

**BAPTIST IDENTITY IN ECUMENICAL
CONTEXT**

**A Critical Exposition of the 1987 Statement on Baptist Principles
of the Baptist Union of South Africa.**

by

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ABSTRACT

BAPTIST IDENTITY IN ECUMENICAL CONTEXT is, essentially, an exposition of the 1987 Statement on Baptist Principles of the Baptist Union of South Africa. The Statement has had no critical reflection given it to date and therefore this study is a new contribution to the growing corpus of material on Baptist theology in South Africa.

The thesis explains the identity of South African Baptists using the key word discipleship. Though not stated as such, the 1987 Statement on Baptist Principles is an expression of discipleship. Discipleship is described and critically analysed in the thesis as community, its sign as baptism, ministry is discipleship expressed in society, and freedom is the term given to denote the focus on religious liberty and the separation of church from the state, as well as indicating the church's prophetic role. Drawing from the rich heritage of Anabaptist and English Baptist history and theology, and reflecting on other evangelical and ecumenical theological writings, the thesis shows the value of 'discipleship' as the motif for Baptists in the contemporary South African setting.

The thesis invites South African Baptists to re-discover this motif both in the context of their own tradition and in their relations with other Christian churches.

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INTRODUCTION

BAPTIST IDENTITY IN ECUMENICAL CONTEXT

This thesis describes and critically interprets Baptist identity with special reference to the South African context. The 1987 Statement on Baptist Principles of the Baptist Union of South Africa (BUSA) is the special focus of this description and critical interpretation. No exposition of the 1987 Statement has been made to date, nor has any study on discipleship as the key to understanding Baptist identity and ecclesiology been done in South Africa. This thesis, therefore, is a new contribution to the understanding of Baptist Principles in the South African context.

The 1987 Statement indicates what the BUSA believes about being 'Baptist'. Hence the Statement reflects the identity of the BUSA. In seeking to capture the essence of these Principles it has become clear to me that 'discipleship' is the most appropriate motif to use. This motif is not used in the Statement but, as we hope to show, it is the most accurate one.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann suggest that identity

is formed by social processes. Once crystallized, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure.¹

We will be arguing that South African Baptists, particularly those within the BUSA, need to forge a contemporary identity by

1. P. Berger and T. Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1966, p. 194.

recognising and utilising the social and (particularly) theological forces which have influenced their history and current context. To our mind, only then will the BUSA be able to say with Paul Avis that "our identity is our conviction that we are part of the meaning of things. It is where we fit."²

J.N. Jonsson suggests that Baptists "fit" by identifying "themselves with the common heritage of all true believers and disciples of Jesus Christ."³ Further, the Declaration of Principle, which is the basis of the BUSA, claims among other matters "that it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ"⁴ These two observations suggest that for the BUSA 'believer' and 'disciple' are synonyms.

The discipleship motif was used and developed by Stuart Akers in 1984 as his BUSA Presidential theme. Akers asserted that

Discipleship for the Christian is a lifelong commitment to Jesus Christ, to his person, work, teaching, and Spirit. It involves putting into practice all he taught and commanded.⁵

At the following year's Assembly, the commendation given to Mr Akers for his ministry as President included this comment about discipleship:

No other theme is to be compared to this as a worthy objective for our Baptist people; none states more clearly what has been

2. P. Avis, Anglicanism and the Christian Church. Minneapolis: Fortress. 1989, p. 1.

3. History of the Baptist Union of South Africa, (ed) S.Hudson-Reed. Pietermaritzburg: SA Baptist Historical Society. 1977, p. 31.

4. BU Handbook for 1993-4, p. 228.

5. BU Handbook for 1984-5, p. 177-8.

the mainspring of our Baptist life and witness from the days of our forefathers; none makes a more vital contribution to our nation in these troubled and critical days.⁶

Discipleship (presumably meaning 'Christian life' in this context) is the "mainspring" of Baptist life, but what exactly the BUSA considers as the content of discipleship is not stated clearly. In continuity with this, we will be arguing that the 1987 Statement on Baptist Principles should be regarded as a statement on discipleship.⁷ In support of this, the Declaration of Principle, which of course came many years before the 1987 Statement, indicates that 'witness' is a feature of Baptist identity and discipleship. Further, it can be noted from both Akers' comment and the commendation that the BUSA uses the term 'discipleship' in the context of growth as a Christian.

In subsequent years, however, the focus on discipleship did not recur, nor did Presidential themes or union sermons reflect its centrality. At the same time various study programmes on discipleship became popular within the BUSA. Two especially have dominated: MasterLife and Evangelism Explosion.⁸ Whilst these courses are valuable in some ways to sustain the idea of discipleship, they have evolved a different mindset on the subject, one in which discipleship is a privatised personal growth programme rather than a determined following of the teachings and practices of Jesus in the struggles of daily life

6. BU Handbook for 1985-6, p. 85.

7. In the next chapter we will be defining 'discipleship' more clearly. These remarks seek to set the scene.

8. Avery T. Willis, MasterLife: Discipleship Training for Leaders. Nashville: Sunday School Board, SBC, 1982; D. James Kennedy, Evangelism Explosion. Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1983.

in concrete social settings.⁹ Such a privatised discipleship has little or no relationship to the social and political issues that affect the church and the communities it serves.

It is our contention that, even though discipleship was not inherent in the original issue that brought about the Statement, nor was it part of the discussion that produced it, the distinctives enunciated in the 1987 Statement on Baptist Principles are in fact expressions of a Baptist understanding of discipleship. All the material available suggests this. At the same time it is observed that these distinctives, as they stand, lack ecumenical depth and richness due to the BUSA's unwillingness to interact ecumenically. This thesis seeks to understand Baptist distinctiveness and retrieve the tradition by interpreting Baptist Principles as discipleship in ecumenical dialogue.

Since South African Baptists tend to be individualistic and favour strict autonomy in their congregations, notwithstanding a certain agreement in name and baptismal practice, the perspectives offered here may not necessarily be in keeping with other Baptist viewpoints. However, nothing stated here should be regarded as purely idiosyncratic. In the process of this thesis we will be interacting with the 'world' of the Baptist family, both in the historical contexts of its beginnings and the present, particularly in South Africa. An inherent danger in an exercise like this is the inference that other denominational distinctives and ecclesiologies are inferior or wrong. Such a

9. On the problem of privatised religion within the BUSA see L. Kretzschmar, 'The Privatization of the Christian Faith amongst South African Baptists: with particular reference to its nature, extent, causes and consequences.' Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1992.

position is eschewed from the outset. The objective in this thesis is to reflect critically upon South African Baptist identity within the broader ecumenical situation.

It should be noted that considerable interest, and in some quarters concern, has been expressed in recent years about the identity of Baptists not only in South Africa, but in both the USA and in Great Britain.¹⁰

THE LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

We are proposing, then, the concept of 'discipleship' as the key to South African Baptist identity. We will be supporting this claim from both historical sources and theological statements, especially the 1987 Statement of Baptist Principles produced by the BUSA. In fact, the bulk of the thesis deals with an exposition of the 1987 Statement, arguing that the intent of the Statement is to describe Baptist discipleship, even though this is not the way Baptists in South Africa have always expressed it or understood it. Discipleship precedes doctrinal statements.¹¹

10. South African Baptists are not the only Baptist group in recent years to reflect on their contemporary identity. Baptists in the USA, for instance, have been doing work in this area also. See L.D. Hine, 'A Baptist Vision'. Foundations 20 (1977), pp 5-11; J.W. McClendon Jr, 'What Is A "baptist" Theology?' American Baptist Quarterly 1:1 (October, 1982), pp 16-39; the whole issue of American Baptist Quarterly 6, esp. #s 2 (June, 1987) pp 59-115 and 4 (December, 1987), pp 204-254; Review and Expositor 88:1 (Winter, 1991), pp 9-65. In Great Britain see Nigel Wright, Challenge to Change: A Radical Agenda for Baptists (Kingsway: Eastbourne, 1991); David Slater (ed), A Perspective on Baptist Identity (Mainstream: Kingsbridge, 1987); Brian Haymes, A Question of Identity: Reflections on Baptist Principles and Practice (Yorkshire Baptist Association: Headingley, 1986); Roger Hayden (ed), Baptist Union Documents, 1948-1977 (Baptist Historical Society: London, 1980); Michael A.G. Haykin, 'The Baptist identity: A View from the Eighteenth Century'. The Evangelical Quarterly LXVII:2 (April 1995).

11. See James Wm. McClendon 'What is "baptist" Theology?' American Baptist Quarterly 1:1 (October) 1982. McClendon's

Our research focuses on the 1987 Statement because it is an expression of Baptist identity even if not stated as such explicitly. Since no formal exposition of the Statement has been written to date, this thesis fulfills the need for such a study. Perhaps part of the reason for the lack of a thorough exposition is the seeming disinterest in ecclesiological identity by South African Baptists.

Given the breadth of thought within the BUSA, from Reformed to Charismatic, and all varieties in between, it is unlikely that the present interpretation will satisfy all factions in the denomination. Commenting on the influence of a wide variety of theologians (not all of whom are Baptist) on Baptist theology generally, Robert Handy has correctly stated that no one text "satisfies the many persuasions found in any or all Baptist groups."¹² If this is so in the American context, it is equally true in the South African setting. Hence, this thesis is an attempt to give a critical interpretation of Baptist identity of English-speaking Baptists within the BUSA. Afrikaans-speaking Baptists are not considered in this research.¹³

Systematic Theology: Doctrine (Abingdon: Nashville, 1994) is written from the perspective of discipleship. It supports my argument that discipleship is at the centre of a "baptist" vision (his use of lower case). See also Shirley C. Guthrie's review of this book in Theology Today 52:3 (October, 1995), p. 418-20, and McClendon's earlier work Systematic Theology: Ethics (Abingdon: Nashville, 1986).

12. R.T. Handy in W.H. Brackney (ed), Baptist Life and Thought: 100-1980. Judson: Valley Forge. 1983, p. 434.

13. The major reason for this exclusion is that whilst the Afrikaans sector of the BUSA (commonly referred to as the ABK, [Afrikaans Baptiste Kerk]) has had a politically conservative influence on the Union, it has not impacted the Union in terms of the issues dealt with in the thesis. Afrikaans Baptists may regard baptism more sacramentally than English-speaking Baptists do, but this has not influenced the latter's views. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of this issue.

Black Baptists within the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA)¹⁴ use English as a business lingua franca. Since some of the issues dealt with in this thesis concern the Convention, it is referred to. The BCSA has not set out its particular vision of Baptist identity to date,¹⁵ although some of its viewpoints are indicated in the Barkly West National Awareness Workshop.¹⁶ Critical observations on the BUSA made in that document are used where relevant.

Related to what has just been said, but separate in and of itself, is the Declaration of Ibadan.¹⁷ The preamble of that document states that the declaration is the fruit of grappling with the issues of "socio-human and missio-theological concerns affecting our co-operative mission".¹⁸ In the context of mission, however, it is clear that this declaration is also a statement on identity, for it affirms "partnership", it rejects "detached spirituality" and it relates to all areas of human life and

14. The Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA) is a separate denomination to the BUSA, although the Convention was a part of the Union until 1987 (Kretzchmar, PhD Thesis, p. 272). See Chapter 2 below for the discussion on the relationship between the two Baptist bodies.

15. A brief paper by Ruben Richards, 'In Search of Our Identity: Baptist Praxis in a Post-Apartheid South Africa', was offered to the BCSA in August 1994. This had more to do with the formulation of a Constitution than with the issue of "identity" per se, though it is true to say that the intent was to grapple with just who the BCSA is as distinct from the BUSA. It therefore touches a little on questions of identity as well as dealing with a Constitution.

16. The Barkly West National Awareness Workshop, (eds) D. Hoffmeister and B.J. Gurney. BCSA: Braamfontein, 1990.

17. Declaration of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, October 22, 1987. Consultation sponsored by the All-Africa Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist World Alliance Division of Evangelism and Education.

18. *ibid*, p. 1.

struggle.¹⁹ When the BUSA met in 1992 to discuss its denominational identity, the ensuing statement did not in any way reflect Ibadan, even though the two documents have a similar emphasis on 'mission'.²⁰

This, then, is an exposition and a critical interpretation of Baptist Principles. To 'critically interpret' means, in the first instance, examining the meaning and implications of the BUSA Principles, especially in the South African social context, from the perspective of what we have identified as the central focus of the tradition, namely, discipleship. Secondly, 'critically interpret' requires subjecting the Principles to ecumenical scrutiny. While the most often quoted Baptist theologians referred to in the thesis will be those whose books are used within the training institutions of the BUSA and other Baptist works, such a critical task requires engaging theologians from other traditions. It also requires relevant social and historical studies even though this study is fundamentally an exercise in systematic theology, not an historical, sociological, or an empirical work. Langdon Gilkey's comment on the task of theology is apt here. Gilkey asserts that

Merely to repeat past formulations is to abjure the theological task and to guarantee a theology that is anachronistic and thereby void of living meaning; for the task of theology is to express the message in contemporary form, in terms relevant and meaningful to its own time and place.²¹

19. *ibid*, p. 1,2,3.

20. According to the Revds Ellis André and Angelo Scheepers, both of whom were present at the Bloemfontein Consultation, the Ibadan document did not feature in discussions because it was unknown to them (conversation held on September 10, 1996).

21. L. Gilkey, Message and Existence. Seabury Press: Minneapolis. 1979, p. 17.

Thus, 'critical interpretation' should lead finally to the retrieval of Baptist identity, making it ecumenically relevant for our own day.

The Statement on Baptist Principles which now follows was accepted in 1987 after certain member churches of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa refused to be governed by the congregational principle. The whole issue of Baptist distinctives was then raised, and the distinguishing principles of Baptist life and order were published. Whilst the basic tenets of Baptist thought, and the basis for Union have been in print since the inception of the Baptist Union, it was only in the latter part of the nineteen eighties that a definitive statement on the distinctives needed to be published within the South African context. This, of course, indicates the common core of conviction held by Baptists since the formation of the BUSA in 1877. It also indicates the limitations of verbal tradition and suggests that historic convictions are not inviolable.

The following distinctives, then, are the focus of the discussion in this thesis. The Preamble is included to give the Statement's context.

THE 1987 STATEMENT ON BAPTIST PRINCIPLES

PREAMBLE: We as Baptists share many areas of our faith with other members of the professing Christian Church. These include a belief in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; in the supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ as Head of the Church; and in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and as final authority in all matters of faith and practice. There are however areas of principle and practice where we as Baptists make distinctive emphases arising out of our understanding of the Scriptures. It is to clarify these that the following statement is made.

We, as Baptists believe in:

1. The CHURCH as the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The local church, being a manifestation of the universal church, is a community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached and the ordinances of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed. It is fully autonomous, except insofar as it binds itself through voluntary association.
2. BELIEVER'S BAPTISM as an act of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and a sign of personal repentance, faith and regeneration; it consists of the immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. The principle of CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT, namely, that a constituted church meeting is, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the highest court of authority for the local church; and that each individual member has the inalienable right and responsibility to participate fully in the life and government of the church, including the appointment of its leaders.
4. The PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS, by which we understand that each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High priest, and shares with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, even to the end of the earth.
5. The principle of RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, namely that no individual should be coerced either by the State or by any secular, ecclesiastical or religious group in matters of faith. The right of private conscience is to be respected. For each believer this means the right to interpret the Scriptures responsibly and to act in the light of his conscience.
6. The principle of SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE in that, in the providence of God, the two differ in their respective natures and functions. The Church is not to be identified with the State nor is it, in its faith and practice, to be directed or controlled by the State. The State is responsible for administering justice, ensuring an orderly community, and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The Church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and care for all mankind.²²

22. Baptist Union of Southern Africa: Handbook for 1989-90. p. 178. In the light of our stated intention to "expound" these Principles, it should be noted that there are a number of problems which surface in the process of exposition, most of which are beyond the parameters of this thesis. However, where relevant, indications are made to these matters, without necessarily going into depth. This is particularly pertinent in Chapter 3 when dealing with baptism.

Three comments are important here. Firstly, it will be noted that within the text of this thesis the terms 'Principles' and 'Distinctives' are constantly used; these terms are synonymous. Secondly, the Statement says that South African Baptists 'believe in' these truths. It needs to be made clear that Baptists 'believe' these truths to be correct; they do not 'believe in' them, in the same way they 'believe in' Jesus Christ as Lord of life. This is not pedantry; the concept of 'believing in' something or some-one, denotes trust, confidence and reliance upon. Where Jesus Christ is concerned that trust, confidence, and reliance upon, is of prime importance for the forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to Almighty God as Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. The same cannot be said for denominational distinctives. This must not be construed as inconsistent with the convictions held nor to negate the validity of those distinctives. A better way of introducing the Statement would have been "We, as Baptists believe that ...". This would have cleared up any possible ambiguity. According to one of the researchers of this South African Statement, "We... believe that ..." is implied in the Statement and accepted as understood in the light of the context.²³ We would have preferred the assumption to be clearly stated. Thus we agree with G.C. Berkouwer, when he says:

Believing in God as the One Who is true, resting in Him with complete confidence, and abandoning oneself to Him form a particular mode of faith and trust that definitely cannot be applied in the same way to the Church.²⁴

23. Revd. Peter Holness, previously Principal of the Baptist Theological College, Cape Town, in a conversation with the writer.

24. G.C. Berkouwer, The Church. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids. 1976, p. 10. See also K. Barth, Dogmatics in Outline. SCM Press: London. 1966, p. 15ff.

The third observation is that nowhere in these Principles or Distinctives is the idea of 'discipleship' mentioned. This is partly because, we would argue, it is considered inherent to Baptist theology. But the current malaise within South African Baptist thought as to Baptist identity suggests that this core concept needs to be more pronounced.

Reference has already been made to the Revd. Stuart Akers' Presidential theme in 1984 and the fact that in the ensuing years little mention of the theme of discipleship was made. Certainly it was not a recurring nor a central theme in Assembly devotionals or papers. Furthermore, as indicated earlier, even though discipleship is regarded as concomitant with being a Baptist, contemporary South African Baptists have succumbed to a strongly programmatic approach to discipleship training. Using MasterLife, Evangelism Explosion,²⁵ and a host of programmes, usually imported from the USA, the BUSA places considerable emphasis on church outreach and growth.

Unfortunately, this programmatic approach has also resulted in the fact that discipleship, as properly understood within the historic Baptist tradition, is neither central nor wholistic any longer within the BUSA. This dissertation seeks to argue not only for the validity of discipleship as the key to Baptist identity and that the 1987 Statement is a legitimate expression of discipleship, but it also seeks to indicate where the BUSA has lost the original vision of the Baptist movement and to suggest ways to retrieve its identity.

25. See footnote 8 above.

THE GENESIS OF THE RESEARCH

There are three major reasons for the present research. The first, and perhaps the most important, is the ongoing discussion within the BUSA on various aspects of Baptist distinctiveness, or identity. In 1992, a selection of South African Baptists met to discuss their denominational identity, resulting in the Bloemfontein Consultation Report. The report made the following recommendations:

There is a need for a re-affirmation of the place of the Union to provide a national identity in which the churches of the Union do together what would be difficult or impossible to do separately.

The mission of the Union must be to fulfil the Great Commission, through missions, ministry, shared resources, and fellowship.

The leadership structure of the Union must be redesigned to give expression to the above vision....

Funding of those areas associated with Central Mission (eg Missions, Theological education, and central administration) should be by appeal directly to the churches....²⁶

These recommendations suggest that South African Baptist identity is inseparable from an understanding of 'mission as church growth through evangelism'. The 95 by 95 programme, a venture to establish 95 new congregations by 1995, was a direct result of the Bloemfontein Consultation.²⁷ This concurs with our view that the BUSA regards 'mission as church growth through evangelism' as its focus of identity. That mission thus understood is regarded as the focus of identity is not surprising given the BUSA's

26. From the unpublished report of the Bloemfontein Consultation, 17-20 February, 1992. Sanctioned by the Executive of the BUSA.

27. At the 1995 BUSA Assembly it was recorded that 107 congregations had been established.

privatised understanding of the gospel message. Evangelism creates disciples, disciples evangelise. However, as we will be arguing throughout this thesis, discipleship is, initially, the product of evangelism but it is discipleship for mission, and mission must be understood holistically. True discipleship embraces a far more holistic understanding of mission.²⁸

The inadequacy of 'mission as church growth through evangelism' as an identity motif for South African Baptists is borne out by its restriction to personal salvation and the planting of local churches and lacks comprehensiveness. This is illustrated by a comparison with the Ibadan Declaration, which is far more broadly based in its understanding of mission, as the following indicates:

We declare that it is a violation of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and His Christ to preach the redemptive love and saving goodness of God to people who are the victims of discrimination and injustice without addressing a prophetic word of protest against suppressive political systems which abuse human dignities in society.²⁹

The Bloemfontein Consultation five years later seems to have taken no note of this perspective. Notwithstanding their ignorance³⁰ of the Ibadan document, the BUSA seems to have deliberately excluded any ethical response to socio-political issues. Given the struggles in South Africa at the time it is

28. See David J. Bosch's discussion on various aspects of mission in relation to discipleship in Transforming Mission (Orbis: Maryknoll, 1991). Commenting on Matthew (p. 73) for instance, he maintains that "The theme of discipleship is central to Matthew's gospel and to Matthew's understanding of church and mission." Important too is p. 368-510 where he discusses a comprehensive "ecumenical missionary paradigm" rooted in the 'missio Dei'.

29. Declaration of Ibadan, p. 2 para 6.

30. See footnote 20 above.

tragic, if not reprehensible, that nothing of a prophetic nature was included. Hence what should have been an important feature of South African Baptist identity was overlooked.

The initial cause of the concern for identity started when it became evident that some 'charismatic' Baptist churches within the BUSA were moving away from the traditional, and generally accepted, Baptist practice of congregationalism. The matter came to a head at the Baptist Union Assembly meeting in Pietermaritzburg in 1984. At that Assembly the delegates overwhelmingly voted for congregationalism as fundamental to Baptist church order. With this decision, the Hatfield Baptist Church, under the leadership of the pastor, the Revd. Edmund Roebert, left the denomination. Along with the Hatfield congregation, four other churches also left. Following this Assembly, in June, 1985, churches were notified by the BUSA's General Secretary, that seven churches in total had withdrawn from the Union. The overall loss to the denomination was just under 4000 members (2849 from Hatfield alone), a considerable loss to a small denomination of 30,000 members.³¹

Notwithstanding the vote of confidence in congregationalism, a number of churches and ministers still grapple with the question of the biblical validity and practical viability of the Principle. The concept and role of elders in Baptist churches also continues to keep the question alive. Both the theological and the practical elements of congregationalism are continually discussed. Issues like 'power', 'authority', and 'rule' are hotly

31. BU Handbook, 1985-1986, p. 85. Statistics on p. 117ff in the same Handbook, esp. p. 126. See also the 'Open Letter To All Baptist Churches' from General Secretary, Revd. T.M. Swart, on behalf of the BU Executive, dated June 24, 1985.

debated. These matters will be critically interpreted in the relevant chapters of this thesis.

The second reason for this research is the lack of literature on the topic within the South African context. There is much material on ecclesiology in general, and even Baptist ecclesiology in particular, within the American and British contexts. However, thorough expositions of Baptist distinctives as such, are scarce. The ones best known tend to be dated.³² The newer books, again very few, are specifically American and British.³³ In the South African context, C.W. Parnell has produced a number of works on Baptists and their beliefs.³⁴ These books and pamphlets are of a more popular nature, and while excellent for their purpose, they are not regarded as in-depth, critical theological literature. Indeed there is a dearth of solid literature in general, and nothing in the context of South Africa, apart from two sets of notes existing in the Colleges, one in Johannesburg and the other in Cape Town, and the popular

32. Henry Cook, What Baptists Stand For, (Carey Kingsgate Press: London, 1961); H. Wheeler Robinson, Baptist Principles, (Carey Kingsgate Press: London, 1938); Hershel Hobbs, Baptist Faith and Message, (Convention Press: Nashville, 1971). The first two are out of print, as far as is known. Hobbs' book is inadequate as a manual on Baptist identity, even though it has been used as a text for a course on Baptist Principles in the Baptist College of Cape Town.

33. In the American context: W.H. Brackney, The Baptists. Greenwood Press: New York, 1988; S.J. Grenz, The Baptist Congregation. Judson Press: Valley Forge, 1985; N.H. Maring and W.S. Hudson, A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice. Judson Press: Valley Forge, 1963. In the British context: B. Haymes, A Question of Identity: Reflections on Baptist Principles and Practice. The Yorkshire Baptist Association: Headingley, 1986; D. Slater (ed), A Perspective on Baptist Identity. Mainstream: Kingsbridge, 1987.

34. C.W. Parnell, Being a Baptist. Baptist Publishing House: Roodepoort, 1980; and Baptist Vision in Southern Africa. Baptist Publishing House: Roodepoort, 1991.

works already mentioned. Nonetheless, such writings do indicate what South African Baptists believe, and as such they provide us with important resources for our research. More recently Louise Kretzschmar of the Baptist Convention, and Gordon Miller and Kevin Roy of the BUSA have written doctoral theses on aspects of Baptist theology, some of which will be referred to in our work.³⁵ None of them, however, has dealt with the topic of discipleship in the context of ecclesiology and identity, nor has any dealt in depth with the 1987 Statement on Baptist Principles.

The third reason for this research is the need to participate in the broader ecumenical discussion on faith and order. "Ecumenical discussion" is not meant to suggest an objective which results in a world church governed by Rome, as is often feared by Baptists, nor does it mean mere occasional interdenominational co-operation, as usually practised by Baptists. It does mean conscientiously interacting with other Christian Churches and ecumenical bodies on local and international levels. Specifically it means participating in the WCC and SACC, together with their academic, denominational and ecumenical theologians, with the intention of grappling with issues of faith, unity, order, inclusivity and empowerment. This is over and above discussions with like-minded evangelical bodies like the All-Africa Baptist Fellowship, Baptist World Alliance, and The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa.

Baptist identity in South Africa has developed in an ecumenical vacuum. One major reason for this has been the lack of ecumenical involvement by the BUSA. This was institutionalised in 1976 when the Assembly meeting in Pretoria voted to withdraw from

35. See the bibliography for details.

observer status in the South African Council of Churches (SACC).³⁶ In our opinion, however, ecumenical dialogue is critically important for the future of Baptist identity.³⁷ Ecumenical involvement is all the more important in the light of the new political structures in South Africa. If Baptists want to contribute to the moral and spiritual renewal of this country, they will need to participate in the broad stream of Christian expression.³⁸ Hence, throughout this thesis we interact not only with the worldwide family of Baptists, but also with theologians from other traditions. In the chapters dealing with baptism and ministry, for example, we interact with the World Council of Churches' BEM document.³⁹

It is our conviction that the BUSA should be involved in the ecumenical arena not only to be informed of the wider church's activities and thinking, but also as an expression of common Christian discipleship. The BUSA would be enriched by the

36. The South African Baptist Magazine, November, 1976, p. 29, reporting on the Assembly proceedings, reads: "The resolution, tabled at the last Assembly, calling for the withdrawal of the Baptist Union of South Africa from Observer Membership of the SA Council of Churches was adopted by 194 votes to 48." This proposal had been put forward by the Executive at the previous year's Assembly, but was amended to be tabled at the 1976 Assembly, which it duly was (See SAB Nov., 1975, p. 17).

37. It is important to note that our concern for ecclesiology and discipleship within the BUSA relates directly to current ecumenical discussions within the WCC (Faith and Order) on ethics and ecclesiology. See Ethics and Ecclesiology: Costly Commitment (eds) T.F. Best and M. Robra. Geneva: WCC, 1995, p. 65-66. Also the earlier and related material contained in Koinonia and Justice, Peace and Creation: Costly Unity (eds) T.F. Best and W. Granberg-Michaelson. Geneva WCC, 1993 and On the Way to Fuller Koinonia (eds) T.F. Best and G. Gassman. Geneva: WCC, 1994.

38. By this is meant traditions other than evangelical. The BUSA is a member of the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA).

39. W.H. Lazareth and N. Nissiotis (eds), Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. Geneva: WCC. 1982.

broader contact and would, hopefully, contribute meaningfully to ecumenical thinking in return. Although the BUSA has difficulty with the SACC, theologically and with its praxis, its withdrawal from fellowship and discussion could be construed as schismatic. No one church agrees fully with all the others, but for the sake of obeying Christ's call for unity, there should be a positive entering into dialogue and fellowship. Diversity within unity is not denied in the ecumenical movement.

Some South African Baptists have responded to the call for greater involvement in ecumenism by arguing that unity is theological, not pragmatic. There is a perception within the BUSA that the SACC, for instance, has little real sympathy with evangelicalism so that no real fellowship is possible. Such a perception was expressed in the editorial of the South African Baptist Magazine for November, 1976, which stated how "difficult (it was) to conduct meaningful dialogue with those who speak a different theological language to our own."⁴⁰ And at the Assembly meeting in Stellenbosch in October, 1994, it was decided that no further discussions regarding the SACC should be tabled.

"Meaningful fellowship", for the BUSA would exclude particularly Roman Catholics and churches regarded as theologically 'liberal'. Yet ecumenical involvement demands the risk of interaction with churches which are different, and this means becoming exposed to traditions like Roman Catholicism. 'Rome' and 'liberalism' are subjects which evoke considerable antipathy amongst Baptists in the BUSA. But since Roman Catholics

40. Allen C. Townsend (then Editor of the SAB), 'A Problem of Semantics'. Editorial in The South African Baptist, November 1976, p. 3.

are becoming increasingly involved ecumenically,⁴¹ the BUSA must face its historical antagonisms and grapple meaningfully with the issues at hand.

South African Baptists are wary of Roman Catholic bona fides, however, notwithstanding certain positive evidences within Vatican II documents. In this regard they would share the concerns of Baptist theologian Harvey Cox. In The Silencing of Leonardo Boff: The Vatican and the Future of World Christianity, Cox, though far more liberal than most South African Baptists, gives a portrait of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This particular office was once named the Congregation of the Holy Inquisition of Heretical Error. The following quotation is given to reveal how Cox perceives an entrenched mediaeval Roman Catholicism in Ratzinger's thought. Cox maintains that Ratzinger

expresses concern that in recent inter-church discussions Catholics have sometimes lost sight of the unique eucharistic authority Christ himself bestowed on their own church's bishops and priests: hence he strongly supports Rome's renewed refusal to allow "intercommunion". He endorses a revitalized veneration of Mary.... He also advocates the praying of the Rosary.... He finds much to commend in Catholic "charismatic" movements, but warns that those involved in them should steer clear of meetings with Protestants.⁴²

Added to Cox's concerns is evidence that the conciliar voices of Vatican II do not have support from many Roman Catholic

41. Edward Yarnold draws attention to Pope John Paul II's comment: "the commitment of the Catholic Church to the ecumenical movement ... is irreversible." In Search of Unity. St Paul: Slough, 1989, p. 15. See also K. Rahner and H. Fries, Unity in the Church: an actual possibility. Fortress: Philadelphia, 1985.

42. H. Cox, The Silencing of Leonardo Boff: The Vatican and the Future of World Christianity. Collins: London. 1988, p. 81.

leaders. In the popular news magazine Time there was a report on responses to a new Roman Catholic catechism. The article maintains that the catechism "seems to back away from some of the key ecumenical language adopted by the 1962-65 Second Vatican Council".⁴³ Of particular importance to the theme of this dissertation, the article stated that

While Vatican II declared that the true church of Christ 'subsists' in the Roman Catholic Church, implying that there is a place for other Christians, the Catechism uses an exclusionary phrase, 'has its existence in'.⁴⁴

For the BUSA, such publicised evidence of renewed anti-Protestantism and exclusivism by some of the highest leaders in the church of Rome, creates an impression which is not conducive to any real and meaningful fellowship. This is further exacerbated by the recent Vatican pronouncement that

a reunited church must be built upon a papacy that is a God-given, "permanent" institution with "universal" jurisdiction, "directly founded" by Jesus Christ.⁴⁵

According to this report, the "text also asserts the Pope's personal power to teach infallibly on faith and morals."⁴⁶ The report brought forth considerable expressions of disappointment, especially from the Anglican and Orthodox communities.⁴⁷

43. Time Magazine. April 16, 1990. p. 51.

44. *ibid.*

45. Time Magazine. December 16, 1991. p. 51.

46. *ibid.*

47. *ibid.*

Notwithstanding this reported retrogression, Vatican II has had a far-reaching impact on the church of Rome, and there is much that South African Baptists can be sympathetic towards in some contemporary Roman Catholic theological thinking. Some of Leonardo Boff's theological perspectives⁴⁸ are similar to historic Baptist perspectives, as are some of Hans Küng's views on the Church.⁴⁹ Since their theologies create an opportunity to enter dialogue, South African Baptists should enter in meaningfully. Even though one reads, with sadness, that both Boff and Küng have been disciplined by the Vatican for allegedly being 'too Protestant', they are still regarded as representative of the more ecumenical Catholic thought. Boff has resigned from the priesthood⁵⁰ and Küng has been deprived of his teaching post.⁵¹ Without disregarding the negatives, the BUSA must endeavour to interact with these and other Catholic thinkers. Boff states that "there is undeniably a grave crisis within the Roman Catholic Church as it stands".⁵² Boff then appeals to his sympathizers not to be discouraged, but to

help the institutional Church to be more evangelical, compassionate, human and committed to the liberty and liberation of the sons and daughters of God. Let us walk with eyes wide open so that we may discern in the present the signs

48. L. Boff, Church: Charism and Power. SCM Press: London, 1985; and EcclesioGenesis. Collins: London, 1986.

49. H. Küng, The Church. Search Press: London, 1968.

50. See the shortened version of Boff's letter of resignation in Challenge, #8, August, 1992, p. 12-13.

51. See Küng's article 'Why I remain a Catholic', in Journal of Ecumenical Studies 17:1, Winter 1980, p. 141.

52. Boff, in Challenge, p. 13.

of a new world wanted by God and within it a new way of being the Church, communal, popular, liberating and ecumenical.⁵³

As with Boff, K ng is clearly hurt by the way he was deprived from his teaching post.⁵⁴ But what is important for South African Baptists here is K ng's ecumenism and openness. He says

I was born into this Catholic Church: baptized, it is true, into the much larger community of all those who believe in Jesus Christ. ... I have always contended inside and outside the Church for a petrine ministry - purged however of absolutist features - on biblical foundations. ... It would be a primacy, not in the spirit of a Roman imperialism with religious trimmings ... but a primacy in the spirit of Jesus Christ⁵⁵

Referring to the faculty at T bingen, K ng claims that in that context Catholic theology took on "a truly ecumenical character", combining "loyalty to the Catholic heritage and openness to Christendom - in fact to the ecumenical world as a whole."⁵⁶ Further,

discussion, particularly with Protestant colleagues, was of decisive importance, not in order to disparage Catholic reality, still less to squander it, but in an ecumenical spirit to throw new light on it from the Gospel and to gain a deeper understanding of it.⁵⁷

Many South African Baptists feel that secular political issues seem to predominate within the SACC. They are concerned

53. *ibid.*

54. K ng, in *JES* 17:1, Winter, 1980, p. 141.

55. *ibid.*, p. 142.

56. *ibid.*, p. 143.

57. *ibid.*

with the way the Council uses its time, energy, and authority to become involved in the political processes within South Africa. They believe that involvement in these processes is due to theologically 'liberal' convictions which maintain that social, economic, and political concerns are of prime importance, over against evangelical proclamation. This is not only seen as liberal denial of gospel teaching, but also as a violation of the Baptist principle of separation of church and state. Examples of such sentiment can be noted in the letters to the editor of Baptists Today, the news broadsheet for the BUSA.⁵⁸ Undoubtedly such protests indicate a desire for the status quo to remain. At the same time the BUSA has not denied the need for churches to discuss political issues. But, it is maintained, the Christian gospel is more than politics. While Christians must be involved as salt and light in society, if there is no proclamation of the fundamentals, or essentials, of the Faith, then no amount of social change will help needy sinners be reconciled to God.

South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, for one, would respond to these Baptists by asserting that social justice, i.e. the application of Christian ethics, is fundamental to the gospel. So, in speaking of the church, Archbishop Tutu can say

It is an agent and foretaste of the kingdom of God proclaiming His lordship over all aspects of life, political, economic and social, destroying all false dichotomies, reminding all that our citizenship is of heaven and that human history matters and counts because it is the arena of the divine activity and is one that moves to a telos, an end, a glorious consummation when God will be all in all.⁵⁹

58. See the updated appendices to E. André, 'A Baptist View of Church and State'. Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984.

59. D.M. Tutu, Hope and Suffering. Skotaville Publishers: Johannesburg. 1983, p. 109.

Thus, for the Archbishop, if the gospel has no application to a particular area of life, it is defective. Further, if the preaching of the gospel does not include application to society in its widest sense, then such proclamation is defective. The implication of Archbishop Tutu's comment for the BUSA is clear: their perception of the Gospel as dealing solely or even primarily with the 'spiritual', is a truncated gospel. When one considers the earlier Baptist testimony in society, present day Baptists in South Africa have not followed their forebears.⁶⁰ If discipleship is the hallmark of Baptist faith and life, then such a withdrawal from society and such disjunction of faith and life, constitutes a considerable weakening of the historical position on discipleship.

CONCLUSION

In this introduction we have given the reasons for researching this thesis: fundamentally the BUSA needs to articulate a theology of identity if it is to be on the cutting edge of prophetic ministry in South Africa in its present context. At the same time the BUSA, in our opinion, has a desperate need to renew its formal ecumenical relations with the SACC. Then it can take its place with the wider Christian community in helping create a new society in South Africa.

We have stated that discipleship is the essence of Baptist identity. This observation is the basis for the following chapters in which the Baptist view of discipleship is developed.

60. For instance, William Carey in India, Richard Knibb in the Caribbean, and more recently Martin Luther King, Jnr, in the USA, all of whom included social aspects in their ministry, simply because they were inherent to the Gospel, not secondary.

We believe that Stuart Akers is correct in his suggestion that discipleship is a life-long process of obedience to Jesus Christ. This life of obedience is informed by Holy Scripture, guided and influenced by the ever present Holy Spirit, and worked out in concrete human contexts. It is a process which affects the totality of life, beginning with personal piety, and having social implications. Discipleship must include the definitive proclamation of Christ's redemptive work, be committed to an open ecclesiology, be willing to participate in both spiritual and social liberation, and have the courage to continue to reform current structures and practices.

We are arguing that South African Baptists need to view their distinctive principles as expressions of discipleship, thus making them truly part of their daily lives. Currently, Baptist Principles are, in large measure, merely doctrinal statements with little or no relevance to daily life. Discipleship as defined here is, moreover, not a Baptist concept only. It is ecumenical by definition and needs to be examined in relation to the wider Christian church.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER CONTENTS

Chapter one focuses on the historical, ecumenical and hermeneutical background to our discussion and this is critical for a contextual understanding of Baptists and their theology. The chapter also includes an exposition of the theme of discipleship, which sets the scene for the ensuing analysis of the BUSA's 1987 Statement of Baptist Principles. The next four chapters (chapters two through five) then provide the critical interpretation of the 1987 Statement. Chapter two is entitled

'Discipleship as Community', and deals with Baptist ecclesiology. For Baptists, the church is a fellowship of committed baptized disciples; it is the body to which they belong and give prime allegiance as an expression of devotion to Christ. Allied to this doctrine of the church is the Baptist view of baptism. Hence, chapter three discusses baptism as the sign of discipleship and belonging to the church. Baptists claim it is only through believer's baptism that people can formally belong to the body. But our concern is not about baptism per se. Our discussion involves an evaluation of Baptist responses to the World Council of Church's important document Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM). While the BUSA as such made no response to BEM, Kevin Roy, a South African Baptist teaching at the Cape Town Baptist Theological College has recently written a thesis on baptism in which he includes an analysis of the BEM.⁶¹ We will be referring to Roy's work as well as the responses from Baptist material from around the world. An exposition on the place of children in Baptist baptismal theology is also presented.

