what the status quo is, with respect to interdenominational inclusion and to the inclusion of children.

2.4.4 Polemics vs. instruction

Again, as a result of seasons of persecution and tolerance, Baptists have been drawn to the need to defend themselves and their practices from misperception. In doing so, they have unwittingly found themselves caught between the need aggressively to defend their differences and the need calmly to explain the meaning of Communion. Somewhat ill-prepared to progress beyond polemical engagement, they have neglected to make clear exactly what the meaning or relevance of Communion is.

Interestingly, some of the early Anabaptist creeds and confessions spelt out the value of Communion. Ridemann’s Rechenschaft (1540) devotes almost its entire clause (clause V) on Communion to explanation:

The Supper is a sign of the community of Christ’s body, in that each member thereby declares himself to be of the one mind, heart, and Spirit of Christ. It is an act of remembrance at which God’s children become aware again of the grace which they have received. Only a true member of Christ may participate.
The unity of the fellowship of the Lord's Table must already exist prior to the celebrating (Lumpkin, 1969:40).

The *Waterland Confession* (1580) contains two articles relating specifically to Communion (Article XXXIII & XXXIV) and both treat Communion instructionally (Lumpkin, 1969:61):

**ARTICLE XXXIII**

Of the Holy Supper

The Holy Supper (as also Baptism) is an external and visible evangelical action in which, according to the precept of Christ (a), and the usage of the Apostles (b), for a holy end (c), we partake of bread and wine. The bread is broken, the wine is poured out and by them are sustained those who, believing, are baptized according to the institution of Christ. The bread is eaten by them, the wine is drunk. Thus Christ's death and bitter suffering are proclaimed (d), and all these things are done in commemoration of him (e).

(a) Luke 22:19  (b) Acts 2:42, 20:11; 1 Cor 11:22  (c) 1 Cor 10:15, 11:28  (d) 1 Cor 11:25  (e) Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24

**ARTICLE XXXIV**

What the Holy Supper signifies

The whole action of the external and visible supper places before our eyes, testifies and signifies that Christ's holy body was broken on the cross (a) and his holy blood poured out (b), for the remission of our sins; that he is now glorified in heaven, is the living bread, food and drink of our souls (c). It places before our eyes Christ's office or ministry in glory while he sups spiritually with believing souls (d) by nourishing and feeding souls with spiritual food (e). Through it we are taught, in that external action, to elevate our hearts on high with holy supplications (f), and to seek from Christ the true and highest good shadowed forth in this supper (g); and finally it exorts us to give thanks to God and to exercise unity and love among ourselves (h).

(a) Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:23  (b) Mark 14:24  (c) John 6:51,55  (d) Rev 3:20  (e) Eph 5:29  (f) Col 3:1,2  (g) 1 Cor 10:16  (h) 1 Cor 10:17

The single article on Communion in the *Dordrecht Confession* (1632) commences with the biblical institution and the use of bread and wine, but soon moves on to explanatory detail (Leith, 1982:302):

**ARTICLE X**

Of the Lord's Supper

So is the observance of this sacrament also to remind us of the benefit of the said death and sufferings of Christ, namely, the redemption and eternal salvation which He purchased thereby, and the great love thus shown to sinful man; whereby we are earnestly exhorted also to love one another - to love our neighbour - to forgive and absolve him - even as Christ has done unto us - and also to endeavour to maintain and keep alive the union and communion which we have with God, and amongst one another; which is thus shown and represented to us by the aforesaid breaking of bread. Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19,20; Acts 2:42,46; 1 Cor 10:16, 11:23-26.
By the time we arrive at the *True Confession* (1596), belonging to the English Separatists, the polemical character is beginning to manifest itself, in clause 35 (Lumpkin, 1969:93):

> And that all of the Church that are of yeeres, and able to examine themselves, doo communicate also in the Lords Supper both men and women, and in both kindes bread and wine in which Elements, as also in the water of baptisme, even after their are consecrate, there is neyther transubstantiation into, nor Consubstantiation with the bodye and bloode of Jesus Christ... But they are in the ordinance of God signes and seales of Gods euerlasting couenant, representing and offering to all the receiuers, but exhibiting only to the true beleevers the Lord Iesus Christ and all his benefits unto righteousnes, sanctification and etemall lyfe, through faith in his name to the glorie and prayse of God (my emphasis).


One would expect the presence of instruction to continue in the *London Confession of Faith* (1644), but instead one notes a significant departure. Lumpkin estimates that perhaps no other Confession of Faith has had so formative an influence on Baptist life than this one (1969:152). Vedder and Brown (in Lumpkin) also rate this Confession extremely highly. Yet the Confession makes no mention whatsoever of Communion! It covers baptism as an ordinance and gives a brief elaboration on its administration (Articles XXXIX-XLI, in Lumpkin, 1969:167). It even refers to the civil magisterial office as an ordinance (Article XLVIII, in Lumpkin, 1969:169), but it is conspicuously silent on Communion! The omission is suggestive of a declining appreciation for the sacrament. To remedy the situation, no doubt, the *Second London Confession* (1688) does include an extensive treatment of Communion, but does so with a strong polemical thrust into the territory of transubstantiation (cf. Chap. XXX, in Lumpkin, 1969:291). If polemics was assumed to be peculiar to Particular Baptists and not to General Baptists, the *Orthodox Creed* of the General Baptists (1678) dispelled
any such notion, for it, too, contains a little instruction (the first few lines of Article XXXIII), followed by a strongly-worded refutation of non-Baptist persuasions:

Neither is that popish doctrine of transubstantiation to be admitted of, nor adoration of the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, as they call it, together with their denying of the cup to the laity, and many more idolatrous and superstitious practices, decreed in the popish councils of Lateran and Trent. In opposition to which, and such like idolatry of Rome, many of our worthy and famous antients, and renowned protestants, lost their lives by fire and faggot in England, whose spirits we hope are now in heaven, as worthy martyrs and witnesses of Christ, in bearing a faithful testimony to this holy ordinance of their Lord and master. Neither may we admit of consubstantiation, it being not consonant to God's word.... (Lumpkin, 1969:321).

The Confession is noteworthy, also, in its recognition of the cost of defending a 'right' approach to Communion, and so it is perhaps understandable that a defensive stance would be adopted during this period of history.

Perhaps the Baptist penchant for polemics was modelled by the irascible characters of some of its earliest Separatist leaders: Robert Browne, Francis Johnson, John Robinson, Henry Jacob. Browne was a strident controversialist, unnecessarily censorious and critical, and a known wife-beater. Johnson, like most Separatists, was caustic, disparaging and given to controversy (McBeth, 1987:27). Generally, it seems, the early leaders of the emerging Baptist denomination were ready to condemn one another over small details and risk separation. As Sprunger remarks (in McBeth, 1987:31), the early leaders were characterised by "schism and bad manners". Later figures such as Smyth were reportedly uncompromising and loudly critical of opponents, and Helwys, who followed him, was imprisoned for his scathing attack on the Church of England entitled A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity (1612) (McBeth, 1987:32,38).

In assessing the polemical tenor of the Baptist mind, we perhaps should not discount too hastily the influence of the personalities involved in England. When we compare the Confessions and policy statements of other countries, some of whom also underwent social disapproval, there appears to be a promise of more instructional, rather than polemical,
material. The instruction contained in the *Confession of Faith of the Alliance of Evangelical-Freechurch Congregations* of Germany (1944) (in Lumpkin, 1969:406) is still guarded, and in the *Doctrinal Basis of the Baptist Union of Victoria, Australia* (1888) the references to Communion are concise (in Lumpkin, 1969:417), but a more expanded explanation is recorded in their *Principles and Ideals of the Baptist Faith* (in Lumpkin, 1969:420). The most instruction on the significance of Communion in a Confessions is to be found in the Russian Baptist Confession issuing from the All-Union Conference of Evangelical Christian-Baptists in Moscow in 1966. Avoiding the polemics of English Baptists, or South African Baptists for that matter, the document lists six points concerning what Communion signifies and limits itself to biblical warrant for its stipulations regarding the frequency of celebration or the right of participation (cf. Lumpkin, 1969:426).

2.4.5 Expectation of decline

The pressure exerted on Baptists churches, historically, meant that congregations were small and its members known to one another. The atmosphere of persecution tended to cause Baptists to want merely to exist, with little thought to expansive projects and widespread publicity of church activities. Various strategies to ensure the safety of the fellowship were instituted during the seventeenth century when persecution was fierce. Sentries were posted to alert the congregation of the advance of public officers or informers; congregations met in private homes equipped with trap doors leading to secret rooms; some Baptists met in one house with the pastor preaching from the adjoining house; some groups met at irregular times and places; members dressed in clothes that would not indicate that they were on their way to worship; and when these arrangements did not work satisfactorily, the congregation broke up into smaller groups under lay leadership, so as to conform to the regulations of the Conventicle Act (McBeth, 1987:118).

Smallness and relative obscurity has characterised Baptists ever since (with the exception, perhaps of conditions in parts of America). In 1700, few Baptist groups owned any buildings, preferring to utilise homes or rented facilities. Even when buildings were obtained or erected
in England, they were often hidden away in back streets, removed from the general gaze of potential enemies (McBeth, 1987:191).

Of concern (especially in England) during the twentieth century has been the numerical decline of already small congregations. From 1921 - 1981, Baptist membership fell by 57% and Sunday School attendance during the same period by 70% (Champion, in McBeth, 1987:507). A similar trend among Sunday School enrolments in the Northern Baptist Convention has seen a 63% decline between 1928-1982 (McBeth,1987:607). The Briggs Commission report (1979) in England concurred with the steady decline, also pointing out that about twice as many women as men were members. Another study found that churches were becoming smaller: 70% had a membership of less than 100 people; 90% had a membership of less than 200 people and approx. 34% had a membership of less than 40 people (Jones, in McBeth, 1987:508). Baptists churches in the Gauteng area of South Africa, by comparison, have an average size of 112 members (calculation based on figures in the South African Baptists Handbook 1995-96).

The pressure of persecution might account for smallness during the earlier periods, but one would expect the situation to change as the denomination made its way into the twentieth century. Yet it would seem that in the turmoil of conflict and uncertainty, the Baptist mind has imbibed a curious psychological predisposition to expect decline (as the Briggs Commission noted, in McBeth, 1987:508)! Certainly, in passing, contributory factors must be noted, such as a Baptist history of theological polarisation (Calvinism vs. Arminianism) and the undermining of denominational loyalties as a result of the charismatic renewal and the ecumenical movement. Yet, following the seminal idea of the Briggs Commission, it would seem significant in understanding a Baptist approach to ministry and witness to highlight their anticipation of having to cope with:

1. A hostile environment (therefore one should count the cost carefully before committing oneself fully to a life of sacrificial service)
A perceived lack of commitment on the part of fellow believers - especially in other denominations - to fundamental tenets of Scripture (hence the need for Baptist Principles)

The success of coping in such a situation is subtly undermined by a history of hardship and, quite likely fuelled by teaching that depicts the world as getting progressively worse towards a cataclysmic end. In such a scenario, it is easy for Baptists not to be driven by thoughts of expansion, largeness or numerical and outward success, but rather to expect opposition, constraints, unpopularity and even decline.

2.4.6 The symbolic vs. the simple

Having had to defend itself against opposing viewpoint has fostered in Baptists "a direct approach, emphasising Scripture and clear logic" (McBeth, 1987:65). While many non-Baptists clouded their discourse in florid language, Baptists usually preferred the vocabulary of the common folk. To some extent, the favouring of simplicity survives to this day and could also have played its part in the simplification (perhaps even blandness) of Communion in Baptist church practice. Undoubtedly the Reformational preference for austerity is a crucial influence, along with the seventeenth century disputations, that has inclined Baptists towards plainness and a suspicion of elaborate symbolism or an inclusion of the arts. The now-common practice of singing, accompanied by musical instruments, during worship was stoutly resisted by Baptists until the seventeenth century, when Benjamin Keach introduced a hymn at the close of Communion in 1668 (Winter, 1960:199). Singing was unaccompanied by any musical instruments, for these were not permitted in the worship of the Lord (Winter, 1960:201). Even during that century, though, singing generated discomfort, probably due to the ease with which it would draw attention to an illegal gathering of worship (McBeth, 1987:93).

Generally, however, Baptists have seen no need for material aids to worship, since it is believed that a Christian is able to approach God in spirit and in truth (Day II, 1971:273). There has always been a lack of unanimity among Baptists (Steely, 1986:93; Tull, 1982:191;
Patterson, 1969:31) when it comes to the use of the symbolic and the artistic, with some adhering to a more Lutheran freedom, and others feeling more comfortable with a Zwinglian banishment from worship of all things material.

We started out this chapter by noting that Baptists claimed a high status for Communion, and we have seen how the denominational mind has been formed historically. It is appropriate now to examine current perceptions of Communion as these are revealed in an empirical study.
CHAPTER 3
PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Twenty-seven active years in the Baptist denomination as a church member and as part of various leadership bodies within local churches give one a certain sense of the way a generation of Baptists has been schooled in the appreciation of Communion. Nevertheless, such a sense is a personal one and may not necessarily be shared at every point by other members of the denomination. At best, it may offer some starting notions that can guide one towards useful questions. In order to ascertain what current perceptions of Communion might be in this country, it is necessary to undertake an empirical study of a sample of Baptists.

The manner with which the present study was carried out (operationalisation) was set out in paragraph 1.5 earlier, to which the reader is referred.

An average response rate of 59.1% (194 people, out of 328 approached) was recorded from the two churches which made up the sample group. Analysis of the biographical data of the respondents reveals a profile of the Baptist worshipper, which can be compared in some aspects with the initial profile of a typical South African Baptist church (see Appendix 1).

3.2 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

3.2.1 General characteristics

3.2.1.1 Race. Historically, Baptist churches in the Baptist Union of South Africa have comprised a majority of Whites. Mission work through the years has yielded a number of so-called ‘black’ churches as well, but until recently these churches have associated within the Baptist Convention rather than the Baptist Union. Recent efforts at reunification have seen a groundswell of formerly Baptist Convention churches aligning themselves with the Baptist Union, so that within a few years, one may well see the Baptist Union (BU) with a
black membership majority. The two survey churches both are open to all races, but at this stage they have a largely white membership.

3.2.1.2 Language. Since the arrival of the English-speaking settlers from whose ranks came the first Baptists in this country, Baptists churches have been predominantly English-speaking. The surveyed churches are no different in this regard, with all services and official church publications being conducted through the medium of English.

3.2.2 Age and gender
The random stratified sampling design, with which respondents were selected for participation in the study, ensured that sufficient numbers of people were surveyed within each age and gender category. The graph below indicates the age and gender concentrations:

![Age & Gender Concentrations](image)

The gender balance revealed a slight majority in favour of females respondents (male: 46.4%; female: 53.6%).

3.2.3 Age and education
The educational qualifications of the respondents were grouped into four categories. The results indicated a reasonably well-educated sample, with almost 73% holding a Matriculation or post-Matriculation qualification. Within the seemingly high proportion of respondents who held a pre-Matriculation level (27.07%), of course, were both teenagers...
and elderly people, both of which are understandable. Teenagers (13.28%) have not reached the end of their secondary schooling, and those of more senior age lived during a period when a Matriculation or post-Matriculation education was not considered the norm.

![Age & Education](image)

### Occupation

The majority of the sample comprised housewives (17%), followed by pupils and students (16.5%), business people (12.4%), educationists (6.7%), retired people (6.7%) and those in managerial positions (5.7%). Other occupations which comprised the sample included medical-related, accounting, engineering, consultancy and secretarial.

### Connection to Baptists churches

#### Membership

The largest proportion of the sample (68.09%) classified themselves as members, i.e. they had made successful, formal application for membership of a Baptist church. Only 31.91% of the regular attenders declared themselves to be non-members.
As the people increased in age, the incidence of membership increased, with a small decline in the 60+ age-group.

![Age vs. Membership](image)

P-value = 0.000  
Chi-Sq = 49.584

3.2.5.2 Leadership. The sample contained a small group of leaders (15.1%), though the majority (84.9%) did not fill any recognised leadership role.

3.2.6 Length of commitment to Christ

The overwhelming majority of people (96.9%) surveyed regarded themselves to be committed Christians, i.e. they had responded to Christ’s love for them and had submitted their lives to Christ’s authority and value system. This does not necessarily infer that Baptist congregations, on any given Sunday, carry the same majority of Christians, or that Baptist services are not reaching the unchurched. A bias was at work, here, insofar as the sampling method was compelled to target people who were coming regularly to the services to the extent that their names appeared on the church records which were used to arrive at the sample group. One appreciates that, potentially, the survey bypassed many more attenders (irregular, or simply visiting) who would not regard themselves as Christian.

The number of years during which those surveyed regarded themselves to have been committed Christians is depicted in the chart below. It reveals that the majority of the congregation has been Christian for approximately 10 years.
3.3 ANALYSIS OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE

3.3.1 Introduction

The questionnaire (given in Appendix 2) tested several key notions in various questions which are now reported under their respective headings below. For a listing of the questions that probed each notion, refer to Appendix 3.

3.3.2 How important is Communion to Baptists?

The following questions probed the notion of the importance of Communion: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.14, 1.15, 2, 3, 6.

It would appear that Baptists rate Communion highly; to some extent at least. Most agreed (question 1.1) (42%) - even if they did not strongly agree - that Communion was the high point of their worship as individuals (mean score = 2.098 on a five-point Lichart scale from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree"). The age of the respondents affected the result here (see para. 3.4 below), as did the length of commitment to Christ (see para. 3.9 below). There was strong agreement (60.8%) that Communion should be vital to the life of their church (question 1.2)(mean score = 1.454), with a slightly diminished majority (mean score = 1.706) believing that it was already a vital dimension of their church life (question 1.3).

As important as Communion might be to Baptists, they insisted (question 1.14) that it be linked to the preaching of the Scriptures (66% strongly agree and agree; mean score =
2.289), otherwise the sacrament would lose its value. However, they did not wish to see the celebration of Communion replaced entirely by preaching (question 1.15) (58.9% agree and strongly agree; mean score = 3.484). What is interesting, despite the Scheffe test result here, is that 41.2% either agreed or were neutral that preaching could dispense with the need for Communion when it comes to growth impact! This has implications when we consider later aspects of the findings.

For all the importance of Communion to Baptists, the majority (71.6%; mean score = 1.768) did not wish the frequency of the celebration to alter from its current practice of once or twice a month (question 2.1). The most prominent reason for the maintenance of the status quo (question 2.2) was the fear that a more frequent celebration would cause Communion to lose its specialness and would reduce it to a meaningless ritual (47.9%). Those who preferred a more frequent celebration (25.8%) listed as their most important reason the fact that they needed more occasions (such as at Communion) to be reminded of their salvation, or to be encouraged to praise God. Additional celebration need not necessitate more Communion services each month according to a fixed roster, but could happen “according to need”.

When probed as to what would change (really change) in their lives if Communion were to be removed from the practice of their church (question 6), a small majority (34.5%) predicted that it would detrimentally affect their personal relationship with God. They would grow distant from God, gradually, or they would slowly lose focus and cease to remember Christ’s costly initiative. Furthermore, they would lose a sense of warmth, and the will to resist temptation would wane. In place of a strong belief and a sense of meaningfulness in life, they expected that a self-centredness, arrogance, carelessness and presumption would intrude, leaving them feeling disobedient and guilty. Some spoke of the loss of a sense of personal forgiveness that is uniquely communicated during Communion, while others said they would miss the quiet, peaceful and reflective moment that Communion afforded.
A second group (27.8%) anticipated that their attitude to the church would change. It would seem that their altered attitude would include a desire to leave their local church for another where Communion would be celebrated, or a drive to challenge the leadership over the decision to remove Communion, or they would simply enjoy Communion elsewhere (e.g. in the home, or in a private fellowship).

A third group (26.8%) admitted, most significantly, that the loss of Communion would make no difference to their lives!

A fourth group, and a small one at that (8.8%), thought that a negative effect would result, but were at a loss to describe exactly what the effect would be.

The smallest percentage of respondents (2.1%) were perturbed that the loss of Communion would adversely affect their relations (interactions) with others in the church. This weak corporate sensitivity is a matter of concern and will be referred to later in the study. Reference will also be made below (see para. 3.4) to the differing responses to this issue by the various age groups.

In general, thus far, we can say that Baptists claim a reasonably high status for Communion, believing that it is a vital feature of their life as a church and that it ought to be linked inextricably to preaching. While some are registering a need for a different integration of the sacrament, most support the status quo, convinced that it serves an important personal, rather than corporate, need. Nevertheless, there are signs that the place of Communion may be under threat of irrelevance to the overall well-being of Baptists. It would be useful to learn a little more about the manner in which the sacrament is experienced, and to this we now turn.
3.3.3 How is Communion experienced by Baptists?

The following questions probed the experiential dimension of Communion among Baptists:

1.18, 1.6, 5, 1.17, 1.19, 1.20, 7, 1.22, 8.

As can be expected, perhaps, the respondents were thoroughly convinced that they understood the meaning of Communion (question 1.18). The question had been phrased in the negative ("I do not understand the meaning of Communion"), with which 94.3% disagreed and strongly disagreed (mean score = 4.489). On the whole, therefore, Baptists appear to be confident that the sacrament is intelligible and accessible to them.

From time to time one encounters a perception that the mood of Baptist Communions is characterised by a solemnity that borders on heaviness. In putting the notion to the test (question 1.6: "Communions, usually, should be serious, sombre occasions"), it was revealed that the majority of Baptists, in fact, agreed that the mood of Communions, usually, should be serious and sombre (59.1% agree and strongly agree; mean score = 2.445). Furthermore, as the number of years of commitment to Christ on the part of the worshippers increased, so did the expectation that the sacrament should be serious and sombre (see para. 3.9 below).

The study then went on to probe the thought patterns of celebrants during Communion by asking an open-ended question (question 5):"When I participate in Communion, I find myself thinking...." In this way, the study endeavoured to get at the primary metaphors that fired the imagination of Baptist worshippers. Predominantly the respondents were captivated by what Christ went through on the cross, with its resultant feeling of unworthiness and uselessness, and they felt a considerable degree of responsibility for the death of Christ. On closer examination of first reasons offered, there was a distinction to be made. The majority (27.8%) were overawed by what Christ went through, with the emphasis upon being impressed by Christ's love and compassion, and what a privilege it was to be chosen by Christ. Another, slightly diminished, group of the total sample (25.8%) concurred with the
sense of being struck by what Christ endured, but this time the emphasis was upon the *horror of the cross*: the pain, the bleeding, the injury, the price and the agony. Next to such a trend, a significant proportion of people (17%) described how their minds gravitated to a realisation of the extent to which they had fallen short of God's standards, how unworthy or useless they were because their sinfulness had caused them to stray from God, and how their condition had necessitated his death. Other reasons listed as predominant thoughts included the following:

- I think about how I can please God more, or be more a part of him, even as I commit my daily problems to him (8.8%)
- I am relieved at, or am grateful for, being saved (8.2%)
- My mind wanders, I get distracted, I become preoccupied with my own troubles, I dwell on the poor quality of the church service (5.7%)
- I think about the symbols or the elements (what they mean and their connection to the preaching) (3.1%)
- I think about what I need to do to make restitution to others whom I have hurt, I think about being a part of the church and worshipping in a group (2.6%)
- I think about people who do not know Christ and what they are missing (1.0%)

It is worth noting what was identified as prominent thought patterns *as well as what was not*, for it would seem that, again, the corporate awareness and the mission impetus are low priorities. An emerging metaphor for Baptists seems to be one of an awe-struck and guilty individual before an immense tragedy, or accident, that somehow implicates the individual in its horror.

One might have expected that the sombre, crucifixionary images of Communion would be one of the many approaches to the experience of the sacrament, and that a rich variety of presentations would have altered the experience. Yet, the respondents did not express any clear preference for variety which might then have modified the primary metaphor. To the question (1.17), *"There should be more variety each time we celebrate Communion"*, the majority (33%) were neutral (mean score = 2.917). If anything at all, a marginal leaning towards more variety might be detected in the mean score (neutral = 3.000), but not enough to warrant serious attention.
The incorporation of the creative arts (e.g. poetry, dance, audio-visual presentations) may have lent a certain variety to the celebration (question 1.19), but the majority (59.8% disagree and strongly disagree) came out in opposition to artistic inclusion (mean score = 3.690). The differences, given later, between the age groups (see para. 3.4 below), between members and adherents (see para. 3.7 below) and between those of differing length of Christian commitment (see para. 3.9 below), are interesting here. Baptist conservatism is evident in the result, but the large neutral group (25.3%) may suggest that, with different leadership of Communion, there may be a swing towards a clear preference either for, or against, the integration of the arts.

It may well be Baptist history that has deprived them of an appreciation for things symbolic, for the question (1.20) in this regard ("Baptists have a high appreciation for symbol") left most respondents undecided (32.5%; mean score = 3.010). As the table below shows, the responses were symmetrically neutral.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1.20 Baptists have a high appreciation for symbol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Age plays a role in producing some significant differences (see para. 3.4 below).

If Baptists are unsure about the place of art and symbol, they seem only to be minimally more certain about the extent to which people-participation should be encouraged. To the question (7), "In what ways do you think Christians should be encouraged to become participants in the celebration of Communion?", the highest response (24.4%) favoured an encouragement of Christians to participate in the celebration, especially in the intimacy of sitting around tables in smaller groups where they could give testimonies, share their thoughts and feelings, share their needs and hurts and where they could use the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A significant second group (17.6%) were of the opinion that no participation from
the congregation should be encouraged, since there already was sufficient participation. (A cautionary note must be sounded here, however, for it would appear that the question may not have been fully understood by the respondents, as indicated by a 13.5% of responses which were totally unconnected to the question.)

A similar pattern was observed when the statement was posed that, "Communion services should allow for interaction between people (e.g. expressing hurt, giving and receiving forgiveness, sharing a passage of Scripture with another person)" (question 1.22). A slim majority (32.5%; mean score = 2.865) wished there to be interaction, while 24.4% were undecided and 27.5% disagreed with interaction during Communion.

That Baptists, generally, seem happy with the status quo of Communion was borne out by the majority (51.3%) who said that they would not change anything, even if it were in their power to change the way Communion were celebrated (question 8). The minority that did desire alteration mentioned, in the first instance, modification to the variety (13%) and to the mood (11.9%), and in the second instance, modification to certain structural features (e.g. more time for interaction and reconciliation, more frequent prayer for special needs, more silences, greater integration of Communion with the sermon).

In summary, thus far, Communions would seem to be sombre occasions which afford an opportunity to reflect on the terrible consequences of sin. Strongly individualised in appreciation, and with little variation of the means of invoking the imagery, the primary metaphor is one of witnessing (by a type of remembering) a terrible incident that implicates the witness in a personal liability for the tragedy.

3.3.4 How individualistic versus corporate is Communion for Baptists?

The previous matter of group participation and interaction leads us to consider the corporate nature of Communion among Baptists. Questions 1.4, 1.16 and 1.24 tested this notion directly.
Response was sought, initially, to the statement (question 1.4), "I try to shut myself off from the distraction of other people around me when I celebrate Communion." The largest majority (83.5% agree and strongly agree; mean score = 1.804) testified to the fact that Baptists preferred a strongly individualistic celebration. Of note, here are the different responses between the age groups (see para. 3.4 below) and between the genders (see para. 3.5 below) and between the differing lengths of commitment to Christ (see para. 3.9 below). This inclination was taken further in the response to the statement (question 1.16), "Our church is noticeably more sensitive to the needs of others after we have celebrated Communion together." Either the concept of sensitivity to others' needs was a relatively unfamiliar one, or the respondents found themselves unable to measure sensitivity, but in any event, the majority (51.5%; mean score = 3.056) were undecided on this matter. A curious result arose when this question was correlated to the different age groups (see para. 3.4 below).

When it came to churches beyond the boundaries of the local church or of the denomination, the respondents displayed a dilute interest. A marginal majority (30.2%; mean score = 3.145) disagreed with the statement (question 1.24), "It does not matter how other churches celebrate Communion." However, another significant group (25%) were neutral on the issue. Gender differences are interesting here (see para. 3.5 below).

In summary, therefore, it would seem that Baptists are largely self-preoccupied during Communion worship, with little concern for the dynamics of the group, whether that group is the local church or the wider family of believers.

3.3.5 How inclusive is Communion for Baptists?

Baptists might hold a weak awareness of the group while they are at worship, but it would be interesting to test whether there were any strong convictions with respect to the active inclusion of other groupings of worshippers, such as children, women, the laity, other
denominations and unbelievers. These were explored, fleetingly, using questions 1.11, 1.10, 1.9, 1.7, 1.8 and 1.12.

A surprising view was uncovered in reply to the statement (question 1.11), "Children should be allowed to take Communion, even if they have not been baptised". Instead of a majority dissociating themselves from unbaptised communicants, as one would have expected from a denomination that stresses believer's baptism, the majority (39.1%; mean score = 2.958) felt that it was permissible for children to be included in Communion, regardless of their having been baptised or not! What proved to be even more surprising was the correlation of the leaders' responses to this question (see para. 3.8 below).

With respect to women (question 1.10 - "Women should be allowed to lead a Communion service"), it was found that a slight majority (mean score = 2.917) were in favour of women being included in leadership of Communion, though for the most part one might want to regard the outcome as split (strongly agree and agree = 43.8%; strongly disagree and disagree = 43.5%). Given the tradition of male leadership, generally, in Baptist churches, the trend towards the inclusion of women in this aspect of leadership is a surprising one. Age differences were noteworthy here (see para. 3.4 below).

No surprises awaited the result of the question concerning the appropriateness of clergy versus laity leadership (question 1.9 - "Only ordained clergy should lead a Communion service"). The majority (60.8% disagree and strongly disagree; mean score = 3.443) opposed the exclusive right of the clergy to lead Communion. Such a result is consistent with the Reformational (and Baptist) principle of the priesthood of all believers. Noteworthy, here, are the gender differences and the differences in length of Christian commitment (see paras. 3.5 & 3.9 below).

When polled on the issue of Open Communion (question 1.7 - "Christians from other denominations should be invited to receive the elements during a Communion service in a
Baptist church"), the overwhelming majority (86.1% strongly agree and agree; mean score = 1.709) defied the predilection of Baptist history for Closed Communion and voted instead in favour of Open Communion! Age, educational and membership differences, as well as differences arising from the length of Christian commitment, all played a part here (see paras. 3.4, 3.6, 3.7 & 3.9 below). Even the prospect of a non-Baptist leading the Communion service in a Baptist church was met with welcome (question 1.8 - "A member of a non-Baptist denomination may be invited to lead a Communion service in a Baptist church"), though not with as resounding a majority as was the case with the question on Open Communion (54.6% strongly agree and agree; mean score = 2.577). Again, age differences and differences in length of Christian commitment are worthy noting (see paras. 3.4 & 3.9 below).

Baptist inclusiveness stopped short, however, with the participation of unbelievers in the Communion sequence. Predictably, given the Baptist principle of regenerate membership, the overwhelming majority of respondents (82% disagree and strongly disagree; mean score = 4.268) took a stand against the statement embodied in question 1.12, viz. "Unbelievers should be encouraged to take Communion." The educational level of the respondents affected the responses here, as did the length of Christian commitment (see paras. 3.6 & 3.9 below). Quite how the exclusion of unbelievers ought to be implemented was not studied.

In summary, then, the survey uncovered that Baptists have a reasonably open and interdenominational approach to Communion, while maintaining the view that Communion is intended for the fellowship of believers. The notable exception to this intention was the inclusion of (unbaptised) children.

3.3.6 How mission-orientated is Communion for Baptists?

In the previous section, it was clear that Baptists could not participate with unbelievers around the table of Communion. If that is the case, it would be intriguing to explore to what extent Baptists envisaged Communion to have a missions dimension. Questions 1.13 and 1.23 elicited some response in this area.
“A Communion service should challenge unbelievers to commit their lives to Christ” (question 1.13). To this statement, a large majority of respondents assented (76.2% strongly agree and agree; mean score = 2.150). Baptists may be amenable to various methods of challenge within the service itself - not explored by the research - but they were hesitant about the role of Communion in providing the worshippers with any impetus towards reaching out to unbelievers after the service. The statement (question 1.23), “After participating in Communion, I am usually keen to share the new life in Christ with unbelievers”, drew a majority of neutral votes (45.3%), with a leaning in the mean score towards agreement with the statement (mean score = 2.760). Educational levels influenced the responses here (see para. 3.6). Thus, Baptists might expect their worship to offer a challenge to unbelievers in their midst, but do not readily anticipate that the vehicle of that challenge might be the communicants themselves, as they mingle with unbelievers in daily living.

3.3.7 To what extent do Baptists feel a distinctive identity arising from Communion?

Without probing the specific understanding of the meaning of Communion at this stage, the study asked whether Baptists felt that they possessed a distinctive way of celebrating Communion that could possibly be approached as a kind of identifying mark of Baptists. The statement (question 1.21) declared that, “Unless we are careful to preserve the Baptist way, Communion can easily become an empty ritual as it is in certain traditional denominations.”

The statement obviously makes several assumptions, viz. that there is a Baptist way of celebrating Communion, and that the celebration in some other denominations is empty ritual. The majority (59.1% strongly agree and agree; mean score = 2.502) valued the Baptist way and were keen to preserve it. If such was the case, the next notion to be tested attempts to understand what those components of Communion are that Baptists value so highly. This we now consider.
3.3.8 What meanings of Communion are essential for Baptists?

The following questions dealt with this notion: 1.5, 4, 10, 9, 11. Before probing any personal distinctives, an attempt was made to ascertain whether the Jewish roots of the sacrament might play a role in a Baptist way of celebration (question 1.5 - "The Jewishness of the Passover meal should be retained whenever Christians celebrate Communion"). The results, principally the majority neutral vote (47.9%), seem to suggest an uncertainty among Baptists as to how to integrate the Jewish connections. The mean score (2.770), however, indicates a leaning towards a retention of some remembrance of the Jewish Passover meal in the Communion service.

To understand what key characteristics of the sacrament were of crucial significance for Baptists, respondents were then asked about their reasons for participating in Communion (question 4 - "Why do you participate in Communion?"). The potential for believers to affirm their connection to their Jewish spiritual roots was not mentioned whatsoever here, neither was the opportunity to strengthen links with fellow believers ranked highly (only 2.6% gave as their first reason for participation the chance to express unity with other believers). The primary incentive to celebrate Communion appears, again, to be a profoundly individualistic one. The majority (40.7%) gave as their most prominent reason for participation the chance to draw closer to God and fortify personal faith: to "strengthen my commitment to God", to "re-commit myself", to "renew my faith", to "feel his presence", to "have time to reflect on what I believe", to "remember God and thank him for his sacrifice on the cross for me" and to "look forward to his return".

The next most important primary reason for participation was the matter of obedience. A group comprising 28.9% said that they took part out of obedience to God's command or instruction.
The most conspicuous second reason encouraging Baptists to participate was listed as the need to identify with Christ's death and life, and to replay in the mind the events surrounding the execution of Christ on that fateful day (31.1%).

At the same time as Baptists participated this way, it was felt that they could be assured of Christ's presence at Communion. There was almost complete unanimity (99.5%) in the affirmative response to the question (9), "Do you believe that Christ is present at Communion?" The presence of Christ was not expected to be discovered through any change to the elements, as testified by the 76.6% who answered in the negative to the question (9), "Do the elements... undergo any change when they are used in Communion?" (An intriguing 23.4% did believe that the elements underwent change! The percentage might represent the differences in Baptist circles between the Zwinglian and Calvinist viewpoint, which were raised in the historical chapter of the current study. Alternatively, the figure might even conceal a contingent of transubstantiationist thinking which is not being rectified by Baptist preaching and teaching. Further research in this aspect would need to be carried out, of course, in order to clarify the response.)

While expressing the belief - in true Reformational style - that Christ's presence was somehow connected symbolically to the elements (question 9.7), his presence was understood to be manifested through feeling (question 9.1), but - more fundamentally and regardless of feelings - his presence was accepted on the basis of biblical faith (question 9.2). Baptists tend not to use the effect on the group as an evidence of Christ's presence (question 9.3), neither do they determine Christ's presence by any moral change in the worshippers (question 9.4). Even the event of unbelievers committing their lives to Christ as a result of the impact of the Communion service is not convincingly regarded as evidence of Christ's presence, though there is some sympathy for this sign (question 9.5). More readily, Baptists would agree that Christ's presence is manifested by their own personal sense of invitation to commitment (question 9.6), which again underscores the highly individualistic and self-preoccupational interpretation, this time of Christ's presence. Oddly enough though,
this lack of group consciousness is ameliorated to some extent by an awareness of the connectedness that exists with other Christians across time, denomination and distance (question 9.8). More statistical detail of the response to question 9 is given in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Mean</th>
<th>9.1</th>
<th>9.2</th>
<th>9.3</th>
<th>9.4</th>
<th>9.5</th>
<th>9.6</th>
<th>9.7</th>
<th>9.8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.150</td>
<td>1.994</td>
<td>3.189</td>
<td>3.654</td>
<td>2.984</td>
<td>2.586</td>
<td>2.439</td>
<td>2.673</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An additional aspect, here, surfaces when a comparison is made between several sub-questions (9.1 - 9.8) in relation to age groups, educational differences, membership and leadership differences, as well as differences arising from length of Christian commitment (see paras. 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8 & 3.9 below).

Finally the question (11) was posed: "In your opinion, what makes a Communion service a proper Christian Communion service?" The reaction pointed to several essential areas, viz. structure, focus, leadership, recipients and mood. For convenience, these essentials are depicted in the chart below in rank order.

![ESSENTIALS OF PROPER COMMUNION](chart)

By far the most significant essential identified by the respondents had to do with structural matters. They included (in rank order):

- The necessity of bread and grape juice being used as elements (15.8%)
- The necessity of Scripture being a part of the service (10.4%)
- Other matters mentioned under structural essentials were:
  - There must be time for prayer
  - There must be time for introspection, admonition and warning
- There must be explanation of the meaning of Communion and adequate preparation allowed

The most important feature under the essential focus was that Communion ought to have a Christ-focus and a Spirit-focus (25.1%) for it to be a proper Christian Communion service. Communion ought to be led by someone, though the non-necessity of the leadership being ordained has already been established. Few individuals commented on the qualification of the recipients, e.g. whether believer or not, whether Communion had to be administered to more than one person or not. Also with respect to the mood of the service, few remarked on whether it had to be orderly, sincere, humble, sombre, reverent or joyful, in order to be classified as a proper Christian Communion service.

In summary, Baptists highlight several essential meanings in Communion. These included the chance for individual upliftment, an act of obedience and a reassurance of Christ's presence through faith, rather than feeling or effect on the group (though the sense of personal invitation also went a long way to demonstrating presence). A proper Communion service contained certain features of structure, focus, leadership, recipients and mood. The undergirding Jewish meanings have an uncertain place in the largely Gentile celebration.

3.4 AGE-GROUP DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNION

The raw data was subjected to a comparison between the age groups with respect to all the questions (cross-tabulations and the Scheffe test). While not every question yielded significant trends, there were interesting patterns, some of which are included in this chapter.

Since a primary thrust of the present investigation had to do with the perceived importance of Communion among Baptists, the age-specific responses to question 1.1 were of interest. It was noted that as age increases, so did agreement that Communion was the high point of worship. This pattern was corroborated by the Scheffe test which pointed to significant differences between the groups. The mean scores are given, below, for each age group:
A further intriguing result occurred when the age groups were compared with respect to what they felt would change (actually change) in their lives if Communion were to be removed from the practice of the church (Question 6). The frequency tables (reported on under para. 3.3.2) had shown a range of three responses in rank order. For convenience, those results are summarised here.

**Question 6: The loss of Communion...**

...would affect my personal relationship with God (34.5%)
...would change my attitude to the church (I would leave) (27.8%)
...would not change anything (26.8%)

The frequency cross-tabulations (set out below) revealed that the age-group 20-39 years registered the highest incidence of the conviction that nothing would change! The teens and the 40-to-59-year-olds were convinced that the loss would affect their personal relationship with God, while the over-60-year-olds were inclined to alter their attitude to the church and, in many cases, leave.

Regarding the manner in which Communion is experienced among Baptists, the only pertinent age-group-related findings concerned artistic value (question 1.19) and symbolic register (question 1.20). As age increased, there seemed to be a decreased appreciation for the creative arts (indicated by the mean scores in the table below):
When it came to how highly Baptists appreciated symbol, it would seem that only the youngest and the oldest rated symbol highly (as indicated by the mean scores in the table below).

From the frequency cross-tabulation, however, the 40-to-59-year-olds, pre-eminently, were of the opinion that Baptists did not rate symbol highly (see the table below):

It has already been established that Baptists have a strong individualistic inclination (see para. 3.3.3 earlier). The frequency cross-tabulation, with respect to question 1.4 ("I try to shut myself off from the distraction of other people around me when I celebrate Communion"), went further to suggest that there is an increasingly isolationist approach to Communion with age. This was borne out by the Scheffe T-test. (Mean scores for each age group are given in the table below.)