Chapter four brings clauses three and four of the 1987 Statement together. The reason for this is that both congregational church government and the priesthood of all believers are inextricably interlocked. Hence we have entitled the chapter 'Discipleship as Ministry'. The service of ministry is seen by all members participating in governing the church, and all members have some gift or gifts from the Spirit to

61. K. Roy, 'Baptism, Reconciliation and Unity - Towards a Mutual Acceptance of Baptismal Differences.' Unpublished D.Th. Thesis, UNISA, Pretoria, 1994. The Afrikaans Baptist, Izak van der Walt has also written on a similar theme: 'Die Beoordeling van Enkele Moderne Ekumeniese Doopdiskussies'. Unpublished DTh thesis, UNISA, 1990. See the discussion in Chapter 3 below.

effectively witness to Christ and serve the community. Thus this chapter deals with women and men in service, in leadership, and in the ordained ministry, as well entering the ecumenical dialogue of a "mutually recognised ministry".

The final two clauses of the 1987 Statement make up the subject of the fifth chapter of the thesis. Under the heading 'Discipleship as Freedom' we seek to give an exposition of the clauses on religious liberty and church/state relations. In many of the manuals on Baptist polity it is clear that religious liberty is the basis for the church being a free entity before the law of the state, regardless of the country within which the church is located. We will also be arguing for the church to be free to be truly prophetic in its witness to the state. The sixth and final chapter of the thesis is a summation and a proposal for a visionary Baptist identity in ecumenical context.

A PERSONAL WORD

Until 1993 I had been a member of a Baptist congregation since 1970. I became a Pastor of a Baptist congregation in 1973 and was eventually ordained under the auspices of the BUSA in 1979. From 1979 to 1982 I taught full-time at the Baptist Bible Institute, Debe Nek, Ciskei, and from 1989 taught at the Cape Town Baptist Theological College on a part-time basis for three years. At the Cape Town College I taught Baptist Principles. Apart from these teaching posts, I pastored three Baptist congregations full-time, and during my time in the Ciskei, I pastored part-time also.

Over the years I have been concerned about various aspects of Baptist faith and life. Teaching the history and principles of Baptist identity and researching this thesis (from 1991) brought me to a crisis point. What I believed Baptists ought to be and do, what I had been trying to inculcate in the congregations I pastored, and what I wanted to communicate to the students I taught seemed a far cry from what was practiced by other Baptists within the Union.

It was eventually obvious that the interests I had would not be considered by the wider BUSA family. Further, I realised that I had moved from where most Baptists in the Union were on these and other matters. I was disillusioned with the Union's inability or unwillingness to grasp the ecumenical nettle and its lack of participation in being a truly prophetic voice in society. My life and ministry among the Baptists therefore ended in April, 1993, when I sought membership and accreditation within the Anglican Communion (Church of the Province of South Africa [CPSA]). I was licenced as Lay Minister in charge of a parish, then ordained Deacon in March, and Priest in December, 1994.

This was no easily performed transition. The differences between a Baptist and an Anglican ecclesiology cannot be glossed over in a perfunctory manner. I grappled long and hard over some of the issues, not least the perennial conflict over infant and believer baptism. Having experienced some of the worst features of congregationalism as practiced by South African Baptists, episcopacy was not too difficult to accept. The CPSA has moved towards negotiation and consensus in decision making. Hence, when it comes to placing priests in parishes there is considerable evaluation and discussion rather than an authoritarian decision

by a bishop. My current regional bishop has given me assurances that my evangelical perspectives will be honoured.

There is obvious sadness over the loss of contact, fellowship, and friendships built up over almost twenty years of ministry. I will always cherish my time within the Baptist family. The critical character of this thesis is not one of antagonism but is a burden that pleads with the Baptist Union to recognise the need to have an identity true to its roots and one which seeks to relate within the ecumenical and social contexts of the late 1990s.

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CHAPTER ONE

FOUNDATIONS FOR BAPTIST IDENTITY

In this chapter the historical and ecumenical backgrounds of South African Baptist (BUSA) identity are described, together with the theological and philosophical presuppositions that are inherent to the BUSA's denominational consciousness. We also give a fuller description of discipleship, which we believe is the core of South African Baptist identity. We will be arguing that South African Baptists need to see their Statement of Principles as an expression of discipleship, and to see that this is in keeping with their historical heritage.

In anticipation, we affirm that discipleship is a life-long process of obedience to Jesus Christ. Such obedience is informed by Holy Scripture, guided and influenced by the ever present Holy Spirit, and worked out in concrete historical contexts. It is a process which affects the totality of life, beginning with personal piety and having social implications. Discipleship must include the definitive proclamation of Christ's redemptive work, be committed to an open ecclesiology, be willing to participate in both spiritual and social transformation, and have the courage to continue to reform current structures and practices.

Notwithstanding their particular origins, Baptists have always considered themselves as belonging to the catholic (universal) church, and that their Principles are consistent with Scripture and the Catholic Faith. Robert T. Handy makes this point in the following way:

Baptists are evangelical Protestants who accept trinitarian Christianity and believe in the sovereignty of God, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and

the authority of the Bible. While there have been differences on how to interpret these points, they mark the perimeters of the Baptist family.¹

These theological affirmations would be accepted by most, if not all, Christian bodies, Protestant and Roman Catholic.

Together with these convictions, South African Baptists claim a testimony that they have proclaimed to the church and the world the need for 'following Jesus' in a particular manner: that of convinced discipleship. Hence, some Baptists see the essence of Christianity as 'discipleship'.² Being a 'disciple' is the hallmark of being Christian and Baptist. This concept has been stated in the introduction, summarised in the second paragraph of this chapter, and will be explained more fully later in this chapter.

To appreciate the Baptist understanding of discipleship, we need to know something of its origins in Baptist history. For this reason we will reflect briefly on the Anabaptist and English Baptist links and then specifically focus a little on the South African context. While this is not a study in church history, systematic theology cannot neglect historical reflection. This is true for Baptist theology and its understanding of discipleship.

HISTORICAL ROOTS

The debate surrounding sixteenth century Anabaptist influences on Baptist origins is long and involved. Even Baptists

1. Robert T. Handy, 'The Baptist Family: A Heritage of Faith'. Review and Expositor 84:4 (Fall), 1987, p. 597.

2. As suggested by Stuart Akers and J.N. Jonsson, referred to in the Introduction, and which will be amplified later on in this chapter.

sympathetic to the connections are cautious. For instance, William R. Estep maintains that to

claim that Baptists ... are direct descendants of the Anabaptists is to assume that similarity of belief proves causal connections. Such a relationship is assumed from some thing other than historical evidence.³

Stanley J. Grenz also acknowledges the lack of documentation as to any "direct influence" on English Baptists by the Anabaptists.⁴ By contrast, Baptist historian William L. Lumpkin accepts Anabaptist influences on Baptist origins. This is clear from both his presentation of Anabaptist material and his comments. Lumpkin begins his book by saying that the "Baptist movement appeared in Europe in connection with the left wing of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century."⁵ Whilst Lumpkin acknowledges that it cannot be proved categorically that the Baptists had a "genetic connection" with the Anabaptists, he argues that Baptist teachings are so similar to those of the Waldenses, the Lollards, and Anabaptism that to deny the influence is pointless.⁶ Overall, Lumpkin maintains, "the primary streams of English Baptist thought are ... traceable to the old native evangelicalism, to Anabaptism, and to Calvinism."⁷ Furthermore, Lumpkin asserts that by 1562 some 30,000 Dutch

3. W.R. Estep, The Anabaptist Story. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1975, p. 203.

4. S.J. Grenz, The Baptist Congregation. Valley Forge: Judson, 1985, p. 76.

5. W.L. Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith. Valley Forge: Judson, 1969, p. 11.

6. *ibid*, p. 11-12.

7. *ibid*, p. 16.

people lived in England, many of whom were Anabaptists. Lumpkin states that between 50,000 and 100,000 Dutch refugees were in England during the struggle of the Netherlands against Alva.⁸ Given the turmoil of those times in England, it is difficult to believe that the large number of Anabaptists living there had no influence whatsoever.

There is evidence, according to Glen Stassen, of Anabaptist influences on the Particular Baptists.⁹ Stassen concludes his study by asserting that Particular Baptists are indebted to Anabaptism for, amongst other truths,

such doctrines as believer's baptism, the meaning of baptism as signifying death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, immersion, Christology, and that large area ... called the application of the gospel to the believer.¹⁰

Thus, it is interesting to note just how many Baptist historians and theologians do indeed root Baptist origins in Anabaptist thought and practice - not solely nor totally, yet at least partially and assuredly. R.G. Torbert has captured the point when he states that

with respect to the relationship between Anabaptists and Baptists, it is safe to say that the latter are the spiritual descendents of some of the former.¹¹

8. *ibid*, p. 13.

9. G.H. Stassen, 'Anabaptist Influences on the Origins of Particular Baptists'. Mennonite Quarterly Review 36 (October), 1962.

10. *ibid*, p. 348.

11. Quoted in D.E. Smucker, 'Walter Rauschenbusch and Anabaptist Historiography'. The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision, (ed) G. Hershberger. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1957, p. 301.

The evidence for Baptist origins to be found within Anabaptism, then, whilst not fully conclusive, is at least reasonably convincing. Ernest Payne, a British Baptist historian, and an ardent proponent of this theory, wrote a booklet on the theme.¹² Of the nineteen pages, fourteen are taken up with the Anabaptists, and the remaining five pages deal with modern Baptists. There is no doubt as to Payne's position.

In the South African setting, John N. Jonsson writes, "The early Baptists ... called themselves 'nachfolge Christi', the followers of Christ."¹³ Jonsson uses this same terminology in an earlier section of his article when he describes the Anabaptists as "the forerunners of the modern free church movement, and the people called Baptists."¹⁴ Thus there is justification for drawing the essence of the "Baptist Movement" - discipleship, from the Continental Anabaptists, for discipleship was the distinctive of Anabaptism.¹⁵ Certainly, John Smythe, the acknowledged founder of modern Baptist churches, was influenced by the Dutch Waterlander Mennonites.¹⁶ It was due to this influence that Smythe questioned the validity of his self-baptism and his congregation's independency. Smythe entered into negotiations with the Mennonites which caused a rift between himself and Thomas Helwys, his co-leader.

12. E.A. Payne, The Baptist Movement in the Reformation and Onwards. London: The Kingsgate press. nd.

13. J.N. Jonsson (ed), The New Disciple. Roodepoort: BUCED. 1976, p. 41.

14. *ibid*, p. 10.

15. My emphasis here, but see H.Bender, 'The Anabaptist Vision', in The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision.

16. W.H. Brackney, The Baptists. New York: The Greenwood Press. 1988, p. 5, 38.

Another South African Baptist historian, Sydney Hudson-Reed, in his thesis on Dutch Anabaptism¹⁷ has concluded that "it is difficult to deny a kinship between these two movements (Anabaptism and Baptist), even if it not possible to plot a common family tree in their history."¹⁸ He comes to this conclusion after protracted discussion on the issues at stake during which he seems to hold to a far stronger conviction as to Anabaptist influence on the Baptist movement than his final remark indicates. Certainly Louise Kretzschmar, also a South African Baptist, is convinced of the links and influences of Anabaptism on the Baptist movement.¹⁹ Further, David Hunter, an Australian Baptist who spent some time in South Africa among Baptists of both the BUSA and the Convention, argues for the link and the value of using Anabaptist history and theology to retrieve a contemporary Baptist identity.²⁰ The Black Baptist Convention of South Africa, in its effort to establish its identity, has used Anabaptist history as a mirror of its own

17. S. Hudson-Reed, 'Dutch Anabaptism', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Natal, 1989.

18. *ibid*, p. 232.

19. See her 'Pietism, Politics and Mission: An Examination of the Views and Activities of South African Baptists.' Missionalia 17:2 (August 1989), p. 104; 'The Neglected Heritage: An Examination of the Anabaptist Roots of the South African Baptist Churches.' Studia Historicae Ecclesiasticae 16:2, 1990; 'The Privatization of the Christian Faith amongst South African Baptists: with particular reference to its nature, extent, causes and consequences.' Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1992, p. 23, 76-87.

20. See his 'The Origin of Baptists with Special Reference to Anabaptists.' The Barkly West Awareness Workshop. Eds D. Hoffmeister and B.J. Gurney. Braamfontein: Baptist Convention, 1990.

struggle.²¹ With these supportive sentiments we agree, and root our understanding of Baptist discipleship in this context.

It is significant also that the German sociologist, Ernst Troeltsch, dubs the whole 'left wing' of the Reformation as the "Baptist Movement", with 'Anabaptism' denoting the Continental European and the more radical section of the movement. This seems to be borne out by Troeltsch's assertion that the "Anabaptist movement broke out in 1525, in Zurich, in radical reform circles", whereas in contrast to the radicalism of the Peasants' Revolt, "moderate Baptists ... constituted the main body of the movement."²² Perhaps what Troeltsch is indicating is that for him, as a sociologist, 'Baptist' and 'Anabaptist' are synonymous. The social emphases observed in these groups suggest this. In the light of the number of similar doctrines and practices common to both bodies, the links between them should not be overlooked. Yet just as Anabaptist historiography itself reveals a 'polygenesis' rather than a 'monogenesis',²³ so Baptist origins are to be found not only in Anabaptist, but also in Separatist and Calvinistic history.

We may add that together with the historical roots which are similar, there are, also, a number of theological similarities between the three groupings that give a sense of unity. We can see in each of these groups: a distinct understanding of the

21. See the various papers in the above document, as well as Hunter and Kretzschmar.

22. E. Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, Volume 2. Allen and Unwin: London. 1931, p. 703-4.

23. J.M. Stayer, W.O. Packull, and K. Depperman, 'From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins'. Mennonite Quarterly Review 49:2 (April), 1975.

nature of the church; baptism of believers only; congregationalism; priesthood of all believers; religious liberty; and, separation of church and state. All told, then, we maintain that to deny or even play down the Anabaptist roots and influences on Baptists generally and South African Baptists specifically, is unhistorical, unhelpful and misleading. Rather than deny these links the BUSA could benefit enormously by joyfully recognising them and exploiting them as much as possible for the forging of a contemporary dynamic identity.

Moving on from these European roots to the immediate African context, South African Baptist historians place Baptist beginnings in South Africa in the 1820s, with William Miller as the founder of the denomination.²⁴ Together with other Baptists and Wesleyans, Miller came from England to the Eastern Cape during 1820 on the immigrant ship Brilliant. The Baptist community started their first services in the Grahamstown area, and the church building, when finished, became the 'Mother Church'. This was a community that saw no reason to be different from its parent in England, since they were all English in every way save in their geographical setting.

It is noteworthy that apart from J.E. Ennals's brief history of the Missionary Society, none of the other BUSA histories refer, in any explicit way, to the theological continuities with the Baptist Union in Britain - they were simply taken for granted. Of the fledgling mission society in South Africa, Ennals

24. H.J. Batts, The Story of a 100 Years, 1820 - 1920, Being the History of the Baptist Church in South Africa. Cape Town: T. Maskew Miller. nd, p. 2. See also S. Hudson-Reed (ed), Together for a Century: The History of the Baptist Union of South Africa 1877 - 1977. Pietermaritzburg: S.A. Baptist Historical Society. 1977, p. 13.

states that the "young society was formed on the British model" yet independent.²⁵ The continuities between the two countries with respect to faith and life were, therefore, assumed. Even the conflicts were brought from Britain - hence the small fellowship had a variety of difficulties to contend with in those early days, especially the Arminian/Calvinist controversy, and the invariable splits due to this. The Declaration of Principle²⁶ which became the cornerstone of the Union when formed in 1877, was also drawn from the British parent body.²⁷ No specific reference to what we now refer to as 'contextualisation' can be noted in the histories. The reason being that it simply was not considered a necessity.

These early Baptists were vigorous in their evangelistic endeavours and within fifty years Baptist congregations were established in a number of towns in the Cape and Natal.²⁸ As time progressed, British Kaffraria became home to numbers of German migrants and former mercenaries who had served Britain in the German Legion during the Crimean War. In 1857 the first influx of German settlers arrived including five Baptist families. By the

25. J.E. Ennals, A Half Century of Missionary Enterprise, 1892-1942. SABMS, nd, p. 5.

26. This has been altered and developed since the original in 1877. See J.N. Jonsson, 'Baptist Theological Outlook', in Together for a Century, p. 31-37, and the corresponding footnotes.

27. *ibid.* A brief history of this matter in the English context is given in Roger Hayden, 'Baptists, Covenants and Confessions'. Bound to Love: The Covenant Basis of Baptist Life and Mission, by P.S. Fiddes, R. Hayden, R.L. Kidd, K.W. Clements and B. Haymes. London: Baptist Union. 1985, p. 28-31.

28. By 1825 congregations with buildings were formally constituted in Grahamstown and Salem. Preaching posts were formed at Port Alfred, Kariega, and Bathurst. Other congregations were established at Port Elizabeth (1854), Durban (1864), Alice (1874), and Cape Town (1876).

late 1860s some 300 Germans were formally connected with the Baptist Churches in Kaffraria. A plea was made to Johan Oncken of Hamburg, Germany,²⁹ to send a minister to the area. Hugo Gutsche was dispatched, arriving in December 1867. Over the next 25 years Gutsche established the same number of churches.³⁰

Through Gutsche's efforts an Afrikaans church was formed in Cornelia in the Orange Free State. Work amongst the Black population, started by the German farmers, encouraged by Gutsche, flourished and eventually developed into the South African Baptist Missionary Society. The year 1877 saw the formation of the Baptist Union of South Africa. Three English congregations with representatives from the German congregations and other interested parties were present. The 'Bantu Baptist Church', under the leadership of the Revd. William Mashologu, was established in 1927 as a result of the SABMS's work.³¹

We re-iterate that the early settler Baptists were naturally Eurocentric in their orientation. Their sympathies were with the other settlers, their understanding of land possession in keeping with British Colonial rule, and they espoused the fears and attitudes of other settlers towards the Black tribes into whose territories they came. Hudson-Reed acknowledges that

29. Oncken is regarded as the founder of the Baptist churches in Germany.

30. Hudson-Reed, Together for a Century, p. 21. See also Kretzschmar, Ph.D Thesis, p. 28. Some of the churches were King William's Town, Stutterheim, Frankfort, Berlin, Hanover, and Panmure (now East London). All but Frankfort are still existing as established congregations.

31. G. Makhanya, 'A History of the Baptist Convention of Southern Africa', in The Barky West National Awareness Workshop, p. 33. Also see S. Hudson-Reed, Channels for 100 Years of Missionary Endeavour. SABHS: Cape Town, 1992, p. 19ff.

Seen through modern eyes many of the genuine attempts to grapple with problems as they occurred in the evolution of our (Baptist) missionary enterprise and policy-making receive judgemental treatment. What was seen by our forebears as a God-given duty of parenting for maturity could be judged as paternalism today.³²

Certainly alternative histories of the Missionary Society and the Baptist Union do see much paternalism and racism in the practice and policy of these institutions.³³ Referring to H.J. Batts' History of the Baptists in South Africa, Louise Kretzschmar maintains that

the social context within which the events took place, such as colonialism, the response of the various black tribes to white occupation of their land, the implications of the discovery of diamonds and gold, and the political domination of whites in South Africa, are not discussed. It is assumed that the task of the young Baptist Church was simply to evangelise and establish churches - mainly among white inhabitants.³⁴

Kretzschmar is also critical of Hudson-Reed's histories for the paucity of references to the Baptist Convention: six pages out of four hundred.³⁵ Ultimately, she claims, "it is the interests and actions of white, male Baptists that receive the lion's share of the attention."³⁶ Kretzschmar accuses the BUSA of being racist, hierarchal and paternalistic.³⁷ Further, she maintains that South

32. Hudson-Reed, Channels for 100 Years ..., p. 19.

33. See Kretzschmar, Ph.D Thesis, especially pp 22-33 and 88-115. Also the essays by Kretzschmar, Makhanya, Manuel, Hoffmeister, Mhlope, and Madolo, in The Barkly West National Awareness Workshop.

34. Louise Kretzschmar, 'A Theology of Dominance - An Alternative History of the South African Baptist Union.' The Barkly West National Awareness Workshop, p. 25.

35. *ibid.*

36. *ibid*, p. 25 and 26.

37. *ibid*, p. 27.

African Baptist historians leave out "the complicity of the Baptist settler in the colonial dispossession of tribal lands and, thereby, the destruction of the political and economic power of the indiginous peoples."³⁸

In Gideon Makhanya's 'History of the Baptist Convention of South Africa', he quotes, with seeming approval, Edgar Lockwood's viewpoint that "missions also became promoters of racial segregation."³⁹ He also accepts without comment John Jonsson's observations that missionaries acted patronisingly and in a manner supportive of government policy.⁴⁰ Fanyana Peter Mhlope is even stronger: "The SABMS operated within the structures imposed by the South African government."⁴¹ Makhanya makes an interesting criticism of the early SABMS missionaries. He claims that these people "found employment for themselves among Blacks,"⁴² which resulted in a "non-evangelical church,"⁴³ one in which "few Blacks came to know the Lord Jesus as personal Saviour," and one in which there was "a weak emphasis on spiritual commitment and personal growth."⁴⁴

The work of the Revs. Elijah Mkhazazi and William Duma in their 'Jesus Saves' campaigns did much to turn the Bantu Baptist

38. *ibid*, p. 28.

39. Makhanya's essay and Lockwood's quote is contained in The Barkly West National Awareness Workshop, p. 33. Makhanya does not give any bibliographic details for his quotations.

40. *ibid*, p. 34.

41. Fanyana Peter Mhlope, 'The Effects of Apartheid on Baptist Convention Pastors in South Africa'. The Barkly West National Awareness Workshop, p. 54.

42. Makhanya, 'History of the Baptist Convention', p. 34.

43. *ibid*, p. 35.

44. *ibid*, p. 34.

Church into becoming known as "an evangelical church."⁴⁵ Makhanya's point is clear: in God's providence it was the Black ministers who were used of God to guide the Bantu Baptist Church to spiritual life and evangelical commitment, not Whites or the Baptist Union. Indeed, Makhanya claims that the "White missionary's presence in the life of the Convention had a paralysing effect."⁴⁶ Diba William Madolo sees this paralysis resulting in the inability of some Blacks to have confidence in "anything they do until it has the blessing of the Whites. ... because to disagree with White people is to disagree with God."⁴⁷

By 1968 the Bantu Baptist Church had become the Baptist Convention. The leadership felt that to remain segregated was unbiblical and wrong,⁴⁸ and here lie the roots of the process towards (an unsuccessful) merging with the Union. In 1978 the BUSA embarked on a 'work review', whereby the structures of the Union would be evaluated with a view to incorporating the Convention and other Associations of Churches into the Union.

Mhlope maintains that at the Jabavu Assembly in 1984, the Convention rejected the work review due to what was considered "the Baptist Union's intention to swallow the Convention by Convention churches becoming members of the Baptist Union on its (the BU's) terms."⁴⁹ By 1986 the Union proposed a way ahead

45. *ibid*, p. 35.

46. *ibid*, p. 36.

47. D.W. Madolo, 'The Effects of Apartheid on the Churches and the Convention'. The Barkly West National Awareness Workshop, p. 60.

48. Makhanya, 'History of the Baptist Convention', p. 35.

49. F.P. Mhlope, 'Divided We Fall, United We Stand'. Unpublished paper read at the Convention Assembly, Potgietersrust, December, 1988, p. 1.

whereby the Convention would disband and thence participate in the Union.⁵⁰ The Convention refused to disband maintaining that their mandate was towards a merger. Such a merger involves: "one identical constitution, a common church register, a common ministerial role, a coming together for the purpose of sharing and not just to 'give' or to 'receive' in a paternalistic manner."⁵¹ The General Secretary of the BUSA sent a letter to the Convention in October, 1987, which included the BUSA's understanding of merger. The Convention's interpretation of the BUSA's concept of merger is a "grafting into its present existing structure all those who come to beg for membership. (The BU) wishes to affirm its immutable code of criteria for membership of its Union."⁵² The Convention subsequently decided that "merger be removed from the Convention agenda."⁵³ It became an autonomous body in its own right, was received into the All Africa Baptist Fellowship in January, 1988, and the Baptist World Alliance in July the same year. The removal of the merger talks from the Convention's agenda did not end discussions. Regular meetings between representatives of both the Convention and the Union were held until 1990.

It needs to be stated clearly that the BUSA made considerable efforts to accommodate the Convention. There were many informal as well as formal discussions in the process of seeking solutions. It was the Convention that terminated discussions, not the Union. There are still tensions evident

50. Makhanya, 'History of the Baptist Convention', p. 39.

51. *ibid.*

52. *ibid*, p. 40.

53. *ibid*, p. 41.

between the two Baptist bodies. The sad reality of Baptist history, policy and practice is that the Baptist family and witness in South Africa is scarred and split, with little evidence of healing in the immediate future.⁵⁴

ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

Given the thesis' concern to consider Baptist identity in an ecumenical context, it is necessary to reflect briefly on the links South African Baptists have had with the ecumenical movement and the SACC specifically. Reference has already been made to the fact that since 1976 South African Baptists have opted out of ecumenical relationships.⁵⁵ There was a time, however, when Baptists in South Africa took their place in the ecumenical fellowship. Baptists were, in fact, founder members of the Christian Council of South Africa established in 1936.⁵⁶ Subsequent to the Second World War, according to James, "the nature of the Christian Council changed", with the gaining momentum of the ecumenical movement.⁵⁷ James asserts that the Council changed from being involved in "co-operation in matters of common interest and concern" to "a body pledged to work for

54. According to the Revd Angelo Scheepers, currently President of the BUSA, the BUSA and the BCSA began new discussions in August 1996, not towards a merger but for greater appreciation of each other's objectives. Thus, while the previous antagonisms seem to have been lessened somewhat, the two bodies are still no nearer to unity.

55. See the Introduction above.

56. A.H. Jeffree James, 'Baptists in Relation to Other Churches in General and the South African Council of Churches in Particular'. Baptists Today, July, 1988, p. 9.

57. *ibid.*

reunion of the churches".⁵⁸ At the BU Assembly in 1963 a query was raised as to the validity of this objective. James maintains that the terms for reunion were laid down by the Anglicans, involving episcopal government linked with the theory of apostolic succession. Ultimately, says James, this "could lead to union with Rome".⁵⁹ The Baptist Union Executive prepared a statement, which was accepted at the 1964 Assembly. The statement is as follows:

This Executive of the Baptist Union meeting in Pretoria, having given careful consideration of our continued membership of the Christian Council of South Africa feels compelled to make its position clear as under.

Starting from the premise that all believers are one in Christ, we welcome every opportunity for co-operative effort with Christians of other persuasions. While we deplore, with all Christians, that which denies our essential spiritual unity, we do not believe that the full expression of unity is to be achieved by organic union, nor do we believe that the existence of separate communions necessarily precludes spiritual unity.

We find ourselves in the anomalous position of being in sympathy with the spirit of ecumenicity in its broadest sense and yet unable to share the primary aspiration of the ecumenical movement. According to our interpretation the phenomenal advance of ecumenism in the direction of church reunion inevitably leads to the concept of the world church.

It is our fear that, in the process, the principle of freedom of the individual church under Christ will be in jeopardy. We cannot abandon this conviction which we believe has the sanction of Scripture and the justification of history, without being false to our trust.

We desire to remain within the Christian Council but we cannot conscientiously subscribe to Clause 3 (e) of the new constitution namely "to encourage reunion of the churches" if it implies the ultimate organic union of all churches.⁶⁰

58. *ibid.*

59. *ibid.*

60. *ibid.*

The problem is that the ideological dimensions of the principle of Christian unity operative within Faith and Order's deliberations made ... "experience" unnecessary. According to Faith and Order's understanding, Christian unity is an atemporal reality that merely requires an historical instantiation in order to make its demands viable within the historical milieu.⁶³

Hicks' viewpoint is not the only one, however. Gennadios Limouris clarifies the position of Faith and Order with the claim that

The unity we seek is neither that of church discipline under a centralised authoritarian institution, nor is it based only on the kerygmatic message of the Gospel to the world; but it is primarily based on and maintained by the charisms received from the Holy Spirit by the people of God in the historic church. It is therefore a charismatic and eucharistic unity, expressed through and for the communion with the grace of God the Holy Trinity.⁶⁴

And Martin Cressey, also a member of the Commission on Faith and Order, remarks that

The current ecclesiology of united churches has more in common with the Orthodox ecclesiology of autocephalic churches in a full communion than with the emphasis on union through a communion focused by a universal primacy.⁶⁵

What Cressey is saying, then, corroborating Limouris' view, is that the WCC is more in favour of union and fellowship by consensus, than union under either papal rule or some other world order type structure.

63. *ibid*, p. 273 his emphasis.

64. G. Limouris, 'The Church as Mystery and Sign in Relation to the Holy Trinity - in Ecclesiological Perspectives'. Church, Kingdom, World: The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign, (ed) G. Limouris. Geneva: WCC, 1986, p. 32.

65. M. Cressey, 'The Ecclesiology of Union'. Ecumenical Review 41:2 (April), 1989, p. 242.

South African Baptists were probably right to be cautious in 1964 about their fears of an ecclesiological structure overwhelming them. But structures were not the real issues at stake, notwithstanding that throughout the 1960s and 1970s concern for the independence of the local church was voiced. The real issues were political, and related particularly to combatting racism in South Africa. South African Baptists tended to view with suspicion any theological argument about justice and socio-political concerns. Hence, when the Bangkok Statement on Salvation (which spoke of "peace in Viet Nam, independence in Angola, justice and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and release from the captivity of power in the North Atlantic community") was published, South African Baptists took this to be "the essence of liberation theology".⁶⁶

The more the WCC and the SACC pronounced gospel values within the social and political arena of South Africa, the more South African Baptists reacted negatively towards these Councils. Hence in 1970 the BUSA Assembly passed the following resolution:

The Assembly notes that the Baptist Union of South Africa is not and never has been a member of the World Council of Churches, basically for theological reasons.

The Assembly expressed its strongest condemnation of grants made for any purpose by the World Council of Churches to movements whose declared aim is to overthrow the elected government of South Africa by violent means. The Assembly also rejects the use of violence as a solution to racial problems.

In dissociating ourselves from the action of the World Council of Churches, we do not thereby imply any lack of concern, on our part, for the sociological needs and the racial problems of our country. On the contrary, we express our deep concern wherever prevailing attitudes condone injustices.

66. James, 'Baptists in Relation to Other Churches ...', 1988, p. 9.

The Assembly notes with approval the Prime Minister's withdrawal of his request that South African Churches which are members of the World Council of Churches should withdraw from the body. It is a long-standing conviction that the state has no place in deciding matters of conscience for religious bodies.⁶⁷

James maintains that the SACC was itself responsible for the break between themselves and the BUSA. The Council was responsible because in 1974 it had urged men of military service age to register their conscientious objection to serving in the SADF, as a disapproval of the political and social situation in this country.⁶⁸ A proposal to withdraw totally from the SACC was tabled at the Assembly that year, but it was only at the following Assembly in 1976 that the resolution was passed to withdraw the BUSA's observer status from the Council.⁶⁹ James maintains that only one delegate at that 1976 Assembly pleaded for retention of observer status. The reason given was that the "SACC provided the one platform where the Black could speak his mind uninhibited and unafraid".⁷⁰ This observation was regarded as having value since it recognised the 'plight' of the Black. It was, however, patronising and inadequate. The plea was ignored, and the BUSA left the SACC.

Prior to this call by the SACC for conscientious objection, the publication in 1968 of A Message to the People of South

67. *ibid.*

68. *ibid.*

69. The South African Baptist Magazine, November, 1976, p. 29, carried a report on this matter, noting the vote of 194 against 48, upholding the proposal to withdraw the BU's observer status.

70. James, 'Baptists in Relation to other Churches ...', 1988, p. 11. This writer's recollection is that it was James himself who was the lone delegate pleading for the retention of observer status on the Council. Perhaps it was James' eloquence that emboldened the 48 who voted against leaving the Council.

Africa also contributed to the BUSA's disquiet about the Council. The Message itself had its roots in a conference convened by the Council in May 1968, dealing with "pseudo-gospels". In August of the same year the six page document was sent to all the clergy in South Africa.⁷¹ De Gruchy claims: "Seldom has a theological document brought such immediate reaction from so many sections of the populace"⁷² Further, the "Message aroused the feelings of White South Africa in a dramatic way because it went for the jugular vein in the body politic."⁷³ Support and criticism was forthcoming from the churches as well. The BUSA "believed that the Message was theologically questionable",⁷⁴ or, as the BUSA Executive statement put it: "the theological premises upon which it builds its case are faulty".⁷⁵ By this was meant confusion between regenerate and unregenerate communities, between national survival and personal salvation, and an implication that social integration is another means of salvation.⁷⁶

De Gruchy suggests that this "critique" by the Baptists "raised central issues in a clear and concise way".⁷⁷ For the Baptists apartheid was simply a political policy, which does "not enter into the realm of his being justified by faith. ... (the

71. J.W. de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids; David Philip: Cape Town. 1979, p. 118.

72. *ibid.*

73. *ibid.*, p. 120.

74. *ibid.*

75. The Message in Perspective, eds J.W. de Gruchy and W.B. de Villiers. Braamfontein: SACC. 1968, p. 40. This is taken from the BUSA's Executive Committee's approved statement, October, 1968.

76. *ibid.*, p. 39 and 40.

77. de Gruchy, The Church Struggle ..., p. 121.

issue belongs) in the realm of Christian ethics."⁷⁸ "For the drafters of the Message, apartheid was not just a political policy, but an ideological substitute for the gospel."⁷⁹ De Gruchy also draws attention to the fact that faith and salvation are concrete issues, not given in a vacuum, and thus ethics cannot be separated from doctrine.⁸⁰ Hence he observes:

Critics of the Message have insisted that salvation is a personal and individual thing and cannot be applied to society. The Message insists that salvation is both personal and social⁸¹

In their response to the Baptist critique in The Message in Perspective, de Gruchy and de Villiers claim that the Baptists drew

a line between the Church and the World which is far too hard and fast. Obviously we cannot regard the world in any idealistic way. Moreover, the Church is not simply the regenerate community, it is both the community of saints and sinners. To equate the Church as it exists in reality with the regenerate community, borders dangerously on ecclesiastical triumphalism⁸²

The response continues: "The Message does not say that the proponents of apartheid are preaching another Gospel of personal salvation, but that they see the security and future of our country in an unbiblical way." Nor does the Message suggest "a policy of social integration as a way of life." The Message

78. The Message in Perspective, p. 40.

79. de Gruchy, The Church Struggle ..., p. 121.

80. *ibid.*

81. J.W. de Gruchy, 'Is Salvation Personal or Social?' The Message in Perspective, p. 44.

82. The Message in Perspective, p. 42.

claims that "Christians must order their society on the basis of the reconciliation of man to God and to one another in Jesus Christ."⁸³

Whilst one appreciates the BUSA's claim to be opposed to racism (and de Gruchy acknowledges this opposition⁸⁴), it has to be conceded that their opposition was ineffectual for the simple reason that it was talk, not action. Kretzschmar recognises the "limited, verbal critique that has been addressed to the government,"⁸⁵ but is severely critical of the BUSA's lack of involvement in the concerns of society. Thus she claims, the BUSA was

neither actively involved in society, nor is their withdrawal from the political realm a commitment to an active, caring Christian community that includes Black Christians.⁸⁶

In similar vein, Gideon Makhanya has written that even though "statements against apartheid were made, the Baptist Union remained passive and practically supportive of this heresy."⁸⁷ Furthermore, the Union was struggling with its own structures and the inherent racism therein. There was not simply a 'struggle', but, Makhanya accuses, a "continuing campaign" to "destabilise the Convention"⁸⁸

83. *ibid*, p. 42-43.

84. de Gruchy, The Church Struggle, p. 120. The sentence reads: "They did not reject the concern of the Message, for they too condemned racism as contrary to the gospel."

85. Kretzschmar, PhD Thesis, p. 113

86. *ibid*, p. 114.

87. Makhanya, 'History of the Baptist Convention of South Africa', p. 33.

88. *ibid*, p. 41.

Since 1976 then, the BUSA has had no formal links with the broader ecumenical movement represented by the SACC. At the 1993 Assembly held in Pretoria, the Assembly approved a Commission of Enquiry to investigate "reinstatement of the Baptist Union to observer status with the South African Council of Churches".⁸⁹ The mandate emphasised that this was simply an investigation, not an application, nor was the media to be informed. At the 1994 Assembly meeting in Stellenbosch, this Commission had no report to make. The Assembly voted to disband the Commission, and not to table further SACC issues.⁹⁰ In our opinion this is tragic, especially if one considers E. Lange's observation: "Ecumenism can no longer be toyed with as a mere possibility. It has become the test of faith."⁹¹ For the BUSA to deliberately terminate dialogue, consultation and possible rapprochement, is a move towards sectarianism.

Before closing this section on the BUSA's ecumenical relationships, we need to comment on its links with other English-speaking churches and with other evangelicals within South Africa. We recognise the problematic nature of the term 'English-speaking' with reference to churches simply because all of those bodies (Anglican, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian) have a majority of members who do not speak English as 'mother-tongue'. Nor are their liturgical, social, cultural,

89. Digest of business transacted at the annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa held at Pretoria from 24 to 28 September 1993.

90. Digest of business transacted at the annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa held at Stellenbosch during October 1994.

91. E. Lange, And Yet it Moves. Quoted in K. Raiser, Ecumenism in Transition. Geneva: WCC, 1991, p. viii.

theological or racial patterns reflective of 'Englishness' per se.⁹² What it does refer to is "those churches of British origin which have grown together over the years as a result of the ecumenical movement and their common attitude towards the racial situation in general and apartheid in particular."⁹³ South African Baptists have not been identified with these churches since they have not been involved with the SACC nor with the Church Union Commission.⁹⁴ Louise Kretzschmar observes that the BUSA was more Afrikaans in its ecclesial and power structures and ideological orientation.⁹⁵ We take note of this, but remain convinced that the Afrikaans constituency of the BUSA was not as influential on the BUSA's theological attitudes as Kretzschmar asserts.⁹⁶

The BUSA is an avowedly evangelical body. By 'evangelical' we mean someone who holds to a number of key theological convictions, the first being that Scripture is the supreme authority "as a source of knowledge of God and as a guide to Christian living."⁹⁷ Other fundamentals include belief in Jesus Christ as incarnate God and "saviour of sinful humanity"; the

92. See J.W. de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids/David Philip: Cape Town. 1979, p. 85-87.

93. *ibid*, p. 85.

94. See C. Villa-Vicencio, Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches. Orbis: Maryknoll/David Philip: Cape Town. 1988, p. 17.