Another indicator of the individualism of Baptists at worship was the degree to which respondents felt that the church was noticeably more sensitive to the needs of others after
Communion had been celebrated (question 1.16). Again, age differences featured when cross-tabulations were carried out, this time revealing that ages 20-39 years felt the most negative about the sensitivity of the church following Communion! (Mean scores are given in the table below, which can be seen to rank the age groups from most negative to most positive in their response as follows: 2-3-1-4.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUEST.</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.16</td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 1 (13-18 yrs)</td>
<td>2.933</td>
<td>0.0036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 2 (19-39 yrs)</td>
<td>3.363</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 3 (40-69 yrs)</td>
<td>3.016</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 4 (60+ yrs)</td>
<td>2.790</td>
<td>0.22145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schefte T-test shows groups 2 & 4 differ significantly on the 5% level.

Comparisons were also carried out with respect to the extent to which the age groups were inclusive. Two aspects of interest showed up here, viz. inclusivity of other denominations (quest. 1.7 & 1.8) and of women (quest. 1.10). In terms of other denominations, the middle years appear to be the more strongly interdenominational and the teenage years the least interdenominational. The following tables apply, with the first bearing upon the willingness to include other denominations in the receiving of the elements (quest 1.7) and the willingness for a leader of another denomination to lead Communion in a Baptist church (quest 1.8):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUEST.</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 1 (13-18 yrs)</td>
<td>2.275</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 2 (19-39 yrs)</td>
<td>1.665</td>
<td>7.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 3 (40-69 yrs)</td>
<td>1.508</td>
<td>26.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 4 (60+ yrs)</td>
<td>1.720</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schefte T-test shows group 1 to differ significantly from 2, 2 & 3 on the 5% level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUEST.</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 1 (13-18 yrs)</td>
<td>3.166</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 2 (19-39 yrs)</td>
<td>2.509</td>
<td>5.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 3 (40-69 yrs)</td>
<td>2.360</td>
<td>29.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 4 (60+ yrs)</td>
<td>2.581</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schefte T-test shows groups 1 & 3 differ significantly on the 5% level.

Gender inclusiveness was by and large acceptable across the age groups, with the exception of the elderly group (60+ years). Generally, with increasing age, the inclusion of women tended to become more problematic, though it one does not want to place too much emphasis upon this statistic, since the Schefte T-test did not reveal significant differences.
between the groups and the p-value is greater than 0.05. The mean scores, however, are
given below:

Two aspects of the historically contentious issue of the presence of Christ in Communion are
worthy of comment here. Age-specific responses were offered to the statement concerning
presence on the basis of feeling. One would probably have expected that the teenagers
would have relied more on their feelings to tell them whether Christ was present or not, but
the results portrayed a different picture. The 40-to-59-year-olds rated feelings the most
highly, with the 20-to-39-year-olds the least impressed by feelings. (Mean scores are given in
the table below.)

When feelings were juxtaposed with biblical obedience, however, a somewhat contradictory
pattern emerged, whereby the teens were significantly different to the rest of the age groups
in their reluctance to dispense with feeling in preference to biblical obedience as a means of
determining Christ’s presence. (Again, mean scores are provided in the table below.)

In addition, it would seem that, with age, there is a trend towards a reliance upon biblical
obedience rather than feeling (with a reversal among the elderly group).
Another difference was detected between the teens and the elderly on one hand and the 20-to-39-year category on the other hand with reference to presence being discernible because of an invitational pull. (Mean scores are given in the table below.)

Lastly, the result of question 9.8, "He is present because I become aware of my connection to Christians across time, denomination and distance", can apply in two directions. Its relevance can be measured in terms of the notion of essential meanings of Communion, and in terms of the notion of how individualistic vs. corporate Communion is. Either way, it must be recorded that there was a significant difference between ages 20-39 and ages 40-59 years, with an increasingly corporate sensibility with the passage of years. (Mean scores are given in the table below.)

3.5 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNION

The raw data was subjected to a comparison between the genders with respect to all the questions (cross-tabulations and the Scheffe test). While not every question yielded significant trends, there were interesting patterns, some of which are included in this chapter.

Already it is emerging that Baptists favour an individualistic approach to worship. They prefer to shut themselves off from the distraction of other people; and in this regard, there appears to be a more emphatic resolve amongst the females, rather than the males, to
isolate themselves within their own private experience (mean score for males = 1.955; mean score for females = 1.673).

Perhaps it is a more strident need for women to shut themselves off from distraction because of the incessant demands of their own children throughout the day, from which a brief respite during Communion is desperately sought (see the graph below for gender differences):

[Gender Difference Chart]

With respect to whether only ordained clergy should be allowed to lead Communion (question 1.9), females tended to be stricter than the males within their own local church (mean score for the males = 3.677; mean score for females = 3.240; p-value = 0.0098). The local preoccupation (dare we say the 'home' preoccupation) of the females was again evident when it came to saying that it did not matter how other churches celebrated Communion (question 1.24). Here, the males were troubled by such a disregard for the wider practice, whereas the females tended to agree that it did not matter what other churches did (mean score for males = 3.377; mean score for females = 2.941).

3.6 EDUCATION DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNION

It would appear that with increased education comes a greater interdenominationality (see chart below).
Also, with increased education came a more vehement opposition to unbelievers taking Communion (see chart below).

One might have expected that the vehemence against unbelievers taking Communion might have been met with a more urgent desire to reach out to those very unbelievers after the church has reaffirmed its special fellowship with Christ and his people, but it would appear that the neutrality Baptists feel about outreach after Communion (see question 1.23 - "After participating in Communion, I am usually keen to share the new life in Christ with unbelievers") is a phenomenon that generally intensifies with education. The strongest response to the question, correlated with education, revealed that four of the five education categories felt neutral, while one education group (diploma) admitted that they did not feel inclined to reach out after Communion! The graph below depicts the peaking neutral responses:
Education also seemed to influence the affective indicator of Christ's presence at Communion (question 9.1). With increased education came a diminished dependence on feelings as an indication of presence (see the table below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION DIFFERENCES</th>
<th>Quest. 9.1</th>
<th>Str. Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Str. Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Matric</td>
<td>47.92</td>
<td>35.42</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>35.59</td>
<td>38.98</td>
<td>16.95</td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>28.13</td>
<td>15.63</td>
<td>15.63</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-degree</td>
<td>16.22</td>
<td>37.84</td>
<td>21.62</td>
<td>21.62</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-grad.</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>23.08</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The trend toward a lesser reliance upon feeling as an indicator of Christ's presence as education increased was borne out by question 9.2 ("He is present because the Bible says so and I accept that regardless of how I feel"). Here the strong agreement with this statement, characterising Baptists, was more vehemently held as education increased. The chart below depicts this trend:
3.7 MEMBERSHIP DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTION OF COMMUNION

While one would have expected the reverse, it would appear that members of Baptist churches are more strongly in favour of interdenominational contact than regular adherents in Baptist churches (mean scores are given in the table below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUEST. 1.7</th>
<th>MEMBERSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P-value = 0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.583</td>
<td>2.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to question 1.19, members seemed to be more opposed to the inclusion of the creative arts in Communion than adherents (mean score for members = 3.83; mean score for adherents = 3.36; p-value = 0.0024). Another way of viewing this data is to say that as people are incorporated into the active running of the church, they relinquish the desire to include the creative arts.

Compared to adherents, members of Baptist churches seem to be less prepared to base their estimate of Christ's presence at Communion upon the way people are outwardly affected. To the statement (question 9.3), "He is present because people are affected by the proceedings", members registered a stronger disagreement (mean score = 3.341) than adherents (mean score = 2.883).

3.8 LEADERSHIP DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTION OF COMMUNION

In the inclusion of unbaptised children in the Communion service, a surprising result ensued from a correlation of question 1.11 with the variable of leadership. Recognised leaders were more favourably inclined to unbaptised children taking Communion than were non-leaders! (Mean scores are given in the table below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUEST. 1.11</th>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P-value = 0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.462</td>
<td>3.049</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Furthermore, leaders were less convinced than non-leaders about the possibility of Christ being present symbolically in the elements. (Mean scores are given in the table below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUEST. 9.7</th>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.071</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P-value = 0.0127

3.9 PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNION ARISING FROM DIFFERENCES IN THE NUMBER OF YEARS OF COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

A correlational analysis of the total sample revealed certain trends with respect to the influence of the length of Christian commitment upon Communion. The trend is identified below in the form of a conclusion, supported by the Pearson Correlation Coefficient and p-value. (N.B. The coefficient & p-value must be related to the phrasing of the question and not to the phrasing of the conclusion.)

♦ (Quest 1.1) The longer the length of Christian commitment, the greater the agreement that Communion is the high point of personal worship (-0.30427; 0.0001).

♦ (Quest 1.4) The longer the length of Christian commitment, the stronger the insistence upon shutting oneself off from the distraction of others (-0.22939; 0.0013). This again represents a disturbing trend towards individualism, rather than away from it, as a worshipper ‘matures’ in the faith.

♦ (Quest 1.6) The longer the length of Christian commitment, the stronger the expectation among worshippers that Communion should be a sombre, serious occasion (-0.18176; 0.0114).

♦ (Quest 1.7) The longer the length of Christian commitment, the stronger the desire for interdenominationality, with respect to Christians from other denominations being able to receive the elements during Communion in a Baptist church (-0.27756; 0.0001).
• (Quest 1.8) The longer the length of Christian commitment, the stronger the desire for interdenominationality, with respect to a non-Baptist leading Communion in a Baptist church (-0.21829; 0.0022).

• (Quest 1.9) The longer the length of Christian commitment, the less likely a worshipper will insist that only ordained clergy should be allowed to lead a Communion service (0.19568; 0.0062).

• (Quest 1.12) The longer the length of Christian commitment, the more strongly worshippers feel that only believers should be encouraged to take Communion (0.33005; 0.0001).

• (Quest 1.19) The longer the length of Christian commitment, the less likely worshippers feel that the creative arts should be included in Communion services (0.22334; 0.0017). This could either be the product of many years of the absence of creative arts in Communion services, or the product of a growing suspicion that there is no place for the creative arts in the type of worship represented by Communion. Either way, the creative arts seem to lose ground as a Baptist worshipper continues in his faith.

• (Quest 9.2) The longer the length of Christian commitment, the stronger the reliance upon the testimony of Scripture (rather than upon feelings) for a determination of Christ's presence at Communion (-0.17879; 0.0133).

• (Quest 9.5) The longer the length of Christian commitment, the less likely a worshipper will depend on the witness of conversions to Christ as an indicator of Christ's presence at Communion (0.17475; 0.0159). This is a troubling observation, for it would seem that there could be a growing disassociation between the phenomenon of people coming to new life in Christ, and the presence and purpose of Christ in the world (his desire to save all people). Alternatively, the result could mirror a growing scepticism that a conversion witnessed at Communion really is a conversion after all; hence there is no need to become excited about a conversion until it has been adequately demonstrated by a changed life.
3.10 AGE AND GENDER INTERACTION

An analysis of the variance was conducted on the data pertaining to age and gender. The purpose of the statistical exercise was to establish whether age and gender had an interactionary effect on the other variables. The significance level was taken as 0.01. The result of the analysis revealed that age and gender do not have any interactionary effects. Consequently, age and gender have been treated separately.

3.11 AGE AND EDUCATION INTERACTION

A similar analysis of variance was carried out on the data pertaining to age and education. The result of the analysis yielded no significant interactionary effects. Similarly, then, age and education have been treated separately.

3.12 SUMMARY

To some extent the findings have been somewhat predictable, insofar as Baptist worshippers believe that Communion is important. Baptists on the whole do not appear to be innovative, preferring the maintenance of the status quo. The disturbing element in their basically conservative stance is the erosive irrelevance of the sacrament to the corporate life of the church. The individual, drawn into the sombre seriousness of the church event, is capable of apprehending the awful consequences of human sin which sent Christ to the cross on the individual's behalf, but the primary metaphor so dominates the imaginative landscape that there seems to be little scope for any other metaphorical appreciations of the sacrament. In some sense, perhaps, the two feed upon each other. When it comes to the group gathering around the symbol of table, plate and cup, there are few 'impellers' for the individual to launch beyond his own self-preoccupation towards a wider solidarity with local church or interdenominational family. Certainly Baptists have been shown in this study to be open to interdenominational contact, but imaginatively there does not appear to be a consciousness of the wider family while the individual Baptist is at worship.
In fact, so insular is the experience of Communion that there is little missionary value to the sacrament either. It cannot admit unbelievers to its essential sequence (and rightly so), but there is no viable conception of the sacrament in a missionary context. Worshippers are not reminded even of their *individual* ambassadorial role in the territory of foreign belief, with the result that Communion comes and goes with only the meagre hope of replaying the parochial guilt-release transaction.

In concise terms, Communion could be said to mean the following to Baptists: It is an act of obedience which offers the chance of personal spiritual upliftment, because Christ is present through faith, rather than feeling or effect on the group. The act must be structured, have a specific focus, be well-led and in a reverential mood, so that the committed recipients can benefit from the occasion.

If such a statement fairly reflects a Baptist approach to Communion, we still need to bring such an approach into relation to a biblical/scriptural tradition (see the Adaptation of Zerfass’s Model earlier, figure 1.4). To this we now turn in an attempt to assess what emphases the Bible intends for the celebration of Communion.
CHAPTER 4
BIBLICAL INTENTIONALITY

4.1 USING THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS

Given the diversity of interpretation that can so easily arise from an investigation of biblical intention motivating any Christian practice, it is advisable, at this point, that it be made clear just how the scriptural accounts are to be used. (Remarks, here, are to be read in conjunction with earlier statements under para. 1.4.2.3.) As both Ridderbos (1962:406, 419), Lucas (1972:56) and Crockett (1989:9) remind us, there is a certain diversity in biblical perspective, and even a looseness, in the very Communion accounts which alert us to the need for caution when we try to fix ‘what the Bible says’ on the matter. Yet even if Scripture is silent on aspects we wish it would proclaim loudly, and flexible where we would welcome definitiveness, we should not feel pressed to devalue biblical research. Instead, we open our thinking to biblical correction, in the belief that God uses Scripture to set direction and general principle (2 Ti 3:16-17), within which we are called to act with creativity, integrity and faith. Consequently, we shall not be resorting to the Communion accounts for the exact wording of the institution, nor as a manual laying out the inviolable sequence of action. Rather, we shall be sensitive to the spirit, ethos and purpose of the event, as we appreciate the traditional passages (Mt 26:17-30; Mk 14:12-26; Lk 22:7-39; Jn 13-17; 1 Co 11:17-34) within their wider context. (The inclusion of such a lengthy Johannine passage might be considered non-traditional, but it is arguably relevant, since it starts - like the other gospels - “just before the Passover Feast” and ends with the departure of Jesus for the Garden of Gethsemane. In addition, there are several parallels to the other accounts that would indicate that John is rendering a specific content to an otherwise familiar event.) Naturally, as we do just that, the findings of our empirical study (of the previous chapter) are never far from our minds, for we are not busy in this study with a comprehensive treatment of Communion, but rather with a limited investigation. Thus the need will be apparent for us simply to raise significant features from the accounts before moving on in the following chapter to a fuller discussion of the implication of biblical and empirical research for an understanding of Communion.
4.2 FEATURES OF THE PASSAGES

A comparison of the traditional biblical passages reveals several features, all of which are important for the construction of a practical-theological theory of Communion.

4.2.1 Context of betrayal

All five passages (in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Corinthians) place the event within the context of betrayal. Christ was conscious of the fact that one of his disciples would turn against him in an act of treachery. The intimacy of the meaningful gathering was tainted, even at the beginning, with the prospect of lack of faithfulness and active rebellion. Modern Communion celebrations may well continue to contend with the same impediments, despite our very best attempts to ensure a committed congregation.

In two of the Gospel records, the betrayer is singled out (in relative privacy, it would seem, for if Christ were to have made a public revelation, the other disciples surely would have reacted to Judas, or at least restrained him from going out into the night to commit the deed). Matthew has Judas respond to Jesus' general remarks about the presence of a betrayer by asking (Mt 26:25), "Surely not I, Lord?", to which Christ replies, "Yes, it is you." In both Mark and John's gospel, the identification is indirect: by means of the bread dipped into the bowl (Mk 14:20, Jn 13:26).

At that stage, it is likely that Judas excused himself, before the Communion sequence got underway. Both Matthew and Mark place the identification of the betrayer prior to the distribution of the elements (though Luke has Jesus discussing betrayal while he is distributing the wine). In John's account, Jesus identifies the betrayer during the meal, immediately after which Judas leaves (Jn 13:26-30). Though there is more in favour of an early departure of Judas, we are not able to infer that the precedent of the first Communion eliminated the presence - even the participation - of those who are opposed to the Gospel of Christ.
4.2.2 Context of the Jewish Passover

The complexities of interpersonal loyalties is set against a wider mood of historical uncertainty. Christ intended to celebrate the Jewish Passover meal with his disciples on that night on which he was betrayed; thus evoking additional layers of expectation and association. With the exception of Paul (in Corinthians), all of the gospel writers link Communion with the Passover period, if not with the Passover meal itself. Moreover, Matthew and Mark place the Communion sequence during the course of the meal (Mt 26:26, Mk 14:22), while Luke mentions that it was “after the supper” that Jesus took the bread and the cup (Lk 22:20). The Jewish roots of the sacrament, by and large, have been neglected in the Christian church, yet we see Christ keen to institute something new within the specific setting of the Passover: "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Lk 22:15).

4.2.3 Giving thanks

Jesus’ taking of the bread and the cup at some stage in the Passover-meal setting was accompanied by the giving of thanks (Mt 26:26, Mk 14:22-23, Lk 22:19-20, 1Co 11:24). Gratitude at meal-times was not uncommon. Lawler (1987:135) points out that the Jewish meal known as berakah contains two elements: a blessing, and a statement of the motive for the blessing. The motive was always located in the wonderful work of God in touching a person’s life. Lawler suggests that the Christian eucharistic meal (or Communion) derives from such an older Jewish meal of gratitude.

Whatever the uncertainty surrounding the immediate ramifications of Christ’s course in Jerusalem at the time, and whatever the circumstances are of celebrants down through the centuries, the presence of moments of gratitude in this biblical scenario is salutary reminder that the sacrament should never lose its dominant mood of gratitude.
4.2.4 Association of himself with the elements

Like the elements of the Passover meal, the giving of thanks preceded a deliberate associating of the elements of bread and wine to other things. Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul (in Corinthians) link the bread, unambiguously, with the body of Christ. Similarly, with the wine, they show clearly its connection with blood and, further, with Christ's blood and with a new covenant that was being inaugurated in blood. Forever the sacrament would be noted for its ability to work at the level of symbol, creating linkages and relationships that burst into being and retain immense fascination and application.

4.2.5 The beneficiaries of the new covenant

The three synoptic gospels specify the beneficiaries of the new covenant. The blood of the new covenant is "for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28), "for many" (Mk 14:24) and "for you" (Lk 22:20). John and Paul make no mention of the purpose of the sacrifice. Clearly Christ had in mind a wide span of beneficiaries, including the first disciples, but ranging outward to forgive multitudes of people down through the centuries for their sin.

4.2.6 Instruction to repeat with remembrance

People need to be presented frequently with the availability and benefit of the new covenant. Therefore, two of the passages (Lk 22:19, 1Co 11:24-25) contain an injunction to repeat the event in order to remember Christ: "Do this in remembrance of me." Paul's additional commentary points out that the repetition of the event proclaims the Lord's death until he comes (1Co 11:26). In Paul's assessment, then, it is important that the death of Christ be given priority in an explanation of the meaning of the sacrament.

4.2.7 Theme of the Kingdom of God

The theme of the Kingdom of God is a recurring one in the teaching of Christ; consequently it is not surprising that it should emerge in this last supper. Three of the five accounts refer directly to the kingdom: (1) as "my Father's kingdom" in which the fruit of the vine will be drunk by Christ together with his disciples (Mt 26:29, Mk 14:25), (2) as "the kingdom of God"
which is coming (Lk 22:18) and (3) as “a kingdom” that is conferred on the disciples “just as my Father conferred one on me” (Lk 22:29-30). Interestingly, Luke indicates that Jesus’ avowed abstinence has to do with the Passover which will not be eaten until the kingdom of God is fulfilled (Lk 22:15-16). John’s gospel refers to the kingdom indirectly in the form of a place that Christ is going to prepare after which he will return to collect his disciples (Jn 14:2-3). Paul also makes use of an indirect reference to the return of Christ (1Co 11:26).

The mention of the kingdom of God raises the twin perspectives of Christ’s declaration that the kingdom has come and that it is still to come, both perspectives needing to be respected in the celebration of modern sacraments.