95. Kretzschmar, PhD Thesis, p. 33-38 especially p. 35.

96. See above p. 6 n 13 and our observation that the Afrikaans influence was more in the realm of political sensitivities. This does not negate the obvious influence of political ideology on some aspects of theological thinking within the BUSA.

97. A. McGrath, Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity. London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1993, p. 51.

"lordship of the Holy Spirit"; the "need for personal conversion"; the "priority of evangelism"; and the "importance of the Christian community for spiritual nourishment, fellowship and growth".⁹⁸ The BUSA was a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa until that body's absorption into TEASA (The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa) in 1995. Local Baptist congregations usually work interdenominationally, that is, they are comfortable in working together on certain projects with like-minded churches regardless of denominational commitment - as long as they are also evangelical.

Notwithstanding the BUSA's evangelicalism, its ethical responses to the socio-political concerns of the day have been severely limited. Whereas both the Lausanne Conference and the Concerned Evangelical's 'Evangelical Witness' confessed their compromises in structural and institutional sins back in the 1980s, only in the early 1990s did the BUSA acknowledge its culpability.⁹⁹

THEOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

Just as an examination of the historical and ecumenical background of Baptist identity is necessary (though secondary to the thesis), so too are the hermeneutical perspectives that the BUSA espouse. These presuppositions are discussed here because they are regarded as fundamental to the BUSA's current thinking and practice. They may be somewhat unconscious features in Baptist thought and praxis, in that they are not always articulated, but they are certainly there.

98. *ibid.* See also below p. 63 fn 116.

99. Kretzschmar, PhD Thesis, p. 36.

So in examining Baptist theology and its ethical commitment, there are a number of inter-related theological and philosophical presuppositions that need to be considered. Each of these presuppositions has a bearing on the meaning of discipleship and its consequent significance for Baptist principles as they work out in practice.

The BUSA made their position on the Bible clear in the Preamble to the 1987 Statement on Baptist Principles. The BUSA maintained that it affirmed with the whole Church belief "...in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice."¹⁰⁰ It is important to add here that when the 1924 Statement of Belief was drawn up, the Preamble there clearly said that the Statement "was not intended to be a creedal statement which was binding on all Baptists within the Baptist Union."¹⁰¹ This was not in any way to infer a low view of Scripture nor to reflect a disdain for the cardinal doctrines of the faith, but rather it was in keeping with Baptist sentiment not to subscribe to binding creeds or confessions.

Further, Baptists also maintain that in the light of the Christ-event, the New Testament, as the authoritative record of Christian truth, becomes the guide for all Christian theology and practice. Scripture must be understood in terms of its purpose. That purpose is to give humanity a reliable, sufficient, and authoritative message about God's salvation in Jesus Christ. Hence, the Declaration of Principle states that "the Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, is the sole and absolute authority

100. BU Handbook, 1989-90, p. 178.

101. Hudson-Reed (ed), The History of the Baptist Union of South Africa, p. 36.

in all matters of faith and practice...."¹⁰² There is no need to regard the two 'authorities' (Bible and Jesus Christ) as dichotomous. J.N. Jonsson asserts that the authority of Scripture and of Christ is

neither contradictory, inconsistent, nor incongruous. ... In that the Scriptures represent and embody the mind of the Son of God, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells, the acknowledgement of the Scriptural authority heightens and endorses His authority. Apart from the Scriptures, Christ's authority would not be known, nor could it be fully acknowledged.¹⁰³

Whilst both Testaments constitute authoritative Scripture, and both reveal the message of salvation, South African Baptists argue that the New Testament is clearer than the Old Testament as to the specifics of what salvation means through Jesus Christ. Following Hebrews 1, South African Baptists maintain that God's revelation in Jesus Christ has now superceded all other communication. Likewise, Hebrews 8:13 speaks of the older covenant as obsolete in the light of the new covenant. For South African Baptists, then, this imposes a primacy on the New Testament. In other words,

Without any denigration of the Old Testament ... the Old Testament must be interpreted in the light of the New, and that the witness of the New Testament to Christ is the criterion by which the Old Testament revelation is to be evaluated and judged.¹⁰⁴

102. BU Handbook, 1989-90, p. 180.

103. Hudson-Reed, The History of the Baptist Union of South Africa, p. 36.

104. J.L. Garrett, E.G. Hinson, and J.E. Tull, Are Southern Baptists Evangelicals? Mercer University Press: Macon, Ga. 1983, p. 30.

South African Baptists also regard highly the New Testament's internal evidence of inspiration. Within the BUSA there is wide acceptance of the position that when Paul quotes Luke 10:7 together with Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Timothy 5:18, he is inferring that Luke is also 'Scripture'. The same applies to Peter's approbation of Paul's writings in 2 Peter 3:16. Certainly Dale Moody, a Southern Baptist theologian, affirms that "...at one place Paul's letters are classified as Scripture...(2 Peter 3:16)". Moody continues, referring to John's Gospel, which he says "assigned authority not only to the Old Testament (5:39) but to the Gospel itself (20:31)."¹⁰⁵ Against the Reformed position, and especially against John Calvin, Moody argues:

The first edition of Calvin's Institutes put the Decalogue before the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer, the Sacraments and Church Government, as the basis for Christian Theology, and this emphasis on the Old Testament has been the distinctive of Calvinism. The final edition had four parts: God the Creator, God the Redeemer, The Holy Spirit, the means of Grace and the Church. This God-centered approach, along with the Old Testament emphasis is a sure sign of Reformed Theology.¹⁰⁶

Scholars may well debate Moody's interpretation of Calvin. D.L. Baker has argued, for example, that Calvin "recognized both the similarity and the differences between the two Testaments ...(and)... stressed the former devoting 23 sections to similarity and 14 to the differences"¹⁰⁷ Whilst Moody's view can be questioned, it is representative of some Baptists'

105. D. Moody, The Word of Truth. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: Grand Rapids. 1981, p. 50.

106. *ibid*, p. 17.

107. D.L. Baker, Two Testaments, One Bible. IVP:Leicester. 1976, p. 52.

interpretation of Calvin in their defence of the primacy of the New Testament. Henry Cook sums up the Baptist viewpoint when he maintains that it is

From the New Testament we learn the essential principles of faith and practice for the Church as Christ Himself conceived them, and it is our duty as Christians to make loyalty to these essential principles our constant aim and concern.¹⁰⁸

Of course, the BUSA is not alone in stressing the hermeneutical primacy of the New Testament. In varying degrees this would be common to most if not all Christian traditions.

Another theological presupposition is what Baptists call the 'direct Lordship of Christ'. Contrary to the Southern Baptist J. Anderson,¹⁰⁹ and South African Baptist Victor Brandt,¹¹⁰ to argue for the Lordship of Christ as the distinguishing principle for Baptists, is to suggest that all other Christian communions deny or play down that Lordship. Brandt asserts that

What is distinctly Baptist is the emphasis on Christ's direct involvement - the insistence that He does not exercise His Lordship through intermediary authorities.¹¹¹

What Brandt means by 'intermediary authorities' includes the mediation of Christ's authority through papal pronouncements, creedal formulas, reliance on the faith of parents, a bench of Bishops or a synod of Elders. In other words Brandt is saying

108. H. Cook, What Baptists Stand For. Carey Kingsgate Press: London. 1961, p. 17.

109. J. Anderson, 'Old Baptist Principles Reset.' Southwestern Journal of Theology 31:2 (Spring, 1989).

110. V. Brandt, Unpublished notes on Baptist Principles. Baptist Theological College of South Africa, Johannesburg. 1978.

111. *ibid*, p. 4.

that Baptists reject the idea that Christ's authority is indirectly given and experienced. Scripture is not regarded as an indirect means of communication either, because the Bible is considered, by most Baptists in South Africa, to be the "Word of God." South African Baptists assert that Christ's authority is directly experienced by means of the Holy Spirit. Southern Baptist James E. Tull puts the matter in a similar, but expanded way. He says

Very much bound up with Baptist ecclesiology is what had been affirmed to be the central Baptist principle, namely, "the direct, unmediated, undelegated lordship of Jesus Christ". An implication of this Baptist stand involves what ...(is)... called "the competency of the individual soul before God". The lordship of Christ and the competency of the person signify that no priest, church, or earthly government has a right to interpose itself between God and the human soul.¹¹²

Few Christian theologians would deny the Lordship of Christ, yet the North American and South African Baptists referred to here maintain that Baptists have consistently stressed Christ's unmediated authority in a distinctive way. But, these theologians have stressed their own perspectives as the distinctive. Thus, our preference, as indicated, is for a cluster of principles or distinctives which describe 'discipleship' as denoting the key to Baptist faith and practice.

The Lordship of Christ is none the less highlighted for two reasons. The first is to affirm the unity of the Faith with all Christian churches. The second is to acknowledge the fact that the conscious affirmation of the Lordship of Christ is of prime importance for Baptists, even though there is disagreement with

112. Garrett, Hinson, Tull, Are Southern Baptists Evangelicals? p. 29-30.

those Baptists who make it the central distinctive. Christ's Lordship is the foundation for the personal call to discipleship.¹¹³ Stress must be placed on 'conscious' Lordship, however, because for Baptists it infers that the individual Christian has personally appropriated Christ's Lordship, an experience beyond a creedal or doctrinaire affirmation. Hence, discipleship is personal, it is a conscious attitude and activity which governs the totality of life, and which is operative throughout life. Further, where the local church is concerned, the Lordship of Christ requires a communal commitment to seeking the will of God, in terms of biblical values and congregational consensus, for the life and witness of the church.

PHILOSOPHICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

Philosophical presuppositions are not well documented in the context of Baptist ecclesiology. In fact, philosophical presuppositions do not seem to have been articulated as foundational for any aspect of Baptist theology. The perspective of Southern Baptist theologian, J.L. Garrett, would probably be true for many Baptist - certainly South African Baptist - theologians. In writing his systematic theology, Garrett maintains that there is no

prior commitment to [nor] ... the adoption of any philosophical system or philosophical motif in the light of which Christianity ought to be interpreted. Rather I have proceeded from the premise that good systematic theology ought to be based on the fruitage of biblical theology and the history of Christian doctrine.¹¹⁴

113. See E. Schweizer, Lordship and Discipleship. SCM: London, 1960.

114. J.L. Garrett, Systematic Theology, Volume 1. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: Grand Rapids. 1990, p. ix.

Notwithstanding Garrett's disclaimer, with which many evangelicals and Baptists would concur, it seems true to say that two concepts have been, and still are used as the philosophical bases for Baptist hermeneutics. These concepts are, in modern terms, 'common sense realism', and 'literal language usage'. Indeed, these two presuppositions provide the philosophical basis for the Baptist understanding of discipleship, for they demand that one take Jesus' words and teaching in a straightforward manner.

Bernard Ramm maintains that one approach to Christian thought

employs the philosophy of common sense realism ... ie: that objects of perception exist 'out there', that God would not deceive us as to either the use of our minds or senses, that we have a common internal sense that associates for purposes of combination our sensory information, and that the mind has certain primitive rules given to it by God for correct thinking.¹¹⁵

This philosophy of commonsense is important for our understanding of South African Baptist hermeneutics and discipleship.

Commonsense philosophy, however, is an evangelical,¹¹⁶ not merely a Baptist, hermeneutic.

115. B. Ramm, Protestant Christian Evidences. Moody Press: Chicago. 1953, p. 32-3. On Commonsense Philosophy, per se, see also Th.D. Bozeman, Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1977), Michael Devitt, Realism and Truth (Blackwell: Oxford, 1984), Roger D. Gallie, Thomas Reid and "The Way of Ideas" (Kluwer: Dordrecht, 1989), J. vander Stelt, Philosophy and Scripture: A Study in Old Princeton and Westminster Theology (Mack: Merlton, NJ, 1978).

116. The term 'evangelical' has a number of connotations, for which see the specific articles in Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Baker) and New Dictionary of Theology (IVP). The book Are Southern Baptists "Evangelicals"? by J.L. Garrett, Jr, et al, is important for our discussion. For our context an evangelical is one who regards the Bible as God's Word written, holds to a

The appellation "Scottish" was originally given to commonsense realism, since the philosophy stemmed from Thomas Reid, the Scottish philosopher. E.B. Holifield maintains that this Scottish realism "was not so much a set of conclusions as it was a way of thinking."¹¹⁷ J.L. Dagg, a Southern Baptist theologian during the late 1800s, wrote a theology manual by going "straight to Scripture". "But," says Holifield, "from beginning to end his (Dagg's) discussion of Christian doctrine made extensive use of Scottish methods and conclusions."¹¹⁸ This "use of ... methods and conclusions" includes, for instance, "the notion that moral and religious 'principle' was, along with other principles, ingredient in human nature."¹¹⁹ The "hallmark of the Scottish school", maintains Holifield further, was the "appeal to consciousness."¹²⁰ Who would "deny the reality of selfhood, or of causality, or of the world"?¹²¹ Holifield asserts that Reid

believed that every sensation necessarily implied the existence of a sensing self; every impression presupposed the existence of a cause sufficient to produce it; and every perception contained within it a judgement of existence: "I cannot see without seeing something."¹²²

trinitarian view of God, and who considers Christ as the only and sufficient redeemer from sin. See also p. 56 fn 98 above.

117. E.B. Holifield, The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860. Duke University Press: Durham. 1978, p. 111.

118. *ibid*, p. 122.

119. *ibid*, p. 123.

120. *ibid*, p. 115.

121. *ibid*, p. 116.

122. *ibid*.

In other words, we can have confidence in what we sense, or what we are conscious of. It is little wonder then that Baptist theologians make no reference to philosophical presuppositions, for, in their understanding, there is no need to explain the obvious. This is particularly evident in BUSA historians and theologians.

Both Baptists and evangelicals have been severely criticised recently by various theologians for using this philosophy. One such theologian is a Southern Baptist, B.J. Leonard, who argues that evangelicals should acknowledge their use of such philosophical presuppositions, instead of being critical of others who openly acknowledge theirs.¹²³ It needs to be understood that evangelicals (and for our purposes, the BUSA) regard realism not as a set of philosophical assumptions or criteria. It is, rather, a way of thinking, "a method of consciousness" that allows users "to describe theology as an inductive science."¹²⁴ Be that as it may, but commonsense realism does not recognise the contextual setting from which thought stems. Marsden points out that commonsense philosophers suggest that a "sane and unbiased person of common-sense could and must perceive the same things".¹²⁵ Further, Marsden asserts that commonsense realism claims "that basic truths are much the same for all persons in all times and places".¹²⁶ But,

123. B.J. Leonard, Book review of Authority and Interpretation: A Baptist Perspective, D.A. Garrett and R.R. Melick, Jnr (eds), in Review and Expositor 65:1 (Winter, 1988), p. 157-8.

124. Holifield, The Gentlemen Theologians ..., p. 112.

125. G. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925. Oxford University Press: Oxford. 1980, p. 111.

126. *ibid.*

if truth is so objective and common sense so reliable, how does one account for the wide prevalence of error? This was the great obstacle to the whole Common Sense philosophy and the rock against which in the nineteenth century it repeatedly foundered, until all but its most stubborn exponents were dislodged.¹²⁷

The BUSA, and most evangelicals in South Africa today, are still exponents of this philosophy, notwithstanding its serious limitations.

A modern philosopher, G.E. Moore, whilst convinced of commonsense realism's validity as a philosophical concept, rejects the application of the philosophy to metaphysics, ie: to theology, and especially eschews using it to support the concept of God. Thus Moore says

I differ ... from those [philosophers] who have held that all material things were created by God I differ also from those philosophers who have held that there is good reason to suppose that there is a God at all, whether or not they have held it likely that he created all material things.¹²⁸

But if realism is used to deny divine creation of material realities, and is used to reject the idea of God, based on perception, then equally the philosophy can be used to argue for those same realities. The reason for this is simply that perception of reality is always governed by presuppositions coloured by upbringing, culture, education, and by past experience.¹²⁹

127. *ibid*, p. 114.

128. G.E. Moore, In Defence of Common Sense. Allen and Unwin Publishers: London. 1959, p. 52.

129. See Holifield's excursus on Reid's rejection of Locke and Hume, and his interpretation of the Scottish position, in The Gentlemen Theologians ..., p. 110 ff.

Commonsense realism, then, means that what one perceives is real. One can have confidence in believing one's experience, without needing to evaluate the possibility or probability of an ideal behind the real. The real is self-evident. Mark Noll maintains that A.A. Alexander (a theologian of the Old Princeton school of thought), following Thomas Reid, argued for self-evident truths, the reliability of physical senses, moral senses, and human testimony, and the givenness of cause-and-effect relationships.¹³⁰ Thus, this definition of commonsense has become the standard evangelical (and Baptist) view.

Noll expands this definition while writing about what is called the older Princeton theology: the theology of Alexander, C.W. Hodge, and B.B. Warfield. In his book, Noll includes an extensive comment by Alexander on commonsense, which Alexander argues, consists of self-evident truths. These include

1. The existence of the objects of sense and consciousness.
2. Necessary truths, such as mathematical axioms.
3. Philosophical principles such as 'every effect must be produced by some cause'.
4. Moral truths, as for instance, that there is an essential difference between good and evil; that benevolence is better than malevolence.
5. Facts, reported to us by sufficient number of competent witnesses, past or present, as that such men as Caesar and Pompey did once exist; that there was a beautiful building formally in Jerusalem called the Temple.
6. Truths founded on uniform experience, as that the sun will rise tomorrow; that fire will burn the next hour as well as the present.
7. Memory.¹³¹

130. M. Noll (ed), The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.: Nutley, NJ. 1983, p. 61.

131. *ibid*, p. 67-8.

With regard to the problem of applying commonsense realism to theology, Alexander maintained that God and his truth are self-evident truths.¹³² What Alexander wrote in 1812 has essentially the same thrust as Ramm, who wrote in 1953.

Commonsense realism has been brought to the fore in recent days through the debate over Scripture's authority. In many theological works, neither the term, nor an explication of the philosophy, is given. But, as Leonard maintains, commonsense realism is one of a number of "philosophical antecedents" which underlie most Baptist theological viewpoints.¹³³ This is likewise asserted by Jack Rogers and Donald McKim.¹³⁴ But it is a contention which has been widely debated. For example, some important perspectives are brought to bear upon the issue by John Woodbridge's rejoinders,¹³⁵ and while this is not the place to debate the authority of Scripture,¹³⁶ this debate is important

132. *ibid*, p. 71.

133. Leonard, Book review in Review and Expositor 65:1, p. 157-8.

134. J. Rogers and D. McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach. Harper and Row Publishers: San Francisco. 1979.

135. J.D. Woodbridge, Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1982. See also 'Some Misconceptions of the Impact of the "Enlightenment" on the Doctrine of Scripture', in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, D.A. Carson and J.D. Woodbridge (eds). Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1986.

136. See this writer's 'Biblical Authority in Recent Baptist Theology'. Unpublished M.Th. thesis, University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 1989. The thesis does not deal with the Rogers/McKim proposal for a simple, though major reason: these authors are not Baptists, and the focus of the thesis was restricted to Baptists whose works are used as study texts in the Theological Colleges within the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. Note should be taken of the limitations on p. 3, section 1.2, first paragraph, in the thesis.

for an understanding of the rationale behind studying commonsense realism in the context of ecclesiology and discipleship.

Whilst few studies have been done on specifically Baptist use of commonsense philosophy, much has been done on the Old Princetonians even though the philosophy of commonsense realism was not slavishly followed by them. These studies are important for Baptists because the Princeton theologians, especially Charles Hodge, had a profound influence on the founding fathers of the Southern Baptist Convention, particularly Boyce and Manly. Both Russ Bush and John Woodbridge reveal some interesting facets in the theological and philosophical developments of the Baptists and the Princetonians. Bush affirms that apart from Hodge's influence on Boyce, other Baptists came to the same conclusions on Scripture's authority independently of a commitment, consciously or unconsciously, to commonsense realism.¹³⁷ For instance there is the role the Westminster Confession played in the development of the Baptist Confessions.¹³⁸ Woodbridge asserts that Hodge, particularly, as well as Warfield, was acutely aware of the limitations of philosophic undergirdings for theology.¹³⁹ Further, there was the confessional commitment to the reality of the Holy Spirit's activity in bringing people to Christian convictions and an affirmation of Scripture's and Christ's authority.

137. R. Bush, 'The Roots of Conservative Perspectives on Inerrancy (Warfield)', in The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, M. Smith (ed). Broadman Press: Nashville. 1989, p. 283.

138. *ibid*, p. 283-4.

139. Woodbridge, Biblical Authority, p. 136-7.

The Old Princetonians then, especially Alexander, came to theology and Scripture with these presuppositions. Baptist theologians, whether influenced by Princeton or not, did the same. In the American context, and especially the Southern Baptist setting, Bush asserts that

Baptists have an independent tradition not unlike the Presbyterian tradition in content. We can profit by studying Warfield because the Princeton tradition (through Boyce) is the founding tradition of Southern Baptist theological education at the seminary level. Warfield is a compatible figure but not a direct source of Baptist views on the subject of Scripture. Baptists have been taught and do generally believe in the infallibility of Scripture despite the fact that most have never read or even heard of Warfield.¹⁴⁰

The concern with Scripture in this philosophical context, is primarily an illustration of how one is to assess what God has done and said in human life and history, and only secondarily with the validity or accuracy of historical, geographical, or scientific pronouncements which may be involved.

Whilst such a view of Scripture and history may seem naive, Baptists have indeed viewed them this way. Further, it is not a case of either/or, only a matter of primary and secondary concerns. Yet this distinction cannot be taken too far. The historical events are the settings for communicating truth and truths; therefore such events and their histories cannot be overlooked nor relegated to "myth." When philosophical questions or presuppositions are brought into the debate, the Baptist response is: philosophies change as any history of philosophy reveals. God is absolute; Scripture is the trustworthy record of God's communication with humanity. Baptist theologian A.H.

140. Bush, 'The Roots of Conservative Perspectives on Inerrancy ...', p. 281.

Strong's approach is illustrative of this position. As expressed by Millard Erickson, Strong

begins his theology with the existence of God, but does not offer a proof of it. Rather he maintains that the idea of God is a first truth. It is a rational intuition. It is not a piece of knowledge written on the soul, but an assumption which is so basic that all other knowledge depends on it.¹⁴¹

We have already seen that for Ramm, commonsense realism means, amongst other things, that objects of perception exist, that God would not deceive humanity as to the use of the mind or senses, that the mind has certain primitive rules for correct thinking.¹⁴² Thus Ramm's basic philosophical presupposition is as follows:

There is an infinite, all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving God who has revealed Himself by means natural and supernatural in creation, in the nature of man, in the history of Israel and the Church, in the pages of Holy Scripture, in the incarnation of God in Christ, and in the heart of the believer by the gospel.¹⁴³

Ramm's viewpoint, as a Baptist theologian, has been generally accepted within South African Baptist circles. This is based on the fact that, at least in the South African context, his works are used extensively as texts on apologetics and dogmatics. Further, Ramm's influence is noted in Millard Erickson's writings. Erickson's Christian Theology is used as the basic theology text within Baptist Theological Colleges in South Africa. A modified philosophical presupposition based on Ramm quoted above is presented by Erickson. Erickson says,

141. M. Erickson, Christian Theology. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids. 1985, p. 30-1.

142. Ramm, Protestant Christian Evidences, p. 32-3.

143. *ibid*, p. 33.

Thus the starting point would be something of this type: There exists one Triune God, loving, all-powerful, holy, all-knowing, who has revealed himself in nature, history, and human personality, and in those acts and words which are now preserved in the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.¹⁴⁴

South African Baptists would concur with Erickson, as they would with Ramm and Alexander; and they would see little reason to debate these fundamental presuppositions.

The second philosophical presupposition is literal language usage. We mean by this that we take language seriously; words have meanings. Or, to draw from a philosopher of language, J.B. Thompson:

the structure of reality is a projection of the grammar of language, so that an investigation into how words are used is at the same time an inquiry into what there is.¹⁴⁵

Language cannot be language without structure. Thompson asserts that ordinary language philosophers regard the utterance of a meaningful expression as a convention, or rule-governed activity.¹⁴⁶ Language, then, cannot be used without rules or structures, nor in a private fashion. If language is the means of interpersonal communication (whether verbal or written) then the participants need to know and use the same rules.

It is in this context that we need to consider the term "literal" when reflecting on the fact that Baptists approach the Bible in a literal, historical, and grammatical way. Ramm says

144. Erickson, Christian Theology, p. 33.

145. J.B. Thompson, Critical Hermeneutics. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 1981, p. 24.

146. *ibid*, p.19.

We use the word "literal" in its dictionary sense: "...the natural or usual construction and implication of a writing or expression; following the ordinary and apparent sense of words ..." Associating certain words with such things as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc, is called designation. Every language represents a certain system of designation. ... Ordinary conversation reflects popular, ordinary, common sense designation. ... The word "literal" in the theory of hermeneutics implies an understanding of this process of designation. It takes as the primary range of designation the customary, the usual, the socially acknowledged designations.¹⁴⁷

It follows, then, that taking the Bible literally includes assessing the historical context thoroughly, considering the grammar of the language properly, and appreciating the complexities of literary genre, which includes characteristics like parable, apocalyptic, metaphor, narrative, poetry, symbolism, etc. At the same time, this must not be regarded as "naive" literalism, whereby acceptance of statements are taken at face value as absolute truth without carefully evaluating every context.

Thus, within the framework of the rules of language, and the generally accepted meaning of words used in a sentence within a socially acknowledged context, we can communicate meaningfully with one another. What can be done in writing can be done verbally and vice versa. South African Baptists believe this approach is valid when it comes to Scripture and where expressions of theological truth are concerned.

Baptists within the BUSA hold the conviction that over a period of time, in various historical and cultural settings, men and women have spoken or written about their experience of God. These people affirm that this God made himself known to them.

147. B. Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids. 1970, p. 119-120.

They maintain that God initiated the communication, and that they then responded since their senses were not deceived. In other words, God so clearly communicated with humans that they were not deluded as to the reality of that communication. Therefore, if God initiated communication, it follows (the argument suggests) that personality is involved. The Bible uses the personal pronoun to denote personality.

South African Baptists also believe that just as God communicated with humanity meaningfully, and that God guided people to record that communication by God, so they believe that God influenced the selection of the records. Out of the mass of records about God's dealings with humanity, the collection of documents called the Bible has been selected and deemed authoritative and trustworthy. If God can speak to men and women, God can also guide those same people to accept and collect certain documents.

Finally, men and women throughout history have read the Scriptures and found a kinship with the words and their meaning. Hence the fact of similar experiences and understanding of who God is and what God's purposes are for humankind. South African Baptists believe that by approaching Scripture in a commonsense way, assessing the language according to the standard rules, people are able to understand the Bible's meaning, without fear of being deluded.

In the South African Baptist context, commonsense realism and literal language usage, whilst not extensively articulated, are foundational to Baptist thought and are presupposed in the

Baptist quest for understanding their identity, ecclesiology, and for their definition of discipleship.¹⁴⁸

DEFINITION OF DISCIPLESHIP

Having stated briefly in the Introduction that discipleship is the most appropriate motif for Baptist identity in South Africa, and having expanded on the historical, ecumenical and hermeneutical backgrounds for Baptist identity, we turn now to describe more fully our understanding of 'discipleship'.

Reference has already been made to the attempt by the BUSA to define their identity in the Bloemfontein Consultation (17-20 February, 1992). The report recommended that the Union be the means to provide national unity by the functions it performs as a corporate entity. The Union's mission was to fulfill the Great Commission, to have a leadership structure which facilitates vision, and that funds are requested directly from the churches. Hence, 'mission' is seen as the essence of South African Baptist identity. In and of itself, clearly, such a motif has historical justification and in many ways is a valuable feature. However,

148. Commonsense realism and literal language usage as such was not referred to in Anabaptism, nor in the early period of English Baptist history. This does not exclude the possibility that this later approach was incipient. Available sources give no evidence of conscious subscription to these or other philosophical presuppositions during those times. For instance, A.C. Underwood, in discussing English Baptist growth during the 17th Century, and the effects of revival during the 18th Century, makes no mention of such concerns as philosophical influences. Similar results transpired when researching other key books on Baptist history. For observations on the effects of the Enlightenment on theology in general, see K.W. Clements, Friedrich Schleiermacher: Pioneer of Modern Theology (Collins: London, 1987), especially p. 8-15, but elsewhere also; B. Ramm, After Fundamentalism: The Future of Evangelical Theology (Harper and Row: San Francisco, 1983), p. 2-27. Disagreeing with Ramm is J.D. Woodbridge, 'Some Misconceptions of the Impact of the "Enlightenment" on the Doctrine of Scripture', (Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon), p. 241-270, and p. 410-421 for notes.

mission does not tell the whole story because it is too narrowly focused and, in the South African context, tends to be too limited to mono- and cross-cultural evangelism and church growth. Further, nothing was said as to how this new vision of identity and mission in both church and society would be worked out.

South Africa's past history and its present transition to democracy requires the BUSA to define its understanding of mission more clearly. Baptist identity as a mission-minded people will only be credible if and when the BUSA expresses its purpose in unambiguous terms which include reference to the concerns and needs of society, as does the Declaration of Ibadan. Hence, if the Consultation had focused on 'discipleship' properly understood as the core of Baptist identity, the concerns of unity, mission, leadership and finances would have become clearer.

We are arguing in this thesis that South African Baptists do have an understanding of discipleship (though one which is truncated and not stated as clearly as we would like), and this understanding is summarised in the 1989 Statement on Baptist Principles. These Principles have been developed in concrete historical contexts. We have noted earlier in this chapter the role English Separatist, Calvinist, and particularly Anabaptist influences have played in the development of Baptist identity. We maintain that South African Baptists should not deny especially the Anabaptist influences on their character. We affirm, like the Anabaptists, that discipleship is the most apt motif for identity because, simply, it sums up Jesus' call to follow, and because it is a key word summarising the character of Christian faith. Or, as Harold Bender puts it: "The true test of the Christian is

discipleship. The great word of the Anabaptists was not 'faith' as it was with the Reformers, but 'following'.¹⁴⁹

Discipleship is "a life patterned after the teaching and example of Christ,"¹⁵⁰ which is the "normative form of Christianity."¹⁵¹ We have noted the BUSA's Stuart Akers' position, who in 1984 clearly took this concept of discipleship as the essence of South African Baptist life.¹⁵² And now in the latter part of the 1990s English Baptist Keith Clements espouses the same viewpoint. Speaking about the Christian's calling, Clements maintains that "means actually putting into practice, at whatever cost, the way shown by Jesus in his own life, teaching and death. It is a genuine following, a radical, costly discipleship."¹⁵³

Given this view of discipleship, it is clear that 'mission as church growth through evangelism' is too task oriented to adequately describe Jesus' call. At the same time we acknowledge that South African Baptists have been somewhat eclectic in following their Anabaptist forebears. South African Baptists, like the Anabaptists, obey the Great Commission,¹⁵⁴ and this

149. H. Bender, 'The Anabaptist Vision', in The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision, p. 43.

150. *ibid*, p. 40.

151. J.L. Burkholder, 'The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship', in The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision, p. 136. See also D.J. Bosch, Transforming Mission. Orbis: Maryknoll, 1991, p. 73 ff.

152. See above on p. 2 in the Introduction.

153. K.W. Clements, Learning to Speak: The Church's Voice in Public Affairs. T&T Clark: Edinburgh. 1995, p. 114, his emphasis, perhaps strongly influenced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (for which see below). See also G. Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth. London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1960, p. 144 ff, and D. Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship. Collier/Macmillan: New York, 1963.

154. Burkholder, 'The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship', p. 138.

Commission is regarded as the responsibility of all believers.¹⁵⁵ South African Baptists have, traditionally, held to a "separated life of holiness", as did Anabaptists.¹⁵⁶ Like their forebears, South African Baptists see holiness as a negation of "lewd conversation, pride, drunkenness, and fornication."¹⁵⁷ Ellis André acknowledges the dominance of personal morality within the BUSA.¹⁵⁸ For those Baptists in South Africa who have accepted their affinity with the Anabaptists, to "follow Jesus" sums up their identity.¹⁵⁹ These Baptists would agree with Eduard Schweizer's observation that following Jesus is like being "entrusted with a commission", one which "filled lives that were empty, gave purpose to lives frittered away in daily routine, gave meaning to lives condemned to be meaningless."¹⁶⁰ Equally they would agree with the Roman Catholic Ben Meyer, who affirms that the "disciple is a changed man", and that "... discipleship is transforming. It produces good fruit."¹⁶¹

155. BU Handbook, 1989-90, p. 180. The third section of the Declaration of Principle states: "That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world."

156. Burkholder, 'The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship', p. 148.

157. *ibid.*

158. E. André, 'The Baptist Understanding of the Relationship between Church and State with particular reference to the South African situation.' MA Thesis, UCT, 1984, p. 105.

159. See for instance J.N. Jonsson, 'Christian Discipleship'. J.N. Jonsson (ed), The New Disciple, BUCED: Roodepoort, 1976, p. 40-45; D. Hunter, 'The Origins of Anabaptism and its import for South African Church History'. Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 75, June, 1991.

160. E. Schweizer, Jesus. SCM: London, 1971, p. 41. See also his Lordship and Discipleship, chapter 1.

161. Ben F. Meyer, The Aims of Jesus. SCM: London. 1979, p. 141.

Anabaptists allied their call for holiness to discipline.¹⁶² Most BUSA church's include a clause on discipline in their constitutions, but few exercise discipline to the letter, preferring to let offenders resign, or if absent for lengthy periods of time, simply to remove their names from the membership list. We are not suggesting that discipline ought to be hard-hearted and uncompromising. Perhaps what is needed is a review of the way discipline is referred to in the constitution and to evaluate the practice of discipline. The English Baptist theologian B.R. White suggests that church discipline should be a Baptist distinctive.¹⁶³ With this we would agree since such a view is in keeping with the Anabaptist and English Baptist heritage.

Burkholder includes two other characteristics in his view of discipleship: "love and non-resistance" and "suffering in the spirit of cross bearing".¹⁶⁴ Neither of these concepts is evident in BUSA expressions of discipleship. The irony of the Baptist expression in South Africa is that whilst they show the same "general attitude of social and political indifference",¹⁶⁵ towards society as the Anabaptists, they have, again generally, been supportive of involvement in law enforcement, both civil and

162. See David Kingdon, 'Church Discipline among the Anabaptists'. The Way Ahead. Carey Publications: Haywards Heath, 1975, p. 79-95.

163. Personal letter to this writer, March, 1990. See Kingdon, 'Church Discipline ...' p. 86.

164. Burkholder, 'The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship', p. 142, 146.

165. *ibid*, p. 142.

military.¹⁶⁶

For the Anabaptists, the ethic of love "was a positive force for good" calling "for the creation of a new society where peace and brotherhood would reign".¹⁶⁷ South African Baptists continue to struggle with ethnic, personal, and theological factions which militate against real peace and familial fellowship even within the Union and the Black Convention.

"Suffering", as a factor in discipleship, is rarely an issue in contemporary white Baptist life in South Africa. It is, however, a major factor in many Black Baptists' lives, both in their struggle against apartheid and the grind of daily living as the poor. "Suffering" has been significant for the few conscientious objectors to military conscription. They have been harrassed and imprisoned.¹⁶⁸ Baptists who have criticised the BUSA, or churches within the Union, for their apparent support or tolerance of apartheid have tended to be marginalised.¹⁶⁹ While there is an awareness of the need to reflect more critically on the socio-political implications of the Gospel within the BUSA,

166. This is suggested by the number of Baptist military chaplains (a high percentage for the small number of personnel), and little support for conscientious objectors.

167. Burkholder, 'The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship', p. 142.

168. The two best known Baptists were Peter Moll and Richard Steele. Both subsequently left the Baptist denomination.

169. Along with Moll and Steele, David Walker, Edgar Carrollson, Graham Cyster, Desmond Hoffmeister, Rueben Richards, and Louise Kretzschmar should be added to the list. Add to this the many Black pastors who have committed themselves to the Convention. Little or no understanding and sympathy was afforded these people by Baptists in their struggle to come to terms with a more concrete and social expression of discipleship. One recognises the emotive character of a term like "marginalised". Some of these people have left the BUSA, others have joined the Convention, and others, not named here, remain in the denomination.

there is still considerable caution, even suspicion of proposals that deal with these issues.

Burkholder's and Bender's thesis that discipleship is "the essence of Christianity"¹⁷⁰ has been challenged from within Anabaptism.¹⁷¹ It will no doubt be challenged in the South African context. This is how it should be, for 16th Century Anabaptism does not have all the answers for contemporary South African Baptists. Anabaptism has features, however, that illustrate the quest for a retrieval of Baptist identity.¹⁷² South African Baptists who seek to recover their Anabaptist roots do indeed recognise the weaknesses of Anabaptism (their penchance for spiritualising Scripture and their pietistic withdrawal from the issues in society, to name but two), and they therefore see the need to go beyond their Continental forebears in these and other matters and follow their English heritage in the critical involvement in society.

However, discipleship as an identity motif has biblical, theological and historical justification, and is more comprehensive than other suggestions. The early Baptists, as J.N. Jonsson calls the Anabaptists,¹⁷³ maintained that

Christian discipleship meant more than subscribing to a creed or doctrine. ... Repentance demanded the evidence of newness of life. Their keynote was a call to believers to bring their whole life, spiritually and materially, under the Lordship of

170. H.S. Bender, 'The Anabaptist Vision', in The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision, p. 42.

171. J.D. Weaver, 'Discipleship Redefined: Four Sixteenth Century Anabaptists'. Mennonite Quarterly Review 54:4, 1980.

172. See, for instance, how the Baptist Convention uses Anabaptist history in forging their own identity in The Barkly West National Awareness Campaign.

173. Jonsson, The New Disciple, p. 41.

Christ in discipleship.¹⁷⁴

Jonsson appeals to South African Baptists to have the same "keynote".¹⁷⁵ Discipleship involves before anything else "a willingness to be taught and to learn."¹⁷⁶ It also requires taking up the cross, meaning "a personal acknowledgement and acceptance of the call of God for me".¹⁷⁷ V.R. Edman agrees with the cross-bearing aspect of discipleship, but suggests it also implies "a denial of self", a "full surrender to the will of God".¹⁷⁸ This must include repentance, asserts Jonsson, a "turning away from our rebellion, and our turning to God",¹⁷⁹ which Edman calls "the discipline of conversion."¹⁸⁰ David Hunter, in a perceptive article on Anabaptism and contemporary Baptist thought, maintains that discipleship is the "distinguishing mark" of a regenerate church, since such a church, by virtue of its regenerate nature, is committed to a new ethical order.¹⁸¹ This emphasis on ethics in relation to discipleship is well expressed by Jamaican Baptist, Neville Callam. He states that "involvement in the struggle for respect

174. *ibid* p. 15.

175. *ibid* p. 7.

176. Clements, Learning to Speak ..., p. 117.

177. Jonsson, The New Disciple, p. 7.

178. V.R. Edman, The Disciplines of Life. World Wide Publications: Minnesota. 1948, p. 13-14. See also J.W. de Gruchy, Liberating Reformed Theology. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1991, p. 171.