4.2.8 Pastoral issues

The biblical passages, especially John, make Communion the occasion for a variety of pastoral work to be carried out. In recognising pastoral care in operation in the scriptural texts, De Jongh van Arkel’s description is helpful when he says that pastoral care is “directed to the situational concretisation of the Word” (1985:78). Both Word-as-Christ and Word-as-Scripture are envisaged as applicable here, for what Christ (the Word) strives to do is to instil an orientation to life (earthly and heavenly) that will equip his followers to be faithful. When the Bible (the Word-become-Scripture) is applied to situations, its purpose of teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2Ti 3:16) moves to fulfilment.

The event of Communion becomes the locus for Christ to confront Judas with his impending sin (Mt 26:25, Mk 14:17-21, Jn 13:21-27), to bolster Peter’s faith in the face of his forthcoming lapse (Lk 22:31-32), to remind the disciples of God’s unfailing provision (Lk 22:35), and to prepare them for conflict in the world (Lk 22:36-38).

It is especially significant that chapters 13-17 of John’s gospel (which have been included deliberately as a Communion passage in this study) cover the issues that they do, for it would seem that John’s unique contribution to the Communion record is to provide us with
the pastoral content that is so necessarily a part of Communion touching the common life of disciples. John (the same John who wrote the love-epistle) is more concerned to reflect the pastoral heart of Christ ministering to his followers than he is about the sequence of wording and action that was important to the other gospel writers. Hence John will show us Christ - during the Communion event - carefully preparing them for the future, guiding them in their hope and focus so that they will not fall away from the faith before they are joyfully reunited with Christ. Consequently, Christ turns their gaze to their future hope ("In my Father's house are many rooms" Jn 14:1-4), he centres their focus on himself ("I am the way, the truth and the life...") Jn 14:5-6), he explains the Father-Son unity (Jn 14:7-14) and the promise and function of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:15-31, 15:5-16), so that they would hold a trinitarian focus.

In keeping with the centrality of the Christ who gave himself for many for the forgiveness of sins, Christ reminds them to stay connected to him ("I am the vine; you are the branches" Jn 15:1-17) so that they will lead fruitful, love-characterised lives. To be sure, they must expect trouble in this world (Jn 15:18-1-4), but they should hold on to the hope that because he was leaving the world to return to the Father, they could anticipate a joyful reunion ahead (Jn 15:17-33). Christ concludes the Communion event with a moving prayer for them and for all believers who would follow these first disciples (Jn 17:1-26).

Paul is similarly pastoral in his admonition of the Corinthian Christians whose lack of community awareness with respect to their eating habits at Communion celebrations and to their abusive discrepancies between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' (1Co 11:17-34).

The Communion event, then, holds enormous potential for pastoral work: healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling (Clebsch & Jaekle in De Jongh van Arkel, 1985:79).

4.2.9 Community emphasis

A final feature of the Communion passages concerns their community awareness. Most prominently, this aspect is demonstrated in Paul's castigation of the Corinthian celebrations where, with disappointment, he highlights the presence of divisions between groups of
believers (1 Co 11:18), and their participation in such a way that others at the same
celebration are humiliated (1 Co 11:22). It is important in Paul's view that believers partake
worthily, i.e. that they participate with due respect for Christ who gave himself sacrificially to
save us from our sins, and with due regard for fellow-believers (1 Co 11:27-34).

Luke, too, incorporates a dispute that arose around the table concerning which one of the
disciples was considered the greatest. Most likely the incident resulted from Jesus' current
remarks about a betrayer being in their midst. Probably certain disciples were attempting to
defend themselves by alluding to their importance, whereupon Christ picks up on the
necessity for servanthood in contrast to the non-Christian pattern of lording it over one
another (Lk 22:22-27).

Likewise, John's gospel presents the matter of servanthood, this time by means of Christ's
washing of the feet (Jn 13:12-17), which he explains in terms of an example for them to
follow in the Christian community:

Do you understand what I have done for you? he asked them. 13 "You call me
'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your
Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's
feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.
16 I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger
greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will
be blessed if you do them.

Hard on the heels of this incident and the discussion of betrayal comes another
community-orientated pastoral instruction: "A new commandment I give you: Love one
another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that
you are my disciples" (Jn 13:34-35). Christ's concern during the Communion event was to
ensure that his disciples understood the significance of their community relations: not only
would these be good and wholesome for the group, but outsiders would be affected by their
loving nature.
4.3 SUMMARY

Our brief investigation of the biblical data has revealed several key features. The precedent for all later Communion celebrations took place within the context of betrayal and the context of the Jewish Passover, in which thanksgiving was made in a rapidly expanding symbolic appreciation. Christ's actions were seen against the background of new covenantal commitments, the benefits of which would spiral outward from the intimate circle of disciples to a world in desperate need of forgiveness. The memory-laden Communion event was intended to be repeated during Christ's absence, until the final dimension of the kingdom of God would be fulfilled upon Christ's return. In the meantime, pastoral issues would be addressed in an environment that would be uniquely community-orientated.

Already it is becoming apparent - from the empirical research and now from the biblical review - that Baptist celebrations of Communion are in need of revision. Our next chapter attempts the construction of a practical-theological theory that promises, eventually, to drive a new praxis.
CHAPTER 5
TOWARDS A PRACTICAL-THEOLOGICAL THEORY

5.1 OUR PROGRESS SO FAR

Our study has brought us to the point where we need to bring various strands of consideration together into a set of principles that will form a theory of Communion. Our historical survey has taken trouble to identify a Baptist mind that has been profoundly shaped by persecution and the memory of persecution. The passage of Baptists through history has engendered a spirit of independence that has struggled to free itself from the comforting cocoon of Closed Communion. Seasons of struggle have inclined Baptists to adopt a polemical rather than an instructional stance with regard to the transmission of Communion to succeeding generations, leaving ensuing churches, who no longer face the relevance of the polemical issue, with little helpful catechetical content upon which to construct creative engagements with this time-honoured sacrament. Little wonder, therefore, that the sacrament might well be moving towards redundancy or archaism.

The empirical investigation alerted us to some disturbing trends, despite the strong insistence that Baptists hold Communion in high regard. The primary metaphor of crucifixion horror, with its attendant mood of sombre seriousness and its individualistic guilt-transaction, so dominates the imaginative landscape that there seems little room for movement away from the status-quo into participative explorations of community-consciousness, missionary value and symbolic / artistic innovation which, at the same time, does not jettison those godly principles that are already ensconced in current practices. Present Baptist celebration may well be holding strictly to austere, simplified Communions, only to find that the worshipping heart of such celebrations is dying from within.

Yet when we examine biblical passages on Communion, we are urged again not to dismiss too quickly its context in betrayal, its Jewish roots, its mood of gratitude, its symbolic versatility, the people-orientatedness of its covenant, its design to be repeated in a manner
that remembers Christ, its participation in the kingdom of God and its pastoral and community profile.

Data from the three preceding chapters merge in our progress towards a practical-theological theory, as we now try to affirm certain principles that are intrinsic to the meaning of Communion if it is to be re-integrated into the common life of Baptists.

5.2 PRINCIPLES FOR RE-INTEGRATING COMMUNION INTO THE COMMON LIFE

5.2.1 A powerful event of worship

For Communion to withstand the pull of redundancy, it is imperative that Baptists acknowledge it as a fully-fledged event of worship and not simply as an act of obedience. The early Christians' desperation to attend Communion ("We cannot survive without the eucharist" - Erickson, 1989:9) must surely suggest that they regarded it as indispensable to their spiritual vitality. What a pity that John Calvin's efforts to disentangle Communion from its Catholic materialism of the day should have insisted that "assurance of salvation does not depend upon participation in the sacrament" (Calvin, 1960:1290), for in so doing he relegated Communion to the edges of mainstream spirituality! As long as it remains "as an extra course to the main diet of worship and is viewed by many as little more than a spiritual Remembrance Day service" (Trent, 1957:10), it will persistently teeter on the brink of obsolescence. Perhaps because of its detachment from the agape meal of the first century, the celebration has taken a huge step away from the regular rhythms of a day that would otherwise have compelled its attention in the minds of the worshippers. To some extent, modern Communion is twice-deprived, resulting from attempts to redefine its material import. By stressing its supernatural nature, Communion lost the ordinariness of its meal; by stressing its ordinariness, it lost its mystery (Webber, 1992:6). Now, modern people find that the traditional worship celebration - especially the Communion 'relic' - does not speak to them with the same ease. As Keifer points out, this impasse between theology and life cannot be attributed to a loss of faith or to intellectual laziness. "It belongs, rather, to a profound change in religious consciousness [whereby] .... people simply experience God in a
different way than their ancestors in faith did" (1982:2). Increasingly, Baptists are stuck in the primary metaphor of trying to re-live the crucifixion horror, leaning unsuccessfully for reinforcement of the horror upon sanitised elements that are neatly presented in pre-diced cubes of white bread and thimbles of sweet juice. Many words later, worshippers emerge strangely dulled by a god of talk and little action, content perhaps in the (false) assurance that they have celebrated their own dedication to God rather than God's action made immediate through the sacrament (Webber, 1992:30).

Despite the frequent status of "poor servant" (Walker, 1988:143), the sacraments do possess power, principally because they are vehicles of worship of Christ. When we worship, we celebrate (review with appreciation) and we celebrate life (in its diversity of experience, drawing in past, present and future, and in its appreciation of the natural and the supernatural). More so, when we worship we engage with God (we ponder, wrestle with, become actively involved with the mystery that God is even in his self-revelation). Worship is a human response to the magnificence of God. That is why the primary metaphor of worshippers is critical to understanding the nature and quality of their worship, for worship is informed by the God who is worshipped (Underhill, 1962:69). In worship we receive God's self-giving, his initiative, and we commit to it our determination to learn to refer all things to God (Saliers, 1994:69). In that sense, to worship is to 'dethrone the gods' of our lives (Kendrick, 1984:31). Communion, like good worship, "disturbs, breaks open, discloses a new world" (Saliers, 1994:213), where God's ridiculous economy of self-giving and selflessness is honoured and applied. We are taken beyond ourselves and our preoccupations, into a contemplation of the concerns and desires of God. As we worship, we find that an integration occurs, for as Willimon says, "Worship is always an integrative act of the community.... All our worship must be a meeting, synaxis, coming together" (1979:20). There is an integration between humanity and God, between people and between parts of our lives that have been fragmented by the ravages of sin. Worship steadily puts the pieces back together and brings about a wholeness, or as Underhill puts it, "Christian worship is always directed towards the
sanctification of life" (1962:87). Only as Communion is valued as legitimate, mainstream worship will it be rescued from inconsequence.

The sacraments also possess power for reasons of their communicative ability. It is one thing to sit through a sermon that elucidates the grace of God; it is quite another to feel the invitation of participation that the sacraments bring to the event. Willis speaks of the sacraments as 'visible words' which sets up an objective-subjective interconnection enabling the worshipper to participate in the reality of Christ (1981:453). Willis is perhaps still word-bound in his conceptualising of the sacraments and it would be an improvement to follow Lucas, who attributes a slightly different power to the sacraments, when he says that many people find religious concepts difficult to express intellectually, but their embodiment in ritual action enables them to overcome the obstacle (1972:118). The sacraments, and in this case, Communion, are instances of multi-media communication, for they speak to us audibly, visually, sapidly and in a tactile manner (Wenham, 1995:15). Sacraments have a unique capacity of 'making us aware' (Barclay, 1967:112), one which this study will argue, accrues from its symbolic nature. The awareness is not neutrally apprehended. We are drawn in, realising that what happens to the bread and wine also happens to us: externally we look the same, but at another level we undergo a complete change and are given "a whole new script for life" (Lay, 1980:184). In a striking sense, Jesus the great parable-teller perpetuates his parabolic method by using two acted parables (washing of feet, bread and wine) at the end of his ministry to explain the way of the kingdom (Wenham, 1995:15). We are induced to participate and, in the process, we become parables ourselves of God's curious love and favour. The power of the worshipful event needs to be released from the restraints of legalistic adherence to a denominational tradition which prevents experimentation, which disdains lessons learned from mistakes and which is keen to preserve the status quo.
5.2.2 A symbolic event

5.2.2.1 From sign to symbol

Much of the reason for restraint and ensuing archaism, regarding Communion, has to do with the essential way it is viewed by our denomination. Through the ages, and indeed today, the tragedy and the opportunity of Communion can be summed up in the subtle difference between viewing the event as a sign or as a symbol. Many writers on the subject of Communion do not necessarily differentiate between the two. Michael Marshall, for instance, mixes them when he discusses 'signs and symbols in everyday life' (1996:79). Even when as eminent a writer as Evelyn Underhill refers to symbols, she is struggling to extricate them from the confines of ritual signs (1962:29ff.). If we are going to construct a practical-theological theory that respects history, empirical investigation and biblical tradition, it is imperative that we note how the sacrament has been confined to a sign instead of permitting its symbolic heart the scope it deserves. Dillistone (1955:33) has observed, in the case of humanity, that there is a momentous step by which people advance from sign to symbol, and this study is proposing that a similar step in our understanding of Communion is justified if we are to re-integrate the celebration to the common life.

5.2.2.2 Common features of both sign and symbol

Both a sign and a symbol share the similar function of bringing about a comparison between at least two entities. Both are preceded by God’s use of the material to convey the immaterial. God is incarnated in flesh and bone in Jesus, and in that way demonstrates that the way to the universal is through the particular (Marshall, 1996: 39, 193). Karl Barth makes an equivalent point when he identifies that God’s desire for self-revelation issued in his use of a second objectivity - principally Christ, but thereafter a variety of signs (Gollwitzer, 1994:39, 40, 43, 74). Both sign and symbol point away from themselves to something else, for the purpose of eliciting a certain response. Hence, a road sign will alert motorists to an impending hazard, so that they will reduce speed and negotiate the situation without incident. Most Baptist worshippers would say that the bread of Communion points to the body of Jesus that was given for their redemption, thus engendering gratitude within the worshipper.
To some extent, in the realm of religion, both sign and symbol attempt to bridge the gap that exists between the worshipper and the Object of the worship (Underhill, 1962:46), but they each do so in dramatically various ways (see figure 5.2 below).

5.2.2.3 **Sign**

The word, 'sign', in English is derived from the Latin *signum* and retains a measure of Roman practicality, efficiency and organisation (Dillistone, 1986:229). A sign endeavours to fix meaning and to eradicate ambiguity. To return to the example of the road sign, for a moment, a no-entry sign would be ineffective if it equally suggested the beginning of a freeway, as well as the advent of a landing strip! For a sign to be effective, the options must be reduced to a single referent. For such to be the case, sign relies heavily, therefore, upon explanation. Worshippers need to be educated, so that - as ceremony and ritual repeat the sign - the same response can be re-experienced. For that reason, sign is static, drawing upon nostalgia, rather than novelty (despite Marshall's assertion to the contrary - 1996:81). Signs regulate and order religious experience, with a result that there is an inevitable pull towards conservatism (Underhill, 1962:43).

Whenever signs enter worship, their denotative status (contrasted with symbols' connotative status) can so easily shift them towards idolatry. One understands - with Lucas (1972:17), but unlike Tracy (1979:17) and Dreisbach (1976:333) who argue that symbols have an energy or life of their own - that signs and symbols must remain connected to Christ if they are to enjoy any Christian significance. Nevertheless, as Underhill points out (though, in her case, with respect to symbol), "Popular devotion will always tend to confuse image and reality, give absolute rank to particular embodiments, and identify the carrying medium with that which it carries" (1962:48).

5.2.2.4 **Symbol**

The word, 'symbol', by contrast with sign, is derived from the Greek word *symbolon* and preserves a certain element of the Greek penchant for dialectic, dialogue and debate.
Symbols are multi-semantic (Sullivan, 1975:28), multi-sensate (Erickson, 1989:176) and multi-vocal. In a discussion of the words of institution, "This is my body", Eller (1972:89) enumerates the diversity of possible interpretations, ranging from 'body' referring to Christ's flesh and tissue, to 'body' referring to the group of disciples (the church), to 'body' referring to the action of breaking and giving. Symbol is dynamic, holding diversity, and synergising variable strands of meaning and connotation, without necessitating the disqualification of one meaning simply because of the presence of another.

Bearings similarities to metaphor's capacity to link disparate entities, thereby shattering in order to widen (Dillistone, 1955:28), but unlike metaphor in its reliance upon almost complete identification or merging, symbol keeps the entities distinct in some kind of tension. The tension is expressed, for example, in the potentiality of symbol simultaneously to reveal and obscure (Lucas, 1972:17). Christ is present in the act of breaking bread, yet is obscured the moment we ponder exactly how he is present. The means for us to approach the issue of God's absent presence - even to say that we experience God's coming near - is made available to us in beholding the elements working symbolically upon our consciousness (Cooke, 1990:1) and, in the process, creating a symbolic consciousness which equips us to see the essence of things (Sullivan, 1975:14,15). The symbol will suggest possibilities that our reason and practicalness will not easily offer for consideration. We are educated by symbol (Mulder, 1985:190), but taken beyond simple correspondences (Marshall, 1996:24). As Lawler says:

Symbols... lead, however, to the conception not of clear and distinct ideas, but of confused ideas, which require further reflection for further clarification. Symbols communicate at the level of sense and image and feeling and intuition and conception,
elemental meanings which are grasped, not logically and scientifically, but socially and personally (1987:22).

The effect of symbol is to draw us beyond the mundaneness of believing only what we see, to a territory where we have occasion to wonder (Marshall, 1996:4). Ultimacy is awakened in us (Gilkey, 1974:254) and the very likelihood of our lives coming together in a satisfying wholeness is sparked even as the very symbols themselves bring together impossible combinations. Each time we commune, we are strengthened to conceive of schizophrenic distinctions in our lives being abolished (Marshall, 1996:192), as God fills all things (Eph 4:9-10), not least of all our common life. Our yearning for wholeness and transformation in the daily grind is heightened and, to some extent, answered (Crockett, 1989:241). Sensitised by a symbolic consciousness, we do not only use symbols to express our experience (a point that will be elaborated on in a moment), we are also invited to participate in the experience of the symbol, or the shared life towards which the symbol points (Saliers, 1994:143). Moreover, we begin to ponder our role as symbols in a fractured world. Gilkey argues that, "unless the symbols of our tradition in word and sacrament are brought into relation to the ultimacy that permeates our ordinary life, unless traditional symbols reawaken in us our role as symbols of the divine activity, there is no experience of the holy. The Spirit must speak in and through us, and must reawaken us to our role as symbols, if the Father is to be known through the Son" (1974:260). Gilkey's remarks are pertinent to the task of re-integrating Communion to the common life, for the object of Communion is not so much that Communion ought to be inserting the divine activity into the ordinary traffic of our lives, as much as it "should bring that prior relation forth in awareness and give it the shape, power, and form of Jesus Christ" (Gilkey, 1974:261). Intrinsic to the successful accomplishment of this object is the symbolic consciousness, in which Jesus is respected as the central symbol (Dillistone, 1986:179, 233).

A further dimension of regarding ourselves as symbols is revealed when we understand the pastoral diversity which symbol accommodates precisely because of its own diversity, held together in unity. Symbols remain superb vehicles for the expression of often-complex experience. Embleton (1984:47) has observed that:
If we are to capture the meaning of a person, to touch the pulse of his or her hurt, then we must not look at the clinical classifications or the monolithic record of psychiatric diagnosis. Such approaches can only give us a sterile sketch of the person. However, if we examine the way that people express themselves in terms of symbols and metaphors, we can begin to see the inner depths of personality. Consider some of the expressions used by people endeavouring to grasp meaning and purpose when all seems so confused. 'I'm like a tree with two forks going in each direction.' 'It's like being in a supermarket with no shopping list.'

Though not much attention has been given to the pastoral utilisation of Communion itself, its symbolic stature prompts us to explore the application of symbol from the field of pastoral care. McGlashan (1989:505), supported by Lawler (1977:368), mentions the consensus surrounding the link between an individual's attitude towards, and use of, symbols and the same individual's successful negotiation of developmental crises. Symbols assist in the emergence of mature religious faith, defined by McGlashan as the avoidance of dogmatic certainty, inclusiveness, and a secure sense of personal identity (1989:519). Schalfenberg (in Power & Maldonado, 1979:32) concurs with their developmental value when he argues for Christian symbols as an aid to maturation.

5.2.2.5 Enemies of symbol

The brief discussion of symbol above has set out the variety and imaginativeness of symbol. We know only too well that human nature can appreciate something from a distance, yet resist its approach. Such is the case with Communion as a symbolic event. Certain trends, customs and orientations militate against the symbolic heart of Communion being given wings to fly. Marshall has observed that the process of enhancing the symbolic character of worship will always have two principal enemies "bent upon restraint and reduction: they are the enemy of the intellect and the enemy of the well-ordered sacristy and tidy sacristan!" (1996:83). Certainly our denomination is one that has tried hard to make the faith intelligible. Baptist emphasis on the preached word has often been at the expense of the visible word, or the sacraments (see para.3.3.2 earlier). Teasingly, Davies has demonstrated the imbalance among Protestants who have tended to regard Communion as "mere angel cake for the pious who had already received a meal of sirloin steak in the sermon" (1993:129). Indeed the basis of the denominational understanding of faith, expressed in
believer's baptism, for example, favours an intelligent articulation of conversion. Yet many writers from different persuasions recognise that word and sacrament are symbiotically connected (e.g. Berkouwer, 1969:54; Lucas, 1972:116; Stookey, 1993:60; Erickson, 1989:189; Hadley, 1989:52; Webber, 1992:10). The theological basis for their interrelatedness is Jesus Christ, who was the Word which became flesh and dwelt among us (Webber, 1992:57). Ironically prepared, perhaps, by the Middle Ages' concept of 'spiritual reception' (Macy, 1992:87), strengthened by the Reformational severance of the synthesis between art and Christianity (Mulder, 1985:191), but more obviously bolstered by the rationalism of the Enlightenment, the preoccupation with understanding one's faith becomes suspicious of non-rational components of worship. (Just witness Baptist nervousness with the charismatic movement, for a moment). The determination to impose intellectual control and still have 'an experience' of God's nearness (a sign reversion) can precipitate a will-induced spiritual experience, of the kind Merton warns against when a worshipper attempts to conjure up the 'living flame' by an exercise of the will, ignoring the reason-superior activity of the Holy Spirit (1969:87). The symbolic consciousness accommodates the unpredictable role of the Holy Spirit in the perfecting of godliness:

The living experience of divine love and the Holy Spirit in the 'flame' ... is a true awareness that one has died and risen in Christ. It is an experience of mystical renewal, an inner transformation brought about entirely by the power of God's merciful love, implying the 'death' of the self-centred and self-sufficient ego and the appearance of a new and liberated self who lives and acts 'in the Spirit' (Merton, 1969:88).

Then, too, symbols have a way of being corrupted by extraneous associations, brought across sometimes from pagan sources. In order to counteract this sweep towards error, the intellectual reaction is to call for a return to sign by explaining the correspondence to death, or by literalising the symbols, or by dismissing symbols as irrelevant and dangerous (Massanari, 1977:299). In that movement, a blow is dealt to the symbolic imagination, which all along had been attempting to uphold 'reason, plus'.

The second enemy of symbol is the insistence we often have for order and tidiness. Generally, Baptist services are expected to flow smoothly, they must be well-structured (see para. 3.3.8 earlier), with few distracting elements. It is for that reason, one suspects, that
most Baptist churches do not make an effort to incorporate children into the service, for children are unpredictable, fidgety and distracting to clear thinking. A symbolic approach to Communion, on the other hand, will allow for interaction, silences, joyful celebration, symbolic expressions by congregants and so on. The arrangement of pews or chairs may be affected, time constraints may have to give way to some extent, in favour of the flexibility to admit religious depth as well as the width of human experience. The greater the insistence on orderliness, the greater the likelihood that the event will become mechanical and constricting (Dillistone, 1955:233). Experimentation becomes harder and more revolutionary than it need be, and creativity is forfeited for the safety of the familiar.

In conceding to the enemies of symbol, we permit our worship to degenerate to the blandness of sign, and soon duty must work doubly hard to compensate for loss of vitality.

Having attempted to depict Communion, centrally, as a worshipful symbol, it is necessary to explore how we can opt for a symbolising approach, instead of a sign approach, while we adhere to several familiar but relevant principles for the re-integration of the sacrament to the common life.

5.2.3 An event of remembrance

Because Communion is an event of worship (the celebration of life in its diversity, here, with particular reference to the past), it will include the act of remembering. Christ's instruction to repeat the sacrament, with remembrance, only serves to intensify the impulse to remember.

5.2.3.1 Remembering Christ

Of course, we realise that biblical remembering is somewhat different to twentieth-century conceptions of the same thing. For the purposes of Communion, remembering is not a general thinking back over a few incidents prior to the crucifixion; it is focused on a specific person - Christ - who stands at the centre of various strands of action and expectation.

Called to “do this in remembrance of me”, worshippers take into account Christ in his fullness
and not just in his crucifixion. As Creator, covenant-maker, liberator and coming Messiah, we remember him. So too is his incarnation and ministry, his betrayal, his death, resurrection and ascension, and his coming again recalled to mind and heart.

Nevertheless, Baptists, we have seen (para. 3.3.3 earlier), place great emphasis on remembering his death, no doubt strengthened in their focus by the Pauline passage that explains the sacrament as proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor 11:27). However, the remembering of his death needs to be understood carefully, otherwise, for all the assent given to the full remembrance of Christ, our praxis will reveal that we have slipped back into old patterns and sombre moods. (Even the eminent Berkouwer struggles to escape the clutches of the old death imagery - 1969:193.) The death that is proclaimed is not a re-living of the horrific details. It is the remembering of a much-loved person (Christ), whose death was not a loss, as if Christ ought to be mourned because his life was snuffed out tragically in the prime of his ministry. Instead, his death was a tremendous gain, both for God and for humanity. For God, the gain was measured in that his loving mission of redemption had been accomplished and the Son could be re-united in glory with the Father. For humanity, the gain was the way being opened for the enjoyment of life with Christ. Far from exerting a dolorous effect on the celebration, the remembering of Christ's death ought to lead us to renewed hope, joy and gratitude. Certainly the fixation with the cross cannot (nor should it) be entirely set aside, but instead of the focus of the remembering being restricted to the cross / death as an experience in itself, it now points us to our Christ-given liberty, joy and communal wonder. (This aspect will be develop further when Communion as an eschatological event is discussed later.)

5.2.3.2 A historical imagination.

The celebrant is encouraged to develop a historical imagination as he celebrates Communion. Hogan (in Masson, 1982:11) says that a strong role for the imagination is usually reserved for images of the future, but that it is a vital ingredient in one's capacity to construct the past, as well. The worshipper places himself "back into the past, makes
judgements about alternative responses to a situation and re-enacts the thoughts of the actor in the past" (Hogan in Masson, 1982:11). The thinking-oneself-into-the-past is a process which combines the collection and interpretation of evidence with the living-through of the events (1982:18). Essentially episodic and non-linear, the worshipper's memory which - according to Ong - is "thematic and formulaic", proceeds by "stitching together formulas and themes in various orders triggered by the specific occasion in which the rememberer is remembering" (in Masson, 1982:66). Each time a worshipper participates in Communion, he is supplementing his historical imagination and, simultaneously, verifying the data his historical imagination is processing. The subjective element naturally plays a role in the re-enactment, but it is always submitted to this ongoing verification process.

Also, remembering is not a private affair. It is a corporate act, stimulated and balanced by the group, in which Christ is encountered anew through ritual repetition, invigorated and inspired by the Holy Spirit (Stookey, 1993:28,100). Two aspects deserve brief elaboration here: the fact that remembering is a group affair and the role of the Holy Spirit.

5.2.3.3 Remembering together.

Through the act of remembering, the group is itself reconstituted and recalled to its identity and unity. As Sullivan says: "It is the corporate re-membering by the whole community. Through the ritual the community is gathered together (re-collected), its origins re-presented, and its historico-cultural life re-created. Repeatedly, through the ritual, individuals are incorporated, 'made very members of one body' " (1975:19).

5.2.3.4 Spirit-inspired memory.

The agency of the Holy Spirit in the flow of the historical imagination must not be downplayed in Baptist worship. (This point has already been alluded to in an earlier discussion of the enemies of symbol.) Here the practice of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the eucharistic liturgies of the early church have much to teach us. According to John's gospel (during the Communion sequence of chapters 13-17), Christ alerts the disciples to the
promise of the Holy Spirit, one of whose tasks it would be to remind them of everything that Jesus had said to them (Jn 14:10). The ten-part basic structure of early eucharistic liturgies (see Appendix 4) positions the anmnesis (the summary of what is being recalled) between two invocations of the Holy Spirit, viz. the preliminary epiclesis (e.g. a prayer from the 5th C liturgy of Mark: "Fill, O God, this sacrifice also with a blessing from you through the descent of your all-holy Spirit" - Webber, 1962:141) and the epiclesis (e.g. a prayer of Hippolytus: "And we ask that you would send your Holy Spirit upon the offering of your holy Church; that, gathering them into one, you would grant to all who partake of the holy things for the fulness of the Holy Spirit for the confirmation of faith in truth" - Webber, 1962:144). For the eastern tradition and the patristic church, remembering was intimately connected to the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit.

5.2.3.5 Memory and action.

Lest we think that Communion as an event of remembrance is confined to mental processes, Crockett and Stookey warn that remembering is action-loaded. While we might be accustomed to memory in psychological terms, the Hebrew word zkr ('remember') moves beyond the psychological to the sphere of action (Stookey, 1993:28, Crockett, 1989:23). Thus, biblical memory causes us to live into the events of the past, confirming judgements made, or making choices for the first time. Devotion to Christ and his way of living life is strengthened. With each repetition of Communion, perspective is refined, resolutions are made and a vibrant relationship with the One commemorated is kept alive for the next generation to encounter. It becomes clearer, then, why Christ overlaid the Jewish Passover with his new memorial: the Passover had as one of its purposes the repetitive re-enactment so that succeeding generations would keep forever fresh the miraculous deliverance from Egypt (Barclay, 1967:51).

5.2.3.6 The Passover in the process of remembering.

There has been much debate over whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal or not, a debate that will not concern us here, apart from a few brief remarks. Jeremias's detailed study (1966) concludes in favour of a Passover meal (1966:84), while Marshall's review of
Jeremias' findings, taking into account the discrepancy in time afforded by John's gospel, leads him to believe that it was an irregular Passover meal that was held earlier than the official time, but acceptable to the authorities as a result of calendar differences among the Jews (1980:59). Others, like Matthew Black (in Davies, 1993:5) are convinced that Jesus held an illegal Passover, thereby exciting the ire of the Pharisees as Judas brings them evidence of the bread dipped in the sop. Generally, however, twentieth-century biblical and liturgical scholarship confirm the Jewish origins of Communion (Crockett, 1989:230), even if all are not prepared to go so far as to say without doubt, as Ridderbos (1962:420) does, that the meal Jesus celebrated was the Passover meal.

Even if Jesus followed the usual Passover seder, he revised its interpretative framework in at least three ways (Davies, 1993:13). First, Jesus' possible application to himself of the afikoman (the second of three unleavened bread pieces that is broken off and hidden during the Passover ceremony) and the third cup (cup of redemption) or the fifth cup (Elijah's cup), as his body and blood, would have sent a different signal than any Passover could have done: instead of prophecy still to be fulfilled, it was fulfilled in himself. The Messiah had come (Rosen & Rosen, 1978:58)! Second, the Passover was to be celebrated annually, whereas Christ anticipated that his memorial would be celebrated frequently, sometimes daily (Ac 2:42, 46). Third, none of the specifics of the Passover meal itself were made obligatory for the celebration of Communion.

The changes that Christ initiated during the Passover meal caution us against restricting Communion to Passover horizons. "What the Passover had been cannot be allowed to dictate what the Lord's Supper had to become" (Eller, 1972:85). In fact, as Lucas notes, it is remarkable just how little influence the Passover motif has exerted in the New Testament understanding of the death of Christ (1972:39). Jesus felt free to modify the seder for his own purposes. His actions, along with the lack of legalistic detail for a new memorial, permit us the freedom to incorporate and depart from the Jewish festival as we worship the Lord in various geographical and cultural contexts. In so doing we are pointed again towards the
difference between sign and symbol. To celebrate 'signly' would be to feel the compulsion of slavish aping of the Passover ceremony, forgetting that there is a freedom in symbol that can draw on the Jewish heritage, without being under bondage to its duplication. Unlike sign, symbol gives flexibility, allowing cross-cultural passage, without compromise of its essential integrity. One area where this freedom might be more easily seen is in the use of the elements. Already Baptist churches have shifted from matzo (the most likely element used by Jesus at the Passover meal) to cubes of white refined bread, and from wine to grape juice.

There is much to be said for further contextualisation of the elements into other cultural settings, where the equivalent of bread and wine, for example, might be millet and palm wine (Uzukwu, 1980:171), or bread and fish (Hiers & Kennedy, 1976:20). The decision for such changes could well rest with the regional church leadership (Uzukwu, 1991:110), as they endeavour to find the most appropriate elements that would evoke parallel memories.

The Jewish roots of our Communion celebration have not been understood by Baptists as essential to the meaning of the event (see para. 3.3.8). Yet, as we remember Christ in his fullness, we remember One who announced himself, at the meal, to be the long-awaited Messiah which the Passover looked forward to in its redemption motifs. We remember One who delivered his people from oppression and continues to be the Deliverer of multitudes of sin-oppressed people. It is helpful to bear in mind that for the ancient Hebrews, the nomads and desert pastoralists, the day-to-day environment was not an obsession as it is for moderns. They looked back to a notable event in the past and forward to greener pastures.

The present was lived between the two. For them, life was "activated by memory and by hope" (Dillistone, 1955:273). The Passover, thus, provides a rich associative backdrop to expand the living-into the past deliverance, coupled with the living-into the future inheritance, so that the living in the present can be unburdensome, joyous and fret-free.

In affirming Communion as an event of remembrance, then, we are making a pivotal choice between sign and symbol. To remember, 'signly', is consciously to direct our thoughts down well-worn paths of re-enactment, imagining ourselves standing in front of the cross, like Mary
or John, grieving over Christ, and feeling tinges of guilt about our lives that have necessitated this divine extremity before us. Cleansed, by feeling bad, we tell ourselves that Christ took our place to give us a second chance. With some respite from the discomfort of a troubled conscience, we leave the service, assessing its merit by how we felt, how short it all was and how entertaining the sermon was. For the most part during the Communion, we have been inactive, the entire proceedings taking place in interior regions, reached (or not reached) by the articulateness of the words the leader uses. No meaningful interaction with anyone else is required of us, no imaginative exploration or propitious connections draw us to commitments and risks. To maintain freshness, novelty must be plundered, lest boredom sets in.

The movement from sign to symbol rescues remembering by encouraging the rich interplay of association between Jewish Passover, Jewish history and expectation, Gentile parallels and images of sacrifice. Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming mingle in a historical imagination, quickened by the Holy Spirit. Because the sacrament is released from the confines of having to produce a fairly standard psychological response, symbol and symbolic action are free to trigger personal memories that are called into conversation with a God who gives himself to a relationship with his people. Our past is annexed by a multitude of past encounters God had with his people. Suddenly, we are engaged. Prepared by memory and called into the open before a self-giving God, we look ahead.

5.2.4 An event of eschatological significance

5.2.4.1 Governing the mood

Communion might have a strong pull towards remembrance, but never to the point that its forward perspective is obliterated or diminished. We saw in chapter four that two themes emerged in the Last Supper sequence, viz. that of giving of thanks and that of the kingdom of God. Both of these perspectives (we can give thanks in whatever circumstances we might be in, and the kingdom is here, yet it is still to come in fulfilment) are woven into the mood
which develops around the event of Communion. Christ's avowed abstinence (Mt 26:29) alerts us, also, to the expectation of reunion with him and the joyful occasion that such will be. Could it be that the eschatological undergirding of the event is what is meant to govern the mood of the sacrament? To what extent we Baptists have neglected this principle of Communion is difficult to ascertain, except that the research has reflected a Baptist preoccupation with crucifixion horror rather than with eschatological festivity and eschatological anticipation.

5.2.4.2 Balancing the restriction exerted by a penitential mentality

The primary metaphor among Baptist worshippers nurtures a penitential mentality that Pannenberg believes is ingrained in Protestant piety (1983:13ff.). "In early Christianity, sin and guilt had been considered to be forgiven once and for all by the sacrament of Baptism. The early Christian consciousness was characterised by the joyous experience of freedom from sin and death by communion with Christ" (1983:16). All this changed as the second-century church wrestled with the re-integration of lapsed Christians. For believers to be in fellowship again, there needed to be a fresh contending with sin in their midst. By the time of the Reformation, Protestant piety would be focusing increasingly on the awareness of sin and guilt as a condition for genuine faith. Since then, "the glorious freedom of the Christian in Protestant piety could not rid itself of guilt consciousness" (Pannenberg, 1983:17). It would need to keep a consciousness of sin 'at a boil', as it made meditation on sinfulness a condition for communion with God (1983:25, 20). Though we might be sceptical of the identification, by philosophers and psychologists such as Nietzsche and Freud, of the penitential mentality as a mental disease (a form of masochistic self-aggression), we have not really given the criticism much attention.

5.2.4.3 Introducing wholeness

Westberg reminds us that the chief ingredient of health has to do with one's outlook on life (in Wiest, 1988:320). Whatever restricted focus might accrue from a penitential mentality, the eschatological dimension of Communion exerts a balance by introducing to our outlook
the contemplation of wholeness, for it accepts that life, at present, is fraught with fallenness and corruption, but at the same time it compels us to take account of our future and of Christ’s sure resolution of history. Thus penitence is not without hope, just as hope is never without due recognition for what we have been lifted from. Since it is a sacrament of wholeness, it reconciles (after the precedent achieved by Christ, the Reconciler). Former alienations are unified (Rhodes, 1969:62):

- The worshipper and God
- Parts of the worshipper’s inner life, overcoming what has been called the ‘divided self’ (Shea in Masson, 1982:75) and achieving a more harmonious confluence of left-brain and right-brain initiative (Webber, 1992:87)
- The common and the holy
- Matter and spirit
- Time (past, present, future)
- The individual and the group
- The community of faith and a needy world

Strikingly, the Communion table sets up a rhythm of relationship between itself and all our other tables - family tables, work tables, leisure tables, conference tables, operating tables, all those private and public tables of human life that need the health-bringing love and presence of God (Westberg in Wiest, 1988:333, 334).

Of course, wholeness is not a fixed commodity, but is a matter of relationship. With Rhodes, we realise that wholeness “is not an absolute to be achieved and held.... It is a quality of living, being, acting, becoming. Wholeness is not something one gets, but a way of living and relating (1989:62). Essential to the maintenance of wholeness (a powerful function of Communion in the life of a believer) is the necessity of ongoing connectedness with Christ (Jn 15:1-8). For this reason, Vatican II speaks of Communion as spiritual food (Flannery, Vol.1, 1992:556), nurturing the relationship with Christ who gave himself for us.

The very symbolism of the loaf being broken does not diminish the wholeness of the event, for as the Didache declares in an early prayer: “Just as this bread that is broken was scattered upon the mountains and then was gathered together and became one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever” (Holmes, 1989:154). From the
beginning of covenant-making, the symbolism has been of a wholeness (animal, cereal, human) being rent asunder, with the new unity emerging from between the sundered parts. So too, out of the ‘brokenness’ of Christ’s body, a new body (the risen Christ; also the church) would be evident (Dillistone, 1955:277).

5.2.4.4 The issue of Christ’s absence and presence

The emergence of something out of brokenness raises the issue for us of the presence of Christ at Communion. Without immersing ourselves in the lengthy debate over transubstantiation or its alternatives, it is necessary that we try to grasp what kind of presence we are alluding to when we celebrate. The eschatological fulfilment anticipates the presence of Christ more really than is at all possible right now, but equally so, the presence of Christ in Communion is not merely the longing for his presence that seems to bring him near.

From the research, Baptists would seem to assert that Christ is present on the basis of faith, and to some extent on the basis of individualistic feeling. As worshippers sense the invitation to commitment, they realise Christ is present. The effect on the group, as indication of presence, however, was not considered to be significant (see para.3.3.8).

To be sure, Christ’s presence clearly cannot mean his bodily presence (as transubstantiationists try to argue), since he is currently seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Berkouwer, 1969:221). We, his disciples, are promised his presence in at least two special situations: (1) while we are carrying out the Great Commission mandate of Mt 28:20, and (2) where the ‘two or three gathered in Christ’s name’ constitute a local expression of the church (Mt 18:20), a surprising reduction by Christ of the quorum of ten that constituted a synagogue (Marshall, 1996:65). But the question remains to what extent Christ is present in Communion in a way that is different to the manner in which he is present generally with believers.
The basic realisation that Christ is just as present in ordinary life as he is in Communion has been obscured, unfortunately, by the transubstantiationist debate, with its insistence on the extraordinariness of Christ in the elements. To get locked into such a debate is surely to miss the point, for a person is always more than a body (Vogel in Tracy, 1979:49). Yet the debate is indicative of a long struggle that humanity has had to conceptualise the presence of divinity (Cooke, 1990:2). From earliest biblical understandings, God has been seen as occupying a separate realm to humanity and intervening periodically (pouring out his Spirit) to alter the course of events. Alternatively, God has been understood to be present in the manner with which humans image divinity by their moral actions (keeping the law). Yet both of these explanations have been compelled to undergo re-conceptualisation, in order to cope with the new presence of God, first as Emanuel, then as risen Lord and finally as ever-present Holy Spirit. The re-conceptualisation has not always been a happy one, since history has shown the church to distance God progressively by at least three means: (1) excessive spiritualisation, (2) ritual distancing, and (3) church order (Cooke, 1990:42 ff.).