179. Jonsson, New Disciple, p. 40.

180. Edman, Disciplines, p. 9.

181. D. Hunter, 'The Origins of Anabaptism and its import for South African Church History'. Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, 75, June 1991, p. 73.

for human rights and concern for responsible discipleship must mark the church's life, if the witness of the church is not to be compromised."¹⁸² Discipleship and ethics are so inter-related that Jeremias equates the "ethics of Jesus" with the "life of discipleship."¹⁸³

Discipleship also includes an "identification with Jesus Christ", becoming "followers of Christ."¹⁸⁴ Edman expands this by speaking of discipleship as a "discipline of cost. ... We are to make our Lord Jesus supreme, permanent, pre-eminent in our hearts, so that no person nor anything shares that place in our lives."¹⁸⁵ Another way of saying this is by saying that discipleship "is a covenant with God."¹⁸⁶ Both the Anabaptists and the English Baptists used the "covenant" idea.¹⁸⁷ Roger Hayden asserts that

The life of the covenant community is expressed for Baptists in a gathered fellowship of believers in Christ, whose central actions focus upon worship, the preaching of God's Word, and the sacraments of believers' baptism and the Lord's Supper. This strengthens Christian discipleship, equipping the community for service, work and witness to the whole world.¹⁸⁸

182. N. Callam, 'The Tasks of the World Conference in the Perspective of the Future: Reflections'. On the Way to Fuller Koinonia, (eds) T.F. Best and G. Gassmann. Geneva: WCC. 1994, p. 30.

183. J. Jeremias, New Testament Theology, Volume One. SCM: London. 1971, p. 204.

184. Jonsson, New Disciple, p. 41.

185. Edman, Disciplines, p. 12.

186. Jonsson, New Disciple, p. 15.

187. See W. Klassen, Covenant and Community: The Life and Writings of Pilgram Marpeck. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968, especially p. 144.

188. R. Hayden, 'Baptists, Covenants, and Confessions'. Bound to Love. London: BUGBI. 1985, p. 33.

The "covenant community", therefore, is a community of disciples involved in the process of discipleship: worship, witness, and work. This process reflects the "importance of personal decision and commitment to follow Christ."¹⁸⁹ Discipleship was, indeed, the primary concern of Jesus, not a "secondary stage."¹⁹⁰ As Orlando Costas states

The call to discipleship is a necessary correlation of the proclamation of the kingdom because it indicates a fundamental - indeed the most concrete - means by which the kingdom of God is manifested in history. It shows that at the heart of Jesus' preaching there was the idea of a community that would embody his life and carry on his mission.¹⁹¹

Stanley J. Grenz rightly claims that the true church is marked by people, the assembly of those who have been called out by the proclamation of the gospel, who belong to God through Jesus. As such, they are to be a people with a special consciousness of covenant and community.¹⁹² Part of the discipling process includes outreach, which Grenz says "takes the form of discipling, a mission to which the risen Lord called his people."¹⁹³ Disciples (believers, the covenant community, Jesus' followers) are called to discipling by evangelising, teaching, and nurturing. But Clements reminds us that

189. R.T. Handy, 'The Baptist Family: A Heritage of Faith'. Review and Expositor 84:4 (Fall, 1987) p. 597.

190. O.E. Costas, The Integrity of Mission. San Francisco: Harper and Row. 1979, p. 14.

191. *ibid.*

192. S.J. Grenz, The Baptist Congregation. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. 1985, p. 23.

193. *ibid*, p. 21.

discipleship begins with "being with him" then "being sent by him."¹⁹⁴

The discipling process requires an understanding of the "Lordship of Christ", according to Frank Tupper. Tupper maintains that

The centrality of the Lordship of Christ and the necessity of discipleship clarifies the phrase in Acts 2:42, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."¹⁹⁵

In other words, Tupper maintains that the content of Acts 2:42 expresses the essence of discipleship, which by definition means a conscious commitment to Christ as Lord of everything. This is what David Walker would regard as "holistic" discipleship.¹⁹⁶ It is evident in the comments of Tupper (a Southern Baptist) and Walker (formerly a member of the BUSA) that there is no distinction between the disciples of the New Testament and contemporary followers of Jesus; both are expected to reflect the character of Jesus in being and act.

The observations in the preceding paragraphs are truly Baptist, but they are also truly ecumenical. Arguing a similar viewpoint, the Catholic Benedictine Mark Sheridan, in his study of discipleship in Matthew and Luke, maintains that "Matthew has restricted the use of the term disciple exclusively to the

194. Clements, Learning to Speak ..., p. 119.

195. E.F. Tupper, 'A Baptist Vision of the Church'. Review and Expositor 84:4 (Fall, 1987), p. 623.

196. D. Walker, 'Evangelicals and Apartheid: An Inquiry into some Dispositions'. Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 67 (June, 1989), pp 46-61, especially p. 60. Also 'Radical Evangelicalism: An Expression of Evangelical Social Concern Relevant to South Africa'. JTSA 70 (March, 1990), pp 37-46. See also Hunter JTSA 75, p. 72.

twelve, while Luke has broadened it to include not only the twelve but all believers".¹⁹⁷ Sheridan continues:

The twelve are ... called disciples in order to emphasize their historical continuity with Jesus. But the conscious broadening of the term disciple to include all Christians also emphasizes the fact that, although the conditions of discipleship are not easy, yet all Christians are called to follow Jesus as disciples".¹⁹⁸

Supporting this is Rengstorf's claim, that for "the disciple of Jesus ... discipleship is not a first step with the promise of greater things to come. It is the fulfilment of his destiny".¹⁹⁹ In similar vein, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, expounding the story of the Rich Young Ruler, maintains "It would be ... wrong if the young man were to regard discipleship as the logical conclusion of his search for truth in which he had hitherto been engaged, as an addition, a clarification or a completion of his old life".²⁰⁰ Hence, for Bonhoeffer, Christ's call given to those he chooses, "is at once followed by the response of obedience. The response of the disciples is an act of obedience, not a confession of faith in Jesus".²⁰¹

197. Mark Sheridan, OSB, 'Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke'. Biblical Theological Bulletin 3, 1973, p. 254.

198. *ibid*, p. 255. See also James Donaldson, '"Called to Follow": A Twofold Experience of Discipleship in Mark'. Biblical Theological Bulletin 5, 1975, pp 67-77.

199. K.H. Rengstorf, 'mathetes'. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol 4. ed G. Kittel, translated by Geoffrey Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1967, p. 448. See also Schweizer, Lordship and Discipleship, chapter 1 and Jesus, p. 39-43 and p. 128-132.

200. Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, p. 82-83.

201. *ibid*, p. 61.

However, there is some Baptist dissent from these ecumenical perspectives. Southern Baptist theologian Fred L. Fisher, as a representative of this dissent, states that "we must not confuse what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus and what it means to live a Christian life."²⁰² Fisher continues

Before the resurrection, Jesus' followers were disciples; after the resurrection they were believers. ... During his lifetime, they followed him; after his resurrection, they worshipped him. ... The center of gravity shifts from obedience to God to commitment to Christ after the resurrection.²⁰³

This novel interpretation would not have the support of Baptists generally. Most South African Baptists would certainly not agree with Fisher's arguments. There are, however, two reasons for including such a perspective, and discussing it in this thesis. The first reason is the widespread evangelical dichotomy between Jesus as Saviour and Jesus as Lord. The second reason for including this discussion is because of the relationship which South African Baptists have with the Southern Baptist Convention of the USA (SBC). Southern Baptists are significantly influential in South African Baptist circles, especially in evangelism and theological education. The inculcation of this dichotomy between believing and discipleship is therefore pervasive. This position is unfortunate to say the least. Many South African Baptists have, in fact, noted the problem and have addressed it in various ways.

None of the other Baptists, nor Bonhoeffer, nor the ecumenical theologians considered in this study suggest that

202. F.L. Fisher, Jesus and His Teachings. Nashville: Broadman. 1972, p. 141.

203. *ibid.*

obedience is legalism. All indicate that obedience springs forth from a desire to please the Lord who redeems. Most of these theologians would agree with Bonhoeffer's maxim: "only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes".²⁰⁴ Fisher asserts that Jesus rejected any "idea of formal, legalistic obedience."²⁰⁵ For Fisher, "legalism breeds self-righteousness" whereas "Jesus demanded absolute sincerity". Further, if "obedience is to a code of rules, it is possible for a man to say 'I have obeyed completely.'"²⁰⁶ We agree that discipleship does not consist of mere obedience to rules.

Contrary to his earlier statements, Fisher asserts that "obedience to God is the primary demand of discipleship."²⁰⁷ Moreover, Jesus' "love for men, his devotion to God, his constant help to all stand as a shining example of what it means to obey God radically."²⁰⁸ Fisher's summary of love and its relation to obedience is interesting. He says

With Jesus, love for others is not based on the worth of the person loved or the character of the one loving; it is based on obedience to God. ...[T]o love ... was godlike, because it was demanded by our relation to God. Love was obedience. Love is not thought of as an emotion, a feeling of goodwill, or respect for others. It is thought of as an attitude of the will, a matter of deliberate choice. It is a principle of concern for the good of others which is willing to sacrifice to achieve that good.²⁰⁹

204. Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, p. 69.

205. Fisher, Jesus and His Teachings, p. 147.

206. *ibid.*

207. *ibid*, p. 142.

208. *ibid*, p. 143.

209. *ibid*, p. 153.

Fisher's statement that love is a "deliberate choice" is the same as saying "love was obedience". Yet he, again contrary to his earlier comments, does not regard such acts as legalistic. They are acts of discipleship, acts based on belief, sustained by worship, proved by love, and applicable to the totality of life. Notwithstanding his concerns over legalism, then, Fisher concludes that obedience is rooted in love and is thus the mark of discipleship.²¹⁰ The joint Baptist/Lutheran agreement says this in the following manner:

We both regard discipleship - following Jesus wherever he calls us, even if it is to bear his cross - as a lifelong process, encompassing our entire existence: in fellowship with the people of God, in doing God's will, in prayer and worship and in service and mission to the world.²¹¹

Discipleship, then, "is not a mechanistic task of recruitment, where people are brought into an undemanding and thoughtless relationship."²¹² Further, it is not an "intellectual exercise", it is not based on catch-words, "psychological tactics", or "brainwashing", nor on the "assimilation of complicated theological formulations."²¹³ Rather, Costas maintains, discipleship

is a continuous process based on an effective personal relationship with (Jesus). It involves, of course, a basic understanding of who Jesus is, what he did and where he wants to guide us in life. It involves the developments and exercise

210. *ibid*, p. 153-155.

211. Baptists and Lutherans in Conversations: A Message to our Churches. Report of the Joint Commission of the Baptist World Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation. Chaired by T.Lorenzen (Baptist) and M.Lienhard (Lutheran). Geneva, 1990. p. 15.

212. Costas, Integrity, p. 14.

213. *ibid*, p. 15-16.

of effective methods of communication. But the key to this process of intake and output, of reception and transmission, is the authority and effective presence of Jesus himself in our lives.²¹⁴

Thus, as J.J. Vincent puts it, discipleship is "a dynamic activity of connection to and presence with Jesus in his dynamic work".²¹⁵ Hence, our understanding of discipleship has continuity from the New Testament period to the present. Obviously the issues of the day relating to any particular generation will affect the application of discipleship. Discipleship is a relationship, an attitude and a process, or as Vincent says "an apprenticeship to the work of the Kingdom".²¹⁶ Discipleship begins with regeneration (the operation of the Holy Spirit) and conversion (the human response expressed as repentance and faith), which results in intelligent, wholehearted, and conscious commitment to Jesus Christ. Discipleship is governed by the Lordship of Christ. Discipleship is developed through worship, witness, and acts of loving care to other members of humanity.

Discipleship is inherent to all Baptist thinking. But it is not, unfortunately, always worked out in ways which correspond with Jesus' teaching, nor which give credit to what Baptists have learnt throughout history and which is inherent in their

214. *ibid*, p. 16.

215. J.J. Vincent, Disciple and Lord: The Historical and Theological Significance of Discipleship in the Synoptic Gospels. Academy Press: Sheffield. 1976, p. 40.

216. *ibid*, p. 31. L. Goppeldt speaks in similar vein: "When Jesus challenged the tax-collector Levi to follow him, he bestowed his fellowship upon him in advance, and with it a share in the reign of God". Theology of the New Testament, Vol.1. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1981, p. 209.

distinctive theology.²¹⁷ In the South African context, discipleship, whilst being acknowledged as being inherent to Baptist convictions, tends to be programmatic. This can be seen by the use made of certain courses on discipleship. Such courses keep alive a focus on discipleship, but it is a discipleship which has little to do with the mission of the church to society. The SBC's Masterlife programme, for instance, defines discipleship as

the Christian's lifelong commitment to the person, teaching, and spirit of Jesus Christ. Life under Jesus' Lordship involves progressive learning, growth in Christlikeness, application of biblical truth, responsibility for sharing the Christian faith, and responsible church membership.²¹⁸

E.E.III, as Evangelism Explosion²¹⁹ is popularly known, does not define its understanding of discipleship as clearly as Masterlife. However, its thrust is almost exclusively in the realm of personal evangelism. It is possible that those who developed these courses do not consider a wholistic concept of discipleship a necessity. This is suggested by the omission of specific application to the wider issues of life. Perhaps there is a deliberate ambiguity so as not to be prescriptive. Costas, knowing the Western evangelical context well, supports this observation when he states that

Everywhere we go, we are confronted with the question of what kind of disciples we are making if there is no noticable

217. See our earlier references to Martin Luther King, Jnr, Richard Knibb, and William Carey. To this august group we add Walter Rauschenbusch.

218. Avery T. Willis, Masterlife: Discipleship Training for Leaders. Nashville: Sunday School Board, SBC. 1982, p. 5.

219. D.James Kennedy, Evangelism Explosion. Wheaton: Tyndale House. 1983.

change in their mental structure and lifestyle; if their energies are interiorized and exhausted in intrachurch activities rather than in the transformation of their history; if they make no effort to relate faith to reality; if they leave Christ out of important areas of life - like economics and politics - and reduce him to the realm of the private self or the religious club. We need to call into question discipleship programs that shun the imperative of obedience and put their emphasis on shallow slogans, that major on abstract truths and minor on concrete actions, that stress commitment to Christ without demanding the fruits of repentance, that underscore 'baptism without church discipline', that permit 'communion without confession', and restitution.²²⁰

Masterlife has the potential to be applied widely. In the South African context it is not so applied. It is unfortunate that South African Baptists, in importing these programmes, have not seen the need to adapt the material to apply more specifically to the broader needs of the South African situation. This lack of contextualization has made these programmes inadequate in their overall emphasis, unable to meet all the discipling needs of the local community, and has tended to perpetuate an individualistic understanding of piety and evangelism. This in turn has had a negative impact on the outworking of discipleship as a life-style, especially in the application to the socio-political arena.

The above discussion defining discipleship leads us now to assert that it is for these very reasons that the BUSA's Statement on Baptist Principles should be seen as an expression and definition of discipleship. While each Principle or cluster of Principles will be discussed progressively, we want here to summarise the point being made. The BUSA needs to make more of the communitarian and holistic character of discipleship.

220. Costas, Integrity, p. 24. See also Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, p. 47.

Community is not a necessary evil over against the sanctity of individualism. Belonging is an integral part of both divine and human relationships. The fact that the church is a divine creation as well as a human institution should alert Baptists to the importance of the life of the church in its concrete and real-life form. Just to profess commitment to the 'gathered church' idea results in a withdrawn community.

Ecclesiology is not a major concern to the BUSA, save for the establishment of local congregations fulfilling their mission projects. Dynamic contemporary discipleship means valuing the church as church - the community of believers, and centering activities within this group with a view to be edified and to move out into service. This will require a change in both evangelistic and pastoral practice. Bonhoeffer's 'costly grace' concept will become crucial, as will the ecumenical marks of unity, holiness, apostolicity and catholicity.

Since all Christian traditions believe that baptism is the sign of discipleship (even though they differ on various points), the BUSA would benefit from being more disciplined in their baptismal practice as well as seeking a more comprehensive and significant theology of baptism. Evangelism which focuses only on 'decisions for Christ' leads to a shallow and inadequate baptismal theology. Whilst it moves considerable numbers through the baptismal pool, it does not necessarily produce more effective disciples. The percentage of those that fall away is considerable. But discipleship in this context demands a rigorous application of preparation and pastoral contact, recognising that believers develop from their birth towards their maturity. Hence

discipleship cannot be programmatic, but wholistic and progressive.

The church business meeting, so central to congregationalism, is not the best attended gathering, generally speaking. Yet, discipleship embraces the demands of dealing with matters of money, planning, buildings and the hiring or firing of ministers, as well as with mission and worship. The 'regenerate' nature of the church membership involves the expectation to sanctify the totality of the church's life. This places obligations on leaders and people alike. The essential expectation is service and to be servants.

In this context the role of women has to be examined. Women make up a large percentage of the church's membership, in Baptist congregations as in all Christian communities. Historically women have led, been decision makers, and done great things for God and the church. Female representation at all levels of the BUSA's structures has to be seen as discipleship in action in the contemporary setting. Not only this, but a renewed emphasis on the ministry of all members is needed to show the breadth of discipleship.

Perhaps more than all the above is the need to see discipleship as committed involvement in the socio-political struggles in the wider community within which the church witnesses. To struggle for religious liberty will mean freedom for all religions not only Christian faith. It means a freedom to be prophetic without ideological captivity. It means the struggle is not over when legislation is changed, but only when public (over and above the personal) morality is agreed upon and implemented. In a State which is not bound to prefer one

religious mindset, but is committed to upholding the rights of all faiths (and the right to have no faith), Christian discipleship is called to speak clearly, regularly and fairly (ie, on behalf of all humanity, not only for Christians) on the issues of the day. Discipleship thus requires clear and unambiguous articulation of truth; and this rooted in the historic Scriptures and applied in a manner that can be understood. All of these matters will concern us in the chapters which follow.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have argued, then, that for the BUSA to critically retrieve its identity, it needs to not only understand what discipleship is in the South African context, it also needs to appreciate the historical, ecumenical, and hermeneutical foundations of denominational identity.

We have explained that the foundations of discipleship are rooted in Continental Anabaptist and English Baptist theology and practice. The early South African Baptists were Eurocentric in their culture and theology. Thus their outlook and attitudes towards Black South Africans and their practice of evangelism and mission in relation to these other South Africans were governed by this Eurocentricity.

With the imposition of separate development by the then South African government, the BUSA acquiesced to pressure. Notwithstanding a limited verbal protest to draconian measures, the BUSA was seen, certainly by many Black Baptists, to be racist in most areas of life. The fact that the Black Baptist Convention and the BUSA have come to an impasse as to a possible merger, is

a sad reflection of entrenched attitudes and negative reactions to Baptist history in South Africa. Thus, rather than encouraging discipleship that is wholistic and informed by the history and practice of their forebears, the BUSA gives evidence of a shallow, unhistorical and non-contextual form of privatised discipleship.²²¹

We have also seen that the BUSA has compromised its understanding of discipleship by their withdrawal from the ecumenical debate. Once founder members of the Christian Council, due to a perceived politicisation of the Council's mandates, the BUSA left the Council. Rejecting the overtures from the Council to remain in fellowship, the BUSA narrowed its concept of discipleship to a private and personal pietism which has little impact on society. Discipleship became programmatic, sectarian and individualistic. Thus Baptists within the BUSA have not followed their English Baptist nor their Continental Anabaptist forebears in struggling for the Lordship of Christ in society as obedient disciples.

Many other Baptist Unions or Conventions are involved in ecumenical discussions; their example could spur the BUSA into rethinking its position. Sadly this will not be the case in the light of the decision taken at the Stellenbosch Assembly in 1994 which took ecumenical discussion off the agenda. In our view discipleship which is biblical, Christian and Baptist is also ecumenical.

221. This is not to infer that the BCSA is free from prejudice. This thesis deals primarily with the BUSA, and references to the BCSA are made to illustrate or reflect on the concerns at those points in the discussion. Grappling with the issues within the BCSA, for instance, is beyond the parameters of this thesis.

Finally this chapter has defined and described discipleship in broad compass, arguing for an understanding of discipleship that takes Jesus' call to obedience (following), to repentance, to sacrifice, to wholeheartedness, to involvement in the concrete needs of society seriously. A summary of the BUSA's Principles has been presented, maintaining that in the light of the above definition, these Principles should be seen as an expression of discipleship. We now move on to an exposition of the Principles in terms of our definition.

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CHAPTER TWO
DISCIPLESHIP AS COMMUNITY¹

In this chapter the objective is to critically describe the ecclesiology of the Baptist Union of South Africa. Earlier we stated that discipleship is a life-long process of obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord on the basis of the authority of Holy Scripture, guided and influenced by the ever present Holy Spirit, and worked out in specific historical contexts. This process affects the totality of life, both personal and social. Discipleship includes the proclamation of Christ's redemptive work, a willingness to participate in both spiritual and social liberation, and to work for justice in society. Discipleship for Baptists, we will now be arguing, should include meaningful belonging to a particular congregation, an appreciation for the universal church, and a commitment to the ecumenical process.

By considering the Baptist Union of Southern Africa's Statements on Baptist Principles and Belief together with relevant portions from the Constitution of the Union, we can determine what Baptists, at least officially, in South Africa generally believe about the church, and how this impinges upon discipleship and ecumenism.

In an effort to describe and develop a Baptist understanding of discipleship, the Southern Baptist church

1. See Stanley J. Grenz's Theology for the Community of God, (Broadman & Holman: Nashville, 1994), who writes as a Baptist and uses the integrative motif of 'community' (p. ix and p. 29-31). At the same time Grenz combines this with the motif of the 'kingdom' (p.28-29, and his earlier book Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century. Downers Grove: IVP, 1993, p. 137 ff).

historian, H.L. McBeth, gives the essence of the Baptist quest when he states that

Perhaps the origin of Baptists is best explained as a search for a pure church. They sought a church composed of "visible saints", that is, true believers, observing the gospel ordinances and obeying the commands of Christ.²

A.C. Underwood says something similar when he says that in the forerunners of the modern Baptist movement there

may be traced, in varying degrees, an attempt to assert the spirituality of the Church, an insistence that doctrines and institutions must be judged by Scripture, and also an awakening of the spirit of free lay discussion.³

Underwood places the roots of Baptist history and belief within the Puritan and Separatist movements of England in the 16th and 17th centuries, though he acknowledges the possibility of Anabaptist influence also.⁴ He continues to set the scene by asserting that

It was largely a search for a pure church that led the Puritans to dissent from the Church of England, and, in turn, led the Separatists to withdraw into their independent congregations. That search led the Baptists to go a step beyond the Separatists by adopting believer's baptism.⁵

McBeth's observations on the centrality of the church are accepted by many Baptist theologians, even though in some cases

2. H.L. McBeth, The Baptist Heritage. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1987, p. 75.

3. A.C. Underwood, A History of the English Baptists. BUGBI: London. 1947, p. 19-20.

4. *ibid*, p. 21.

5. *ibid*, p. 75.

greater stress has been placed on other distinctives.⁶ This is why some Baptist bodies, like the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, for instance, have a number of distinctives, the whole of which make up the 'key' to the Baptist understanding of discipleship.

Our reflection on the distinctiveness of the church begins with a consideration of a number of the doctrinal statements from the BU Handbook pertaining to 'the Church'. The first, from the 1987 Statement on Baptist Principles, is the central text for evaluation. Then follow two other extracts to show how the BUSA has seen the concept of the church in various contexts. The 1987 Statement declares that

We, as Baptists believe in ... The Church as the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The local church, being a manifestation of the universal church, is a community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached and the ordinance of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed. It is fully autonomous and remains so notwithstanding responsibilities it may accept by voluntary association.⁷

The next two statements are taken from the 1924 Statement of Belief and from the Constitution of the BU as adopted in 1933. The 1924 Statement is as follows:

6. See also our Introduction to this thesis where we show how different Baptist theologians have, at different times in history, and for varying reasons, emphasised certain 'distinctives' or 'principles' over others. For instance: the authority of the New Testament (H. Cook, What Baptists Stand For, 1961) and the Lordship of Christ (J. Anderson, 'Old Baptist Principles Reset', SWJT, 31/2, 1989). Anderson draws attention to Mullins's stress on the competence of the soul and Whitley's predominance of the church. Anderson also makes reference to religious liberty as another central Baptist principle, but does not name any theologian by name. There is helpful material in McBeth's Baptist Heritage.

7. BU Handbook 1989-90, p. 178.

We believe that the one true Church is the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit; that the local Church on earth should take its character from the conception of the Church spiritual, and therefore that the new birth and personal confession of Christ are essentials of church membership.⁸

Further, the Constitutional clause of 1933 states that

CHURCH shall mean a gathered community of Protestant believers which accepts the supreme and final authority of Holy Scripture in all matters of faith and practice, observes the two ordinances of Believer's Baptism by Immersion and the Lord's Supper, and affirms its adherence to the Declaration of Principle⁹

These three statements on Baptist convictions on the church are germane to our study. They embody both ecumenical (though only Protestant) and denominational perspectives on ecclesiology. But before we analyse and interpret them, we must consider the way in which Baptists more generally interpret the New Testament images of the church.

THE BIBLICAL IMAGES

Baptists claim to base their view of the Church on direct biblical imagery - understood from the perspective of commonsense realism. This imagery, in turn, reflects on the character of discipleship. Millard Erickson¹⁰ and Frank Tupper¹¹ both

8. *ibid*, p. 177.

9. *ibid*, p. 179.

10. M. Erickson, Christian Theology. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids. 1985, p. 1034.

11. E.F. Tupper, 'A Baptist Vision of the Church'. Review and Expositor 84:4 (Fall, 1987), p. 617.

acknowledge Paul Minear's work¹² on this topic. Minear draws attention to almost one hundred images of the church in the New Testament alone. The best known and most accepted images are as follows:

1. Flock: 1 Peter 5:2
2. Household: Ephesians 2:19
3. Bride: Ephesians 5:25
4. Living Stones: 1 Peter 2:5
5. People of God: 1 Peter 2:9
6. New Israel: Romans 2:28-9; 9:7,8,25,26; 1 Peter 2:9-10
7. Church (ekklesia): Matthew 16:18; 18:17; Colossians 1:18;
Ephesians 1:22-23
8. Temple: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17
9. Body: Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Corinthians
6:19
10. Fellowship: 1 Corinthians 6:19; Ephesians 2:21-22.

Erickson¹³ and Dale Moody¹⁴ are helpful when they reduce the fundamental images to three, corresponding to the Trinitarian concept of God. These fundamental images are first, the People of God, second the Body of Christ, and third, the Fellowship of the Spirit.

In Tupper's opinion, the image of the church as the "people

12. P. Minear, Images of the Church in the New Testament. Westminster Press: Philadelphia. 1960.

13. Erickson, Christian Theology, p. 1034-41.

14. Dale Moody, The Word of Truth. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: Grand Rapids. 1981, p. 442-8.

of God" has priority.¹⁵ Frank Stagg also gives pride of place to the term by using it as an umbrella under which all the other images of the church are placed.¹⁶ Tupper argues that priority should be given to this image because it

existed prior to the founding of the New Testament Church ... (and it) focuses upon the covenant of God with the house of Israel, the children of Abraham. It magnifies the centrality of the Old Testament Scriptures for understanding the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, himself a Jew and son of Abraham, and it accentuates the purpose of God that through Abraham all the nations of the earth will be blessed. This image emphasizes the utmost importance of the Old Testament Scriptures for understanding the life of the New Testament Church during its earliest and most formative stages.¹⁷

Tupper's point is important, for Baptists generally have justified their viewpoints predominately from the New Testament, sometimes giving the impression that the Old Testament is obsolete. This is based, usually, on Hebrews 8:13, which indicates that the older covenant is now obsolete in the light of the Christ event. Whilst Tupper uses 1 Peter 2:9-10 to argue the New Testament development of this particular image,¹⁸ Erickson uses 2 Cor.6:16.¹⁹ Both texts echo Exodus and Hosea especially, though many other Old Testament passages could be cited.

15. Tupper, 'A Baptist Vision', p. 617. The Anglican David Watson (I Believe in the Church. Hodder: London. 1989, pp 75-95), the Roman Catholic Hans Küng (The Church. Search Press: London. 1968, pp 107-150), and the Documents of Vatican II (Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, Austin Flannery, General Editor. Costello Publishing Co.: Northport, NY. 1987, pp 359-369) also argue for the priority of this image.

16. F. Stagg, New Testament Theology. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1962, p. 170.

17. Tupper, 'A Baptist Vision' p. 617. See similar argument in Watson, Küng, and Vatican II (bibliographic details above).

18. *ibid*, p. 618.

19. Erickson, Christian Theology, p. 1035.

What Erickson and Tupper are seeking to show is how the Old Testament is the foundation for the New Testament perception of the "people of God" as church. Over against an external circumcision, there is an inward circumcision. Holiness is not merely separation from the sinful world, it is rather a distinctive attitude to, and a quality of life in Christ.²⁰ Further, Erickson correctly emphasizes the divine initiative in choosing a people; God did not adopt an existing nation, but actually created a people for himself.²¹

The second fundamental image is the 'Body of Christ'. Erickson asserts that this image is now the "locus of Christ's activity", whereas Jesus' physical body was such a focal point during his earthly ministry.²² Erickson clearly desires to keep the living reality of Christ as the central idea within the church, as well as affirming the continuity of Christ's presence from his earthly sojourn until the present.

The body of Christ image is the most dominant within the Pauline writings. For the Baptist concept of the church, the image is crucial for it emphasises the inter-relatedness of people and functions (giftedness) within the body. It is from this image that the mutuality of ministry stems, as does the strong emphasis on fellowship, like-minded members supporting each other, no matter the racial, social, or linguistic characteristics of members.

Erickson draws attention to the danger of regarding the church as a "literal" incarnation of Christ. He does not indicate

20. *ibid*, p. 1036.

21. *ibid*, p. 1035.

22. *ibid*, p. 1036.

who actually claims to believe this, nor does he develop this observation, save for saying this "would be a virtual pantheism".²³ It is possible that he is referring to the implication that, since the church is Christ's body, it (the church) must, in some way, be Christ, albeit in a mystical fashion. This implication is recognised by the early Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who says that the church "is the presence of Christ, as Christ is the presence of God."²⁴ But Bonhoeffer is aware of the theological difficulties in his statement. He asserts that "there can be no thought of a second incarnation of Christ, ... but rather we must think of a revelatory form in which 'Christ exists as the church'."²⁵

Notwithstanding Bonhoeffer's disclaimer about a second incarnation, some of his interpreters seem to read him as equating Christ with church. A Baptist theologian, Dallas Roark, for instance, maintains that for Bonhoeffer "to be in Christ" and "to be in the church" are synonymous;²⁶ and again "the church is Christ and Christ is the church."²⁷ John de Gruchy clarifies this by saying that Bonhoeffer's concept "Christ existing as the congregation" refers to the church, and is "understood not as an institution but as a 'community of persons'."²⁸ Ultimately, it seems that this paradox is answered for Bonhoeffer by his

23. *ibid*, p. 1038.

24. D. Bonhoeffer, Sanctorum Communio, p. 101.

25. *ibid*.

26. D. Roark, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Word Books: Waco, Tx. 1972, p. 33.

27. *ibid*, p. 34.

28. J.W. de Gruchy, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Witness to Jesus Christ. Collins: London. 1988, p. 6.

Lutheran understanding of the church, and especially his understanding of the 'real presence' in the sacraments. He writes

The church is the body of Christ, but only under the gathering and uniting influence of the Holy Spirit. ... He is only present in the church, that is, where the Christian community is united by preaching and the Lord's Supper for brotherly love.²⁹

The BUSA would agree with this only in a limited sense. The Pauline instruction in Ephesians on the church being the "body" which is quite distinct from the "head" is fundamental. Further, South African Baptists would not accept the concept of a "real presence" in the ordinances.

The third fundamental image is the 'Fellowship of the Holy Spirit'. Moody³⁰ draws attention to the fact that the term is found only twice in the New Testament, viz: 2 Corinthians 13:14 and Philippians 2:1. However, Moody says, "the idea supplements the fellowship with the Father (1 John 1:3) and the fellowship with the Son (1 John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 1:9) to give the very essence of the church".³¹

The essence of the church, then, is the Triune God in fellowship with the community of believers. This community came into being, and has been, and continues to be, sustained as the people of God, as the body of Christ, and as the fellowship of the Spirit. This unique fellowship of the Holy Spirit is known only by those who are indwelt by the same Spirit. It is this Holy Spirit who draws believers into community. Thus there cannot, in

29. Bonhoeffer, Sanctorum Communio, p. 101.

30. Moody, The Word of Truth, p. 447.

31. *ibid.*

reality, be unchurched, or non-churched, believers. As Bonhoeffer says, "The idea of a Christian who does not attach himself to the congregation is unthinkable", for only in the congregation is the Spirit at work.³²

For Baptists the interplay between universal and local church is of prime importance. The triune character of the church must be seen in the local as well as the universal context. The local congregation, made up of true Christians, those indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is in reality the body of Christ in microcosm.

CHURCH AND KINGDOM

In the documents of the BUSA under consideration, the Constitution and Statements of Belief, there is only one reference to the kingdom of God. This reference is found under Clause 5 of the Constitution which states that the objects of the Union are, amongst other things, "to advance the kingdom of God primarily in Southern Africa". At the formation of the Union in 1877 no mention was made of the kingdom in the original set of objectives. Nor was mention made in 1886 when the set of objectives was revised. However, the abundant references to evangelism and church planting suggest that the essence of the kingdom - Christ's reign over all creation - was at the heart of all activities, theological and practical. One can only assume that the revisers of the Constitution presumed that readers knew what the kingdom entailed, or the relationship of church and kingdom did not matter significantly to them, for it to feature so little. It is equally possible that 'kingdom' thinking was too closely identified with the 'social gospel', a perspective of the

32. Bonhoeffer, Sanctorum Communio, p. 156.

Christian faith denied, obscured, and even maligned by most white South African Baptists.

We do, however, need to understand some distinctions. The church is not the kingdom, nor is the kingdom the church. Millard Erickson says that "the church is a manifestation of the ... reign of God."³³ Alfred Loisy's provocative statement "Jesus foretold the kingdom, and it was the church that came...",³⁴ needs to be considered more positively, for it cannot be disputed that the church (in its best, most universal sense) did come forth from the kingdom's proclamation. In fact, Hans Küng points out that Loisy himself meant his comment "as a positive statement", not a negative one.³⁵ For Baptists, the kingdom of God (or of heaven) simply means the kingship, or kingly rule, of God.³⁶ Yet the context of such a rule is normally left ambiguous, though usually relegated to spiritual matters only, with an occasional admission to God's sovereignty or providence. Baptists could accept Loisy's statement as long as it is defined in the second, broader manner. Even Loisy himself maintains that "no terrestrial institution realizes the kingdom finally, and the gospel only prepares the way for the accomplishment."³⁷

Interestingly, the Mennonite Harold S. Bender argues for a concept of the kingdom similar to that of Loisy, though as an

33. Erickson, Christian Theology, p. 1042.

34. A. Loisey (edited by B.B. Scott), The Gospel and the Church. Fortress: Philadelphia. 1976 (1903), p. 166.

35. Küng, The Church, p. 43, note.

36. Stagg, New Testament Theology, p. 149.

37. Loisey, The Gospel and the Church, p. 168.

Anabaptist he would claim to be neither Catholic nor Protestant.

Friedmann asserts that Bender maintains that the

true church is the present kingdom of Christ which is being established in the midst of and alongside of the kingdom of this world; it is not to be deferred to some millennial future.³⁸

This equation of church and kingdom is problematic, and Baptists would be unwilling to accept it. Whereas Loisy maintains that the church comes into existence through the proclamation of the kingdom, Bender appears to be making the kingdom and the church synonymous. Baptist theologian George Eldon Ladd claims that the "kingdom of God is also the kingdom of Christ,"³⁹ thus differing with the Anabaptist position of Bender. South African Baptist C.W. Hill, makes the observation that the church is "the local embodiment of the kingdom of God."⁴⁰ As a general rule, though, Baptists do not equate the church with the kingdom in this way.

It is appropriate to refer here to the development of 'Landmarkism' in the Southern Baptist Convention during the nineteenth century. The movement drew its name from a tract entitled An Old Landmark Re-set, written and published by J.R. Graves, a leader in the movement, in 1854.⁴¹ The movement not

38. R. Friedmann, 'The Doctrine of the Two Worlds'. The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision, (ed) Guy F. Hershberger. Herald Press: Scottdale, Pa. 1957, p. 106.

39. G.E. Ladd, 'Kingdom of Christ, God, Heaven'. Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, (ed) W.A. Ellwell. Baker: Grand Rapids. 1984, p. 607.

40. C.W. Hill, Baptist Elders. Baptist Union: Roodepoort. 1975, p. 29.

41. Landmarkism was a movement within, and essentially limited to, the Southern Baptist Convention, and offered a Baptist theory of apostolic succession. As Glenn Hinson suggests, Landmarkism

only denied validity to paedobaptism, but also to believer's baptism by immersion by other than Southern Baptists. This attitude still prevails in some quarters within the SBC, maintains W.B. Shurden.⁴² While the practice is largely limited to the SBC, the exclusive attitude is sometimes noted within the BUSA. Exclusivity is observed by closed membership, by limited co-operation with other church traditions, and by the refusal to join ecumenical bodies (apart from like-minded evangelical groups). According to R.G. Torbert, Landmarkism identified the Baptist churches with the kingdom.⁴³

Baptists in South Africa would generally agree, though perhaps with some qualification, with fellow Baptist Walter Rauschenbusch's distinction, in which the church is "primarily a fellowship for worship; the kingdom as a fellowship of righteousness."⁴⁴ Given Rauschenbusch's commitment to social

claimed that Baptist churches alone exhibited the true marks (landmarks) of Christianity. These true marks were:

1. The local church is the only true expression of the church, the kingdom of God on earth.
2. The only true churches are those that practice believer's baptism. Those which practice infant baptism are not gospel churches.
3. Baptism can be recognised as valid only if performed in Baptist churches.
4. Communion may not be shared with any person who has not received Baptist baptism.
5. None except Baptist ministers should speak from the pulpits of Baptist churches, because non-Baptist ministers are not gospel ministers.

From E.G. Hinson, The Integrity of the Church. Broadman: Nashville. 1978, p. 27. See also W.B. Shurden, Not a Silent People: Controversies that have shaped Southern Baptists. Broadman: Nashville. 1972, p. 67 and 70.

42. Shurden, Not a Silent People, p. 67.

43. R.G. Torbert, 'Baptist Thought about the Church.' Baptists: The Bible, Church Order, and the Churches, (ed) E. Gausted. (Essays from Foundations, a Baptist Journal) Arno Press: New York. 1980. No original dates nor consecutive pagination, but pp 31 and 34 of Vol. 1:2.

44. *ibid*, p. 35.

righteousness, his understanding may be somewhat more earthy than South African Baptists would like. Yet not only the proponents of the social gospel, but one of the Baptists' spiritual forebears, the Puritans, believed that the renewal of the human social order was part of God's sovereign purposes.⁴⁵ The kingdom is always more than "God's universal and providential power over creation", it is supremely "manifested by the coming of Jesus ... in his teaching and acts, and especially in his death and resurrection."⁴⁶ Rauschenbusch would probably concur, for he "described his perception of the kingdom of God as embracing the saving of the lost"⁴⁷ William Brackney continues, saying that Rauschenbusch includes in his concept of the kingdom,

the teaching of the young, pastoral care of the poor and frail, the quickening of starved intellects, study of the Bible, church union, political reform, the reorganization of the industrial system, international peace - in short - "humanity organized according to the will of God."⁴⁸

James E. Tull understands Rauschenbusch in a similar way. The kingdom of God "is the Christian transfiguration of the social order,"⁴⁹ Further, Tull asserts, the kingdom's

45. J.W. de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa. David Philip: Cape Town. 1979, p. 195-237, especially p. 196-7. See also his Liberating Reformed Theology, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1991, p. 156, where he explicitly links justice and discipleship.