Again we acknowledge the contrast of sign and symbol. If we are to approach presence in terms of sign, we will earnestly seek to pin the concept down to one or two explanations (e.g. transubstantiation, consubstantiation, transignification). The exercise is flawed, however, since Christ’s presence will persistently defy containment, in much the same way as Christ’s post-resurrection appearances startled the disciples and prepared them for a thoroughly new presence (Marshall, 1980:126). To deal with the matter of presence symbolically has distinct advantages, for one can respect a variety of emphases that would otherwise vie with one another for supremacy. With Pannenberg (1998:304, 323) we can uphold the criticalness of the resurrection and the Holy Spirit to the appreciation of presence. Likewise we can recognise his presence in the action (rather than in the elements) of self-giving which is so characteristically Christ-like (Moltmann, 1978:87). Here, the eyes of faith, trained by biblical example (Lk 24:30), recognise Christ impressionally, in the use of the elements:

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, “Were not
our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Lk 24:30-2).

The Emmaus incident alerts us to the ambiguity of Christ's presence and absence, to that 'real presence' that is paradoxically a presence-in-absence" (Baillie in Davies, 1993:80). No longer bound to the 'either-or' of bodily presence or internal rumination, we are free also to experience his immediacy:

- As a story presence (Pannenberg, 1998:311, 313, 315)
- As personal presence, in terms of a sense of Christ 'being there for us' (Willimon, 1991:30)
- As life-giving presence, whereby, at Communion, Christ gives the gift of life to the church (Schoonenberg in Davies, 1993:221).
- As localised presence, insofar as God's multifaceted character is localised in the sense of being concentrated on us during Communion. There is a corporate exertion of the grace of God upon us (Crockett, 1989:234). His presence is experienced in the group dynamics of adoration and interaction, and not in rational analysis (Berkouwer, 1969: 204).
- As a moral presence, the effect of which is experienced in the fellowship of believers, where Christ's message and his values are lived out, rather than necessarily his intimate friendship felt (Keifer, 1982:142).
- As invitational presence. We become aware of the presence of Another when we are drawn to interact. Communion's invitation to commit ourselves vivifies Christ's concealed presence. Thus the necessity of commitment presences Christ before our senses.

Quite comfortably, and with reverence, we can talk of Communion's capacity to evoke Christ's absent-presence, which is made apparent by the power of symbol to bring together interiorisations, spiritual dynamics and group processes. To the group processes we turn more deliberately, now, as we discuss community participation.

5.2.5 An event of community participation

The communal emphasis of Communion has not always been appreciated, as can be witnessed by the current research (see para. 3.3.4) and by a disturbing article, advocating individual Communion (Schilling, 1996:38).

5.2.5.1 Community

The community of God's people, gathered for worship, is not a collection of individuals acting individually. As Lucas rightly compares, if one person enters a snack-bar and eats a meal, and another person does likewise, it does not follow that the two people have enjoyed a meal together. What makes for a corporate act is when the same individual actions are
carried out by people with a shared objective and an awareness of each other (1972:3).

Various attempts have been made to describe community, with or without a Christian
emphasis, and it is helpful to build on some of these attempts to glean an understanding of
this important feature of Communion that seems to be so lacking in Baptist celebrations.

The word ‘community’ can be defined geographically (the neighbourhood), anthropologically
(the extended family), institutionally (the school or workplace), politically (the nation),
religiously (a congregation), psychologically (a support group) or culturally (the artistic
community) (Banks, 1993:19). The Latin roots of the word ‘community’ (cum-muniere),
indicate those who ‘serve together’ (Westberg in Wiest, 1988:337), and the Christian
distinctive happens when people serve the purposes of Christ together, bound in a covenant
relationship to one another, in and through Jesus Christ (Bonhoeffer, 1954:10). So far, a
religious definition of community is being used, but the psycho-social (how people relate
around a task or personality) should not be set aside in our explorations. Scott Peck has
suggested that we restrict the term, ‘community’, to a group of people characterised by a
peculiar relationship, communication and commitment (1987:59). Similarly, Vanier believes
there are three (he lists them as two) essential elements of community: (1) inter-personal
relationships, (2) A sense of belonging, and (3) An orientation of life to a common goal and
common witness (1989:10).

As such communities are:

- Inclusive, committed and consensual
- Realistic, self-examining (contemplative)
- Safe places where healing and converting can occur, where people can be vulnerable, where they can ‘fight gracefully’ in an atmosphere where authority is decentralised and where the emerging ethos is a spirit of peace (Peck, 1987:61 ff.). In such an environment, people stand the chance of becoming ‘artisans of peace’, as Vanier terms it (1989:5).
- Dedicated to those not yet a part of their number. The outward-focus and mission perspective is never diminished by a concern for internal dynamics (Vanier, 1989:102).

The life together of that community can be spoken of alternatively as fellowship (koinonia),
which is much more than a social get-together of Christians. Following Bridges (1985:189),
fellowship is the living expression of our objective relationship with God and with all other
believers. It speaks of care for one another, partnership in the Gospel, a sharing with one
another spiritually (using spiritual gifts for the upbuilding of the group) and a caring for one another materially. People in fellowship suffer together and serve together and have fun together.

The precedent for community is the community that God is in his trinitarian self (Hartin, 1991:20; Banks, 1993:19, Vanier, 1989:59), and exemplified in Jesus' desire to live his life in a group (Hartin, 1991:66). In community, people are drawn into the open, they co-operate, they find forgiveness, healing and trust and in the process they become the people God intends. The group, itself, births as a symbol of fidelity in a world wearied by broken alliances and allegiances.

Within a symbolic community, Communion evolves from sign to symbol, leaving behind (though never entirely forsaking) the restrictive obsession that comes from it being a sign of God's blessing solely on me and mine. Instead, the event symbolises God's delight among us, enabling us to share the enjoyments and hardships of a variety of people whom God has placed around the table. Christ's absence is strangely overcome, as the group possibilities and surprises 'break' his presence to us. We become alert to the hiddenness of Christ, revealed among people bringing their lives, interactively, around a common purpose.

Certain implications of community for the worshipping group are apparent: (1) **Community is a mentality that orientates worshippers towards the common life.** Communion can never become so highly personal an event that a worshipper is divorced from the presence and purposeful action of other worshippers. The mentality fosters a profound respect for the congregation, rather than the individual, as the irreducible unit of Christianity (Stookey, 1993:24). Moreover, there is a progression that we are persuaded towards: from community-for-myself to myself-for-the-community (Vanier, 1989:178). In addition, the mentality acknowledges the church, rather than the nuclear family, as the primary family unit. Of course, the nuclear family is not cast away; instead, by recognising the church as the primary group, the nuclear family, along with singles, widows and divorces are nurtured.
under a new umbrella (Webber, 1992:208; Vanier, 1989:73). **(2) Community is a challenge to any separatist inclination.** Every tendency to isolate persons, classes, races, nations, denominations and Christian persuasions is vehemently resisted (Stookey, 1993:152) and appropriately named as sin. As Davies rightly concludes: “Disunity among Christians is active counter-testimony to the gospel of reconciliation. That is the stumbling block of disagreement, ultimately to be attributed to Christian disobedience” (1993:266). Community always urges people to become more (Vanier, 1989:23). Community, then, is not optional to the mature life, but indispensable to its fulfilment. **(3) Community pays attention to the corporate nature of sin and release.** Our pre-conversion downfall is worked out in a matrix of relationships, just as much as our post-conversion release is. “The enemy in the community reveals to us the enemy inside us” (Vanier, 1989:35), in much the same way as the beauty in the community stirs a sense of beauty within us. Sin (both personal and corporate) is confessed together, bringing balance to our hopes of instant personal redemption (Hadley, 1989:23) that can safely ignore the condition of the group. **(4) Community registers our participation in the life-cycle of the group.** It is a commonly known fact that groups pass through stages in their life-cycle: from conception, through birth, growth, marriage and procreation, to maturity, even death (Prior, 1992:85ff.; Olsen, 1984:31ff.; Barker, 1985:58ff.; Peck, 1987:86ff.). Because we are committed to the well-being of the group, we are alert to the deepening of character of the group, and to the manner with which our own contribution affects the development of everyone. We are reminded of the biblical concept of shalom, which - apart from indicating maturity, righteousness, truth, fellowship and peace; in fact, all the gifts of the messianic age - conveys a social happening:

Shalom is not something that can be objectified and set apart. It is not the plus which the haves can distribute to the have-nots, nor is it an internal condition (peace of mind) that some can enjoy in isolation. Shalom is a social happening, an event in interpersonal relations. It can therefore never be reduced to a simple formula; it has to be discovered as God’s gift in actual situations (WCC in Emswiler & Emswiler, 1980:3).

Communion is ideally placed to focus attention on the condition of the group life.
5.2.5.2 Participation

We have already made the point that to be part of a Christian community is to serve the purposes of Christ together. Participation by the members of that community is implicit. Besides, the meaning of the term 'communion' can be translated 'participation' (Webber, 1992:78). We use the term 'participation' interrelatedly with at least three implicit nuances:

1. Participation implies joint activity,
2. Participation implies variety, creativity and learning,
3. Participation implies the possibility of exclusion.

Historically, Communion suffers from an ironic lethargy. Whatever may or may not have been a more participatory celebration during the early church, Communion soon became infrequently celebrated by the laity, and more frequently celebrated by the clergy, with ordinary folk observing rather than participating. Participation was what the Reformation gave back to Communion (Johnson, 1969:25). Yet modern Baptist celebrations do not reflect any greater degree of participation beyond that of the congregation partaking of the elements (cf. para. 3.3.3 earlier) and the involvement of lay deacons in the distribution of the elements. Otherwise the service is usually led by the ordained pastor.

It may be that Baptists resist all but minimal participation for the following reasons (Erickson, 1989:2):

- Personal problems (e.g. marital difficulties, guilt, low self-esteem, lack of faith) which combine to make the worshippers feel more keenly their own sin and unworthiness to participate
- A consumeristic orientation among the congregants, whereby worshippers come to church to be served rather than to serve
- A vague grasp of just how fortunate the worshippers are in Christ
- The fear of loss of control, disorderly worship and possible conflict, if people with various persuasions were to take a more active part

One could list additional inhibitors stemming from tiredness (I went to bed late on Saturday night and it is too much effort to take part), a natural self-consciousness in front of a group, and an uncertainty on the part of a potential participant concerning what would be appropriate for others, arising from insufficient knowledge of the needs of many of the
fellow-worshippers. Nevertheless, Communion makes no sense unless we become involved in it (Hadley, 1989:13), and the involvement requires the development of a 'cultural competence' - or more accurately, a 'worshipping competence' (Lawson, in Boyer, 1993:191). Such a dexterity (which this study will later associate with learning) permits the worshipper: (1) to make judgements about the well-formedness of a participation, relative to the Christian message, (2) to make judgements about the relationships between participations during the Communion service, and (3) to assess the relationship of the participations during one Communion service to the overall character of the local contextualisation of the Gospel.

Erickson has identified six types of participation (1989:194), only the first two of which are appropriated in Baptist celebrations:

- Silent engagement (silences, listening, adoration, meditation)
- Interiorised verbal participation (rituals, familiar prayers and responses)
- Lay leadership (parts played by non-clergy)
- Spontaneous involvement prompted by the Holy Spirit (singing, praying out loud, charismatic prophecies and glossolalia)
- Prophetic verbal participation (readings, creative expressions)
- Multi-sensate participation (gestures, colour, art and environmental stimuli)

The latter three types are worth exploring, especially in our African context, where ritual gestures are the primary means with which a believing community responds to the Christian message. Uzukwu notes that "Africans experience the body in a very positive way. African anthropology is not preoccupied with body as fallen and in need of redemption; rather the body is experienced as primal symbol where the totality of person is revealed in gestures" (1991:101). Given the primary metaphor (the horror of the cross) and the penitential mentality of Baptists (noted earlier), both of which lend themselves to a silent, interiorised participation rather than outward expression, Baptists have not been prompted to expand the range of participations in a way that might be more contextually relevant - or even more biblically accurate. Protestants may well insist that the most basic level of participation required by Communion is the presence of the worshipper's faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Communion, however, like the rest of Christian living (Jas 2:26), invites our faith to
issue in concrete participative action, lest we delude ourselves that faith without deeds is, in fact, Life. Certainly commitment is crucial (Stookey, 1993:149), and Catholicism, according to Lawler, would concur with Protestantism that personal faith is an absolute necessity. But what the Council of Trent, Martin Luther and the entire Christian tradition wished to condemn "was not the insistence on the necessity of faith, but the one-sided insistence on 'faith alone' as the source of grace, to the detriment of the sacramental action" (Lawler, 1987:42). The conferring of grace through the sacraments has long been the subject of misunderstanding between Catholics and Protestants. Sadly though, Protestants (here, Baptists) have failed to take into account that the sacrament has at least a two-fold benefit: it propels faith towards action by an irrepressible invitation to participation; and it nurtures and refines faith by objectivising it so that it can be reflected upon and re-internalised in fresh configurations.

The second benefit probably requires elaboration, since Baptists may be sceptical of the suggestion that the sacrament confers grace by nurturing and refining faith. In this connection, it is worth borrowing from the insights of education, in particular, that of experiential learning. As we do so, we will realise how imperative it is that community participation is highlighted in our understanding of Communion.

David Kolb (1984), building on the work of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget, has developed a model of learning that he calls 'experiential' to connect it to the tradition of his three predecessors, but more importantly to emphasise the critical role played by experience in the learning process. He defines experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984:38).

The six characteristics that Kolb identifies in this definition can be condensed below into four of pertinent application to Communion. (1) Learning is a process rather than an outcome. Ideas, or perceptions of Christ's relevance to our lives and the possibilities of a life lived with an awareness of Christ, are not fixed (Kolb, 1984:26), but are rather formed and re-formed through the experience of living, and the experience of enacting Christ's self-giving in Communion. Communions, then, take up a place in this process, causing us to
prize them, not as isolated rituals, but as moments in a continuity of development.

(2) Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world. Communion implants new ideas and impressions of Christ in the experience base of the worshipper (integration). Also, it deposes and displaces old ones (substitution) in our outlook. A lifestyle of self-giving (Christ) is juxtaposed with our patterns of coveteousness and self-satisfaction. Inevitably, the process of learning is a tension-filled one, with the depth of learning determined by the manner with which the conflicting ideas are resolved into action plans of surrender, distinction and courageous adjustment. Usually the depth of learning is expected to take place before the participation in Communion (the Word is preached and worshippers are urged to examine themselves before they eat and drink). Experiential learning, however, posits the possibility of significant learning taking place after Communion, as worshippers reflect on the experience of Christ's love present in the elements in a type of debriefing exercise (Thatcher, 1986:263; Webber, 1986:54; Stookey, 1993:34).  

(3) Learning is a wholistic process of adaptation to the world. Thinking, feeling, perceiving and acting are all incorporated in the cumulative achievement of learning. Also, all the life-stages and human settings are recruited as data. Thus Communion will not seek to appeal to the cognitive alone, nor merely to a segment of one's life. All the senses and all manner of experience will be plumbed for their richness, so that life can be lived differently. The creative arts come into their own here, for they can create knowledge at a level beyond words. "Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible", said the Swiss painter, Paul Klee (in Emswiler & Emswiler, 1980:57).  

(4) Learning involves transactions between the learner and the environment, from which knowledge emerges. Crucial to learning is a respect for the role that action plays, as worshippers act upon their world on the basis of existing information. "Experience," says Dewey, "does not go on simply inside a person.... The word 'interaction' assigns equal rights to both factors in experience - objective and internal conditions. Any normal experience is an interplay of these two sets of conditions. Taken together... they form what we call a situation" (in Kolb, 1984:35). Thus worshippers, if they are to grow in their knowledge of Christ and his ways in our lives, cannot withdraw into their private worlds. If anything they will derive deeper
knowledge to the extent that they engage with their world, allowing personal knowledge to interact with social knowledge. Naturally, the learning will be affected profoundly by biological maturation and developmental accomplishment, but experiential learning pays attention to the vital learning that takes place in what Vygotsky (the Soviet cognitive theorist) has called 'the zone of proximate development', i.e. the distance between the actual development of a person, as determined by independent problem-solving (perceptions of Christ I can arrive at in isolation from the input of others); and the potential development of a person, as determined through problem-solving under the guidance of another person or group of people (Kolb, 1984:133).

Clearly, there is - in any given group of worshippers - considerable variation in the level of learning that is taking place, but the symbolic approach, espoused by the present thesis, both acknowledges the variation and recognises the necessity for Communion to offer scope for multi-linear development.

Katherine Bridges (in Kolb, 1984:135) describes the increasing emotional differentiation of a growing infant from singular excitement to the basic distinctions between distress and delight, to a sophisticated array of emotions including fear, disgust, anxiety, jealousy, joy, parental affection and so on. At the highest levels of sophistication, a growing person has constructed (and re-adjusted) an intricate structure for coping with complex relationships between him/her and the world. Built into the structure is a flexibility for integration and organisation of experience, so that change and uncertainty can be integrated adequately. In summary, therefore, a growing person will move from a low integration index with simple correspondences between person-world and between perspective-emotion (see figure 5.1 below).
Two correlations to Communion present themselves when we apply Bridges’ observations. Firstly, it would seem that our reaction to Communion may well start simplistically, but as we learn, experientially, our response opens out into multi-linear variety. Secondly, it would seem that Baptist Communions - if they continue to be approached signly - will continue to favour, however unwittingly, the lower integration indices. Simple links between the sign and its fixed meaning are sought and conveyed, and predictable responses are expected from relatively passive worshippers.

The alternative is to approach Communion symbolically, consistently stimulating the myriad connections and correspondences, regardless of whether everyone in the congregation makes full use of them. The creative arts (including song, movement, gesture, audio-visual supplementation, dramatic readings, poetry) will be strategic here in communicating at new levels. Emswiler & Emswiler (in somewhat usual terms for Baptists, perhaps) discuss the use of rhythm, movement, touch and silence in terms of their ability to promote wholeness in worship (1980:14). They allude to a dancer who was asked to explain her dance, to which she replied, “If I could explain it, I wouldn’t have to dance it” (1980:57). Instead, then, of
talking about Christ's blood shed for us, it could be arranged for a jug of red liquid to be on hand to be poured onto a white cloth, thereby visually depicting the spilling in a way that could supplement the words - even, on occasion, replace the words. Many churches have even the most rudimentary sound systems through which sound productions can be relayed to a listening congregation. Dramatised readings, coupled with sound effects, can be acquired or digitally produced with stunning effect on the sensitivities of an increasingly 'techno-literate' congregation. To do so will create a learning environment in which worshippers can develop higher levels of integration. Drawing in the fullest possible range of experience from life, participation in the event will place the worshipper in the zone of proximate development, wherein vital learning takes place. The knowledge that is gained will not be confined to the dispassionate, cognitive and scientific reaches (often the case with sign knowledge), where information fails to touch us profoundly. Instead, knowledge that is symbolically discerned involves the learner (worshipper) in the process, deepening the personality, and necessitating his 'living into' the knowledge. The symbolic mode of knowing is “through seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, imagining, remembering, associating, emoting, conceiving, judging, deciding, doing, living, experiencing” (Lawler, 1987:26).

Kolb points out that four skills are necessary for a learner to be effective, viz. the ability to experience something concretely, the ability to observe and reflect on the experience, the ability to conceptualise abstractly, and the ability to experiment actively (1984:30). These skills set in motion four dialectical modes of resolving conflicting information from our world, viz. apprehending vs. comprehending, and intention vs. extension. Four forms of knowledge result from the dialectic resolution: divergent knowledge (new insights gained by reflecting on a concrete experience), assimilative knowledge (convictions that form when the new insight is conceptualised abstractly), convergent knowledge (the possibilities that are proposed when the abstract conceptualisation is subjected to the influence of new circumstantial factors), and finally accommodative knowledge (the raw experience from experimentation producing a new experience) (Kolb, 1984:40 ff.).
Diagrammatically, Kolb's model can be depicted as follows (1984:141):

Figure 6.2

To examine Communion from the angle of experiential learning has emphasised several things. First, Communion is an instance of experiential learning, such that new and varied knowledge is constantly created as worshippers are free to bring the stuff of ordinary living into creative encounter with God. Second, the educative value of Communion (leading to higher integration indices and more developed 'worshipping competence') is enhanced to the degree that we permit it to function according to the basic characteristics of experiential learning (process, resolution of conflicting modes of adaptation, wholism, transactionalism).

When one considers participation, with respect to who participates in Communion, one is aware of a wide agreement that the basic requirement is that only baptised Christians ought to participate (Carter, 1989:37). Pannenberg has quite rightly justified the exclusivity by pointing out that the Last Supper was a meal for disciples that presupposes discipleship on the part of the participants. We can assume a desire for discipleship only where people have handed over their whole lives to the triune God by baptism (1998:330).
5.2.6 A frontier event

The moment we ponder the necessity of restricting Communion to baptised Christians, we become aware of a world populated by people with no allegiance to Jesus Christ. How is Communion to operate on such a frontier? While for many Christians the thought of the sacrament's having any application to unbelievers may be a new idea, there equally may be many believers who would say that Communion ought not to have any relevance to unbelievers until they commit their lives to Christ, since the meal is a fellowship meal for believers only. From the research, Baptists felt that unbelievers ought not to participate in the event, though they felt that the service could challenge unbelievers while it took place before them (albeit excluding them from the elements). Baptists were largely taken off-guard by the suggestion that Communion should stimulate them to reach out to unbelievers after the service, during the weekly round of work and leisure (see paras. 3.3.5 & 3.3.6 earlier).

To be sure, the early Christians were alerted by Paul to the implications of strict monotheism in the celebration of Communion when he warned: “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons” (1 Co 10:21). Communion, therefore, perpetuates the concept of a Christian's distinctiveness from an unbelieving society, a theme that does not always sit comfortably in a pluralistic age and country. In this connection, it should be observed that Communion fulfils an ethical role, establishing believers in the ways of the Lord who desires their absolute loyalty. With each celebration, the ethics of the kingdom surface through the confession of sin and the preaching of the word. Believers come to sense the expectations of the kingdom in a more vital way as they are given opportunity to examine themselves, and then to embrace the ways of the kingdom. In this respect, Communion reaches inward, across frontiers of unbelief within the Christian community (a ‘centripetal’ action, to use Saayman’s phrase in a slightly different sense - 1985:18).
Be that as it may, one realises that it would be improper to cling to what is experienced within the sanctity of the Christian community. To do so would be to approach Communion as a sign, rather than as a symbol. Its sign-value points, statically, to our God-favoured position alone, reminding us that we are to commit ourselves anew to our Lord. To appreciate Communion as symbol registers God’s favour upon his people, while at the same time noting profoundly his favour upon a rebellious and indifferent world. In terms of symbol, Christians are to be world-faced, and so is their worship of God. Christians must move out into the world (centrifugally, as Saayman would put it - 1985:18). The final sending out is a crucial feature of Communion, a point that is recognised in the Catholic term for Communion - the Mass or missa (the sending). As Hadley rightly explains:

The ‘concluding rite’ or ‘dismissal’, with which it ends, is not merely (as it sometimes seems) a convenient way to round it all off neatly: it is essential and integral, the commissioning of Christ’s people to go and be Christ in and for the world, to lose themselves for his sake and for the gospel’s” (1989:114).

Being world-faced is no optional accessory to the event; the mission’s perspective must inform Communion (indeed all our worship), or else Communion degenerates into a dangerous, self-sustaining unreality. “Worship is dangerous,” says Marshall (1996:ix), “that does not issue in discipleship and service.” Communion is not an escape from the realities of living in this century, in this country. It is not a “one-way ticket from earth to heaven (a get-away-from-it-all on a long weekend!), but rather what is commonly called ‘a round trip’ from heaven to earth and all the way back again, via a stable door, Gethsemane, and Calvary hill” (Marshall, 1996:197). Baptists are often strong on asserting that Communion proclaims Christ’s death, but the proclamation is not a nostalgic lament for the dead; rather it is a profession of the dawn of the new kingdom, ushered in by the death and resurrection of Jesus, where old disorders endemic to our world are no longer appropriate (Elert, 1973:19). Communion declares that the application of new-order values is valid and necessary.

Of course, the world-faced orientation of Communion (that emerges with a symbolic understanding of the sacrament) does not imply that worshippers ought to be unbeliever-obsessed while they worship. Worship can be evangelistic without it taking place
in the "shop window of the Church, commending the goods that are on sale" (Marshall, 1996:199). Communion is intended, primarily, for believers, not unbelievers; though with a moderate sensitivity to the unfamiliarity experienced by unbelievers who might be present, the sacrament can have a powerful impact upon them. Yet one does not deliberately draw unbelievers around the Communion table, as Marshall seems to suggest when he recommends that Communion finds its way out of the sanctuary and into homes of 'shut-ins' or sick members. There, believers can invite neighbours and friends to join in (Marshall, 1996:169). The problem exists if these neighbours and friends are not believers. Christ, we will remember, did not celebrate the Last Supper in the same context as the feeding of the five thousand. Instead, he withdrew into the Upper Room with his disciples. His action is instructive for us who would celebrate today with due regard for the needs of unbelievers and still preserve its believer-fellowship.

Communion as a frontier event, then, respects the primary participation of believers, notwithstanding the presence of unbelievers at the event. Nevertheless, the world is, and must be, brought before the consciousness of worshippers during the event itself. Three principal means recommend themselves here:

(1) **The elements are given their symbolic scope.** They bring to our attention matters of food and hunger. Hunger reminds us of our own hungers (Willimon, 1981:67). Bread before us admits the starving of our neighbourhood, of our world, into our company (Wallis in Stromberg, 1983:57), as awkward as that may be. Reflection on the bread and grapejuice also sparks a reflection on the economic structures of our country, in which the gap between rich and poor widens all the time (Crockett, 1989:251).

(2) **Intercession is made for the world.** With the elements given their voice, they make it impossible for us to worship to the exclusion of the needs of the world around us. Hence it is fitting and proper that intercession be made at Communion: for the sick; for social reform; for civil and political leaders; for people affected by disasters, crime, and injustice; and for the
salvation of people of other religious persuasions (e.g. the Jews, the Muslims, the cultists).

Through intercessions we link our lives with Christ's for the world. Through intercessions we identify with our fellow-humanity in their struggle for survival and significance.

(3) Something is done after the sacrament is concluded. Crosby notes that it is impossible to "eat the bread that is broken without accepting responsibility to do something about all the brokenness that is still part of the body" (in Stromberg, 1983:45), indeed, that is still part of the world. Eating the bread takes brokenness into ourselves and it becomes part of us. To resist the brokenness, and to harden ourselves against a world of need, runs the risk of our celebrations being identified with the empty rituals which were rejected by God (Isa 1:11 ff.). Even while we remember Christ who suffered, we remember the suffering of others, and with it a socio-political conscience is formed which compels us to act on behalf of others (Crockett, 1989:259). As Neely observes: "The eucharist can be a meaningless ceremony, a soothing anaesthetic, or an outright evasion. But it can also be the ferment of revolution which awakens the conscience to what is possible, to what is not yet achieved, [and] to what has not yet been contemplated" (in Stromberg, 1983:66). Our action is carried out, not necessarily in strength, but perhaps in vulnerability, following the One who made himself vulnerable on the cross for a world gone wrong (Wallis in Stromberg, 1983:55).

Still, the conscientising and revolutionary nature of Communion must not be underestimated or downplayed. Balasuriya, the Sri Lankan Catholic priest, has exposed the all too frequent domestication of Communion, as a result of privatisation, clericalisation, the neglect of its sharing character, and as a result of the influence of capitalism and colonialism (1977:27). He argues from the angle of the Old Testament Passover that Communion was designed to instil within people indomitable thoughts of liberation (Balasuriya, 1977:10). Refusing to be spiritualised at every point, Communion seeks to be relevant to humans in their search for personal meaning, for community and for freedom from oppression of various sorts (1977:42). He suggests that Communion be re-organised to provide for personal and collective reflection on themes such as: food, clothing, shelter, family, sex and marriage, the
environment, health, education, work, leisure, freedom, transport, public life, truth, justice, religious harmony, groups, and world justice (1977:136). Though one is vigilant to the possibility that Communion (because it is a public event) can easily be hijacked for the purpose of political agendas, his remarks certainly lead us to ponder just how relevant our Communions are in a context of desperate need. What would be the use of celebrating fifty-two Communions in a city, if there is no visible impact on the problems of that city (1977:21)? All our protestations about being the body of Christ broken for the world (which we are meant to be if we embrace fully the symbolic approach to Communion) would be held in contempt. Thus, it would be true, following Neely (in Stromberg, 1983:65), that Communion will be a missionary, or frontier, event to the degree that it activates us to struggle against every force, or system that breaks down human worth in the sight of God. Fired for action by Communion as a frontier event, worshippers have the opportunity now:

- To help practically: by taking up collections of money, clothing or foodstuffs for the poor, following in the tradition of the Communions of the early church (Webber, 1992:211).
- To help socio-politically: by exerting pressure on regional, national and international structures that confine people to misery and deprivation.
- To help spiritually: by grasping opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ in home and work-place.

Clearly Communion operates in frontier territories. Its genius is its ability to open God’s people to God whose heart is for the nations. As a symbol, Communion senses the ambiguity of our position as people-on-the-way, in the process of learning God’s ways; different, but similar to the multitudes that populate our world. Worshippers are impelled by the multi-faceted appeal of Communion to let their lives become symbols, or parables, of God among people during the week. Worshippers, made conscious of the world during their worship, are thrust out into the world to be salt and light.

Principles such as these need to be given form in a theory that represents one step closer to praxis. The concluding chapter, which lies before us, attempts such an operational theory.
6.1 SUMMARY

We have reached the final chapter of the current study. Through its pages, the thesis has sought, in chapter one, to define the problem of increasing redundancy, with respect to Communion, that the researcher has observed from having been active in Baptist churches over a number of years. The same chapter has laid a theoretical and operational foundation for the remainder of the study.

Chapter two has investigated, historically, the forming of the Baptist mind, noting as it did that six denominational themes emerge: (1) Baptists have been affected by persecution, (2) Baptists have come to favour independence, (3) Baptists have wrestled with whether Communion should be open or closed, (4) Baptist discussions of Communion have tended towards polemics rather than instruction, (5) Baptists have expected decline and have tried to prepare themselves for it, (6) Baptists have favoured a simple, rather than a symbolic, celebration of Communion.

Chapter three took the investigation into the field, testing, empirically, a sample of Baptist perceptions regarding various aspects of Communion.

Chapter four turned to the Scriptures in an attempt to identify several features which would prove important to the construction of a practical-theological theory in chapter five.

Six broad principles were discussed in chapter five which, together, offered to re-integrate Communion to the common life of Baptist worshippers: (1) Communion is a powerful event of worship, (2) Communion is a symbolic event, (3) Communion is an event of remembrance, (4) Communion is an event of eschatological significance, (5) Communion is an event of community participation, and (6) Communion is a frontier event.
The task of this final chapter is to present an operational theory that can be taken into the practice of Communion in the local church. As it is implemented it becomes a new praxis (praxis 2).

6.2 A DEFINITION OF COMMUNION

Using the practical-theological theory, dealt with in chapter five, it is possible to define Communion in the following manner: Communion is a worshipful symbol of the self-giving Christ's absent presence, for the purpose of transforming an individualistic people into a thanks-filled, wholistic community imbued with his presence, and to open such a community compassionately to the world. Apart from holding together a number of essential features, already discussed, the definition makes clear, in simple terms, what Communion is and what purpose it fulfils. As such, its value begins to be clarified.

6.3 PRE-COMMUNION

To be sure, Communion will never be re-integrated into the common life of a group of Christians if we are to expect the ceremony alone - disassociated from other dynamics of the local church - to make the difference. It has already been said that Communion is an event of worship, and therefore as worship it needs to be respected as such and prepared for. Worship is not simply ritualistic action, detached from the life of the worshipper. Rather, it is the worshipper's entire life being brought to God, depicted in certain forms in a moment of ritualistic and ceremonial action that unites inward and outward, past, present and future.

Preparation is part, then, of the momentum of a life coming before God. It takes place on several fronts. First, the leaders of Communion find themselves having to ask some personal questions about their attitudes to the sacrament, so that they can move to a disposition that begins to place Communion creatively in the centre of the life of the worshipping community. Second, the congregation can be encouraged to prepare for the event by establishing a recognised regularity about the frequency of celebration. Also, the
leadership can assist the congregation to prepare themselves by, for example, distributing a leaflet for private devotional use the week before Communion. The suggested leaflet, reproduced below (modifying prayers contained in two Anglican documents, viz. *A Book of Common Prayer, 1954:228, 235* and *The Holy Eucharist Morning & Evening Prayer, 1975:7*), can be adapted easily:

**PERSONAL PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION**

This leaflet is offered to you to assist your preparation for Communion next Sunday. Through the week leading up to Communion, try to get alone with God and spend some time thinking through the questions below. You will also find some prayers that have been used by Christians in their preparation.

**Prayer**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so that I, together with my family in Christ, may perfectly love you and honour you. I ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Scripture meditation (Mark 12:29-31)**

Jesus said that the most important commandment is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.

- Do I believe that you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are one God and that you are Lord over all of my life?
- Where is my love for God weak and in need of His attention?
- How am I demonstrating that I love other people?
- Is there anyone (especially another believer in Christ) with whom I have a problem? What do I need to do before Communion to bring about reconciliation? (Matthew 5:23-24)
- Do I love and respect myself as God desires? (1 John 4:7-12)

**Prayer**

I confess, Lord God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) that I have sinned in thought, word and deed, and that such sin has been through my own fault. [Pause and name specifically those instances of sin that God brings to your mind]. I turn from such sin, in true repentance, and I ask that you be merciful to me and forgive me. Deliver me from all evil, confirm and strengthen that which is good in me and bring me to everlasting life. Help me that as I take Communion together with my family in Christ, we will be able to testify to our unity in you and our resolve to be your people forever. Amen.

**Scripture meditation (1 John 1:5-9)**

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

The leaflet has an additional advantage in its being the occasion for believers to seek reconciliation with other people prior to the Communion Service. The emphasis on
penitentiality can give way, legitimately, to a more joy-filled celebration. Thirdly, there is scope for a revolving involvement of a diverse group of people (a worship planning committee), whose efforts can be directed to preparing appropriate banners, poetry readings, music, dance, audio-visual moments and supplementary symbols (e.g. a globe of the earth to stand on the Communion table representing the world which is very much present at our celebration.) All this takes time and the initiatives suffer repeated setbacks, but the rewards of wider participation and involvement by the congregation can be enormous.

6.4 A TEMPLATE FOR THE COMMUNION EVENT

Understandably, the actual Communion event occupies the central position in any attempts to re-integrate it to the common life. Unfortunately, the manual used by many ministers in Baptist churches (Hermanson & Lehmkühl, [sa]) gives little assistance in leading a Communion service that orientates worshippers to the principles discussed here. If anything, it reinforces an introspective, centripetal celebration that undermines the connection between worshipper and the common life. The following template hopes to offer an improvement, especially as a means of implementing the principles discussed earlier. It has been constructed in such a way as to merge Communion principles with a basic pattern of Baptist worship, followed by many churches: Presentation, Penitence, Exaltation, Illumination - sermon, Consecration (Von Ogden Vogt in Segler, 1967:189). The concept of a template combines the essential features of Communion with the flexibility necessary for rescuing the sacrament from rigidity. Moreover, it does so with the embattled pastor, or worship leader, in mind who must prepare yet another event in an otherwise busy week. The template envisages that Communion be given the attention of a special Communion Sunday, where the entire service is centred around Communion. Whether Communion Sunday is held once a month, twice a month or every Sunday is a matter for the leadership and congregation of the local Baptist church to decide. Each heading (e.g. Christ the Word) represents a feature to be retained from Communion to Communion, but the variety under each heading is a matter of flexibility and creativity. (For an example Order of Communion Service, following the template suggested below, refer to Appendix 5.)
1. TO CHRIST WE COME: [Gathering]
   1.1 Welcome & notices
   1.2 Opening congregational initiative
      * Song
      * Procession of children to the front, carrying elements
   1.3 Opening prayer
      [Principles emphasised: Worship, Symbolic, Eschatological, Community, Participation.]

2. CHRIST OUR LORD: [Focus on whom we worship; Tone-setting]
   2.1 Scripture reading
   2.2 Song(s) of adoration
   2.3 Invocation
      [Principles emphasised: Worship, Remembrance, Eschatological, Participation.]

3. CHRIST OUR PASSOVER LAMB: [Focus on Sin & Forgiveness]
   3.1 Preamble highlighting the fact of sin and our need of repentance
   3.2 Prayer of confession
   3.3 Silent confession
   3.4 Creative expression of repentance
      * Ceremonial action, e.g. a modification of the bedikat chamesetz of the Jewish Passover
   3.5 Prayer of absolution
   3.6 Creative expression of release
      * Song
      * Dance to music symbolising release
      [Principles emphasised: Worship, Symbolic, Remembrance, Eschatological, Participation.]

4. CHRIST THE WORD: [Focus on Scripture]
   4.1 Creative focus on the Word of God (e.g. lighting of a candle)
   4.2 The Word of God in our lives (e.g. reading a section of Psalm 119 each time)
   4.3 The sermon
      [Principles emphasised: Worship, Symbolic, Remembrance, Eschatological, Participation.]

5. CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST: [Focus on the preparation of the elements]
   5.1 Taking the bread (matzoh)
   5.2 Taking the grapejuice
   5.3 Creative expression of thanks
      * e.g. Song
      [Principles emphasised: Worship, Symbolic, Remembrance, Eschatological, Participation.]

6. THE BODY OF CHRIST: [Focus on the community of faith]
   6.1 Recognising the body (people) of Christ
      * Creative appreciation of one another
      * Apostles' Creed
      * Welcoming new members & covenanting with them
6.2 Intercession
* Inviting prayer needs & matters of praise (testimony and sharing)
* Praying for local church needs (praying for one another, anointing the sick with oil and laying hands on them)
* Praying for intra-church & inter-church unity

6.3 Symbolising our community
* Song, or greeting, or ceremonial action (e.g. washing feet)

6.5 POST-COMMUNION
The follow-through of Communion is a feature that is not readily included in a discussion of the celebration of Communion, but is important if Communion is to connect with the common life. For a start, if a worship planning committee is in operation, the follow-through can find expression in such a forum, as the committee gives feedback for the purpose of assessing the impact of each Communion event.
Then, if Communion is to minister outwardly with frontiers of poverty and need in mind, collections straight after the service find their place. The congregation can be reminded that a collection (in addition to the tithes) will be taken after every Communion service for the purposes of a fund to be distributed to the needy associated with the church and further afield. As a direct outflow of the emphasis of Communion, worshippers can be reminded at other events of the church to invest their lives in the service of others, in projects and initiatives that are taking shape as congregants become active in the fabric of society.

Another dimension of the follow-through concerns the taking of Communion to the shut-ins (those unable to leave their rooms through frailty, or debilitating illness). The following inclusion (adapted from Stookey, 1993:156) can be inserted under item 7 of the template in such a way that the shut-ins are linked with the rest of the body of believers:

7.3 While we have been fellowshipping together, we acknowledge that there are several of our number who wish to receive Communion today, but who have been prevented from participating with us in this place. We share this meal with them and remember them as being part of us. The sacrament will be taken to these members of our family: Joe Bloggs, in Johannesburg General Hospital; Joseph Nkumalo, in his home; and Michael Wong, in the frail care facility at Mt Pleasant Retirement Complex. 'Gracious God, you have bound us together as one family in Christ. We remember those who will share with us in this event of grace. According to their particular needs, by the power of the Holy Spirit, minister to them. Strengthen their faith. Enable them to sense our love and concern for them and give us grace to keep them at the centre of our care and fellowship. Through Jesus Christ, the Host of our Table. Amen.'

6.6 CONCLUSION

"No one should walk away from the Lord's Supper unchanged," says Martin Marty at the end of his personal reflection on Communion (1997:79). Yet before the church bulletin has been gathered up, along with the car keys and those toys from Aunt Ethelbert that have proved indispensable in keeping junior occupied throughout the service, thoughts of Christ have shifted to an embarrassingly mundane level. Nevertheless, interspersing the plans for next Friday which were hurriedly made while waiting to shake the Pastor's hand at the door, the memory lingers of Christ poignantly poised at the table, on his way to the cross; of Christ mingling with you and your friends, enjoying your conversation and lifting it to new purposes;
of Christ sitting quietly with you in the car on the way home where you will face domestic realities and work demands. Somehow, Christ was there, is here.