46. J.W. de Gruchy, 'The Dynamic Structure of the Church'. Unpublished DD Thesis, UNISA, Pretoria. 1972, p. 230.

47. W.H. Brackney, The Baptists. Greenwood Press: New York. 1988, p. 249.

48. *ibid.*

49. James E. Tull, Shapers of Baptist Thought. Mercer University Press: Macon, Ga. 1984, p. 196.

subjects in the world fight for the freest and highest development of human personality, whose divine worth has been revealed by Christ. It fights for a progressive reign of love in human life and society, and it fights against any system of social organization or exploitation which denies human brotherhood. It seeks the progressive unity of mankind in a fellowship which preserves individual freedom and the "opportunity of nations to work out their own national peculiarities and ideals." The kingdom, far from being superceded by the church, is the end and aim of the church's existence. It is the church's task and responsibility, therefore, to interpret salvation, whose agent it is in the world, in the light of the nature and goals of the kingdom. Lastly, the kingdom of God is not confined to the church. Rather, it embraces the whole life of man."⁵⁰

Another Baptist, Langdon Gilkey, offers some interesting suggestions in his Reaping the Whirlwind.⁵¹ Gilkey says that

the characteristics of the kingdom as manifested to us in the teachings and existence of Jesus are life, community and love, or, to bring these closer to political norms: being, participation, and responsible concern.⁵²

Rauschenbusch's and Gilkey's views would be considered as utopian by most South African Baptists. Yet neither Gilkey's nor Rauschenbusch's interpretations fit this caricature. They are committed to the kingdom both for the penultimate "immediate and immanent" in history, as well as providing "a transcendent reference" for the ultimate meaning of history.⁵³ The church's objective is always so to preach the Gospel that the kingdom becomes an evident reality in the lives of individuals and then of communities. The church's purpose is to be instrumental in causing the kingly rule of Christ to be real over all of

50. *ibid.*

51. L. Gilkey, Reaping the Whirlwind. Seabury Press: New York. 1976.

52. *ibid*, p. 288.

53. *ibid*, p. 292.

creation. Or, as J.E. Tull puts it, in his attempt to interpret Walter Rauschenbusch, the "doctrine of the kingdom relates our moral actions to our faith, and it gives those actions a religious quality."⁵⁴ Only when our view of the kingdom of God governs our understanding of history and life and their meaning, can we maintain that it is the kingdom Jesus preached.

In the light of this discussion, we now turn to a critical assessment of the BUSA statements on ecclesiology.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE BUSA STATEMENTS OF BELIEF CONCERNING THE CHURCH

We return to the three texts previously cited to explore the constituent elements of Baptist ecclesiology as stated by Baptists in South Africa. It does need to be understood, however, that no formal explanation of these statements of belief has been written. The following elements are considered important for the discussion:

A definition of 'church'

The regenerate nature of the church

The relation of local to universal church

Autonomy and association

The restriction to Protestantism

Once we have defined 'church', it may be noted that each of the following four factors under consideration correspond to the traditional ecumenical 'marks' of the church, *viz* holiness, catholicity, unity, and apostolicity.

54. Tull, Shapers of Baptist Thought, p. 196.

We begin by defining 'church' from a Baptist orientation.⁵⁵ The 1924 BUSA Statement of Belief speaks of "the whole company of those who have been redeemed"; the 1987 Statement of Baptist Principles is almost identical; and the 1933 Constitution describes the church as "a gathered community ... of believers". Hence, Geoffrey Corbin, a leading South African Baptist layman, can say that "our doctrine of the church is bigger than simply a denominational one. There are many members but only ONE body."⁵⁶ British Baptist Henry Cook⁵⁷ quotes with approbation the definition given in 1926 by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland (BUGBI) in response to the Lambeth Appeal. That response said that "the church is the holy society of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, which He founded, of which He is the only Head, and in which He dwells by His Spirit". Southern Baptist Dale Moody defines the church in terms of Trinitarianism: "The church is that fellowship of faith created by the living God as Father, Son, and Holy spirit to the praise of his glory."⁵⁸ Moody also asserts that the church, as "anticipated" by Matthew, for instance, is "an organized and disciplined community."⁵⁹ Another Southern Baptist, New Testament

55. For ecumenical discussions on 'church', see C.G. Berkouwer, The Church (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1976), J. Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit (SCM: London, 1977), J.A. Heyns, The Church (NGKerkboekhandel: Pretoria, 1980), H. Küng, The Church (Search Press: London, 1968), and A. Dulles, Models of the Church (Gill & Macmillan: Dublin, 1974).

56. G. Corbin, Unpublished notes on Baptist Principles for the Baptist Theological College, Cape Town. 1988, p. 3, his emphasis.

57. H. Cook, What Baptists Stand For. Carey Kingsgate Press: London. 1961, p. 33.

58. D. Moody, The Word of Truth. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids. 1981, p. 442.

59. *ibid*, p. 428.

theologian Frank Stagg, uses the phrase "fellowship of persons in Christ",⁶⁰ to describe the essence of the meaning of "church". Millard Erickson discusses the term 'ekklesia' extensively, resulting in the following theological definition of the church as

the whole body of those who through Christ's death have been savingly reconciled to God and have received new life. It includes all such persons, whether in heaven or on earth. While it is universal in nature, it finds its expression in local groupings of believers which display the same qualities as does the body of Christ as a whole.⁶¹

Brian Haymes, a British Baptist dealing with Baptist identity, stresses the fact "that the gathering is the act of God". Haymes continues:

The church does not come into being because a few like minded religious people get together to do their own thing and establish their own club. The church is called into being by God. Its presence in the world is a work of his grace.⁶²

These observations indicate that for Baptists the church is a 'gathered'⁶³ group of convinced believers in Christ. However, in practice, within the South African context and notwithstanding

60. F. Stagg, New Testament Theology. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1962, p. 170.

61. M. Erickson, Christian Theology. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids. 1985, p. 1034.

62. B. Haymes, A Question of Identity: Reflections on Baptist Principles and Practices. Yorkshire Baptist Association: Headingley. 1986, p. 8.

63. The term 'gathered' here is synonymous with the Baptist idea that members are to be regenerate, conscious believers. Only professed believers are allowed to become members of Baptist churches in South Africa.

these affirmations of the universal church, South African Baptists restrict 'church' to evangelicals and Protestants.⁶⁴

Apart from theological definitions, we must also acknowledge that the church can and should be considered as a sociological entity. Baptists would agree with Karl Barth in his critical view of an understanding of the church which is primarily sociological, for, he says, then "we would have to omit mention of God and His Word, of faith and obedience."⁶⁵ For Barth the church is "the community instituted by God himself, the community of faith and obedience living from the Word of God, the community of the faith and obedience of sinful men."⁶⁶ A purely sociological interpretation would mean that one would have to talk of a "sociological group ... concerned with religion ... communities which share ... the same religio-ethical convictions."⁶⁷ Sociological definitions of the church are "unsatisfactory" for Barth "because they include only half and that not the essential half of the church."⁶⁸

None of the Baptist theologies used as the source material for this study, some of which are used in the training institutions within the BUSA, approach theology or ecclesiology from a sociological perspective. The major reason for this is the perception that the church is a divine creation and therefore

64. The emphasis is on "in practice" (my stress), for the BUSA's antipathy to ecumenism and Roman Catholicism is well known. See above in Chapter 1, and later in this Chapter when dealing with 'The restriction to Protestantism' clause.

65. K. Barth, Theology and Church. SCM Press: London. 1962, p. 334.

66. *ibid.*

67. *ibid.*

68. *ibid.*

must always, in the first instance, be studied from that point of view. However, what needs to be made clear is that there is a difference between the social character of the church and an exclusively sociological definition of it. James Gustafson maintains that a task of ecclesiology is to give "a social interpretation of the church".⁶⁹ He rightly notes that

various human social processes in the life of the Christian community are not unique to it, but rather are common to a variety of human communities. In a social interpretation, then, the continuity and social identity of the Christian society can be seen as part of the general and historical life of man.⁷⁰

The fact is, as Avery Dulles notes, that the church is both a sociological and a theological entity.⁷¹ Dulles is of the opinion that from a sociological perspective the term 'church' would designate any group of humans who consider themselves to be, and are considered to be, followers of Christ. On the other hand, he says, from a theological viewpoint, the term 'church' refers to the mystery of Christ as realized in the community of those who believe in him and are assembled in his name. Dulles continues:

Sociologically, the Church is a fact of observation, accessible to persons who do not have faith. Theologically, the Church is a mystery of grace, not knowable independently of faith.⁷²

69. J.M. Gustafson, Treasure in Earthen Vessels: The Church as a Human Community. University of Chicago Press: Chicago. 1976, p. 1.

70. *ibid*, p. 99.

71. A. Dulles, Models of the Church, p. 115.

72. *ibid*.

Thus, as de Gruchy comments: "Ecclesiology ... is particularly concerned with the dialectical relationship between the church as a sociological and a theological reality."⁷³ This dialectic is assumed in our attempt to state and critically evaluate Baptist ecclesiology.

The traditional ecumenical formulation of the 'marks' of the church,⁷⁴ as expressed in the following terms: unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity, are rarely used by South African Baptists. In fact, of four commonly used Baptist theology manuals, Erickson, Milne, Moody, and Stagg, only one, Milne, gives even a brief exposition of these 'marks'.⁷⁵ All these Baptist theologians reflect upon them (or some of them), but under different rubrics. Since few Baptists use these notae ecclesiae, how can we benefit from their study, and how should we interpret them in the light of Baptist distinctiveness?

We shall consider this question in due course. For the moment we simply note that for South African Baptists the language of the notae ecclesiae appears too sacramental⁷⁶ and is regarded with suspicion. Whilst Baptists agree with the concepts of mystery and grace, their understanding of the concepts would not be infused with what they consider the sacramental character inherent in Dulles' Roman Catholic perspectives. Yet Baptists

73. J.W. de Gruchy, 'Christian Community'. Theology and Praxis, Volume 1. Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives. J.W. de Gruchy and C. Villa-Vicencio, eds. Orbis: Maryknoll and David Philip: Cape Town. 1994, p. 125.

74. See footnote 55 above for bibliographical details of the discussions by other Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians on these characteristics.

75. Milne, Know the Truth, p. 214-219.

76. But see comments on Baptist views on the sacrament/ordinance debate below in Chapter 3.

would certainly acknowledge the divine origins of the church, and the constant activity of the Spirit, bringing sinners into the experience of God's gracious love in Christ.

Before we move on to analyse and interpret the church's character three other important features need to be highlighted. Milne draws attention to the Reformed idea that the preaching and hearing of the Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments constitute two marks "of the true visible church."⁷⁷ The BUSA documents are in general agreement with Milne. But, contrary to the early Dietrich Bonhoeffer,⁷⁸ Baptists in South Africa do not accept that the Holy Spirit is only present when these elements are observed. The Spirit is present where Christ is, and Christ is wherever "two or three gather in his name" (Mt.18:20). There are meetings where the ordinances are not observed - prayer meetings for instance, yet Christ is present, since believers have gathered in his name. Milne states that the existence of groups like Quakers and the Salvation Army, who reject the ordinances, should caution us from making these elements essential to the nature of the church.⁷⁹ However, Scripture is so clear as to the inclusion of the ordinances in the teaching and practice of the gospel, that it is difficult to justify their exclusion.⁸⁰

77. Milne, Know the Truth, p. 219.

78. Bonhoeffer, Sanctorum Communio, p. 101.

79. English-speaking Baptists in South Africa indicate a certain sensitivity to some of these concerns by having an open communion table and emphasising the non-sacramental character of the elements.

80. Milne, Know the Truth, p. 220.

A third feature, and one that also emerges from the Reformation, especially Calvinism and the Radical Reformation, is the 'mark' of church discipline. David Kingdon points out, especially from the writings of Menno Simons, that for Anabaptists discipline was "one of the marks of the true church of Christ."⁸¹ Whilst this matter will be taken up again in greater detail in a later chapter, it is necessary to raise it here.⁸² Obeying Christ as the Lord and Head of the church means striving to inculcate all his commands on both personal and corporate levels. A true, visible church ought to include all the facets discussed here. The ordinances, for instance, are subservient to Christ, yet Christians observe them because they seek to obey Christ as Head of the church.

The aspect of prime importance to a Baptist understanding of ecclesiology and discipleship is its holiness.⁸³ We have noted how both the Statements of Belief and Baptist Principles maintain that the church is made up of "those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit". The phrase is amplified by the synonymous terms "new birth and personal confession of Christ". The Baptist concept of discipleship, then, requires some understanding and experience of the power of God in Christ. This is seen in the recognition that regeneration "describes the inner renewal by the Spirit of

81. D. Kingdon, 'Church discipline amongst the Anabaptists'. The Way Ahead. Carey Publications: Haywards Heath. 1975, p. 87.

82. See below in Chapter 4. Reference is made in Chapter 1 to the Anabaptist use of discipline as an aspect of discipleship.

83. For the specific discussions in ecumenical context, see Küng, The Church, p. 319-344; Dulles, Models of the Church, p. 115-129; Heyns, The Church, p. 127-134; Berkouwer, The Church, p. 313-420; Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, p. 352-357.

God."⁸⁴ The experience is a conscious confession of trust in Jesus Christ's historic redemptive work, and the deliberate decision to actively follow him. This experience is sometimes called a new birth (John 3:3, 5). The confession and decision is wrought by the Spirit of God, but also involves the uncoerced response of the individual.

Another term sometimes regarded as being synonymous with regeneration is 'conversion'. A converted membership is the same as a regenerate membership. Conversion "is the act of turning from sin and self towards God through Jesus Christ"⁸⁵ Essentially regeneration is the divine work, and conversion the human response in repentance and faith.⁸⁶ However, this distinction should not be taken too far, for the evidence of spiritual renewal is the objective of regeneration and conversion. Further, in actual experience the two elements occur simultaneously.⁸⁷ The important point here is that for Baptists, only those who have consciously trusted in Christ, who have become disciples, and who have experienced the power of renewal, may be members of the local church, for this reflects the reality of the universal church.

The nearest equivalent, then, to what the BUSA calls the 'regenerate nature' of the church, is what others refer to as the 'holiness' of the church. The equation is not exact, however.

84. H. Burkhardt, Article 'Regeneration'. S.B. Ferguson and D.F. Wright (eds), New Dictionary of Theology. IVP: Leicester. 1988, p. 574.

85. S.S. Smalley, Article 'Conversion', *ibid*, p. 167.

86. Erickson, Christian Theology, p. 942. Also D.G. Bloesch, 'Conversion'. W.A. Elwell (ed), Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids. 1984, p. 273.

87. Erickson, Christian Theology, p. 932.

Dulles says, the "holiness of the church is seen as a matter of faith, attributable to the presence of the Holy Spirit", and is not used "as a criterion for distinguishing the true church from its counterfeits."⁸⁸ The BUSA would argue that the church's holiness is related to the holiness of its membership, and would indeed claim that to some degree the evidence of holiness distinguishes the true from the false church. Karl Barth, seeking to show just how close Protestant and Roman Catholic belief is on this point, affirms that the church is holy because it is

singled out by its origin and institution as the place and tool of the divine act of revelation and reconciliation, distinct from every other organization and association.⁸⁹

Barth quotes the Roman Catechism and Calvin, maintaining that according to their respective statements, both agree with each other. He quotes these two authorities saying that the church "is holy 'among so many sinners ... because like a body with a holy head it is joined to Christ the Lord.'"⁹⁰ And again "'Because whom God chooses, them he justifies and transforms into holiness and innocence of life, that his glory may shine in them.'"⁹¹ He then asks if the first would not be regarded as from Calvin, and the second from the Roman Catholic tradition. The truth, Barth affirms, is the other way round. And to go further back than the Reformation, J.N.D. Kelly has stated that the early fathers regarded the term "holy" as "the stock epithet of the Church",

88. Dulles, Models of the Church, p. 116.

89. Barth, Theology and Church, p. 276-7.

90. *ibid*, p. 277.

91. *ibid*.

expressing "the conviction that it is God's chosen people and is indwelt by His Spirit."⁹²

The BUSA would not reject these observations. The Union would stress, however, that these comments suggest a dominance of propositional confessionalism, over against the dynamic reality of holiness which reflects the character of Christ through the believer by the power of the Spirit. The institutional character and the doctrinal formulations of the church are not wrong; they tend, in this context, to overwhelm the more subjective and dynamic nature of the church. The emotional power of such an argument is lessened, however, when one recognises that without a sociological and empirical investigation of the reality of a regenerated membership all one has in both accounts is a theological definition. The church, then, is not simply holy theologically but is called to give sociological evidence of holiness.⁹³

Notwithstanding the sinful nature of the people who actually make up the church, Scripture is clear on the demands of holiness of the people of God (1 Peter 2:9). Milne has captured the biblical mandate, so fundamental for Baptists, when he asserts that

Union with Christ involves ... a certain visible holiness of life. Hence a church's relationship with Christ the church's head will be expressed in the moral character and tone of their common life and relationships. A church which is a stranger to holiness is a stranger to Christ. When Christ addressed his churches he clearly expected just such a moral

92. J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines. A. & C. Black: London. 1968, p. 190.

93. See above on p. 116ff for the discussion on Barth's views on the sociological aspects of the church.

difference and was severe in his judgment when he found it lacking (Revelation 2-3).⁹⁴

The community of believers, united in Christ, is to be holy in terms of Christ's teachings (Matthew 28:19). Dulles makes a most important point when he says that

In the community model of the Church, the notes are no longer interpreted as the visible marks of a given society, but rather as qualities of a living community.⁹⁵

And J.N.D. Kelly, writing much earlier than Dulles but whose sentiments are similar, maintains that the

early church fathers, for instance, always regarded the Church as the empirical, visible society; they had little or no inkling of the distinction which was later to become important between a visible and an invisible Church.⁹⁶

This traditional 'note' on holiness, then, written by the church over its history, is important for Baptists. It helps Baptists ground their understanding of the dynamic character of faith in community and in society as well as helping them to give broad intellectual assent to these sentiments. The BUSA does recognise, however, that assent is important and has its place. Yet a disdain of the 'objective' character of the holiness of the church is a weak point in the Union's thought. Overall however, South African Baptists are in agreement with other Christian communities on the objective and subjective characteristics of the holiness of the church.

94. Milne, Know the Truth, p. 217.

95. Dulles, Models of the Church, p. 121.

96. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, p. 191.

We turn now to the relationship between the universal and the local church or, to put it in ecumenical terms, we come to discuss the catholicity⁹⁷ of the church from a Baptist perspective. The 1924 Statement asserts that the local church "should take its character" from the true and catholic (or universal) church. The 1987 Statement speaks of the local church "being a manifestation" of the true church. 'True' church, here, indicates the company of true believers past, present, and future.⁹⁸ Or, as South African Baptist Eric Hayward puts it: "The true church of Jesus Christ is a living organism rather than an organization."⁹⁹ Further, the 1933 Constitution refers to a "gathered community of ... believers" as being the church.

The term 'local' church needs explaining here. "The local church" de Gruchy claims, "is the presence of Christ within the community of Christians in each particular context."¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, he remarks that in "contemporary ecclesiology much stress has been rightly placed on the 'local church', whether understood as a single congregation, a 'base community', or, within the the Catholic tradition, as a diocese."¹⁰¹ Hans Küng

97. For the ecumenical discussion on this dimension, see Dulles, The Models of the Church, p.115-129; Küng, The Church, p. 269-319; Berkouwer, The Church, p. 105-198; Heyns, The Church, p. 134-143; Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, p. 347-352.

98. For Roman Catholic perspectives on this particular term, see Dulles, Models of the Church, p. 115-129; Küng, The Church, p. 263-269; F.A. Sullivan, The Church We Believe In (Paulist: New York, 1988); W. Kasper, Theology and Church (SCM: London, 1989), p. 129-147.

99. E. Hayward, 'The Church'. J.N.Jonsson (ed), The New Disciple. 1976, p. 49.

100. de Gruchy, 'Christian Community', p. 129.

101. *ibid.*

supports this idea that 'local church' is "local community", speaking about the Christian communities at Rome and Corinth.¹⁰² Thus 'local church' is not congregation, but geographic locales which possibly, even probably, include a number of congregations. The Southern Baptist Dale Moody seems to agree with this view, one of the few Baptists to do so.¹⁰³

Since the term 'catholic' elicits a varied response from Baptists, it is helpful to clarify it somewhat. In 1948 the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland (BUGBI) issued a statement summing up the Baptist understanding of the 'catholic' church. The statement maintains that Baptists

believe in the catholic Church as the holy society of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, which He founded, of which He is the only Head, and in which He dwells by His Spirit, so that though manifested in many communions, organized in various modes, and scattered throughout the world, it is yet one in Him.¹⁰⁴

In other words, the church is united in Christ and in no other. This re-iterates what the BUGBI affirmed in 1926 in reply to the Lambeth Appeal. In support of this South African Baptist A.H. Jeffrey-James asserts that the Baptist

conception of catholicism is Christo- not Ecclesio-centric. He is catholic who is united by faith (trust) and love to Christ. That church is catholic where Jesus Christ is worshipped as Saviour, Lord and Head of the Church.¹⁰⁵

102. Kung, The Church, p. 227.

103. Moody, The Word of Truth, p. 434-6 and 441-2.

104. R.N. Flew (ed), The Nature of the Church. SCM Press: London. 1962, p. 160.

105. A.H.J. James, 'The World Council of Churches: its Origins, Objectives and Trends'. Unpublished paper read at a Baptist Ministers' Fraternal, Pretoria. 1965, p. 1.

It is important to notice that, for Jeffrey-James at least, there is a cohesiveness between soteriology and ecclesiology. Indeed, the renewing work of God of necessity leads individuals into corporate fellowship. Thus Milne argues that reconciliation to God must be revealed through reconciliation to redeemed humanity.¹⁰⁶

At this point we must consider the terms 'visible and invisible' in relation to the local and universal church. Although these terms are not used by the biblical writers, they can (though they have not always done so) reflect the intent of the biblical teaching. Therefore South African Baptist R.G. Mathie says that the

invisibility of the Church (a body of believers spanning the ages and the physical world and therefore unseen) is the ground of its visible representation. The visible local body exists to show and witness to the essential reality of the invisible body which is union with Christ.¹⁰⁷

Erickson maintains that the terms 'visible' and 'invisible' deal "with ... the question of the extent to which the true church is to be identified with the present earthly institution."¹⁰⁸ At an earlier point in his discussion on the church, Erickson remarks that

the individual congregation, or group of believers in a specific place, is never regarded as only a part or component of the whole church. The church is not a sum or composite of

106. Milne, Know the Truth, p. 209-10.

107. R.G. Mathie, Unpublished notes on Ecclesiology. Baptist Theological College, Johannesburg. 1978, p. 8.

108. Erickson, Christian Theology, p. 1044.

the individual local groups. Instead, the whole is found in each place.¹⁰⁹

Further, Erickson states that the New Testament is clear about the universal nature of the church. He appeals to Matthew 16:18 and various texts from Ephesians to support his thesis. Erickson then sums up by saying that the church is the whole company

of those who through Christ's death have been savingly reconciled to God and have received new life. It includes all such persons, whether in heaven or on earth. While it is universal in nature, it finds expression in local groupings of believers which display the same qualities as does the body of Christ as a whole.¹¹⁰

What both Erickson and Mathie are saying is that there must be a complementary appreciation of the whole church in terms of its local and visible manifestations, and its broader catholic or universal reality by which they also mean the 'invisible' church. The balance between visible and invisible is necessary to protect the church from viewing itself solely as a visible social entity. This also impinges upon the Baptist idea of association, which we will deal with later in this Chapter.

Baptists, generally, do not regard any single Christian denomination as being the 'true' church. This is a viewpoint with which most of the other Christian communities, with the exception of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox family of churches, would concur. Even within the Roman Catholic tradition, especially since Vatican II, there is the new attitude towards Protestant churches, and other 'ecclesial' groups. Thus, Francis Sullivan is able to affirm that the Roman Catholic Church makes "the explicit

109. *ibid*, p. 1033.

110. *ibid*, p. 1034.

recognition that the 'elements of sanctification and of truth' found outside of the Catholic Church are ecclesial in nature".¹¹¹

But Vatican II does not go far enough for the BUSA in accepting other ecclesial bodies. The term "subsists in" is notoriously vague, as is seen even in Sullivan's explanation.¹¹² Further, Sullivan points out that according to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

it is only in the Catholic Church that the church of Christ can be said to "subsist", and ... it subsists in the Catholic Church in so exclusive a way that outside of her limits there can be found only elements of church.¹¹³

Not all Catholic theologians accept this restrictive interpretation, as Sullivan points out.¹¹⁴ The irony is that the BUSA too is almost sectarian in its interpretation of the church. The church, the BUSA's 1987 Statement says, is "where the Word of God is preached and the ordinance of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper is observed."¹¹⁵ Further the BUSA defines the church as "a gathered community of Protestant believers."¹¹⁶ Just as Baptists want the Roman and Orthodox communions to open their hearts more fully to Protestants and accept them genuinely as 'church', so the BUSA's restrictive phrases need to be reconsidered in a more ecumenical and biblical manner.

111. Sullivan, The Church We Believe In, p. 25.

112. *ibid*, p. 26-8

113. *ibid*, p. 29, his emphasis.

114. *ibid*, p. 29-33 when referring to Leonardo Boff and the text of *Lumen gentium* in *The Documents of Vatican II*.

115. BU Handbook for 1989-90, p. 178.

116. *ibid*, p. 179.

However, the BUSA does not see any inconsistency in its desire for a pure church nor its acknowledgement of the idealism of that desire. At the same time Baptists recognise that other Christian traditions also desire a "pure" body, for similar reasons to their own, even though the ecclesiologies are different. Milne draws attention to the distinction between 'edah' and 'gahal': the entire visible congregation, and those within the congregation who have responded to God's call. Further, Milne reminds us of Jesus' own teaching on the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13, by which we understand there will never be a totally pure church, only 'a church within the church'.¹¹⁷

Baptists, then, believe in the complementary character of the visible and local church and the invisible and universal church.¹¹⁸ The visible and local body reflects the invisible company of believers and it is one manifestation of the universal Church. South African Baptists, in particular, could benefit by following Milne in his interpretation of the parable of the wheat and the tares. Milne's interpretation (following many other interpreters) could help them become genuinely open to other Christian communities, who also believe in the visible church reflecting the invisible.

117. Milne, Know the Truth, p. 215. Milne's interpretation of this parable is not typical of Baptists. Reformed Baptists like David Kingdon is one who strongly disagrees with Milne's position (Children of Abraham, Carey: Haywards Heath, 1973, p. 59). Some South African Baptists would agree with Milne, though most would hold to Kingdon's view of the church and this parable, but not necessarily with his Reformed soteriology in general.

118. We recognise, notwithstanding the earlier comment on p. 128 where we observe that Erickson and Mathie seem to equate "universal" with "invisible", that not all Baptist theologians hold the same view. "Universal" includes the "visible" as well as the "invisible" church.

Hence, the authenticity of the church needs to be assessed by more than a profession of faith and morality by its members. The divine origin of the church and its historical character are important authenticating features. Here, then, we are drawn back to the call of Jesus to the original disciples who, established on the Rock himself, became the pillars of the community of faith.

Notwithstanding the mixed character of the church, the church's authenticity is also seen in the catholicity of mission. Jürgen Moltmann understands catholicity not so much as "an adjective describing the church's state" but as "an attribute describing its movement, its mission, and its hope."¹¹⁹ Moltmann defines mission as that which

embraces all activities that serve to liberate man from his slavery in the presence of the coming God, slavery which extends from economic necessity to Godforsakenness. Evangelization is mission, but mission is not merely evangelization.¹²⁰

Southern Baptist Dale Moody has a similar viewpoint, and goes so far as to say that "the church is mission, and where there is no mission there is no church."¹²¹

John de Gruchy differentiates between the function and being of the church in relation to its mission by asserting that mission "is not a task of the church, the church is only the church when it becomes mission."¹²² Berkouwer puts it this way:

119. Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, p. 349.

120. *ibid*, p. 10.

121. Moody, The Word of Truth, p. 427.

122. J.W. de Gruchy, 'The Dynamic Structure of the Church'. Unpublished DD Thesis, UNISA, Pretoria. 1972, p. 233.

"Catholicity is connected with the commission to Christ's disciples."¹²³ Authenticity is reflected in mission. Mission, in turn, is characterised by catholicity or by the openness of the church. Milne supports this by arguing that the

key aspect of the early church's catholicity was its openness to all. In distinction from Judaism with its racial exclusivism, and Gnosticism with its intellectual and cultic exclusivism, the church opened its arms to all who would hear its message and embrace its Saviour, irrespective of colour, race, social status, intellectual capacity or moral history. ... The only basis for entry was personal trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, with baptism as the authorized rite of admission.¹²⁴

This openness is based on God's love.¹²⁵ Catholicity is not an end in itself, for as Moltmann says

The real point is not to spread the church but to spread the kingdom. The goal is not the glorification of the church but the glorification of the Father through the Son in the Holy spirit. The missionary concept of the church leads a church that is open to the world in the divine mission, because it leads to a trinitarian interpretation of the church in the history of God's dealings with the world.¹²⁶

Moody is, again, in fundamental agreement with Moltmann, and asserts that the New Testament portrays the mission of the church in three ways: witness, service, and fellowship.¹²⁷ Witness is the Petrine tradition, service the Pauline, and fellowship the

123. Berkouwer, The Church, p. 106.

124. Milne, Know the Truth, p. 217.

125. Berkouwer, The Church, p. 111. Dulles, Models of the Church, p. 122.

126. Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, p. 11.

127. Moody, The Word of Truth, p. 428.

Johanine traditions.¹²⁸ All three aspects are necessary for the church to be truly catholic in its mission and nature.

Of the three statements under review, only the 1987 Statement includes the autonomy clause in which the local church (read congregation) "is fully autonomous and remains so notwithstanding responsibilities it may accept by voluntary association". This relates, clearly, to the unity of the church.¹²⁹ The other mention of autonomy can be found in Bye-Law 2(b), headed Admission to Membership of the Union, where it states that the "churches are completely autonomous and as such are free to manage their own affairs in terms of their own adopted constitutions".¹³⁰

In the debate during the Kimberley Assembly in 1989 over the inclusion of the sentence pertaining to autonomy in the 1987 Statement, it was observed that association, by definition, limited autonomy. The sentence was included, notwithstanding considerable debate. The inference is clear: churches desire to be in fellowship one with the other, but they equally desire to retain the right to dissent and dissociate from decisions if need be. However, in practice this tension has created a highly individualistic approach to co-operation negating any structural authority, and reflects poorly on Baptist claims to be mutually responsible for and committed to each other. An appeal to this type of autonomy is detrimental to a cohesive concept of the

128. *ibid*, p. 433.

129. Ecumenical discussions on this feature of the church can be found in Küng, The Church, p. 263-296; Dulles, Models of the Church, p. 115-129; Heyns, The Church, p. 113-127; Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, p. 342-347; Berkouwer, The Church, p. 29-102.

130. BU Handbook 1989-90, p. 184.

church. Even recognising the need for inter-dependency in association, extreme autonomy negates effective relationships. W.H. Brackney maintains that E.Y. Mullins, in 1912, introduced the term "autonomous" to Baptist vocabulary, linking it with "democratic government."¹³¹ Once again, terms are used ostensibly to describe theological meaning, but actually give sociological content which obscures the biblical intent. Thus, in the American context initially, and extensively though not exclusively, to many Baptist communities throughout the world, independency and autonomy have become synonymous.

The unity of the church, then, is what is at stake here. As far as is known there are no guidelines in any of the provincial associations within the BUSA for balancing autonomy and inter-dependency. A highly individualistic interpretation of the 1987 Statement seems to rule. English Baptist Barrie White makes the observation: "Interdependence is the mark of the converted - the search for independence was Adam's sin."¹³² The comment is appropriate and valid here for the South African setting. Another comment made by British Baptists in 1948 on unity and interdependency, is worthy of note, and instructive for South African Baptists. British Baptists believe

that a local church lacks one of the marks of a truly Christian community if it does not seek the fellowship of other Baptist churches, does not seek a true relationship with Christians and churches of other communions and is not conscious of its place in the one catholic Church.¹³³

131. W.H. Brackney, The Baptists. Greenwood Press: New York. 1988, p. 42.

132. B.R. White, 'The Practice of Association', in D.Slater (ed), Perspectives on Baptist Identity. Mainstream: Kingsbridge. 1987, p. 29.

133. Flew, The Nature of the Church, p. 164.

Long before this 1948 Statement British Baptists recognized the value of the association of churches. White maintains that the Abingdon Statement of 1652 was very clear as to association, its necessity and benefits. The Abingdon Baptist Association

believed that the reasons which required a believer to be in membership with a particular congregation were precisely the same as those which required a distinct congregation to be in membership with a wider fellowship of churches.¹³⁴

As for church membership, church association stimulates purity in life and doctrine, the extension of Christian love, the effectiveness of combined efforts, growth in a variety of ways, meaningful fellowship, and shows its reality to the world.¹³⁵ Further, the Calvinistic 1689 Baptist Confession asserts "that churches should seek fellowship one with another, so far as the providence of God provides opportunity for the enjoyments of such benefits."¹³⁶

The American Baptist Convention has always regarded "congregational polity, coupled with an associational principle" as one of the distinguishing marks of Baptist ecclesiology.¹³⁷ From the early days of Baptist churches, both General and Particular, the concern for balance between autonomy and association can be seen. Maring and Hudson maintain that "the General Baptists formed associational bodies in which delegates

134. White, 'The Practice of Association', in Slater, Perspectives on Baptist Identity, p. 23.

135. *ibid.*

136. 1689 Confession, p. 59.

137. N.H. Maring and W.S. Hudson, A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice. Judson Press: Valley Forge. 1963, p. 15.

of the churches could meet", because this gave "visible expression to the universal character of the church."¹³⁸ The Particular Baptists, in their confessions of faith, reveal "the same concern to preserve a judicious balance between the universal church and the local churches."¹³⁹ There was a danger of the "local church's independence ... obscuring the unity of the church. Local churches were not regarded as isolated units."¹⁴⁰ Yet the association "could not interfere directly in the affairs of a congregation."¹⁴¹ If and when recommendations were made from the associations, then local churches were expected to heed the advice. Expulsion from the association was possible if advice was not acted upon.¹⁴² (It can be noted here the interplay of catholicity and unity in some Baptist thought and practice.)

The basis for association, according to S.J. Grenz, is rooted in Acts 15, 1 Corinthians 11:16; 14:33; and the Pastorals, amongst other passages of Scripture. Grenz maintains that

Local congregational autonomy must never be equated with congregational individualism. Rather, interdependency is clearly the norm in the New Testament. ... Using the example of the Jerusalem Council as a basis, Baptist congregations call together associational councils to advise local congregations in various situations.¹⁴³

138. *ibid*, p. 39.

139. *ibid*, p. 40.

140. *ibid*, p. 150.

141. *ibid*, p. 153.

142. *ibid*.

143. S.J. Grenz, The Baptist Congregation. Judson Press: Valley Forge. 1985, p. 54-5.

When Mathie deals with association and unity he draws heavily on Kūng for support. Kūng says that

the Church - and by this I mean as always the local Church and the universal Church, the local community and the community as a whole - is really and positively one Church, one people of God, one body of Christ, one spiritual creation. The whole New Testament message bears witness to this.¹⁴⁴

Mathie then asserts

In our concept of the church we must start from the whole church and not the local church. When we first encounter the idea of the church in the New Testament, it is the whole (or universal) church that is in view. In Matthew 16:18, when Christ speaks of building his church, it is the total rather than the local community that he refers to. The idea of the whole body has logical priority over the idea of different local bodies. We cannot understand what churches are until we understand what church is. The invisibility of the church (a body of believers spanning the ages and the physical world, and therefore unseen) is the ground for its visible representation. The visible local body exists to show and witness to the essential reality of the invisible body which is in union with Christ.¹⁴⁵

However, Mathie goes on, again to quote Kūng with appreciation, to support the thesis that the local congregation is the church.¹⁴⁶ In other words, the local congregation does not merely belong to the church, it "fully represents it."¹⁴⁷

Baptists in South Africa have an inadequate understanding of the unity of the church due, in part, to their unwillingness to participate with other Christian communities and councils. Too

144. Kūng, The Church, p. 272, emphasis his.

145. Mathie, Notes on Ecclesiology, p. 8.

146. *ibid*; cf Kūng, The Church, p. 85.

147. Kūng, The Church, p. 85.

often they confuse the ecumenical concern for unity with uniformity, a mistake which Küng does not make, for as he says:

the unity of the church presupposes a multiplicity of churches; the various churches do not need to deny their origins of their specific situations; their language, their history, their customs and traditions, their way of life and thought, their personal structure will differ fundamentally, and no one has the right to take this from them.¹⁴⁸

Küng accepts the diversity of worship, theology, and order, noting that none of these elements negate unity.¹⁴⁹ He concludes:

The co-existence of different churches does not, therefore, in itself jeopardize the unity of the church; unity is only endangered by co-existence which is neither co-operation nor support, but basically a hostile confrontation.¹⁵⁰

While all the Baptists referred to above are agreed that the church is one, the practice, in the South African context, of autonomy without association weakens the BUSA's claim to be committed to unity.

Unity, for South African Baptists, is focused in Christ; unity is only possible in him. This summarises a sentiment expressed in the 1926 BUGBI response to the Lambeth Appeal, where "personal faith" is the basis for uniting as churches.¹⁵¹ Thus, assent to catechetical or creedal statements, whilst valuable, is considered inadequate. Added to statements of faith there needs

148. *ibid*, p. 274.

149. *ibid*, p. 275.

150. *ibid*, p. 276.

151. Cook, What Baptists Stand For, p. 245.

to be personal, obedient faith in Jesus Christ, which is "vital evangelical experience."¹⁵²

Institutional unity has not attracted Baptists. By 'institutional' is meant "the organisation of a community with its hierarchy, sacred powers, dogmas, rites, canons, and traditions."¹⁵³ South African Baptists tend to think particularly of the liturgical churches with their hierarchical structures as being institutional. There is a reaction to such ecclesial patterns. Sadly, the BUSA fails to see institutionalisation in its own local church and denominational structures and practices. In terms of our earlier discussion, the BUSA lacks an adequate sociological understanding of its ecclesiology as it functions in practice. Obviously, no structure, however efficient, can create or maintain unity, but all communities need, as Leonardo Boff states, "institutionalization that lends its unity, coherency, and identity."¹⁵⁴ This aversion to the institutional model of the church and to the reality of an unacknowledged Baptist institutionalisation, is a weak area in Baptist ecclesiology. After all, Christian traditions generally would agree with Baptists in affirming that the institutional character of the church is not "primary but secondary, functional and instrumental."¹⁵⁵ It is the agency of the Kingdom of God.