Life - the common life - need not have to be lived as before.
APPENDIX 1

A PROFILE OF A TYPICAL BAPTIST CHURCH

1. Size of congregation in Gauteng: 112 members
2. No. of ministers: 1
3. Duration of pastorate: 5 years' (3-7)
4. Strong denominational link: BTC trained, involved in BNA, supportive of BU projects, well-known among Baptists; Baptist Principles upheld in doctrine & teaching
5. Pattern of leadership: Pastor - Diaconate; Strong lead expected from pastor (especially spiritual matters), but power usually held by diaconate; Power tension between pastor-diaconate; Elders increasingly recognised
6. Age concentration (Congregation): Youth - 40/50 - 50+ [gap in 20-40 yrs]
7. Gender concentration: Female
8. Language: English
9. Race dominance: White (established churches); Black (newer churches)
10. Socio-economic bracket of majority of congregation:
    (Whites) Middle; few upper class; (Blacks) Lower-Middle
11. Congregation type targeted: Families, slightly dysfunctional families, no special group (e.g. alcoholics, gays, deaf) would be in the majority; If special group is targeted, it is preferred that they stay where they are rather than assimilate
12. Ministry purpose: Congregations would regard themselves as promoting concept of a personal faith in Christ & being more forward in wanting to stimulate such faith
13. Ministry method (Usual ministries): Worship services, Youth groups, Bible studies, BWA, Men's Fellowships, TBA mission projects rather than local church sustained, visitation of seniors, occasional campaigns, EE3 & Masterlife programmes, cell group concept beginning to take root
14. Worship style: Currently in flux; Strong emphasis on preaching; Conservative, subdued, non-expressive; personal appropriation; minimal participation, fear of charismatic style
15. Women in leadership: Resistance to women in leadership (rare for diaconate, though isolated cases of a female deacon; no female elders); Inconsistency (women can lead a Bible study group, but not preach)
16. Socio-political involvement: Minimal, but awareness increasing; BU CARE is targeting social problems
17. Integrative of children: Was strong with multi-departmental Sunday Schools, but has declined; Weak in black communities; Little to no involvement of children in services

Typical churches?

Randburg Baptist Church Honeyridge Baptist Church Benoni Baptist Church
Rosettenville Baptist Church Waterkloof Baptist Church
APPENDIX 2
CONGREGATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

• Please complete this questionnaire independently of anyone else. For the sake of accuracy, members of the same household (e.g. husbands, wives and teenage children) should not discuss their answers until the survey sheets have been sealed and returned.

• Either a pen or a pencil may be used to complete this questionnaire.

• Most of the questions may be answered by simply placing an X in the appropriate box. Other questions ask for written-in answers. However, you may write in additional comments whenever you wish to do so.

• Please answer all the questions.

PERSONAL DATA

1. Age [ ] years

2. Gender [ ] Male [ ] Female

3. Occupation (e.g. housewife, businessman, lawyer, teacher, student) _________________

4. Highest educational level attained (e.g. Std 8, Matric., B.Comm.) _________________

5. Your connection with Baptist Churches (Please tick the two boxes that apply to you)
   [ ] I am a member of a Baptist Church (i.e. my application for membership was successful)
   [ ] I am not a member of a Baptist Church, but I attend one regularly
   [ ] I am part of the recognised church leadership of a Baptist Church (e.g. elder, deacon, home-group leader, department leader)
   [ ] I am not part of the recognised church leadership in our church

6. Do you consider yourself to be a committed Christian (i.e. you have responded to Christ's love for you, and you have submitted your life to Christ's authority and value system)?
   [ ]YES [ ]NO

7. If you have answered 'yes' to the previous question, please answer this question:
   For how many years would you regard yourself to have been a committed Christian? [ ] yrs
QUESTIONS

1. Listed below are some statements about Communion. In the row of boxes immediately beneath the statement, place an X in the box which best represents your response.

1.1 Communion is **the** high point of my worship ....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1.2 Communion **should be** vital to the life of our church ....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1.3 Communion **is already** a vital dimension of the life of our church ....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1.4 I try to shut myself off from the distraction of other people around me when I celebrate Communion....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1.5 The Jewishness of the Passover meal should be retained whenever Christians celebrate Communion ....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1.6 Communions, usually, should be serious, sombre occasions ....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1.7 Christians from other denominations should be invited to receive the elements during a Communion service in a Baptist church ....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1.8 A member of a non-Baptist denomination may be invited to lead a Communion service in a Baptist church ....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
1.9 Only ordained clergy should be allowed to lead a Communion service ....

1.10 Women should be allowed to lead a Communion service ....

1.11 Children should be allowed to take Communion, even if they have not been baptised ....

1.12 Unbelievers should be encouraged to take Communion ....

1.13 A Communion service should challenge unbelievers to commit their lives to Christ...

1.14 Communion, without the preaching of the Word, has little or no impact for growth ....

1.15 Good preaching, alone, achieves the same (if not better) impact than the celebration of Communion is able to do ....

1.16 Our church is noticeably more sensitive to the needs of others after we have celebrated Communion together ....

1.17 There should be more variety each time we celebrate Communion ....

1.18 I do not understand the meaning of Communion ....

Page 3 of 7 pages (Congregational Questionnaire)
1.19 Communion services should include the creative arts (e.g. poetry, dance, audio-visual presentations) ....

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree

1.20 Baptists have a high appreciation of symbols ....

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree

1.21 Unless we are careful to preserve the Baptist way, Communion can easily become an empty ritual as it is in certain traditional denominations ....

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree

1.22 Communion services should allow for interaction between people (e.g. expressing hurt, giving and receiving forgiveness, sharing a passage of Scripture with another person) ....

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree

1.23 After participating in Communion, I am usually keen to share the new life in Christ with unbelievers ....

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree

1.24 It does not matter how other churches celebrate Communion ....

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree

2. In our church, Communion should be celebrated ....

2.1 More often than it is | The same as it is | Less often than it is

2.2 Please give a reason for your answer in 2.1 above: ..............................................

........................................................................................................................................

3. How often is Communion celebrated in your church at the moment? (e.g. weekly, twice a month) ..........................................................

........................................................................................................................................

Page 4 of 7 pages (Congregational Questionnaire)
4. Why do you participate in Communion? .................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

5. Complete the statement below in as full a way as possible:

When I participate in Communion, I find myself thinking ........................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
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........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

6. What would change (actually change) in your life, if Communion were to be removed from the practice of your church?
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7. In what ways do you think Christians should be encouraged to become participants in the celebration of Communion?
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
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........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
8. If it were in your power to change the way Communion were celebrated in Baptist churches (or in your local Baptist church), what would you change?


9. Do you believe that Christ is present at Communion?

[YES  NO]

If you answered YES, please now answer questions 9.1 - 9.8
If you answered NO, please leave out questions 9.1 - 9.8, and go on to question 10.

9.1 He is present because I feel something different inside (e.g. I feel close to him) ....

[Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly disagree]

9.2 He is present because the Bible says so and I accept that regardless of how I feel ....

[Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly disagree]

9.3 He is present because other people are affected by the proceedings ....

[Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly disagree]

9.4 He is present because the church members act differently after Communion ....

[Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly disagree]

9.5 He is present because new people commit their lives to Jesus for the first time ....

[Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly disagree]
9.6 He is present because Communion invites us to give ourselves to Christ ....

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree

9.7 He is present symbolically in the elements ....

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree

9.8 He is present because I become aware of my connection to Christians across time, denomination and distance ....

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree

10. Do the elements (the bread and the wine) undergo any change when they are used in Communion?

YES | NO

11. In your opinion, what makes a Communion service a proper Christian Communion service? (e.g. What needs to happen? What needs to be said or done? Who or what needs to be present?)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HONESTY AND YOUR ASSISTANCE
APPENDIX 3

LIST OF QUESTIONS PROBING EACH NOTION

1. How important is Communion for Baptists?
   Questions: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.14, 1.15, 2, 3, 6

2. How is Communion experienced by Baptists?
   Questions:
   - Mood 1.6
   - Variety 1.17
   - Comprehension 1.18
   - Artistic value 1.19
   - Symbolic register 1.20
   - Thought patterns 5
   - Participation 7, 1.22
   - Need for change 8

3. How individualistic vs. corporate is Communion for Baptists?
   Questions: 1.4, 1.16, 1.24

4. How inclusive is Communion for Baptists?
   Questions:
   - Children 1.11
   - Women 1.10
   - Laity / clergy 1.9
   - Other denominations 1.7, 1.8
   - Unbelievers 1.12

5. How mission-orientated is Communion for Baptists?
   Questions: 1.13, 1.23

6. To what extent do Baptists feel a distinctive identity arising from Communion?
   Questions: 1.21

7. What meanings of Communion are essential for Baptists?
   Questions: 1.5, 4, 9, 10, 11
APPENDIX 4

BASIC STRUCTURE OF EUCHARISTIC LITURGIES OF THE EARLY CHURCH

1. Introductory dialogue between the chief celebrant and the congregation
   1.1 Salutation
   1.2 Sursum Corda (Lift up your hearts...)

2. Preface
   Redemption is given briefly as the reason for thanksgiving and praise

3. Sanctus and Benedictus
   3.1 Singing of "Holy, holy, holy", based on Isa 6:3 and Rev 4:8
   3.2 Singing of "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"

4. Post-Sanctus
   Continues the thanksgiving by reciting in prayer all of Christ’s works

5. Preliminary epiclesis
   Recognises the place of the Holy Spirit in enabling worship

6. Words of institution
   Recitation of the words of Jesus from the Gospels

7. Amnesis-oblation
   7.1 Amnesis (remembrance) summarises what is being recalled
   7.2 Oblation offers the bread and the cup to God

8. Epiclesis
   Invocation of the Holy Spirit who makes real the worship and the presence of God

9. Intercessions
   [At this point the fraction and distribution took place]

10. Concluding doxology and Amen

(Source: Webber, 1982:136)
APPENDIX 5

AN ORDER OF SERVICE FOR COMMUNION

1. TO CHRIST WE COME [Gathering]
1.1 Welcome & notices

1.2 Opening congregational initiative:
* Hymn - HE LIVES, HE LIVES
* Procession [During hymn, procession to front by young people carrying the elements]

1.3 Opening prayer
"Lord God, the Father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we come to you - our very life and strength. Help us as we would seek to draw near to you; to bow our wills to yours, and to yield ourselves to the influence of your Holy Spirit. Help us as we would worship your eternal goodness; as we would meditate on the unwearying mercy of which we are constant partakers. Help us as we would confess our shortcomings and sins, and give ourselves up to be led by you in the ways of purity, peace and service. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who is God our Saviour. Amen." (Adapted from a prayer by John Hunter in Castle, 1986:290)

2. CHRIST OUR LORD [Focus on whom we worship; Tone-setting]
2.1 Scripture reading [Readings can be carried out alternately by two people]
- "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Dt 6:4)
- "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this" (Isa 9:6-7).
- "For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living" (Ro 14:9).
- "And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy" (Col 1:18).
- "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:9-11).

2.2 Songs of adoration
HE IS ALPHA & OMEGA
MORE THAN ANYTHING

2.3 Invocation
We remember how Jesus, the Risen Lord, met some of his followers on the Emmaus road and talked with them; and how He was known to his disciples in the breaking of bread.
"Yeshua / Lord Jesus, here in this room today, make yourself known to us in the breaking of bread, so that having met you here, we may go from this place with hearts aflame with love for you. This we ask in your Name. Amen."

3. CHRIST OUR PASSOVER LAMB  [Focus on sin & forgiveness]

3.1 Preamble
If we tell God our sin, we can depend on him in his faithfulness and justice to forgive us. Let us ask forgiveness now.

3.2 Prayer of confession

"In our homes, we have been careless and inconsiderate; we have been moody and irritable and difficult to live with; we have treated those whom we ought to cherish with a discourtesy we would never dare to show to strangers; for this forgive us, O God.

In our church family, we have found your service sometimes a burden instead of a delight; we have not always shown love that brothers & sisters ought to show; we have become distracted from the big by the small things in this life; we have often been too satisfied with self and too critical of others; for this forgive us, O God.

In society, we have often been careless in duty and reckless in speech; we have often confused godly holiness with fear-inspired separation; we have been blind to the opportunities that you have set before us to be as Christ to someone nearby; for this forgive us, O God."  (Prayers adapted from Barclay, 1967:114)

3.3 Silent confession
Let us be silent and, in the silence, let us make our own confession to God. "Lord, have mercy."  [Pause for individual prayer]

3.4 Creative expression of repentance
Having made confession to God for those things that keep you from full obedience and enjoyment of Christ your Lord, I urge you to leave your sin with God.

Scripture uses the symbol of yeast to refer to sin in a human life. (1 Cor 5:6-8) "...a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?  Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.  Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

[In silence, chunks of leavened bread, that are lying on a separate table, can be gathered up by the leader into a bag. The bag can be taken outside by another person to symbolise - much like the Jewish bedikat chametz - the removal of sin from our midst.]

3.5 Prayer of absolution
"O God, our Father, we know that we are sinners, but we also know that you remove sin from our lives when we repent. Help us here and now to receive your forgiveness and the absolution which you are offering to us. We want to walk in the release of your forgiveness by living and interacting with the loveliness of Jesus in us, so that people may know that we have been with Jesus."  (Adapted from Barclay, 1967:115)

3.6 Creative expression of release
* Song - O, LET THE SON OF GOD ENFOLD YOU
* Dance - A small group of people could perform a simple movement to the words of the song, with or without large scarves that can enfold a person
4. CHRIST THE WORD  [Focus on Scripture]
4.1 Lighting of the candle
We come to your word, as one who comes to the light  [A young person or elderly person comes forward to light the candle standing on the Communion Table]

4.2 Your word is a lamp unto my feet
* Ps 119 [At each Communion, a segment of this long psalm can be read contemplatively]
* Prayer: "May your word to us be a light to our path, that we will not stumble easily. We want to grow to Christlikeness. Use your word to that end we pray. Amen"

4.3 Sermon

5. CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST  [Focus on the preparation of the elements]
5.1 Taking the bread
"Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. For us it becomes the bread of life."

5.2 Taking the grape juice
"Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this grape juice to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. For us it becomes the new relationship made possible at the cost of your blood."

"God our Father, through your Son Jesus Christ, accept our offering of thanks and praise; and send your Holy Spirit upon us and these gifts. Transform us into your holy people, offered to your service in this world. Fill us with your Spirit that, in unity and with joy, we may be your faithful people until we feast with you in heaven."

5.3 Song of thanks

GIVE THANKS WITH A GRATEFUL HEART

6. THE BODY OF CHRIST  [Focus on the community of faith]
6.1 Recognising the body of our Lord
We recognise the body of our Lord as we clasp hands and - with the Apostle Paul - say [Until the church know it, display on OHP; but the intention is that we say it to one another]:

We pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And we pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- And we say together our common confession. [Place The Apostles' Creed on OHP & say together in unison. Alternatively, someone could read 1Cor 15:1-6; or the creedal song, "I believe in Jesus" can be sung]
- [If there are new members to be welcomed into fellowship, this can be done here.]
- [If there are departing members to be acknowledged, they can be acknowledged here.]

6.2 Intercession
We recognise the body of our Lord as we hear what God is doing in each others' lives and as we pray for one another. Is there anyone who would like to encourage the congregation, or who would like us to pray for them? [Give opportunity for sharing and praying. Where appropriate, the pastor/elders can anoint the sick and lay hands on them before praying for them].
Let us not neglect to pray for the unity of God’s church:
- “You have called us together, Lord, to be your Church. But we have splintered apart, seeking to be our church. You have called us to be your body, given in the service of your world. But we have broken your body in our ways, dividing into rival denominations, separated groups, each one claiming to be the real body, the true church, the only one in the right. Forgive us, Lord. Break down the walls we have built up to shut each other out. Set us free to love you and serve you together.” [Prayer by Shepherd in Erickson, 1989:111]
- Give grace to all who are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity. [Especially we pray for ...]. [Silence] Give peace to those who are troubled by past brutalities, painful memories, and persuasions of childhood. We praise you that in you we have newness of life and freedom from guilt or fear.

6.3 Song of community

A NEW COMMANDMENT

7. CHRIST GIVEN FOR US  [Focus on the reception of grace]
7.1 Words of institution  [Leader takes the matza and says]
You will remember how on the night on which Jesus was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: This is my body given for you. Do this to remember me.
[Leader takes the cup, and says] After the supper, he took the cup and when he had given thanks, he said: This is the new covenant in my blood. As often as you do this, remember me.

7.2 Distribution
[Leader gives whatever instructions are deemed necessary, e.g. who is welcome to participate, retain until all have been served etc. and gives out the elements to the servers for distribution.]

7.3 Body ministry
[While the elements are being distributed, worship team to sing to congregation quietly.]

THIS IS MY BODY
[Gifted individuals can pray for others as the Spirit leads.]

8. CHRIST OUR COVENANT  [Focus on consecration]
8.1 God’s commitment re-affirmed
The Lord gives himself to us, calling us to give him our lives. 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (Jn 3:16-17)."

8.2 Call to consecration
I invite you to dedicate yourselves anew

8.3 Offering  [Take up the tithes & offerings from the congregation]

8.4 Song(s) of consecration

JUST AS I AM
COME INTO JESUS

9. THE MISSION OF CHRIST  [Focus on frontiers]
9.1 The needs of our world
Consecration to Jesus Christ takes place in the real world, in the world of broken promises and unfulfilled dreams. If our consecration is revolted by the thought of following Christ into
the falleness and ugliness of modern society, then we have misunderstood Christian consecration.

- Ours is a world that is troubled by ...... [add one or two social needs].
- We are touched by these things whenever ...... [specify].
- To follow Christ means to ...... [specify according to the social need, so that the congregation can register a practical outworking of Christian frontier action].

An alternative to the bulleted section above could be the reading of the following paragraph, adapted from Stromberg (1983:53): WHERE A PEOPLE IS BEING HARSHLY OPPRESSED, COMMUNION SPEAKS OF THE EXODUS OR DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE. WHERE CHRISTIANS ARE REJECTED OR IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH, THE BREAD AND GRAPEJUICE BECOME THE LIFE OF THE LORD WHO WAS REJECTED BY MEN BUT HAS BECOME 'THE CHIEF STONE OF THE CORNER'. WHERE THE CHURCH SEES DIMINISHING MEMBERSHIP AND ITS BUDGETS ARE DEPRESSING, COMMUNION DECLARES THAT THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO GOD'S GIVING AND NO END TO HOPE IN HIM. WHERE DISCRIMINATION BY RACE, SEX OR CLASS IS A DANGER FOR THE COMMUNITY, COMMUNION ENABLES PEOPLE OF ALL SortS TO PARTAKE OF THE ONE FOOD AND TO REJOICE IN BEING ONE PEOPLE. WHERE PEOPLE ARE AFFLUENT AND AT EASE WITH LIFE, COMMUNION SAYS: 'AS CHRIST SHARES HIS LIFE WITH YOU, SHARE WHAT YOU HAVE WITH THE HUNGRY.' WHERE A CONGREGATION IS ISOLATED BY POLITICS OR WAR OR GEOGRAPHY, COMMUNION UNITS US WITH ALL GOD'S PEOPLE IN ALL PLACES AND ACROSS TIME. WHERE A SISTER OR BROTHER IS NEAR DEATH, COMMUNION OPENS A DOORWAY INTO THE KINGDOM OF OUR LOVING FATHER. IN SUCH WAYS GOD FEEDS HIS PEOPLE AS THEY CELEBRATE THE MYSTERY OF COMMUNION, SO THAT THEY MAY CONFESSION IN WORD AND DEED THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER.

9.2 Intercession for our world

[Prayers can be offered for (1) the social needs specified earlier; (2) for our political leaders; (3) for Christians to be bold to serve.]

9.3 Dismissal and benediction

- "You have given yourself to us, Lord. Now we give ourselves to others, for you. Your love has made us a new people: as a people of love, we will serve you with joy."

- As we close, it is my privilege to bless you in the words of Scripture (Nu 6:24-26): "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you his peace. Amen"
1. WORKS CONSULTED

1.1 Books


Baptist Theological College. [s a]. *Baptist Principles.* Johannesburg: BTC.


Barker, S (et.al.) 1985. *Good things come in small groups.* Downers Grove: IVP.


Dillistone, F W 1955. *Christianity and symbolism.* London: SCM.


1.2 Theses


1.3 Periodicals


1.4 Tapes


2. WORKS CONSTITUTING BACKGROUND READING

2.1 Books


Jackson, C [sa] *Do this...* Melbourne: Clifford Press.


### 2.2 Theses


### 2.3 Periodicals


Miller, L D. 1955. The use and abuse of symbols. The Lutheran Quarterly. 7(3), 268-270.