152. Flew, The Nature of the Church, p. 162.

153. L. Boff, Church: Charism and Power. SCM Press: London. 1985, p. 48.

154. Ibid.

155. W.O. Carver, in Flew, The Nature of the Church, p. 289.

What Baptists really react negatively to is the hierarchy and sacramentalism they associate with institutionalism. As Carver says, the church:

does not definitively administer or withhold salvation. It has no vicarious mediatorial function, but is committed to the proclamation of the complete, exclusive priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. ... Baptists thus find no place in, and no place for, any hierarchy and no saving value in any sacrament.¹⁵⁶

But does the church as 'institution' only portray such elements? And is Carver (and others) correct in his reaction? Hierarchical structures, for instance, can be informal, subtle, and traditional, as well as formal, overt, and entrenched doctrinally. And, surely, the proclamation of the Gospel is a "mediatorial function", though not in the Roman Catholic sense.

Since Carver wrote, many changes have taken place within the Roman Catholic communion, to take one example of an hierarchical community. In Latin America, Leonardo Boff has expressed his desire to see the institutional church become an "authentic community."¹⁵⁷ For this to happen, we must understand the difference between 'community' and 'society'. Boff quotes sociologist F. Tönnies, who says that

a community is a social formation in which human beings are oriented by a sense of reciprocity and "belonging"; a society, by contrast, is a social formation in which anonymity and indirect relationships prevail.¹⁵⁸

156. *ibid.*

157. L. Boff, Ecclesiogenesis. Collins: London. 1986, p. 4.

158. *ibid*, p. 5.

Evaluating the unity of the church in the light of this, South African Baptists would say that the community of believers "belong", and have in truth "a sense of reciprocity". Institutional Christianity, the BUSA would argue, with its tendency to breed nominal links to the church, reveals the "anonymity and indirect relationships" Tönnies speaks of. However, Boff continues to argue for realism. He does not see the church becoming totally communitarian; only partially so, due to the inevitable institutional nature of the church. For Boff the communitarian character of the church is the vehicle of renewal; community revitalizing institution; a church within a church.¹⁵⁹ Whilst we acknowledge that Boff is speaking of the Roman Catholic church, some of what he says is similar to what Milne has said as a Baptist. Because of the pervasiveness of sin and the changes in social environment at a given time, Baptists need always to acknowledge the inevitability of their model, essentially communitarian, becoming institutionalised.

In the contemporary British context, White expresses his concern over the excessive individualism which seems to be shaping Baptist attitudes to association.¹⁶⁰ Also in Britain, Alistair Campbell, responding to Brian Haymes' book Baptist Identity, is forthright in his assertion that

it is the gospel and our understanding of it which will determine our doctrine ... our experience ... our worship ... our mission. These in turn will determine ... with whom we associate, how deeply and for what purpose.¹⁶¹

159. *ibid*, p. 6-7.

160. White, 'The Practice of Association', in Slater, Perspectives on Baptist Identity, p. 27.

161. A. Campbell, 'The Grounds of Association', *ibid*, p. 39.

With these sentiments Baptists in South Africa would agree. South African Baptists would, however, benefit from renewed reflection on the interdependence between the churches, over against the isolationist interpretation of autonomy. Effective interdependence will enable Associations to establish new congregations, will expect the existing churches to support those ventures, will initiate consultations over local church conflicts, and will guide pastorless churches to find the best person. Such initiatives and procedures must always be in relation with the officers and members of the churches, not independent of them, nor using authoritarian acts to manipulate them. The mark of unity will become a greater reality if Associational and ecumenical fellowship is experienced more concretely.

Of all the statements on doctrine and belief, the 1933 Constitution is the only one restricting the Baptist understanding of ecclesiology to "Protestantism". If the church is truly the company of the redeemed in Christ, then to restrict such a company to Protestantism has to be critically assessed. Our concern here is apostolicity,¹⁶² that is, the continuity of apostolic doctrine. The only justification, then, one can imagine for such a limiting comment being included in the Constitution is that, at the time of writing the Constitution, Roman Catholicism was not regarded as a true church by the

162. For ecumenical discussions on this 'note', see Berkouwer, The Church, p. 201-309; Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, p. 352-361; Heyns, The Church, p. 144-147; Küng, The Church, p. 344-359; Dulles, Models of the Church, p. 115-129.

Baptists who wrote the document.¹⁶³ It also suggests an institutionalised attitude in the Protestant churches, outside of which there is no salvation.¹⁶⁴ If this is so, then it is inconsistent with the earlier section in which Baptists were seen to be part of the catholic church, made up of believers. It is probably true to say, further, that most Baptists in the BUSA today still do not regard Roman Catholicism as being a church true to Scripture or to the gospel.¹⁶⁵ Hence the retention of the clause to the present day. But probably few Baptists would reject Leonardo Boff's contention that the church

emerges, is born, and is continually reshaped whenever individuals meet to hear the word of God, believe in it, and vow together to follow Jesus Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁶

Here is the personal or individual decision, here is faith in Christ, here is conscious discipleship, here is reliance on the Spirit, here is the acknowledgement of Scripture's authority; all important characteristics for Baptists. Yet the

163. See a similar attitude which prevailed within the SBC called "Landmarkism", for which note the comments in footnote 41. Fortunately neither the SBC nor the BUSA would take this view seriously today - as described above. However, the fundamental attitude of exclusivism evident in Baptists within the BUSA is particularly disturbing.

164. The stress is on "suggests" here, not claims or any other more assertive term. No Baptist to our knowledge holds such a view of salvation.

165. The phrase "true to Scripture", as Baptists understand things relates to their literalist hermeneutic and, generally speaking, a non-contextual approach to interpreting the Bible. See also the section in the previous chapter on hermeneutics.

166. Boff, Church: Charism and Power, p. 127.

statement is from a Roman Catholic Liberation theologian.¹⁶⁷

Further, Boff is emphatic, as are Baptists, about the fundamental necessity of faith for the church to be such. He states that

Faith is the act by which human beings open themselves to God and accept in their lives the salvation, forgiveness, and indwelling of the triune God. In this sense, faith is antecedent to the particular, concrete, institutionalized church. Faith constitutes the initiating and structuring principle of the particular church. The latter is defined most basically as a communitas fidelium, a community of those who believe, an assembly of those who gather together by reason of and for the sake of their faith.¹⁶⁸

South African Baptists tend to be defensive about agreeing with someone like Boff, especially because of the age old tensions and suspicions between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. However, we are simply affirming here that Protestantism per se cannot be regarded as the only system of truth, nor truth's sole custodian. What we are concerned about here is 'apostolicity'. We refer, once again, to Milne to offer a Baptist perspective on apostolicity. He states that

apostolic succession is properly the succession of the apostles' gospel, when the original deposit of apostolic faith is passed from one generation to another. ... A church is apostolic as it recognizes in practice the supreme authority of the apostolic Scriptures.¹⁶⁹

Reference has already been made in Chapter 1 to Baptists and authority. There is no need to discuss that issue again.

167. One has to concede that Boff, with his recent resignation from the Roman Catholic priesthood, is no longer recognized as a bona fide Catholic theologian. Yet, when he wrote the books referred to in this thesis, he was a priest and theologian within the Catholic Church.

168. Boff, Ecclesiogenesis, p. 19.

169. Milne, Know the Truth, p. 219.

Suffice it to say that there is considerable diversity within Baptist circles as to what constitutes authority, and how Scripture is authoritative.¹⁷⁰ One can agree with Karl Barth who has asserted that the Church's authority is that of "the Word of the Bible written and proclaimed", or "the normative witness of the Apostles for the understanding and proclamation of the divine revelation."¹⁷¹

There are other factors also. John de Gruchy maintains that apostolic succession has nothing to do with a static belief in terms of being, but rather to do with the church being dynamically "faithful in each situation to the apostolic faith, mission and ministry."¹⁷² Further, appealing to the Reformers, de Gruchy asserts that the continuity of true succession is the work of the Holy Spirit, who aids the church to be faithful.¹⁷³ Continuity and faithfulness in each new situation will demand change. Acting from the premise of relevance per se can create compromise instead of obedience.¹⁷⁴

Apostolicity, then, concerns itself with authority, continuity, and faithfulness to the apostolic testimony to the Gospel of Christ. For Baptists in South Africa to continue to restrict their understanding of the church to a Protestant

170. P. Fiddes, A Leading Question. Baptist Publications: London. 1984. P. Fiddes, R. Hayden, R. Kidd, K. Clements, B. Haymes, Bound To Love. Baptist Union: London. 1985. B.R. White, Authority: A Baptist View. Baptist Publications: London. 1976. J.I. Harris, 'Biblical Authority in Recent Baptist Theology'. Unpublished M.Th. thesis, University of the Western Cape, Bellville. 1989.

171. Barth, Theology and Church, p. 278.

172. de Gruchy, 'The Dynamic Structure of the Church', p. 219.

173. *ibid*, p. 219-20.

174. *ibid*, p. 222-5.

interpretation alone, constitutes an unfortunate error and attitude. The attitude is unfortunate since it negates serious conversations with Roman Catholics, yet technically leaves room to discuss ecclesiology with radical or liberal Protestants. Notwithstanding their 'radical' origins within the Anabaptist movement, many present day Baptists have, in reality, more in common with Roman Catholics than with many Protestants. There is error in the restriction also, for notwithstanding history, key elements in Roman Catholic ecclesiology since Vatican II, as well as other aspects of theology, are akin to the Baptist perspective.¹⁷⁵

In summary, discipleship involves belonging. This means being part of the church of God and belonging to a particular congregation. We have seen that the BUSA's various statements on the church, and the broad-based interpretation of the church, are to a significant extent in keeping with the position of ecclesiologists from other traditions, and therefore ecumenical. However, Baptists tend to be of the opinion that their perspectives are unique to themselves. Baptists have not accepted that other ecclesial traditions also believe in a regenerate membership or discipleship.

The same is true for the relationship between the local and universal church. For Anglicans, for instance, the local church is geographical, centered around the cathedral church with its bishop. (We have noted that the Southern Baptist Dale Moody, is sympathetic to this view.) The BUSA's statements of belief

175. Dulles, Models of the Church; Küng, The Church; Boff, Ecclesiology.

actually restrict the interpretation of the church to a Protestant and Baptist type. This is fundamentally sectarian.

South African Baptist stress on autonomy seriously hinders their ability to understand the unity of the Church. The BUSA could learn from the British Baptists who claim that formal and accountable links with other churches, both from their own tradition and ecumenically, is an essential part of the Gospel. The "associational principle" is a Baptist principle, according to a number of Baptist groups both in America and in Britain. It is a principle held by all mainline Christian churches, therefore it is ecumenical. Sadly, the emphasis on autonomy within the BUSA has resulted in fragmentation and individualism.

The weakest link, but the strongest influence, in the BUSA's understanding of the church, is the restriction to Protestantism. By a single stroke, the BUSA effectively closes itself to dialogue with the Catholic tradition, both Anglo and Roman. Other Baptist groups are not so closed, as is seen by the relationships and conversations recorded especially in the WCC sponsored BEM documents. On a more popular level, charismatic Baptists fellowship with charismatic Catholics without too much difficulty. There is a reliance on the Spirit of God rather than propositions or creedal statements that have their roots in historical periods when doctrinal differences had more of a negative social implication.

South African Baptists do confess to belong to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church even if they have reservations about this formulation. They tend to compromise this confession, however, by their self-imposed restrictions. This, in turn, limits their understanding and their practice of

discipleship, and in turn shapes their sense of identity over against other church traditions.

BAPTISTS, THE CHURCH, AND ECUMENISM

References have been made to the Baptists' ecumenical relationships, or lack thereof, in both the Introduction and in Chapter 1. Reference has also been made to the BUSA's reaction to the WCC and its call for re-union. In the light of the thesis that Baptist identity cannot be wholistic without ecumenical participation, we need, here, to consider ecumenical perspectives on the church.

Using the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 as a basis for a united Confession, a WCC study states that

The Creed identifies the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. This is the richest form of confessing the church in the history of early Christian creeds. It begins with the oneness which had a special relevance in the face of the divisions of the fourth century. Its holiness refers to the fundamental fact that the church belongs to the Holy One and is called to fidelity. Its catholicity means that it is the gift of God for all people whatever their particular country, race, social condition or language, that is to say for the whole oikoumene as understood at the time of the Council of Constantinople. The apostolicity of the church expresses its obligation and commitment to the norm of the apostolic gospel of God's action in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁶

The WCC sees the church as a "community of those who are in communion with Christ and, through him, with one another".¹⁷⁷

Further, this community, with its "life and unity", is "grounded

176. Confessing the One Faith. Geneva: WCC, 1991, p. 83. See also a similar study edited by Hans-Georg Link, One God, One Lord, One Spirit: On the Explication of the Apostolic Faith Today. Geneva: WCC, 1988, p. 106-111.

177. Confessing One Faith, p. 84.

in the communion of the Trinity",¹⁷⁸ and "its full manifestation (is found) wherever people are gathered together by word and sacrament in obedience to the apostolic faith - i.e. in a local church".¹⁷⁹ South African Baptists have not given serious attention to these sentiments mainly because of their antipathy towards ecumenism in general and the WCC in particular.¹⁸⁰

The WCC study continues, giving ample evidence of the inherent biblical character of the ecumenical perspective on the Church, using the images of "body", "communion of saints in the Spirit", and "the people of God". The study reveals its appreciation of the richness of the church's diversity, observes that the church is a "prefiguration of the kingdom which it expects and announces", comments on the features of continuity and discontinuity, and reminds us that the church is 'mystery' and 'prophetic sign'.¹⁸¹

Given some of the conflicts the Baptist Union has had with the Baptist Convention over structure, leadership, pensions, and attitudes, it is instructive here to reflect on a Black perspective on ecclesiology. A Black perspective is important, not least because of the emphasis placed on community within

178. *ibid.*

179. *ibid.*

180. This does not mean that individual Baptists have not interacted ecumenically. I am thinking especially of the BUSA in an official capacity. Kevin Roy, for instance, has written a thesis related to the WCC's BEM document: 'Baptism, Reconciliation and Unity - Towards a Mutual Acceptance of Baptismal Differences'. Unpublished D.Th. thesis, UNISA, Pretoria, 1994.

181. Confessing One Faith, pp 84-90.

African culture.¹⁸² Currently there is no-one from the Baptist Convention of South Africa who has written on Baptist ecclesiology from a Black perspective. Bonganjalo Goba, a Congregational theologian who therefore shares some affinities with the Baptist tradition, has made some helpful observations on ecclesiology from a Black viewpoint.

Goba emphasizes the importance of the 'communal' dimension in ecclesiology, "for it stresses a deep sense of unity and solidarity", balancing the more "negative individualism" seen particularly in Western evangelical thought.¹⁸³ For Goba, Christ's mission is a unified task, affecting the totality of life, not merely the spiritual dimension. Goba speaks of a "mission of liberation" which is "relevant to every aspect of human life".¹⁸⁴ This is consistent with the Black concept of a unified life.

Goba then draws from Jurgen Moltmann's pneumatological perspective on ecclesiology. The church in the power of the Holy Spirit means being critical of all forms of human bondage. It means being involved in the actual transformation of the situation of bondage. Many theologians, particularly in the 'Two-thirds World', have understood the indwelling of the Holy spirit in terms of identification with the poor and oppressed.¹⁸⁵ South African Baptists would certainly have sympathy for the poor and

182. B. Goba, 'Towards a "Black" Ecclesiology: A Response'. Missionalia 9:2 (August), 1981.

183. *ibid*, p.56. See also D.W. Brown, 'Communal Ecclesiology: The Power of the Anabaptist Vision'. Theology Today 36: 1 (April), 1979, p. 25-7.

184. Goba, 'Towards a "Black" Ecclesiology', p. 56.

185. *ibid*, p. 57.

oppressed, but they would be hesitant to view solidarity with such as an equation with the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

Goba continues to describe his pneumatological view of ecclesiology. He says that

the church cannot ultimately be an ideological community. It may be affected by a certain ideological orientation within a specific historical situation, but that orientation must, under the power of the Holy Spirit, be continually transformed.¹⁸⁶

This is a re-affirmation of the Reformation principle of the church ever reforming. But Goba's comment has a particular thrust in the South African context. Whereas in the past the church in South Africa has been influenced, negatively and drastically, by apartheid, it is possible to be influenced by other factors in the future. Learning, then, from the recent past, the church in South Africa must ensure that never again is she so influenced by ideology as to justify injustice. As Goba says, the church "should become the promise of the liberated people of God. This becomes possible when it engages in the actual transformation of our society".¹⁸⁷

This is not merely a liberationist perspective, but the ethical application of Biblical truth, the incarnation of Christian reality. Christ comes not only to redeem and reconcile, but also to to make whole psychologically and socially. Fundamentally Goba is saying that true community is found in Christ and in the context of what a Black Catholic theologian J.

186. *ibid.*

187. *ibid.*

Nxumalo calls "face to face association and close intimacy among members".¹⁸⁸

Black ecclesiology, then, stresses communal solidarity. It also emphasizes that true spirituality - and discipleship - is proved by involvement in the world for the sake of justice. Working for justice is a manifestation of the indwelling of the Spirit of the living God. South African Baptists need to adjust their ecclesiology to incorporate Black perspectives and to make their ecclesiology 'African' in order to become more historically faithful.

Black Baptists have stressed both the African and communal character of the church (read denomination). In his critique of the BUSA, the Baptist Convention's General Secretary, Desmond Hoffmeister, emphasises the need for community which is inclusive. For Hoffmeister, the BUSA is exclusive due to racism, and therefore reconciliation to God is impossible without reconciliation to other human beings.¹⁸⁹ This is especially true for those within the same ecclesial tradition. For Hoffmeister, African ecclesiology empowers, heals, and enables self-discovery, particularly for Blacks, who for so long have been disenfranchised.¹⁹⁰ At the same time Hoffmeister pleads for the

188. J. Nxumalo, in Goba, p. 61.

189. D. Hoffmeister, 'The Relationship between the Baptist Convention and the Baptist Union', in D. Hoffmeister and B.J. Gurney (eds), The Barkly West National Awareness Workshop. Baptist Convention of South Africa: Braamfontein. 1990, p. 49. In similar vein, but with specific reference to Baptist Identity, Ruben Richards has called for an "inclusivist paradigm". R.R. Richards, 'In Search of our Identity: Baptist Praxis in a Post-Apartheid South Africa'. Unpublished paper for the Baptist Convention of South Africa. 1994, p. 2.

190. Hoffmeister, 'The Relationship between the BC and the BU', p. 49-50.

denomination to consciously reject exclusive ethnic congregations.¹⁹¹

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have shown in various ways that Scripture, Baptist, and ecumenically inclined Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians are sympathetic, in principle, to the 'gathered' church concept. Using the fundamental images of People of God, Body of Christ, and Fellowship of the Spirit, the church is portrayed as a 'gathered' organism. This organism is a disciplined and intentional group. The intent is to follow Jesus according to his teaching. This gathered, disciplined, and intentional character of the church is foundational for discipleship. Discipleship, for Baptists, is inextricably linked to ecclesiology, for the community of believers is both a foundation and a support for growth in Christian life and discipline.

In many respects Baptist ecclesiology is no different from other Christian ecclesial perspectives. At the same time South African Baptists reveal an inconsistency by maintaining a separatist stance towards the ecumenical movement and its appeal for a more inclusive ecclesiology. This is seen particularly by the South African Baptist refusal to be part of the SACC since 1975, and by their lack of response to the WCC's BEM document. South African Baptists will benefit greatly by studying the WCC documents and monographs on various theological issues, along with specifically Black perspectives on theology. They will find that their views will be broadened and enriched, and, on the

191. *ibid*, p. 51.

fundamentals, will probably find that they are not that divergent after all.

In this chapter, then, we have described and critically interpreted the Baptist concept of discipleship as "belonging". This term accurately portrays the Baptist view of the church. For Baptists, to be a disciple means to belong to the visible and localised (gathered) church. We have critically assessed the BUSA's confessional statements on the church. At the same time Baptists in South Africa are criticised for being too sectarian in their practice. Baptists need to discuss more critically with themselves, and with other ecclesial traditions, over their distinctiveness and their similarities. They need to be more aware of the sociological realities of their congregational existence. They need also to be more involved in the ecumenical movement, learning from as well as giving to other Christian bodies. Whilst Baptists claim to have an open communion table, their exclusivist practice of membership hinders their role ecumenically. Not that compromise is requested of Baptists. Rather, ecumenism desires dialogue towards truth. Other Christian traditions also claim to believe in and practice the "gathered" church idea (albeit differently to the Baptists).

CHAPTER THREE

BAPTISM AS SIGN OF DISCIPLESHIP

We have been arguing in this thesis that discipleship is not only of the essence of Christianity, but that it should also be considered as the "mainspring" of the life and praxis of the Baptist Union of South Africa (BUSA).¹ We will now argue that discipleship is a life-long process of 'following' Jesus which normally begins with baptism. We will also argue that the Baptist understanding of baptism must be considered within an ecumenical perspective if it is not to become sectarian.

Baptists within the BUSA regard baptism of believers and immersion as the only scriptural and therefore only valid form of the rite. Their problem therefore has to do with other forms of baptism.² This issue brings into focus the BUSA's understanding of discipleship and identity in the current day, for it raises questions as to the ability and willingness of the Union to enter meaningful ecumenical dialogue, for all churches, even those which practice paedobaptism, accept adult or believer's baptism.

The BUSA does not, however, regard baptism necessary for salvation. In most BUSA congregations baptism is not a prerequisite for communion. This is due, in part, to the BUSA's disjunction between baptism as a significant symbol or sacrament and the process of discipleship. Baptists within the BUSA have

1. See above Introduction and Chapter One.

2. See A. König's introduction to Infant Baptism: The Arguments For and Against, (eds) A. König, H. Lederle, F.P. Möller (CUM: Roodepoort, 1984), p. 3.

tended to prefer the term 'ordinance' to 'sacrament',³ although Afrikaans-speaking Baptists have a sympathy towards the latter term, however.⁴ Leon McBeth draws attention to a significant voice among British Baptists whom he calls "sacramentalists".⁵ Certainly British Baptists Bruce Milne and George Beasley-Murray have a bias for 'sacrament'.⁶ Even the modern Anabaptist

3. Rae Trew, 'Ordinances', in The New Disciple (ed) J.N. Jonsson. BUCED: Roodepoort. 1976, p. 64 ff. C.W. Parnell's two booklets Being a Baptist (Baptist Publishing House: Roodepoort, 1980) and Baptist Vision (Baptist Publishing House: Roodepoort, 1991) have only one reference to 'ordinance' in the chapter on baptism (p. 38) in the former booklet. But Parnell couches the reference in a polemical manner, as he does over "sacramentalism" when discussing communion. See p. 66-67 and p. 38 respectively. It should be noted that the Reformed theologian Herman Hoeksema uses the term 'ordinance', but his meaning is clearly sacramental: "... baptism is an ordinance of God to seal unto us and to our seed His covenant" Believers and their Seed. Reformed Free Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, 1971, p. v. John Murray, another Reformed theologian, uses both terms seemingly synonymously, though his preferred use is 'ordinance', see his Collected Writings, Volume 2: Systematic Theology (Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 1977), p. 366-369, 370-375, and Christian Baptism (Presbyterian and Reformed: Philadelphia, 1974), p. 4-8.

4. Notwithstanding the limits mentioned in the Introduction of using English-speaking Baptist literature within the South African context, it is deemed helpful to mention in this chapter some Afrikaans-language material. With respect to this 'sympathy', Afrikaans Baptists Dr I. van der Walt and Dr G. Venter informed the writer of this perspective in a personal discussion on June 24, 1996. See van der Walt's unpublished DTh thesis 'Die Beoordeling van Enkele Moderne Ekumeniese Doopdiskussies' (UNISA: Pretoria, 1990), especially chapter 4 on the "Meaning of Baptism". Also J.D. Odendaal, 'Baptism as Related to Church Membership.' Unpublished paper, nd.

5. L. McBeth, Baptist Heritage. Broadman: Nashville. 1987, p. 512 ff.

6. B. Milne, Know the Truth. IVP: Leicester. 1982, p. 230 ff, where Milne only uses 'sacrament' and does not include 'ordinance' in his discussion. G. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament (Paternoster: Exeter, 1962), p. 187. K. Roy, in his unpublished DTh Thesis (UNISA: Pretoria, 1994), p. 50, observes that Beasley-Murray (p. 99) gives approval to Flemington's position, that is, that baptism is a "sacrament of

(Mennonite) Thomas Finger uses 'sacrament' to describe the meaning of baptism and communion.⁷ Southern Baptists (SBC) and other Baptists in the USA tend, however, to use 'ordinance', if any term at all.⁸

Polarisations such as these are, however, problematic for discipleship and for ecumenism. Perhaps the recognition of both terms as valid would be helpful. Certainly baptism is an 'ordinance' which Baptists regard as ordained by Christ as initiation into the church. Equally, baptism is a 'sacrament', "an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his goodwill towards us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith."⁹ Baptists who view baptism as an act of obedience, for instance, do indeed believe that the very act of baptism is a blessing in itself. As the BUSA's Rae Trew says, "it is a sign of a cleansed conscience, and a sign of those who are saved."¹⁰ The recipient must surely know or experience this

the gospel". However, Beasley-Murray rejects as "unproven" the interpretation Flemington espouses (p. 128 note 1), even though he seems sympathetic to its sacramental nature. Roy makes other observations on Beasley-Murray's sacramental views on p. 24, 53, 60, 61 and 91 of his thesis 'Baptism, Reconciliation and Unity - Towards a Mutual Acceptance of Baptismal Differences' (UNISA: Pretoria, 1994).

7. T. Finger, Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach, Volume Two. Herald Press: Scottdale. 1989, p. 331 ff.

8. See SBC New Testament scholar F. Stagg, New Testament Theology. Broadman: Nashville. 1962, p. 233. Stagg rejects both 'sacrament' and 'symbol', but his discussion indicates that he prefers 'symbol'. M. Erickson (General Baptist Convention), Christian Theology. Baker: Grand Rapids. 1985, p. 1096.

9. Finger, Christian Theology, p. 332, quoting Calvin. See also P. Marcel, The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism. James Clarke: London. 1953, p. 27-28.

10. Trew, The New Disciple, p. 68.

cleansing and salvation in a most personal and subjective manner, over and above the objective conviction he/she may have, for the 'ordinance' to have any real value.¹¹ Further, Roy, in his review of Beasley-Murray's work on baptism, affirms the sacramental position of this English Baptist scholar. A sacramental view is "more than just a symbol of the various blessings bestowed by God ... it is an efficacious symbol whereby those blessings are actually procured."¹² Baptism is efficacious because "faith is efficacious."¹³ The BUSA, however convinced of faith's efficacy, remains bonded to the symbolic meaning of the ordinances, and this is seen in its baptismal theology generally.¹⁴

Regardless of their views on the character of the sacrament, Baptists within the BUSA restrict baptism to believers and by immersion. More ecumenically minded Baptists, especially in Britain and parts of the USA, accept believers into membership who have been baptised as children, as long as they consciously profess faith at the time of their application for membership.¹⁵ In this chapter we will describe and interpret the Baptist view

11. Roy makes an accurate observation that Baptists often practice self-made activities or rites to compensate for their rejection of baptism as the "initiatory rite of incorporation". They include "the sinner's prayer, making 'decisions' at an altar call, etc. See his DTh thesis, p. 97-98.

12. *ibid*, p. 91.

13. *ibid*.

14. See D. Lotz, 'Baptists', in Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement (eds) N. Lassky et al, WCC: Geneva, 1991, p. 88.

15. See indications of this in G.R. Beasley-Murray's Baptism in the New Testament. Paternoster: Exeter. 1972, p. 392-3. Also see the responses to BEM by Baptists in the discussion below.

on baptism as it impinges upon discipleship.¹⁶ The chapter will include critical observations on the place of the child in Baptist thought. We also consider baptism in an ecumenical context. Finally, we suggest an approach to an ecumenical rapprochement over baptism.

To appreciate the Baptist perspective on baptism it is important to take the Anabaptists seriously as those who inaugurated the Baptist movement.¹⁷ For the Anabaptists, "Baptism signifies the forgiveness of sins, an inner transformation of mind and heart, and a pledge of a life of discipleship".¹⁸ But baptism was not simply an individual's symbolic pledge to discipleship; it was a corporate act also. Without baptism, Anabaptists claimed, "the visible church could not exist".¹⁹ For these progenitors of the modern Baptist movement baptism was "an act of confession, obedience, individual discipleship, and church membership".²⁰ Just as the congregational or gathered nature of the church is central to the Baptist understanding of discipleship and identity, so baptism is equally important. The Baptist movement throughout its history

16. For this link see Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament, p. 88ff and again p. 145-6. "Baptizing belongs to the means by which a disciple is made" (p.89).

17. This is important, given our conviction that the BUSA would benefit from renewed interest in the Anabaptists. For some interesting insights on the biblical material, see G.G. Miller, 'A Baptist Theology of the Child', unpublished DTh Thesis (UNISA: Pretoria, 1992), p. 1-38.

18. W.R. Estep, The Anabaptist Story. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids. 1975, p. 151.

19. *ibid*, p. 157.

20. *ibid*, p. 158.

has kept these two features of the gathered church and believer's baptism as the focus of its concept of discipleship and denominational identity.

W.R. Estep asserts that "Believer's baptism was for the Anabaptists the logical implementation of the reformation principle of sola Scriptura."²¹ It could be said, therefore, that the Anabaptists practiced believer's baptism because of their commitment to biblical authority. At the heart of the baptismal controversy in the sixteenth century, like many, if not most other conflicts, was the "priority of the Bible, interpreted Christologically."²² For the Anabaptists the New Testament clearly taught that baptism was for confessing believers only. But more importantly, baptism for the Anabaptists, according to Hubmaier, was "a pledge of discipleship in which the candidate promises to live according to the word and command of Christ."²³ Jürgen Moltmann, traditionally a paedobaptist, but one who has serious reservations about its contemporary practice, agrees with this sentiment, even though he claims that such a pledge made by parents on behalf of their children is equally valid.²⁴

Anabaptists maintained further that baptism was a symbol of corporate as well as individual discipleship without which

21. *ibid*, p. 150.

22. *ibid*, p. 154.

23. *ibid*, p. 155.

24. J. Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit. SCM: London. 1977, p. 230.

"the visible church could not exist."²⁵ Franklin H. Littell maintains that by "baptism the believer came under the discipline of a Biblical people - a discipline which he himself helped make and enforce".²⁶ This may well have been true in that historical period, partly due to the Anabaptists' view of the ordinances, but also partly due to their view of the cohesiveness of society. It is not, however, the case in contemporary South African Baptist contexts. South African Baptists see baptism as an individualistic act, often divorced from the local congregation.

THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCERN: CANDIDATES FOR BAPTISM

The Baptists' "insistence upon believers' baptism grew out of a concern for a 'regenerate church membership',"²⁷ which in turn, is drawn from their concept of the church. Since the church, for Baptists, consists of believers only, then baptism, as the mark of profession of faith, must be applied to those confessing believers only.²⁸ British Baptist Brian Haymes asserts

25. Estep, The Anabaptist Story, p. 157. See also König, Die Doop as Kinderdoop en Grootdoop (Pretoria: KGKerkboekhandel, 1986), p. 115-120; I. van der Walt, DTh thesis, p. 181-195; B.C. Lategan, 'Aspects of Baptism in the New Testament', in König et al, Infant Baptism ..., p. 13.

26. F.H. Littell, The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism. MacMillan: New York. 1964, p. 85.

27. E. Glenn Hinson, 'Baptists and Spirituality: A Community at Worship', Review and Expositor, 84:4 (Fall, 1987), p. 650.

28. What Baptists tend to overlook is the fact that other traditions also believe that the church is for believers only. Paedobaptist traditions include children in the believing community because they are convinced that children can and do believe, and also because children can and do grow into faith - just like adults do. See P. Marcel, The Biblical Doctrine of

that this is not to infer that believer's baptism is merely a sign of human response to salvation. He emphatically asserts:

I reject absolutely the charge from some that believer's baptism stresses more the human response while infant baptism stresses the grace of God. ... [A]ny notion of grace that suggests some impersonal action without relationship is to speak of something other than the grace of the Christlike God. ... Believer's baptism is an affirmation of the saving grace of God. ... Our coming to baptism affirms the divine initiative and in the very act of baptism God remains the chief actor.²⁹

In other words, in acknowledging the human, Haymes in no way negates the divine, and vice versa. British Baptists, like Haymes, may well stress the balance of grace and human response, but in South African Baptist literature the emphasis is certainly on human profession, the act of obedience.³⁰ Obedience, in turn, is regarded as "an 'acted creed'."³¹ Baptism demands "credible and responsible profession of faith on the part of the candidate", which Baptists "hold to be essential to the rite."³²

Infant Baptism, p. 187-245; G. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament, p. 306-386

29. B. Haymes, Baptist Identity: Reflections on Baptist Principles and Practice. Yorkshire Baptist Association: Headingley, Leeds. 1986, p. 9-10.

30. Three examples: C.W. Parnell, Being a Baptist. Baptist Publishing House: Roodepoort. 1980, pp 36-44. *ibid*, Baptist Vision in South Africa. Baptist Publishing House: Roodepoort. 1991, p. 19-24. G.R. Trew, 'The Ordinances', in The New Disciple, J.N. Jonsson (ed). Baptist Union Christian Education Dept.: Roodepoort. 1976, p. 65-68. In all three chapters the writers stress the act of baptism as a command to be obeyed. While the authors speak of repentance and conversion, little is said explicitly of grace and the divine initiative.

31. Flew, The Nature of the Church, p. 166.

32. *ibid*, p. 166-7.

Baptism is regarded as "a means of grace to the believer and to the church", as well "as an act of obedience to our Lord's command."³³ No Christian theologian, whatever the ecclesial tradition, doubts the divine initiative, but one must concede that believer's baptism is regarded generally by Baptists as a human response to God's command.

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa's 1987 Statement of Baptist Principles includes a clause on baptism. Baptists, it states, believe in

Believer's baptism as an act of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and a sign of personal repentance, faith and regeneration; it consists of the immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.³⁴

The fundamental stress in this clause is the idea that only confessing believers are bona fide candidates for baptism. Obedience to Christ is the foundation for baptism.³⁵ This in turn requires an awareness of the reason for repentance: sin and alienation from God. Repentance and faith have to be personal, though this in no way negates the corporate factors involved in their expression.

Whilst regeneration is a divine act, believers become alert to the spiritual renewal taking place in their lives. Knowledge of Christ experientially and cognitively is necessary

33. *ibid*, p. 167.

34. BU Handbook 1989-90, p. 178.

35. Other traditions would not deny this; paedobaptists act out of obedience to their view of the biblical mandate.

for any act of obedience to be significant. Hinson notes that: "Ability to recite a creed was not enough, for it would not validate heart religion. Like the monks of the Middle Ages, Baptists, too, wanted to see 'conversion of life and manners'."³⁶ If baptism is a sign of union with Christ, of initiation into the Church, then a consciousness of what is involved must be evident.

In the South African context the ethical demand of baptism is often neglected. In a perceptive essay, in which he applies lessons learnt from Anabaptist history to the contemporary Baptist situation in South Africa, David Hunter is critical of the interpretation that "restricts baptism to an act of private and individual piety."³⁷ Hunter continues:

Believer's baptism, for Anabaptists, however, was an act which took place within a community or group of people who were committed to a radical witness to Jesus Christ and an allegiance to the new order of the Gospel.³⁸

The fact that for the Anabaptists this form of baptism had political ramifications is regarded as incidental by South African Baptists. For them, in so far as they take them into account, the Anabaptists were religious reformers. That certain political and economic factors arose out of this religious reformation was secondary. But Moltmann makes an important point in regard to this:

36. Hinson, 'Baptists and Spirituality', p. 650.

37. D. Hunter, 'The Origins of Anabaptism and its Import for South African Church History' Journal of Theology for South Africa 75 (June, 1991), p. 73.

38. *ibid.*

The practice of infant baptism is also an open political problem connected with the form of the church in its particular society. Infant baptism is without doubt the basic pillar of the corpus christianum, the 'Christian society' which acknowledges - or at least does not reject - Christianity in the widest sense of the word as its tradition. Infant baptism is the foundation of a national church. Through it 'Christian society' regenerates itself in the bonds that links one generation to another. Anyone who affirms infant baptism, for whatever reason, thereby affirms at the same time this public form of the church, or Christianity. Anyone who condemns it, for any theological reason, must also have in mind and want another social form for the church. A change of baptismal practice without a change in the public form and function of the church in society is not possible.³⁹

Some of the conflict also arose out of the antagonistic language often used by Anabaptists towards their detractors. For instance, Estep quotes Conrad Grebel as saying "Infant baptism is a senseless, blasphemous abomination, contrary to all Scripture."⁴⁰ Such language cut to the heart of the mediaeval understanding of the cohesiveness of society. It indicated a negative attitude towards, and an intent to do away with, the comprehensiveness of 'Christendom' as then understood by the Protestant Reformers as well as the Roman Catholic Church. This, of necessity, links the issue of baptism with the doctrine of the church, and to the concept of discipleship in its best and broadest sense.

There are also indications that within early English Baptist history, both General and Particular, believer's baptism was regarded as a political act (a violation of the cohesiveness

39. Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, p. 229. See also S.J. Grenz, The Baptist Congregation. Judson: Valley Forge. 1985, p. 76; Ellis André, 'The Baptist View of Church and State'. Unpublished MA Thesis, UCT, 1984.

40. Estep, The Anabaptist Story, p. 151.

of society with Christendom). Referring to a later period, the mid 1800s, R.T.Handy points out that due to his "activities as a Baptist," the German Baptist leader J.G. Oncken, was fined, threatened, and imprisoned.⁴¹ In other words, baptism, like many other doctrines, had a bearing on the circumstances of the day, both politically and ecclesiastically. When one reads some South African Baptist material on baptism, one wonders if the authors are aware of some of these historical issues and attitudes.⁴²

Baptists within the BUSA need to recognise that while baptism is important, and will remain so, contemporary discipleship involves other matters. In the context of the societal and political changes taking place in South Africa and the growing religious pluralism, discipleship requires ecumenical participation and an openness to different perspectives on baptism, as well as, of course, other issues. But one wonders if this is possible given the BUSA's seemingly entrenched views. Kevin Roy's recent survey on baptism reveals that 57% of the respondents were against granting validity to infant baptism; 57% were against allowing applicants baptised as infants becoming full members of the local congregation; 60% were against allowing parents to have their children baptised.⁴³ Roy's conclusion is

41. R.T. Handy, 'The Baptist Family: A Heritage of Faith', in Review and Expositor, 84:4 (Fall, 1987), p. 593.

42. See the relevant chapters in Parnell and Trew cited above, and journals like Reformation South Africa and Reformation Today which regularly include papers on this topic.

43. Roy, DTh thesis, p. 237.

that "most of those belonging to credobaptist⁴⁴ churches were reticent about granting any recognition of the validity of infant baptism."⁴⁵ We would venture the opinion that if Roy had surveyed ministers in active pastoral work and some of their leading members, the negative percentage towards infant baptism would have been significantly higher.

In support of their understanding of baptism, South African Baptists use a variety of biblical texts and themes. John the Baptist, for instance, was a forerunner to Jesus. John's teaching prepared the way for the coming and teachings of the Christ.⁴⁶ William L. Hendricks reminds us that water baptism has its roots in an antiquity prior to both Jewish and Christian usage.⁴⁷ Yet, "Christian baptism has specific historical contexts and distinctive theological implications that make it peculiarly Christian."⁴⁸ The Jewish purification rituals, emphasising cleanliness from sin and unworthiness, impinge upon both John the Baptist's baptism and Christian baptism.⁴⁹ John's baptism was one of repentance, culminating in a life reflecting purity and worth

44. The term "credobaptist" is used by Roy as a technical word to identify a particular tradition, the believer-baptist tradition. See his DTh thesis, p. 27.

45. *ibid*, p. 251.

46. Trew, The New Disciple, p. 65.

47. W.L. Hendricks, 'Baptism: A Baptist Perspective'. Southwestern Journal of Theology, 31:2 (Spring, 1989), p. 22-23.

48. *ibid*, p. 23.

49. *ibid*.

through works which honour God.⁵⁰ It is because Jesus was baptised that Baptists argue for believer's baptism as an act of obedience and identification.⁵¹

We note some of the requirements John expected of those who came for baptism. In Mark 1:5 (RSV), for instance, the people were baptized "confessing their sins". They must have known what "sins" were, to confess them. Further, it is clear that those "confessing" were aware that these sins were "theirs". Luke's record (3:3-9, RSV) indicates the same, with the addition of an appeal to "bear fruits that befit repentance", and the reminder that character springs from nature (the illustration of good and bad trees). What Baptists often overlook when considering John's baptism, is the fact that John was preaching in a Jewish context, a comprehensive society whose males were circumcised and whose women were protected by the patriarchal system. John was not preaching "Christian" baptism, but Jewish righteousness.⁵² The record in Acts is equally clear as to the candidates for baptism.⁵³ From Acts 2:37 it is evident that those who

50. *ibid*, p. 24. See also Beasley-Murray's observations on the baptism of John. Baptism in the New Testament, p. 31-44.

51. Hendricks, 'Baptism: A Baptist Perspective', p. 25.

52. On the matter of the 'corporate' character of baptism, see above p. 161 and footnote 26, as well as S. Maimela's response to Lategan in Infant Baptism ..., p. 25, where he draws attention to a Black perspective on community and baptism. See also Emmanuel A. Obeng, 'An African's Reflection on Infant Baptism', in Africa Theological Journal 21:1, 1992, p. 37-48. See also references to B. Goba in Chapter 2 above, p. 150ff, and the ecumenical aspects on p. 192 below.

53. See Beasley-Murray's discussion on p.93-125 of Baptism in the New Testament.

comprehended the conviction of the Spirit asked for guidance. In the next verse Peter instructs them to "repent and be baptised", actions that only those with some understanding of what was involved could do. Acts 2:39 is often raised to show that children were indeed included in the promise of the gift of grace. Baptists affirm the truth of the statement, but add that taken as a whole it is clear that "children" is linked to "all that are far off". Added to this, in turn, is the inference of election to grace: "every one whom the Lord our God calls to him", and the obligation of human response: "save yourselves from this crooked generation". The whole passage indicates that those who respond: the hearers, their children, and those outside Judaism (or those who are yet to hear and respond), will be saved. Baptism, then, is for such.

For South African Baptists, the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27-40 is another illustration of believer's baptism. Philip baptized the eunuch upon his confession of faith (vs. 37, RSV margin). The argument that these are "mission" contexts, in which all baptisms would naturally be of confessing believers, predominantly adults, is accepted as valid. Baptists add, however, that every context is missionary, for every generation is to be evangelized. Further, South African Baptists regard the 'oikos' texts as being manifestly unclear as to children being included in the household baptisms due to their conviction that baptism requires faith. They therefore reject the

use of such texts by paedobaptist apologists.⁵⁴ The question of children in Baptist baptismal thought will be dealt with later.

Paul, whilst by his own testimony was not too concerned with the numbers he baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14-16), clearly taught the significance of baptism.⁵⁵ In Romans 6:1-14 the Apostle links the baptism of the believer with the death and resurrection of Christ. Here, then, is the identification of the believer with Christ in baptism. Further, from a practical perspective, Paul is maintaining the necessity of understanding the value of baptism for sanctification. In this same context Herbert Carson says that

54. The point here is simply to state the Baptist position. For a recent perspective from a South African Baptist on the 'oikos' texts, see G.G. Miller, 'A Baptist Theology of the Child'. Unpublished DTh thesis, UNISA: Pretoria, 1992, p. 26-30, 96. On household and communitarian baptism, see König, Die Doop ..., p. 43-46; M. Green, Baptism, Its Purpose, Practice and Power (Hodder: London, 1987), p. 67-70; Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the NT, p. 312-320; J.F. Eagan, 'The Authority and Justification for Infant Baptism', in Review and Expositor LXXVII:1 (Winter) 1980, p. 47-61; C. Hodge, The Mode and Subjects of Baptism (Biblical Repository and Princeton Review, 1861/rp Evangelical Bookshop: Belfast, 1966), p. 28-31; G.C. Berkouwer, The Sacraments (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1968), p. 168-174. It should be noted that, generally speaking, the BUSA has no real appreciation of community solidarity nor corporate unity, especially in the context of baptism. South African Baptist material on baptism reveals a "face-value", literal reading, rather than a theological comprehension. This is seen particularly in the context of the baptism debate, where paedobaptists suggest to Baptists their inconsistency in demanding faith for baptism but accept that children, up to the "age of accountability", are safe.

55. But note Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament, p. 126: "For example, an approach that starts from 1 Cor.1:14ff could well assume that Paul accords a minimum significance to baptism, yet to begin with 1 Cor.15:29 invites an opposite emphasis, while 1 Cor.10:1ff has encouraged the view that typology is the vital clue to Paul's teaching on baptism."

Paul's concern is with holiness of life. ... His argument is that the Christian has died to sin. ... It is in this context that he makes his appeal to their baptism. You have been baptized - this is his argument - well you must realise what your baptism signified. It declared your death to sin and your rising with Christ. ... Behind this argument is his basic contention that a believer is one who is united to Christ. ... Now it is this which is represented and set forth in baptism. Indeed so vividly is it declared that Paul uses of the sign, language which really belongs to the spiritual reality - we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death. The reality is the work of the Spirit who baptised us into the body of Christ. But it is the plunge in water which vividly sets forth this spiritual baptism.⁵⁶

In Colossians 2:11-12 Paul places baptism in its rightful place as the mark of regeneration, and as a sign of being enveloped by the Holy Spirit. For some Baptists, circumcision is a metaphor for regeneration in this context; baptism is the indication of that spiritual reality.⁵⁷ The reference to resurrection, both Christ's and the believer's, introduces the Holy Spirit's activity in the whole process. No one can be regenerated, or resurrected (a synonym here for regeneration) without the Spirit's powerful working. The link in both Romans 6 and Colossians 2 between water and Spirit baptism is of prime importance. This is Carson's point when he asserts

We are again in the same realm of thought as Romans 6. Baptism declares death and burial and resurrection and it is the burial which so vividly sets this forth. A few drops of water which hardly moisten a man's brow do not inconvenience him and do not alter his condition very much. But to plunge him in water and to immerse him in the water is a vivid interference with his ordinary condition. It is an extraordinary action,

56. H. Carson, 'The Mode of Baptism', in The Ideal Church. Carey Publications: Haywards Heath. 1972, p. 22.

57. D. Kingdon, Children of Abraham. Carey: Haywards Heath. 1973, p. 28, 34; but see also O. Cullmann, Baptism in the New Testament. SCM: London. 1950, p. 56-69.

almost a violent action, and indeed symbolically a killing action. But it is only such an action which can adequately declare a death, a casting away, and a rising again to newness of life.⁵⁸

For Carson, then, the marriage of meaning with symbolism and mode is such that to separate them actually does despite to the biblical thrust. Baptists claim to keep this marriage intact. Hence, whilst the candidature for baptism is the most important aspect, the mode is not unimportant. Those in other traditions do not diminish the importance of such a link nor of the meaning or mode. Yet Baptists within the BUSA could benefit from exposure to and dialogue with other perspectives.

THE MODE OF BAPTISM

It is clear from Carson how closely Baptists link Spirit baptism with water baptism. But, more significantly for Baptists, it is the clarity of the testimony of Scripture: the mode is important. Hershel Hobbes, arguing for immersion as the correct mode of baptism, states that

The word "baptism" comes from the Greek baptizo which means to dip, plunge, submerge, or immerse. In classical Greek it was used of dipping animals or of sinking a ship. In the Septuagint it is used of Naaman dipping himself in the Jordan (2 Kings 5:14).⁵⁹

Hobbes' view is widely accepted in Baptist circles; it is hardly debated, certainly not within the BUSA. Some Baptists and

58. Carson, 'The Mode of Baptism', p. 25.

59. H. Hobbs, The Baptist Faith and Message. Convention Press: Nashville. 1971, p. 84.

scholars from other traditions do, however, discuss the issue, and for a significant reason: 'baptizo' does not always mean immerse.⁶⁰

South African Baptists find value also in considering the use of certain prepositions which, used in context, help them affirm their understanding of the practice of immersion. From Acts 8:38-39 (the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch) and in John 3:23 (John the Baptist baptising at Aenon near Salim) Baptists make the assumption that since there was "plenty of water" and the people "went down into" that water, the mode was

60. They raise questions about texts like 1 Cor 10:2 ff, where the Israelites were baptised into Moses. Beasley-Murray objects to the rendering "into Moses" preferring "to Moses", indicating a commitment or "allegiance" to Moses (p. 128-9). The Southern Baptist R.B. Brown also accepts that the passage indicates that "Moses became their leader" (Broadman Commentary, Vol. 10, p. 346), but his discussion suggests that the Israelites were overwhelmed by the cloud and the sea, alluding to baptism. Beasley-Murray makes no such allusion. Reformed theologian John Murray devotes a whole chapter on 'baptizo' in Christian Baptism (p. 9-33), concluding that there "are very few instances where it can be shown that they refer to immersion, and there are many instances where it can be shown that they refer to actions performed by other modes than that of immersion." South African Reformed theologian A. König refers to the passage to indicate that baptism, certainly by immersion, is not what is meant in Paul's use of the illustration (Die Doop as Kinderdoop en Grootdoop, p. 207). See also Michael Green, Baptism: Its Purpose, Practice and Power (Hodder: London, 1987, p. 28-30). Further, in Acts 1:5 when the Holy Spirit is said to have baptised the apostolic band, immersion is clearly not evident, rather an affusion of tongues! And 'baptizo' is used here (cf König, p. 51 ff and Roy, DTh thesis, p. 71 ff. Notice, too, needs to be taken of passages like Mark 10:38-39, Mark 7:4 (together with Matthew 23:25 and Luke 11:39), Hebrews 9:10 and 1 Peter 3:21, where 'baptizo' is used in ways that cannot be construed as immersion nor in which immersion is symbolised. Hence, in Mark 10, Jesus' baptism is one of suffering by hanging on a cross. Mark 7, its parallels and Hebrews 9 all indicate washing, which does not demand immersion exclusively, but requires having water poured over the implements, or body. And 1 Peter 3 infers a washing away by a violent flood. Immersion in water, in this context, is judgement; salvation is the ark floating on top of the water.

immersion. It does not follow, of course, that the story infers immersion. Going in and out may refer to the minister of baptism and the candidate together entering the water and using another mode than immersion. In fact, John 3:25 clearly states that ritual washing, which does not, of necessity, demand immersion, was the act performed.⁶¹

Baptists in South Africa also claim that the mode of immersion is supported by its symbolism, which is essentially, though not exclusively, burial.⁶² Burial is total covering or total immersion in the grave. Burial presupposes death, and anticipates resurrection. However, as Marlin Jeschke, a Mennonite, points out, even though immersion

symbolizes death and resurrection with Christ, affusion (symbolizes) the pouring out of the Spirit. Neither of these meanings is dispensable. Neither one is more important than the other. Indeed, they are mutually implicated and complementary.⁶³

According to Jeschke, the Anabaptist tradition, inclusive of the Mennonites, has practiced baptism by affusion for over three

61. Interestingly, Beasley-Murray does not indicate the mode in either text. He emphasises that confession of faith, in Acts 8, is the point being made, and maintains that baptism is not under discussion in John 3. See Baptism in the New Testament, especially p. 70, 101, 361; also König, Die Doop as Kinderdoop en Grootdoop, p. 46, 48, 207, in which he argues for Jewish ritual washing by sprinkling.

62. See below for the discussion on the meaning of baptism, where it is indicated how diverse the views on baptism are. The point here is to note how central the burial motif is for the BUSA.

63. M. Jeschke, Believer's Baptism for Children of the Church. Herald Press: Scottdale, Pa. 1983, p. 127.

hundred years.⁶⁴ There is no thought here to denigrate the symbolism of immersion by not using that mode for baptism. Rather, there is the positive stress on the renewing presence and power of the Holy Spirit by using affusion. The idea, therefore, of combining immersion with affusion is attractive for it brings together the fulness of the symbolism. South African Baptists should seriously give thought to this, for it in no way detracts from their particular tradition of immersion, but enriches it by including an aspect they have always accepted.

The exclusive use of immersion by South African Baptists, however, limits their understanding and appreciation of the richness of God's grace in and through the symbolism of water. This is evident by their unwillingness to use any other mode of baptism, their negative approach to other modes, and their critical attitude to infant baptism generally.⁶⁵

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

For South African Baptists there are a number of characteristics which ought to be included in any attempt to interpret the meaning of baptism. The following are the most

64. *ibid*, p. 126.

65. See for instance Parnell, Being a Baptist, p. 38, where he speaks of the "materialistic interpretation of the ordinances". He also infers that all paedobaptists believe in baptismal regeneration, p. 38-41. Also note Rae Trew's 'The Ordinances', in The New Disciple, pp 66 and 68, where the brief references to infant baptism are inadequate and lead to misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the rite. Note also the results of Roy's survey in his DTh thesis, p. 237 and 251, referred to earlier.

used, recognising that there are others.⁶⁶ First is obedience. Matthew 28:19-20 suggests that if the call is to baptize converts, then it stands to reason that the converts are to submit themselves to that ordinance; they are to obey their side of the injunction. Further, Acts 8:36-38 (see also the margin in the NIV) indicates that the Eunuch obviously wanted to follow (obey) the Lord fully. Obedience is indicative of belief.

The second characteristic is cleansing. In Acts 22:16, Ananias instructs Paul to be baptized and washed from sin. In 1 Peter 3:20-21, Peter uses the illustration of Noah and the ark, in that the flood and baptism become symbols of the cleansing of the conscience. Baptism, says Jeschke, "implies simultaneously receiving life from God's Holy Spirit. ... The baptised life is nothing less than divine life itself coming to dwell within us."⁶⁷ Spiritual cleansing can only come from the indwelling and continuous activity of the Holy Spirit. Further, this implantation of divine life indicates

a new ethical life. ... Baptism means death to an old way of life and resurrection with Christ into a new way. ... This new ethical life is not something formal and external, something

66. For instance, South African Reformed theologian B.C. Lategan offers eight "functions", 'Aspects of Baptism in the New Testament', in Infant Baptism ..., p. 7-8. A. König suggests seven "meanings", for which see K. Roy's translation and observations of König's views in his unpublished DTh thesis, p. 67-71 (cf König, Die Doop as Kinderdoop en Grootdoop, p. 18-57. For an African perspective, see Emmanuel A. Obeng, 'An African's Reflection on Infant Baptism' (African Theological Journal 21:1, 1992). Obeng suggests six meanings to baptism, p. 37. Anglican M. Green offers eight suggestions, Baptism, Its Purpose, Practice and Power, p. 46-53.

67. Jeschke, Believer's Baptism for the Children of the Church, p. 46.

postured -a moral resolution or turning of a new leaf. It is more than the absence of specified sinful acts. It is the realization of a new nature.⁶⁸

This is in keeping with Colossians 2:11 which contains Paul's illustration of circumcision where the old nature is 'put off', that is, cleansed.

Third, baptism is a symbol of death, burial, and resurrection. This is seen in Romans 6:3-11 and Colossians 2:11-15. In 1 Corinthians 15:29, Paul uses an obscure illustration, that of baptism for the dead. It is important not to misunderstand the use of the illustration. Paul is not arguing for the validity of baptizing on behalf of the dead, but stressing the inconsistency of so baptizing if the resurrection was not believed by the church. Even though those practising this rite had problems with resurrection, it is clear that they recognized the symbolic links.

The fourth characteristic is identification with Christ. Baptism is Christocentric, Marlin Jeschke maintains, in that it

is inescapably connected to the name of Jesus. ... Baptism signifies believing that Jesus is the Messiah, and it implies a commitment to act accordingly ... (it) signifies discipleship of Christ.⁶⁹

Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17) in order to be identified with his people, even though there was no necessity for this to take place. His followers are baptised to identify with their Lord's suffering, death, and resurrection.

68. *ibid*, p. 48.

69. *ibid*, p. 46.

Fifth, baptism constitutes initiation into the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). Paul, here, speaks of the initiation into the body of Christ. Most commentators see this as the universal body; this is indeed the primary sense. But Baptists stress that baptism is also an immersion into the local church. All the letters, and hence the teaching therein, are addressed to localized churches in certain geographic areas. Thus, for some Baptists, to maintain that through baptism the convert is made a member of the universal church alone, does despite to the evidence of the stress on the local church in the New Testament. As Jeschke says,

Baptism implies membership in the redeemed community. ... Membership in the universal church of Christ does not render local membership unnecessary or even optional. Instead it makes local membership mandatory, because the New Testament knows of no church except one finds actual embodiment at Antioch, Corinth, Rome, or some other specific place.⁷⁰

The Holy Spirit's baptism, testified to in water baptism, is concrete, in that it unites the believer not only to Christ, but also to Christ's people in active participation (Acts 2:41-42).

Little, if any, of the above would be denied by paedobaptists in terms of the theological import discussed. What is questioned is the legitimacy of the exclusivity of immersion to illustrate these truths. Our concern is not so much to debate these age old concerns, but to state them and to show why such dogmatic conclusions are inimical to discipleship understood from an ecumenical perspective. By their assertive position on the

70. *ibid*, p. 47.

meaning and mode of baptism the BUSA closes itself to ongoing meaningful dialogue and suggests an unwarranted arrogance.⁷¹

Further, it must be argued that it is inconsistent with the BUSA's understanding of the exclusivity of believer baptism to baptise indiscriminately, that is, to baptise with no reference to the local congregation. That indiscriminate baptism does take place is seen in the disparity, recorded in the BUSA statistical returns each year, between the number of baptisms and the number of those baptised who joined the church. This disparity reflects the low view of the local church (notwithstanding the Baptist conviction that incorporation into the local church is taught by the symbolism of baptism) and a high regard for numerical results.⁷² Few Baptists in South Africa restrict baptism to entrance into the local church. Further, since Baptists are generally critical of the practice of indiscriminate baptism of children, there needs to be an assessment of their own practice. It is inconsistent for Baptists to baptise without bringing those candidates into formal membership of that Baptist congregation especially when they make baptism by immersion a prerequisite for membership (as the BUSA

71. Note that we refer to the BUSA as a body. This obviously excludes individuals like Roy, van der Walt and others who have contributed to the ecumenical discussion. If the BUSA as a structural entity would commit itself to ecumenical dialogue things might be vastly different. This is apparently not possible given their decision at the 1994 Assembly in Stellenbosch not to pursue ecumenical dialogue further.

72. Typical examples are : Westridge: 21 members added by baptism; 37 baptisms overall. Logos: no members added by baptism, but 35 people were baptised. Durbanville: no members added by baptism; 13 baptisms. In a variety of churches in every Province these examples abound. BU Handbook for 1992-3, p. 123-139.

does). Thus, it is inconsistent for Baptists to baptise people who want to return to a paedo-baptist congregation. Such candidates have not been baptised into a like-minded fellowship. To baptise such candidates perpetuates the individualistic character of faith, negating the corporate nature of the believing community and creating serious ecumenical problems. The arguments concerning consistency or inconsistency have to do with the Baptist understanding of the nature of the local church. This matter remains a most serious challenge to Baptists in South Africa.⁷³

BAPTISTS, BELIEVER'S BAPTISM, AND CHILDREN

Our discussion on baptism and discipleship thus far brings us now to one of the weakest areas of Baptist thought, their 'theology of childhood'. Not only is this aspect of theological reflection weak, but this area of thought in relation to discipleship is almost non-existent. The two-page discussion on the child and discipleship by Thomas Halbrooks⁷⁴ is helpful, but even he speaks of "children as potential disciples".⁷⁵ In American, British, and South African Baptist communities, the place of children is a vexed question, especially in the context

73. See also G.G. Miller, 'A Baptist Theology of the Child'. Unpublished D.Th. thesis, UNISA, Pretoria, 1992 (economy ed), p.189 ff. Miller acknowledges the practice of baptism without church membership, but seeks to make a case for the practice.

74. T. Halbrooks, 'Children and the Church: A Baptist Historical Perspective'. Review and Expositor, LXXX:2 (Spring, 1983), p. 183-4.

75. *ibid*, p. 183.

of Baptist 'conversion' theology. From South African Baptist ranks, Sydney Hudson-Reed has taken up the concern of this topic.⁷⁶ Gordon Miller, of the Baptist Theological College, Cape Town, has completed his doctoral thesis on a Baptist theology of children.⁷⁷ David Kingdon deals with the subject from a Reformed⁷⁸ Baptist point of view, as does Erroll Hulse.⁷⁹ We will be drawing from these sources as well as from American and British material. Our objective here is not to be exhaustive, but to provide some perspectives on children in Baptist theology as they pertain to Baptist identity and understanding of discipleship.

At the outset it must be noted that the spiritual nature of a child is a point of conflict amongst Baptists. By this is meant the "innocence" or "guilt" of a child. Sydney Hudson-Reed, for instance, maintains that children "before they reach the age of accountability are to be accounted as 'innocent' and safe

76. In his unpublished 1987 L.Th (Hons) thesis, 'Towards a Baptist Doctrine of Childhood'. Baptist Theological College, Johannesburg.

77. G.G. Miller, 'A Baptist Theology of the Child'. Unpublished D.Th. Thesis, UNISA, Pretoria. 1992.

78. The term 'Reformed Baptist' indicates Baptists who hold a Calvinistic soteriology and a baptistic ecclesiology, though in most cases the preferred form of government is presbyterial.

79. D. Kingdon, Children of Abraham. Carey Publications: Haywards Heath. 1973. E. Hulse, The Testimony to Baptism. Carey Publications: Haywards Heath. 1982. Kingdon's and Hulse's works are important because both men have served in South African Baptist congregations in various ways, and are influential in Reformed Baptist circles.

(rather than saved) in the hands of God...."⁸⁰ And the report by British Baptists in 1966 on The Child and the Church asserts that "to ascribe either guilt or innocence (to children) is to violate them."⁸¹ Further, the report suggests

Instilling a sense of guilt in a child may lead to a later disintegration of personality in which guilt is an emotion no longer related to the realities of moral decision. ... We do not understand the nature of man if we regard a child as a culpable sinner or if we demand an innocent conformity to 'nice' standards. The child will express his nature in actions which at the age of responsibility will be judged as virtues or vices, guilt or innocence, but until that age a child cannot be morally assessed or legally categorised. The age of responsibility is that at which the child is able to engage in reflective thought.⁸²

What constitutes "reflective thought" is not discussed. The report does not suggest a possible age bracket for the ability to think reflectively.

The matter of the "age of responsibility" has been so critical within the Southern Baptist Convention that educators on the Sunday School Board have recommended that teachers and churches "delay active evangelism until at least age twelve."⁸³ L.C. Ratcliffe observes that since "the quest for the age of

80. Hudson-Reed, LTh Thesis, p. 72. See also Parnell, Being a Baptist, p. 39, and Miller, DTh Thesis, p. 81-84. Miller claims that 73% of the respondents in a survey viewed children as "innocent rather than sinless", against 57% who felt children were "guilty sinners from birth", p. 81.

81. In R. Hayden (ed), Documents of the Church. BUGBI: London. 1980, p. 209.

82. *ibid.*

83. T. Halbrooks, 'Children and the Church: A Baptist Historical Perspective', p. 183.

accountability is a quest for disciple-ability", the average child would "come to disciple-ability between the ages of thirteen and fifteen."⁸⁴ From yet another perspective, that of regarding children as maturing participants in the church, Halbrooks asserts that "Baptism and church membership would come in the middle of childhood, approximately ages nine through twelve."⁸⁵ Given this divergence of thought on a child's responsiveness, final consensus will not be attained on this issue.⁸⁶ The British report ultimately regards the salvation of children as automatic due to their being human, and as being the recipients of Christ's general redemptive work.⁸⁷ This raises some major difficulties, however, which cannot be dealt with here. Most South African Baptists would not accept the British conclusions.

Reformed Baptists, like David Kingdon and Erroll Hulse, take the opposite approach to the BUGB report. Kingdon regards child innocence as a falsity which denies the grace of God.⁸⁸ And Hulse says that children

are the victims of original sin in exactly the same way as are all other members of the human race. They are guilty of Adam's

84. *ibid*, p. 184.

85. *ibid*, p. 185.

86. Even Miller in his extended discussion does not venture an opinion as to an age, but seems to accept the arguments for innocence and thus to leave the matter in God's hands, DTh Thesis, p. 83-84.

87. Hayden, Documents of the Church, p. 212.

88. Kingdon, Children of Abraham, p. 94.

sin. They are destitute of ... righteousness. ... They were born at enmity to God with corrupt, unspiritual natures.⁸⁹

Further, Hulse asserts, children are "wholly inclined to evil".⁹⁰ Concerning the salvation of children, especially of those dying in infancy, Kingdon says that

My own position is that in the matter of infant salvation one can only adopt an attitude of reverent and hopeful agnosticism. One dare not add to Scripture, but neither must one make the deduction from Scripture that God cannot nor will not save all children dying in infancy. The salvation of all children dying in infancy is not asserted in Scripture, nor is the condemnation of such children asserted. The mercy of our God is free and large. That we know. Yet if we are consistent Calvinists we can be no more certain of the election of our children than of the children of unbelievers.⁹¹

In other words, Kingdon acknowledges his inability or unwillingness to accept God's assured salvation of children, but he is hopeful of divine mercy and grace. Miller, by contrast, suggests, by way of the illustration in 2 Samuel 12:14-23 of David's child, that there was an indissoluble bond due to the covenant relationship.⁹² In this context, what does need to be addressed is the question of actual sin, not potential sinfulness. The bias towards sin is inherent to human nature. The problem with Hulse's terminology is that it suggests gross

89. Hulse, The Testimony to Baptism, p. 76.

90. *ibid.*

91. Kingdon, Children of Abraham, p. 98. In this Kingdon differs from his Reformed constituency, whether due to his baptistic position is unclear. See Miller's comments on the reformed views of child salvation, DTh Thesis, p. 88-89.

92. Miller, DTh Thesis, p. 6-7, 10. For a fuller discussion on infant salvation see Miller, p. 85-98.

sinfulness in children which is untenable given their inexperience of life. With regard to potential sin, Hulse's position is that children, like adults, have the potential to sin in the most gross ways, to the destruction of themselves and others. Theologians grappling with this issue need to distinguish between childish naughtiness and active, deliberate sin, so as to assess guilt.⁹³

Both the Reformed Baptists and BUSA do, however, agree that children raised within Christian families and within the ambit of the church have certain advantages. Hudson-Reed maintains that all children, regardless of their family settings, have to come to God by grace through faith in Christ. But, he says,

the child within a truly Christian family can be spared the prodigal's bitter experience ... and can be brought in Timothy fashion to that moment of grace when through the proclamation of the Word, the drawing of the Spirit and the yielding of the individual, the faith of a father becomes the faith of his offspring.⁹⁴

Hulse also assures us of such benefits. He says that children of believing homes have the "privileges of nurture, prayers, and example as well as the glorious privilege of preaching which God declares is his instrument of power to save."⁹⁵ This in no way infers automatic response by the children, and certainly Hulse

93. Miller states that the Old Testament "does not ... accuse children of actual guilt because of this tendency to sin", *ibid*, p. 8.

94. Hudson-Reed, *LTh Thesis*, p. 73.

95. Hulse, *Testimony to Baptism*, p. 76.

rejects any idea of redemption due to being human or being incorporated in Christ's general atonement. Thus, in Baptist thinking, both Reformed and other, children have inestimable privileges, but no guarantees of salvation. God's grace in Christ must be seen to be operative in repentance and faith by the voluntary acts of the child.⁹⁶

This impasse over the child's position in Baptist soteriology is not likely to be resolved, given the wide divergence of theological presuppositions. Yet Baptists need to rethink their attitude to the place of children within their church structure.⁹⁷ Halbrooks' suggestions are valuable and, whilst his arguments on the age of accountability are unconvincing, they do offer some ways of approaching the dilemma. Halbrooks suggests that over the years Southern Baptists have regarded children as non-members, prospects, potential disciples, and finally as maturing participants in the life of the church. In the twentieth century, Halbrooks maintains, Baptists have emphasised the latter three viewpoints. He also maintains that all three positions "assert the innocence of children until the age of accountability."⁹⁸ At the same time all stress the

96. There is no question as to the need for a child to repent of conscious sin. Miller, DTh Thesis, p. 24, does refer to John the Baptist's experience of the Holy spirit whilst still in the womb, though it would have been helpful for him as a Baptist to discuss this particular illustration more. And in the Old Testament, Jeremiah's consciousness of his 'call' could have been a process, not simply a revelation at a later time, Miller, p. 9.

97. See Miller's suggestions, DTh Thesis, p. 209.

98. Halbrooks, 'Children and the Church: A Baptist Historical Perspective', p. 186.

imperative of conversion. There are differences over the exact age of accountability, and how children are related to the church.

Halbrooks' essay has much to commend it. He concludes that a substantial minority of Southern Baptist religious educators support the "children as potential disciples" approach.⁹⁹ But it remains a minority opinion. Most South African Baptists regard children as non-believers for they need to come to personal faith and then voluntarily commit themselves to the local church in a formal way. But this in no way excludes them from being genuine prospects for faith and church membership. In fact, it is logical to assume that many children in the church will pursue their interest in spiritual matters through the church that has nurtured them in their early days. Rather than struggling over the validity of an either/or case of conversion as punctiliar or process,¹⁰⁰ surely the approach is to accept both experiences as valid. It does not matter whether a child comes to faith in a crisis or through a process. The evidence of repentance towards God, faith in and following the Lord Jesus Christ is the critical concern.

As to the position of children as maturing participants, it is evident that in many Baptist congregations, as children grow and their interests and talents become clear, they do become involved in the activities of the church. Granted not all children and young people, in the South African Baptist context

99. *ibid.*

100. *ibid.*

for instance, are baptised or become members before they get involved. Their involvement, together with the teaching on greater responsibility very often bring these young people into an awareness of the need to be baptised and commit themselves to membership. Rather than polarise the different approaches, then, it is best to synthesise them in a contextual manner. When this approach is taken, of necessity the child becomes a recognised person on her/his journey of faith as a disciple. But discipleship in this context is not a mature form, but a growing one,¹⁰¹ relative to the child's understanding.

BAPTISTS, BAPTISM, AND ECUMENISM

In seeking to understand Baptist identity as discipleship in an ecumenical context, it is appropriate to reflect upon the World Council of Churches' document Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM).¹⁰² South African Baptists, who do not belong to the WCC, have made no official response to BEM, but a number of other Baptist bodies have. We will draw on them in our discussion.¹⁰³

101. Miller, DTh Thesis, p. 209, puts it as "a state of becoming, awaiting the dawning of a personally-owned faith ..." (his emphasis).

102. Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, (eds) W.H. Lazarus and N. Nissiotis. WCC:Geneva. 1982.

103. Contained in Churches Respond to BEM (4 volumes) (ed) M. Thurian. WCC: Geneva, 1986-7. South African Baptist, K.B. Roy, has recently dealt with BEM in his unpublished 1994 UNISA D.Th. Thesis, 'Baptism, Reconciliation and Unity - Towards a Mutual Acceptance of Baptismal Differences', p. 218-230.

In their responses to BEM most Baptists acknowledge with appreciation the attention given to Baptist convictions on the issues at stake. For this and other reasons South African K.B. Roy recommends a careful study of BEM, for he believes this will "promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of the different baptismal traditions."¹⁰⁴ Some Baptists, while "affirming believer's baptism and immersion as the full and biblical expression of baptism," have actually "adopted a view similar to that expressed in the document."¹⁰⁵ Section B15 deals with mutual recognition of baptism, and the above quotation indicates that the American Baptist Convention, for instance, has recognised and continues to recognise the validity of paedobaptism under certain circumstances. This fact is not necessarily unique. J.W. Angell makes this observation:

Some Baptist churches accept into membership without any other requirement those Christians who come upon statements of faith or with letters of recommendation from their former churches, without regard to the baptismal practice of those churches. Some Baptist churches accept into membership those who come from churches of other denominations, provided they were baptised by immersion. Some Baptist churches accept into membership those who come other denominations, in some cases even if they were not immersed, provided they were baptised as believers, or provided they were confirmed upon profession of faith after baptism, even infant baptism. Yet other Baptist churches accept into membership by transfer only those who come by statement or letter from other Baptist churches. Indeed, it has been reported that some Baptist churches will accept into membership by transfer only those who come from

104. Roy, DTh Thesis, p. 228.

105. Churches Respond to BEM, Vol.3, (ed) M. Thurian. WCC:Geneva. 1987, p. 259, cf BEM B15, p. 6.

Southern Baptist churches, and otherwise qualify theologically and racially.¹⁰⁶

This extended quotation is necessary to give the picture of the diversity of baptismal practice within Baptist communities. However, it is equally important to note that as to the actual practice of baptism, Angell maintains that Baptists only immerse believers.¹⁰⁷ This openness by some Baptists to other baptismal practices may be in part due to an unwillingness to disenfranchise other professing Christians, or as Dale Moody puts it, rejecting other churches as churches.¹⁰⁸ This openness is exactly what we are suggesting for the BUSA as part of the process towards a contemporary identity of discipleship. After all, as Henry Lederle observes, 92% of the Christian churches practice paedobaptism; a fact that the other 8%, being Baptists and Pentecostals, cannot overlook.¹⁰⁹ No Baptist theologian can afford to simply dismiss this large majority when evaluating the issue of baptism, especially as it impinges upon discipleship and ecumenism.

In noting the responses to BEM by Baptists, we should be aware of the fact that they have been made in two ways: by Councils of Churches which include Baptists, and by individual

106. J.W. Angell, 'A response to Thorwald Lorenzen's paper on The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Character of the Local Baptist Church With Special Reference to membership.' Baptist World Alliance. 1974, p. 1. Emphasis is his.

107. *ibid*, p. 5.

108. Dale Moody, Baptism: Foundation for Christian Unity. Westminster Press: Philadelphia. 1967, p. 301. cf Angell, p. 6.

109. König et al, Infant Baptism . . ., p. 140.

Baptist Unions or Conventions. Those Baptists who are part of a multi-church Council evidence a greater tolerance of paedobaptism. For instance, in the response by the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Czechoslovakia, which includes the Baptist Union of Czechoslovakia, it is stated that "the baptism of children has not aroused opposition in the church nor provoked discussion."¹¹⁰ In their response, the Church of North India, which includes Baptists, maintains that it "finds the statement on baptism agreeable and it adequately expresses the understanding of baptism as contained in the statement on Faith and Order of this church."¹¹¹ These observations suggest a greater willingness by Baptists in formal ecumenical fellowship to accept other baptismal practices.

Baptists in the German Democratic Republic, in the USSR, in Scotland, in Sweden, and in Wales, all of whom responded to BEM, are generally appreciative of the opportunity to dialogue, but critical of BEM's ecclesiology and baptismal position.¹¹² Baptists in Burma, on the other hand, responded to BEM

because of our commitment to unity and the ongoing mission of the whole church in the whole world. BEM is not just a domestic concern among the separated churches. It is intrinsically related to the life that we are to offer for the whole world.¹¹³

110. Churches Respond to BEM, Vol.2. (ed) M. Thurian. WCC: Geneva. 1986, p. 295.

111. *ibid*, p. 70.

112. Churches Respond to BEM, Vols 3 and 4. (ed) M. Thurian. WCC: Geneva. 1987.

113. *ibid*, vol.4, p. 185.

Hence, in the light of this motivation for their response, the Burmese Baptists see BEM's view of baptism as "a life-long growth into Christ",¹¹⁴ not only a momentary experience. They understand BEM as saying that "baptism is a process which can begin from infancy and continue as a life-long growth into Christ."¹¹⁵ Further, "personal faith (of the baptised) as well as the faith of both parents and the church have also been taken into account."¹¹⁶ Thus, "mutual recognition of baptism has become a possibility."¹¹⁷

Moving to the West, we note the response of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland (BUGBI), which begins with the words

We welcome the careful attention that has been given to Baptist convictions on this issue and the keen attempt made to do justice to them. ... We rejoice in the clear setting of baptism within the lifelong process of preparation, growth, and nurture in Christ.¹¹⁸

In their response to BEM, the American Baptist Convention emphasize their commitment to Christian unity, and "affirm that study of the document may be an occasion of growth and

114. *ibid*, p. 187.

115. *ibid*. This is almost identical to our suggested definition of discipleship.

116. *ibid*. This community aspect is particularly relevant in the African context. See earlier references to this on p. 161 and p. 169, as well as Chapter 2, p. 150 above.

117. *ibid*.

118. *ibid*, vol.1. 1986, p. 70.

reformation for us as Baptists."¹¹⁹ The ABC asserts that some of their congregations

accept only believer's baptism as valid. ... Others view infant baptism and a later personal confession of faith as a sufficient basis for church membership. Thus, our own family already encompasses some who have adopted a view similar to that expressed in the document.¹²⁰

British Baptists objected to BEM's use of certain words. In querying words like "is ... gives ... initiates ... unites ... effects,"¹²¹ the BUGBI asks

what is meant by 'baptism' where this sort of language is constantly used. Is it the actual performance of the rite? ... What is not clear is the extent to which the report identifies the actual performance with (the meaning and significance of Christ's work).¹²²

For the BUGBI, the "unanswered question" is "What is a Christian?"¹²³ If BEM infers "that the baptised infant is a Christian ... in what sense?"¹²⁴ Personal faith remains a critical issue for a meaningful answer to this question. Baptists within the BUSA would not accept that "the baptised" are Christian without qualification (though there would be more sympathy for the statement if those baptised were believers and

119. *ibid*, vol.3. 1987, p. 258.

120. *ibid*, p. 259.

121. *ibid*, vol.1. 1986, p. 70.

122. *ibid*, p. 70-71, their emphasis.

123. *ibid*, p. 75.

124. *ibid*.

not inclusive of infants). Not only does this presume something that Baptists feel the gospel does not teach, but, if a true reflection of BEM, automatically denies Christian status to Quakers and the Salvation Army.¹²⁵ Further, British Baptists ask about the "understanding of visible unity" in the document, an unanswered question hithertofore.¹²⁶

American Baptists seem concerned with BEM's quest for unity, which the ABC fears as "uniformity."¹²⁷ For the ABC "a personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is deemed a sufficient basis for our life together."¹²⁸ American Baptists add, however, that "discipleship ... as an essential key to our oneness in Christ" is important.¹²⁹ In other words, faith in Christ must (or will) translate, if true, into discipleship.

All the Baptist respondents were critical of BEM at various points. South African Kevin Roy believes it an "unnecessary restriction"¹³⁰ for baptism to always be celebrated within the worshipping community. He says that

it can be questioned if there is a single instance in the New Testament where baptism is recorded as having taken place in the context of the regular gathering together of the church for divine worship.¹³¹

125. *ibid.*

126. *ibid.*, p. 77.

127. *ibid.*, vol.3. 1987, p. 258.

128. *ibid.*

129. *ibid.*

130. Roy, DTh Thesis, p. 223.

131. *ibid.*

Roy also refers to phrases in the document like "catholic", "high church", "sacramental", and "clerical", all of which have been criticised.¹³² In the same context, the document was criticised for focussing "on the church as a structure ... with priestly powers"¹³³ The most serious criticism was, however, over the statement in B13: "Baptism is an unrepeatable act. Any practice which might be interpreted as 're-baptism' must be avoided."¹³⁴ Even the least critical, the Burmese Baptists, gently suggest that B13 should begin "Therefore, normally, baptism is an unrepeatable act ..."¹³⁵ The reason for this is that Christians who come from other traditions into Baptist church life request a "second" baptism in all good conscience. To deny such a request would be a violation of a believer's conscience; a matter Baptists (and probably most Christians) consider more important than ecclesiastical dogma or structures.¹³⁶

Generally Baptists reject the accusation that they re-baptise because they do not accept infant baptism as valid baptism. However, ecumenically-minded Baptists are more sensitive to this issue, and do not always deny the validity of the infant baptism of a particular person applying for membership of a local congregation, as long as personal faith is evident. Hence

132. *ibid*, p. 226.

133. *ibid*.

134. *BEM*, 1982, p. 4.

135. *Churches Respond to BEM*, vol.4, 1987, p. 186.

136. Roy, DTh Thesis, p. 223.

American Baptists have admitted to an acceptance of a variety of baptismal practices, while asserting that baptism of believers by immersion is "the full and biblical expression of baptism."¹³⁷ This, perhaps, is the kind of compromise evident in BEM itself; not a bad approach necessarily, for as Roy suggests, "compromise documents can play a valuable role in bringing alienated parties into closer contact and dialogue."¹³⁸

A PROPOSAL FOR BAPTISM IN ECUMENICAL CONTEXT

If South African Baptists are going to express discipleship meaningfully within the ecumenical context, not only do they need to seriously consider the BEM document and its implications, but they need to reflect critically on their restrictive practice of baptism. Biblical discipleship is inclusive, and if the BUSA can move away from a pattern that suggests re-baptism for many, their expression of discipleship will be more in keeping with Scripture and with ecumenical concern. Roy suggests that his survey indicates "the existence of a deep instinct ... that baptismal differences ought not to be divisive."¹³⁹ He acknowledges, however, the "entrenched positions"¹⁴⁰ which overcome the inner beliefs.

137. Churches Respond to BEM, vol.3. 1987, p. 259. cf BEM, B11, p. 4 and B18, p. 6, where the document affirms both the believing character of candidates and immersion.

138. Roy, DTh Thesis, p. 228.

139. *ibid*, p. 254.

140. *ibid*.

The following is a proposal to facilitate ecumenical links in the South African setting. The proposal stems from structures evidenced in the ecumenical projects in Britain and in India. The suggestions from S.J.D. McCay, a Presbyterian from New Zealand, and a Roman Catholic from the United States of America, F.S. MacNutt, are germane to the proposal.¹⁴¹ We summarise them as follows.

Since the confession of a believer is the crucial aspect of baptism and church membership for Baptists, such a confession, alone, should be accepted for membership into any congregation. The form or even the lack of, baptism should not be the critical factor. Where the believer has been baptised as an infant, such a believer should not, for membership purposes, be required to submit to another form. Believers who wish to be baptised by immersion, but who were baptised as infants, should be allowed and encouraged to be so baptised without the stigma of re-baptism. Whilst some would regard this as a semantic exercise, both McCay and McNutt have denied such an accusation. Both regard the immersion of those once baptised as infants as an affirmation of their infant baptism, a celebration of renewal of baptism.¹⁴² For the many Baptists who see baptism as supremely an act of obedience, there can be no objection to this pattern, for this is, at least in part, what the re-affirmation is. The approach

141. Included in König et al, Infant Baptism . . ., p. 125-138 and p. 156-162.

142. *ibid*, especially p. 130-1, 161. Both McCay and McNutt affirm that they are not "re-baptising" but using immersion in water as a symbol of renewal etc.

is, manifestly, a pragmatic one, for the sake of pastoral care. It is, further, a useful approach for contemporary ecumenical ventures in the churches.

In his thesis, Roy makes a proposal for a model of reconciliation of baptismal differences. First, the "baptism of infants ought not to be forbidden or enforced."¹⁴³ Roy acknowledges the difficulties this presents for credobaptists. Second, "'rebaptism' of those baptised in infancy ought not to be forbidden or enforced."¹⁴⁴ This would equally be difficult for convinced paedobaptists. 65% of Roy's survey respondents rejected the notion of rebaptism. Third, "Mutual respect of differing baptismal convictions is imperative for Christian Unity."¹⁴⁵ Roy urges sensitivity; Baptist churches should not advocate rebaptism, nor should paedobaptist churches excommunicate members who have been rebaptised.¹⁴⁶ This is a costly exercise, Roy maintains, but it is in keeping with "the spirit of love and unity."¹⁴⁷

Baptism, of any kind, must be celebrated in the context of the structured church, with a view to formal membership. Indiscriminate baptism of either infants or believers is wrong, perpetuating both conflict between the churches and confusion in members. Baptism, by virtue of its meaning is not a private rite.

143. Roy, DTh Thesis, p. 262.

144. *ibid*, p. 264.

145. *ibid*, p. 267.

146. *ibid*, p. 268-9.

147. *ibid*, p. 270-1, 267.

Further, infant baptism or dedication must be celebrated in the context of public worship and praise, not privately.¹⁴⁸

Henry Lederle maintains that "re-affirmation can be repeatable."¹⁴⁹ If taken too far this could be viewed as rebaptism and lead to abuse. If baptism is repeatable for any reason then abuse continues and ecumenical rapprochement will be negated. At best, then, the model of re-affirmation of baptism can be administered but once, and strictly understood as a related event to infant baptism.

Paedobaptist churches open to this ecumenical process can respond to Baptists by not denying the validity of the re-affirmation of baptism. Baptists, in turn, have to open themselves up to accepting infant baptism and be less antagonistic to paedobaptism generally. Baptists in South Africa need to realise that some Baptist communities, especially in America, do baptise very young children, suggesting that the issue of child baptism is not as 'cut and dried' as may be thought. Added to this recognition of the different baptismal forms, is the matter of recognition of ministerial patterns and structures; to this we will turn at a later stage.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have endeavoured to present the Baptist doctrine on baptism in relation to our theme. We have

148. But note Roy's observations that in Acts "baptisms were always administered immediately, irrespective of time and place ...", *ibid*, p. 223.

149. König et al, Infant Baptism ... , p. 142.

reflected on the candidates for baptism, for Baptists the key factor in the debate. Baptists view every context as a 'missionary' one, thereby regarding all people, whether linked to the church or not, as potential candidates for conversion and baptism. Other traditions, however, view the children of believers in a different category. These children are within the covenant and are legitimately given the mark of the covenant. This does not mean they are enlivened with the Spirit ipso facto. As they grow and develop these children are called to respond to the promises they have heard offered to them from their birth. Hudson-Reed, Parnell, Miller, Hulse, and Kingdon, as well as other Baptists infer, if not argue for this, but are not convinced that these children ought to be baptised.

In dealing with the mode of baptism, South African Baptists restrict themselves to immersion. This is based exclusively on the illustrations they find in the New Testament, and on their narrow view of the etymology of 'baptizo'. South African Baptists have overlooked their Anabaptist cousins, the Mennonites, who use affusion to enrich their understanding of baptism. Mode and meaning are bound together. Whereas Baptists in South Africa have tended to restrict baptism to an act of obedience, other facets are cleansing, identification, initiation, and death and resurrection. Restricting the mode of baptism to immersion, negates openness to seeing the validity of other modes, and thus negates openness to ecumenical dialogue.

The place of the child in Baptist thought is varied. What is clear is that the child tends to be excluded from being

regarded as part of the believing community. Children are part of the community in general, in that they are part of a family who attends the worship. Children may have been 'dedicated', but they cannot take communion until they have 'confessed' sin, have repented, and have been baptised by immersion. Baptists rarely speak of their children as 'Christians', until and unless they have so confessed being born again. South African Baptists could learn from the recent discussions within the Southern Baptist Convention on approaches to children and faith.¹⁵⁰ But South African Baptists need to recognise the validity of the child who is within the congregation as a growing disciple.

While South African Baptists have not entered into dialogue with the WCC's BEM document, other Baptist bodies have. This has meant that Baptists do have a representative response to the ecumenical discussions. There are many positive expressions of commonality especially over the eucharist and ministry. Even on baptism there are enough points of agreement for Baptists to enter discussions meaningfully. Obviously there are areas of disagreement. South African Baptists have done themselves a great disservice by neglecting this important ecumenical document. Thus they have compromised their understanding of discipleship in the contemporary situation.

The ecumenical proposal for baptism reflected in BEM and argued here is equally a call for openness to all churches, not only to the Baptists. It is a call specifically to South African Baptists because of their bias towards exclusivity and their

150. See Halbrooks, 'Children and the Church'.

withdrawal from certain forms of ecumenism. Not all Baptists will accept the suggestions that have been made. Most South African Baptists would find major problems with being open to any form of paedobaptism. These Baptists would equally reject a believer from another communion applying for local church membership unless that person was baptised (or rebaptised) by immersion. There are some American and European Baptists who are willing to re-evaluate some of their traditional positions.¹⁵¹ Openness to ecumenical dialogue, even over baptism, does not detract from denominational distinctiveness. In fact, it is this openness that helps put such distinctiveness into proper perspective. It also helps the churches express their unity in Christ in a more meaningful way. Contemporary discipleship has to take into consideration the real needs of community with regard to baptism, the children linked to the churches, and the ecumenical dialogue which BEM has facilitated.

151. See for instance T. Lorenzen, 'Baptists and Ecumenicity, with special reference to baptism'. Review and Expositor 77:1 (Winter), 1980, p. 21-45.

CHAPTER FOUR
DISCIPLESHIP AS MINISTRY

The term 'Ministry' is used here to incorporate the inter-related structures of congregational church government and the priesthood of all believers, or every-member ministry as it is sometimes called. Leon Morris suggests that "the chief scriptural buttresses of (congregationalism) are the facts that Christ is the head of his church (Col. 1:8) and that there is a priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9)."¹ As will be pointed out in this chapter, congregational church government and the ministry are not isolated doctrines but are linked, inextricably, to the Baptist concept of the church, the body of regenerate members in a local setting. Thus the fourth Principle in the BUSA statement maintains

that a constituted church meeting is, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the highest court of authority for the local church; and that each individual has the inalienable right and responsibility to participate fully in the life and government of the church, including the appointment of its leaders.²

Allied to this is the fifth Principle, namely,

The priesthood of all believers, by which we understand that each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest, and shares with him in his work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus christ, even to the end of the earth.³

1. L. Morris, 'Church Government'. Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, W.A. Ellwell (ed). Grand Rapids: Baker. 1984, p. 240.

2. Baptist Union Handbook for 1993-4, p. 226.

3. *ibid.*

Together, then, these Principles indicate that governmental and ministry structures are part of the discipling processes and practices.

It is necessary to re-iterate that discipleship is a life-long process of obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ, as recorded in Holy Scripture, guided and influenced by the ever present Holy Spirit, and worked out in concrete historical contexts. For Baptists this means being part of a local congregation, having publically declared one's faith through baptism by immersion. The administration of a local congregation is thus related to the membership and is concomitant with discipleship. Stanley Grenz maintains that

the congregational model (of church government) declares that each local body derives its authority directly from the risen Lord, who alone is the head of the church. Each congregation is autonomous, that is, responsible under Christ for its own affairs. Such congregations ought to band together in associations, but associational authority is largely advisory, rather than legislative, and generally requires the concurrence of the local body.⁴

In this chapter we will seek to expound the South African Baptist Union's doctrinal statements on congregationalism and ministry, together with the corollaries of leadership, women in ministry, and their ecumenical implications.

MINISTRY STRUCTURE OF CONGREGATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Baptist discipleship is seen in a particular understanding of congregational church government - a concept not as consistent in Baptist thought as may at first appear. "It is

4. S.J. Grenz, The Baptist Congregation. Valley Forge: Judson. 1985, p. 54.

commonplace for biblical scholars to observe that no single pattern of church government is prescribed in the New Testament."⁵ Maring and Hudson acknowledge that the approach which distinguishes very carefully between hierarchal, synodal, and congregational patterns of government "tends to obscure rather than clarify the issues."⁶ The reason for this is simply because, in their opinion, the New Testament portrays aspects of each pattern.

Maring and Hudson claim that Baptists did not advocate congregationalism because it was convenient. Baptists "advocated a congregational form of government ... because they believed that Christ intended the full participation of the members of the church in its total life."⁷ This "full participation ... would provide a check to the distortion occasioned by self-regard, human limitations of knowledge, and vested interests."⁸ They also maintain that :

Congregational polity insists that all members must be permitted to assume the responsibilities of their mutual priesthood. That is to say, each member participates not only in the worship and work of the church, but also in the making of decisions which affect the common life of all the church members.⁹

5. N.H. Maring and W.S. Hudson, A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice. Judson Press: Valley Forge. 1963, p. 47.

6. *ibid*, p. 49. Thomas Finger adds Basic Ecclesial Communities to these patterns of government. Similar to congregationalism, but rooted within the Roman Catholic structures, this pattern emphasises the role of all believers in ministry. It is a "bottom up" approach, and as such, is different to the "judicial and hierarchal" (p.356). Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach, Volume 2. Herald Press: Scottdale. 1989, p. 345-366. See also L. Boff, EcclesioGenesis. Collins: London. 1986.

7. Maring and Hudson, Baptist Manual, p. 52.

8. *ibid*, p. 53.

9. *ibid*, p. 52.

Congregational church government must not be equated with strict local independence or autonomy. Likeminded congregations fellowship with each other, and their association enables them to engage in joint ventures and enrich each other's lives by their association. The congregational form of government (which is rooted in the regenerate nature of the Church and an understanding of the relationship between the local congregation and universal church), together with the wider associational commitment, is the historic Baptist form of government.¹⁰ Grenz asserts that "interdependency is clearly the norm in the New Testament."¹¹ He supports his argument by referring to the Council of Jerusalem's decision which was binding on all churches (Acts 15). Further, apostolic authority and apostolic representation, like that of Timothy and Titus, was to be received. Grenz notes that even "Paul himself appealed to what was practiced in all the churches as carrying a degree of authority (1Cor.11:16;14:33)."¹² Alec Gilmore maintains that the "authority and competence of the local church is limited."¹³ He denies the validity of the assumption that each believer or each local church has the understanding of or competence to answer all

10. S.J. Grenz, The Baptist Congregation, p. 53. See also A. Gilmore (ed), The Pattern of the Church: A Baptist View. Lutterworth: London. 1963, p. 143-4, 149. See further in Chapter Two above, on 'The Regenerate Nature of the Church' and 'The Relationship between the Local and Universal Church'.

11. Grenz, p. 54.

12. *ibid.* See also Chapter 2, above, on 'Autonomy and Association.'

13. Gilmore, The Pattern of the Church, p. 144.

issues. Local bodies, Gilmore asserts, "must be willing to have ... (their) freedom restricted and to listen to others."¹⁴

These views by Gilmore, Grenz, and Maring and Hudson, are considerably different to those espoused by the Southern Baptist Convention and the BUSA. The BUSA asserts that the local church is "fully autonomous and remains so notwithstanding responsibilities it may accept by voluntary association". The Baptist Union's Declaration of Principle states that "each church has liberty to interpret and administer (Christ's) laws". But this cannot, in fact, be worked out to its logical conclusion, since there are factors, like the definitive convictions as to belief in the Statements of Faith, which of necessity restrict such liberty. Further, a condition of continuing membership of the Union is that local church constitutions must be approved by the Executive of the Union. Such facts limit the autonomy of the churches.

Victor Brandt, representing the views of the BUSA, states that

As a corollary to regenerate church membership, Baptists hold to a congregational form of church government. This means that local congregations regulate their affairs directly under Christ's control.¹⁵

Notice the idea of Christ's 'direct' control. Baptist church government has been spoken of as a democratic form of government. This term is problematic, partly because of the political

14. *ibid.*

15. V. Brandt, *Notes on Baptist Principles*. Baptist Theological College, Johannesburg. 1978, p. 19.

connotations, partly due to a certain American individualism,¹⁶ but more so because the word does not really express the Baptist view. Christ is governing His church. If the local body is reflective of the universal body, then there should be a corresponding reality in the leadership structures. Thus Baptists assert that the church is governed by Christ, in that he is the designated Head, and that the Holy Spirit is active in the church through his people. Believers, then, administer God's revealed will in various local situations.¹⁷

The way believers administer the local church will become clearer when we discuss the Principle of Mutual Ministry later in this chapter. At this point what needs to be said is that regenerate members are called and equipped to administer the church's affairs. And, as C.W. Parnell suggests, the objective is not to "have democracy as their vision", but rather their congregationalism is "God's way of making and keeping Jesus Christ and not man, as Lord of his church".¹⁸ However, Gilmore's caution needs to be kept in mind: no local congregation is omniscient; it needs the input of other Christian bodies.¹⁹

If membership is restricted to those who 'belong', and the church has taken the time and effort to assess the lives of

16. W.H. Brackney, The Baptists. Greenwood Press: New York. 1988, p. 42.

17. This is not to suggest that other forms of church government do not do the same. The emphasis here is on what Baptists believe. Helpful perspectives on Presbyterian and Episcopal church government can be found in Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology (ed) R.G. Turnbull. Baker: Grand Rapids, 1967, p. 248-251 and 259-265.

18. C.W. Parnell, Baptist Vision in Southern Africa. Baptist Publishing House: Roodepoort. 1991, p. 25.

19. Gilmore, The Pattern of the Church, p. 144.

prospective members, and the candidates have shown evidence of their obedience to Christ, then it follows that they have a role in the administration of the life of the body. Paul's call in Romans 6 to those baptized to offer their bodies as instruments of righteousness, and his rebuke to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 for allowing immorality and lawsuits amongst themselves, are illustrative of the link between baptism and congregational nature of the government in the Church. There is a caveat here, however. Children who claim to be believers and who are baptized, are not automatically afforded rights and freedoms to exercise responsibilities of governing the church. In most Baptist congregations in South Africa, constitutions include a franchise clause which restricts voting rights to those members 18 years and older. In this respect at least in the South African context it is incorrect to state that Baptists practise strict congregationalism. Nor is it true that "each individual member ... (has) the inalienable right and responsibility to participate fully in the life and government of the Church"²⁰

The Southern Baptist Convention, with whom the BUSA has a co-operative relationship, is the largest Baptist denomination in the world. The Convention has a complex structure, yet one which, according to the Southern Baptist J.L. Sullivan, does not violate the congregational and autonomous nature of the local church.²¹ The SBC is vigorously individualistic in both its commitment to autonomy and in the sense of it being the 'American way'. However, the Convention seeks to maintain a balance by its

20. BU Handbook for 1993-4, p. 226.

21. J.L. Sullivan, Baptist Polity. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1983, p. 25-7.

support for interdependency²² and co-operation.²³ This balance is evident in the language used by Sullivan: "local churches in the New Testament were autonomous, self-governing, and self-determining."²⁴ Furthermore, Sullivan maintains that the Convention is made up of "messengers from churches", not churches per se.²⁵ For the Convention to be made up of churches would "transform Southern Baptist congregationalism into Southern Baptist presbyterianism."²⁶ For Sullivan, Southern Baptists are "unique" because of the way they do things.²⁷

The way Southern Baptists 'do things' *ie*: express their congregationalism, is influenced by four elements, says Sullivan, namely, tradition, law, sound organizational principles, and theology (or doctrine, as he says in the same context).²⁸ These elements are not the same as the inherent presuppositions discussed in Chapter 1, but are built upon them. Further, these four elements are to be considered in the context of church government.

It is clear that doctrine is the most important element for Sullivan, for this is what makes the church different from a business organisation. Tradition, law, and sound organisational principles can be applied to any body corporate. But theology, or doctrine, particularly the Baptist doctrines of local church

22. *ibid*, p. 25.

23. *ibid*, p. 54.

24. *ibid*, p. 25.

25. *ibid*, p. 44.

26. *ibid*.

27. *ibid*, p. 12.

28. *ibid*, p. 54-63.

autonomy and the priesthood of all believers, is the foundation of Baptist polity. He asserts that the church "is looked upon as local. Such a concept forces us into one type of denominational government, with the local church being the most important unit."²⁹ This view of the church plus "the two theological concepts of the importance of the individual believer and the significance of the local congregation" govern Sullivan's understanding of the structure of the church and denomination.³⁰ Another Southern Baptist, Ernest White³¹ is critical of Sullivan's approach, maintaining that it is bureaucratic. We will consider some of White's arguments under the section on leadership.

The individualism, the concentration on the local church, and the structures of the denomination may well make the SBC unique (as Sullivan puts it), but this approach has tended to make the SBC, as a body, business-corporation oriented and sectarian. This tendency to sectarianism is evident within the SBC due to the effect of 'Landmarkism'.³² W.G. McLoughlin has stated that this was the "most serious internal controversy troubling Southern Baptists before the Civil War."³³ McLoughlin continues, suggesting that the controversy "affirmed a stiff exclusivism that left in the ... Convention a long-lasting

29. *ibid*, p. 62.

30. *ibid*.

31. E. White, 'The Crisis in Christian Leadership'. Review and Expositor 83:4 (Fall, 1986), p. 548.

32. For further details of this movement within the SBC, see above Ch.2.

33. W.G.McLoughlin, in Baptist Life and Thought: 1600-1980, (ed) W.H.Brackney. Judson Press: Valley Forge. 1983, p. 234.

deposit of suspicion toward ecumenical relationships."³⁴ Walter Shurden has affirmed that "while the excessively rigid attitude of the movement is dead or dying ... vestiges of Landmarkism continue to crop up in Southern Baptist life."³⁵ James E. Tull, in fact, asserts that the influence of J.R. Graves, the creator of Landmarkism, "is still tenacious and pervasive" in the South.³⁶

This Baptist exclusivism or rigidity that McLoughlin and Shurden speak of, is expressed by negative attitudes to other denominations and their ministers. No other baptism, even immersion, is acceptable; it is considered "alien."³⁷ Further, communion is "closed ... that is, only members of each Baptist church could partake of the Lord's Supper in that church."³⁸ The Landmark doctrine of the church disallowed any idea of a universal body; only the local Baptist congregation in any specific area was the church. Writing of contemporary Southern Baptists, Leon McBeth adds that Landmarkism can also be seen in the "exaggerated emphasis upon local church autonomy" and "a successionist view of Baptist history."³⁹ South African Baptists are influenced considerably by the SBC, and they tend to accept uncritically ideas and programmes from the Convention with little

34. *ibid.*

35. Walter Shurden, Not a Silent People. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1972, p. 67.

36. James E. Tull, Shapers of Baptist Thought. Mercer Press: Macon, Ga. 1984, p. 8.

37. Walter Shurden, 'Crises in Baptist Life'. The Baptist Heritage, a series of pamphlets. The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention: Nashville. 1979, no pagination.

38. *ibid.*

39. H.L. McBeth, The Baptist Heritage. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1987, p. 461.

or no contextualisation. Fortunately South African Baptists do not follow the Landmark spirit. They usually have an open communion table, recognise immersionist baptism from other traditions, and invite ministers from other traditions to preach.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF CONGREGATIONALISM

In using Bible passages to illustrate their viewpoints, Baptists in South Africa, in keeping with their hermeneutical presuppositions, tend to be uncritical. Hence the tendency to accept at 'face-value' statements in Scripture. This is seen particularly in the contexts of baptism and church government.⁴⁰ Acts 1:15-26 records the event of Matthias' election to the apostolate, taking Judas Iscariot's place. The text says that Peter stood up among the "brethren", the sum being 120 persons. In the Mishnah this number "is accepted as the smallest number of Jews in a congregation for the establishment of a little Sanhedrin."⁴¹ The inference being that the whole congregation was involved in the selection of Matthias.

Traditionally, Acts 6:1-7 has been regarded as an account of the election of the first 'deacons'.⁴² South African Baptists still regard this passage as the legitimate source of the establishment of the diaconate. The apostles were appointed by

40. Various inconsistencies do occur, of course. See, for instance, the discussion on women in ministry below.

41. T.C. Smith, 'Commentary on Acts'. The Broadman Bible Commentary Volume 10. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1970, p. 23.

42. But note A.F. Walls' discussion in The New Bible Dictionary (IVP: London, 1962), p. 298, where he questions this position. F.F. Bruce, on the other hand, seems to support the traditional view in his Commentary on Acts (Morgan, Marshal and Scott: London, 1977), p. 127-131. For a Roman Catholic perspective, see H. Küng, The Church (Search: London, 1968), p. 400-401.

Christ, and they gave the lead, the vision, the direction to the primitive church; but the gathered disciples chose the first deacons or servants of the church. Southern Baptist New Testament scholar, T.C. Smith maintains that the apostles "advised the congregation to select"⁴³ the seven, then they (the apostles) would appoint each to positions.

Acts 13:1-3 tells of the calling of Saul and Barnabas to missionary service. "It is difficult to ascertain whether the whole church was engaged in worship or just the five listed. We assume that the word came to the congregation."⁴⁴ Smith is more assertive later on in his commentary, when he states that the "whole church sent them (Paul and Barnabas) forth, and the whole church heard the report when they returned."⁴⁵

Acts 15:22-31 records the choosing of the messengers to take the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem to the churches. Verse 22 is clear as to who was involved: the whole church together with the elders and apostles. Smith makes an interesting observation here:

It appears that the final decision rested with the general assembly of the church in Jerusalem, unless some of the elders in v.22 were representatives from the church in Antioch who came with Paul and Barnabas(v.2).⁴⁶

In 1 Corinthians 5:2-5; 6:1-11 and 2 Corinthians 2:4-5 there is nothing to indicate that Paul is speaking only to the leaders and not to the whole church. In fact, given the issues at stake -

43. Smith, in BBC 10, p. 48.

44. *ibid*, p. 79.

45. *ibid*, p. 80.

46. *ibid*, p. 93.

immorality and lawsuits, together with the corresponding rebuke, it would seem that the apostle expected the whole church to be involved in rectifying such serious moral issues. Another Southern Baptist New Testament scholar, Raymond B. Brown, commenting on the first passage, asserts:

It is important to note that the entire church is responsible for this decision; Paul appeals to the entire church, not to church officials. In fact, Paul always appeals to the congregation throughout the letter and never to ecclesiastical figures. He appeals to no churchly hierarchy but to the faithful themselves.⁴⁷

Further, the tone and content of Second Corinthians indicates that the whole church was the recipient.

The fact that in most of these cases leadership as well as the membership is active should show us the closeness of the relationship between the two in Pauline congregations. Further, it indicates that congregationalism, if structured properly, did work within those congregations, and that true apostolic leadership was not thereby negated. The major difficulty in accepting, uncritically, congregationalism as the biblical form of church government, is the fact that the same texts indicate the specific role of leadership also, a particular feature that other traditions highlight to justify their structures. Furthermore, the pattern is more evident in some primitive congregations than in others.

47. R.B. Brown, 'Commentary on 1 Corinthians'. The Broadman Bible Commentary Volume 10. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1970, p. 319. At the end of his comments on this section, Brown again states (p. 321): "Once more Paul appeals not to church authorities but to the entire congregation whose responsibility it is to exercise discipline."

REFLECTIONS ON CLAUSE 3 OF THE BUSA'S 1987 STATEMENT ON BAPTIST PRINCIPLES

The clause states that Baptists believe in

The principle of congregational church government, namely, that a constituted church meeting is, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the highest court of authority for the local church; and that each individual member has the inalienable right and responsibility to participate fully in the life and government of the church, including the appointment of its leaders.⁴⁸

The place to start is 'the constituted church meeting'. This infers that a church has a constitution which includes the structures of administration. Due notice must be given, in accordance with the constitution. This informs members well in advance of the business ahead. In some cases both verbal and written notice needs to be given. Eligible members must participate, as this is the key to Baptist congregationalism. Or, as J. Anderson puts it, the success of the 'democratic order' "depends on the faithful participation of all the members in the decisions and projects of the local church."⁴⁹ It is, therefore, both a responsibility and a privilege to do the business of the Church.

This constituted meeting is the 'highest court of authority'. The stress here is that of total membership participation, not just some members and some leaders. Obviously, there will be times when all members cannot be at a meeting. However, it should be noted that membership implies such

48. BU Handbook for 1993-4, p. 226.

49. J.C. Anderson, 'Old Baptist Principles Reset'. Southwestern Journal of Theology 31:2 (Spring, 1989), p. 9.

Membership rights and privileges are expressed in the term 'inalienable'. This means, in part, that no one can deny a bona fide member participation in the life of the church. However, a member's bona fides is proven by faithfulness and fruitfulness. Further, any franchise clause in the church's constitution must be adhered to. Reference has already been made to this, but it is important to draw attention to it again. Franchise clauses automatically limit the meaning of 'inalienable'. People younger than 18 years, in South African Baptist churches, are not afforded the same rights and responsibilities as their elders. Generally, though, members are encouraged to participate as fully as possible in the business meetings. The business meeting of the church is as spiritual a meeting as any other. Comment has already been made on the aspect of 'responsibility' as an automatic part of membership. Sadly this is not seriously considered by many Baptists. When things get tough in some situations the members opt out. It is little wonder that power groups develop, or that pastors become autocratic.

Responsibility means working through the issues, being firm in rebuking carnal attitudes and activities by members, and stressing the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus by his Spirit, together with the realization of accountability before him for conduct in these members' meetings.

The next aspect we need to reflect on has to do with the election of leaders. The reason this was highlighted was due to some churches within the Union allowing their pastor, or incumbent leadership to elect new leaders. The end result was a power group at leadership level which excluded the membership

from the electing processes. At the same time, the New Testament is clear as to the validity and roles of leadership. A group without a leader, or leaders, will eventually have to contend with chaos.

The selection of the right leaders, therefore, is of prime importance. God's leaders are needed. A church which takes the electing of leadership lightly will invariably get what it deserves: poor leaders, and poor administration of congregational life and ministry. The fellowship has only itself to blame when that happens. If such a tragedy does happen, the members do have the structures to change things, but any change in this context has to be effected ethically, not high-handedly. Unethical practice in these situations reflect negatively on the Head of the church, on the local church as well as the denomination, and sours, if not ruins, the discipleship of many.

According to a Baptist understanding of leadership within congregationalism, leaders 'lead', they do not 'govern'. They serve, they do not coerce. Servant leadership is an aspect of discipleship for both leader and member. There are a number of important factors concerning leadership that must be considered. Ernest White defines leadership as

an influence process by which persons, organizations, communities, or nations are guided and make progress toward some goal other than where they were prior to the exercise of leadership.⁵¹

Although White writes specifically within the Southern Baptist Convention context, his observations are valid for the South African situation.

51. White, 'Crisis in Leadership', p. 546.

White evaluates three models of leadership currently used in the churches within the SBC. The first model is what White calls the Organization Man/Bureaucratic style of leadership. White places J.L. Sullivan's approach in this category (see above). White maintains that "leaders ... (are) evaluated on their commitment to a set of policies and values external to themselves."⁵²

The second model is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) style. "The main goal of the CEO leader is to become a winner."⁵³ With this pattern inculcated in the leadership, it is little wonder that the churches take on "the corporation ethos", especially "as the megachurch has become the ideal."⁵⁴ In fact, asserts White, this is "a new normative model for much of the Southern Baptist Convention."⁵⁵

The third model White mentions is "the Media Marketing Merchant". Here White is at his most scathing. He speaks of these leaders "manipulating the appearance of reality."⁵⁶ By this White seems to suggest that both congregations and leaders desire, create, and often attain by manipulative patterns a religious-cum-church lifestyle which is, in reality, an illusion, a sub-culture, because it is "religious entertainment."⁵⁷ White states that leaders of this type are "cultivated by the culture and clamoured for by many congregations", and have the "created

52. *ibid*, p. 548.

53. *ibid*.

54. *ibid*.

55. *ibid*, p. 549.

56. *ibid*.

57. *ibid*, p. 550.

image of a religious superman". This image, one patterned after the successful business corporation, pandering to the grasping nature of materially greedy humanity, is what is being offered, rather "than the figure of the lonely Galilean or the wandering missionary from Tarsus."⁵⁸ These three models, due to their self-centeredness, reflect an attitude akin to idolatry.⁵⁹

Turning to Christian leadership, White takes Jesus as his model. "Accumulation of power in itself held no appeal. Faithfulness to the Father and his mission dictated the character of his (Jesus') leadership."⁶⁰ White's bottom line on leadership is this:

The concern about Christian leadership is not simply its effectiveness; the chief concern must be the moral responsibility of leadership.⁶¹

Good leadership, White asserts, must be value driven.⁶² Put another way, the "basic qualification for spiritual leaders is that they be living demonstrations of the reality of all that they teach."⁶³

Ultimately, White opts for a Christian leadership model based on Jesus,⁶⁴ expanding this to incorporate four characteristics: creativity, redemption, wholeness, and human

58. *ibid*, p. 551.

59. *ibid*, p. 552.

60. *ibid*, p. 551.

61. *ibid*, p. 552.

62. *ibid*.

63. Richards and Hoeldtke, Theology of Church Leadership, p. 117.

64. White, 'Crisis in Leadership', p. 551.

growth.⁶⁵ "Christian leaders create" White states. "They build, expand the potential, and bring into being. ... Indeed, creativity is at the heart of the Christian ethic". Leaders create and use whatever valid activities and training procedures that are necessary to "bring new forms of life and reality into being", to enhance the disciple's life and service.⁶⁶

A more direct statement of this objective is found in Richards and Hoeldtke's excellent work, one which a number of South African Baptists have benefitted from. They say that

The spiritual leader incarnates the Word of God in his relationships among the people of God and in the context of that relationship also gives verbal guidance and encouragement, focused on helping the members of the body live life in harmony with divine revelation.⁶⁷

"Redemption", says White "is a creative process of restoring life and wholeness to lives or social entities where destruction and atomization have occurred. In the Christian sense it is the restoration of the image of God in human personality."⁶⁸ For South African Baptists, then, this suggests that the leadership role is not merely one of declaring an ahistorical, non-contextualised Gospel. Redemption affects the totality of human life, and the Gospel is to be applied boldly to that totality in the social contexts that exist.

In considering wholeness, White maintains it "is not complete until there is relatedness of persons on an

65. *ibid*, p. 554-6.

66. *ibid*, p. 554.

67. Richards and Hoeldtke, Theology of Church Leadership, p. 132.

68. White, 'Crisis in Leadership', p. 554.

intrapersonal, interpersonal, and inter-group dimension."⁶⁹

Again, the Christian leader's role is to renew relations between humans as well as with God in Christ. An all consuming concern with statistics: budgets, baptisms, decisions, and membership numerics, and whatever else is involved, is not a priority.

Finally, White says, the energies and focus of leadership that is definitively Christian "must be invested in the continual growth of persons and systems of persons if it is to qualify as ethically and morally responsible."⁷⁰ This is another way of speaking of "transforming leadership", a term White draws from J.M. Burns.⁷¹ Or, as Richards and Hoeldtke state it: "Human leaders in the church use their wisdom and maturity to guide the congregation and individual members into growing ways of life so that when Jesus speaks, his body will be healthy and responsive."⁷²

This is the practice of discipleship: the investment of one life in that of another life or other lives, with the objective of seeing Christ being obeyed in the totality of life. Christian leadership is loving, sacrificial, and courageous, following Jesus' example. C.W. Hill understands the Pastoral Epistles to emphasise character, not merely leadership function.⁷³

69. *ibid*, p. 555.

70. *ibid*.

71. *ibid*.

72. Richards and Hoeldtke, Theology of Church Leadership, p. 92.

73. C.W. Hill, Baptist Elders. Baptist Union: Roodepoort. 1975, p. 37.

Function, obviously, is not unimportant. Hill maintains that elders have two sets of duties, specific and general. The specific duties include: overseeing and managing, shepherding, being responsible for doctrine, teaching, preaching, and being examples to both believers and unbelievers. The general duties include: the distribution of gifts, ordination of others called to ministry, visitation of and prayer for the sick, and hospitality.⁷⁴

When all these functions are considered, Baptists yet again face the earlier issue of the minister as manager, the bureaucratic, CEO, marketing superman leader. Whilst local church pastors will undoubtedly have to do some, if not all these activities at some time or other, the totality of these functions is not their sole task. Richards and Hoeldtke capture the essential function of Christian leadership in their assertion:

The ... picture of the local church leader ... is not that of the manager of an enterprise or a decision maker, but one who with the wisdom gained by personal experience builds an intimate relationship with others whom he cares for and tends with a view toward their growth and maturity.⁷⁵

The functions suggested by Hill can be incorporated into Richards and Hoeldtke's scheme only if the prime objective is kept in mind. That objective is the maturation of the body. This is another dimension of discipleship. To be effective in this aim there will have to be a delegation of tasks. This too is part of the maturing and discipling process. Leaders must delegate for their own good, for the good of others being disciplined, and for

74. *ibid*, p. 30-6.

75. Richards and Hoeldtke, Theology of Church Leadership, p. 92.

the good of the cause, that being the edification of believers and the evangelisation of those in spiritual need.

Concerning church discipline, British Baptist B.R. White, formerly Principal of Regent's Park Baptist College, Oxford, indicates that it should be regarded as part of Baptist distinctiveness⁷⁶ and thus an integral aspect of being a disciple. In the South African context, Clause 3 of the BUSA Constitution includes the following under the heading Dismissal of Members:

the Assembly shall have power to remove from membership any Member Church, Territorial Association or Special Association by a 75 per cent majority vote of the Assembly.⁷⁷

Further, Bye-law 2(b) of the same constitution asserts that

It shall be understood that ... Churches are completely autonomous and as such are free to manage their own affairs in terms of their adopted constitutions. However, a condition of continuing membership of the Union shall be that when a church desires to alter its constitution, such proposed alterations must receive the approval of the Baptist Union Executive. In the event of a church adopting an amendment which is not acceptable to the Executive, the Executive shall enter into meaningful negotiations with the church. In the event of this proving unsuccessful the Executive shall be entitled by a 75% majority vote to introduce a motion to the Assembly for the removal or dismissal of such member from the membership of the Union.⁷⁸

Thus limited discipline can be exercised by the Assembly.

At local church level, all churches have constitutions, and most, if not all, have a clause pertaining to discipline. Those churches which use the 'Model Constitution' of the BUSA approach discipline along a three-fold pattern. The first deals

76. In a personal letter to this writer, dated March 1990.

77. BU Handbook 1989-90, p. 180.

78. *ibid*, p. 184.

with prolonged absenteeism, the second with "unworthy conduct or erroneous belief", and the third with "personal matters". In the first two categories the officers of the church are to "make enquiries into the matter", aiming at restitution. In the third category, "members shall be expected to act in accordance with the Lord's injunction recorded in Matthew 18: 15-17". Few South African Baptist churches actually excommunicate unrepentant members. Most churches urge offenders to resign, if unrepentant. Most members unwilling to be restored, resign their membership so as to escape formal dismissal. Church discipline tends, therefore, to be a paper threat.

The question needs to be asked, "Why is discipline so important?" Discipline is important because it is a reflection of the individual's and the church's conviction that the church is a body of regenerate people. It is therefore to be regarded as a mark of true discipleship. Given the bias towards sin in the human character, discipline is necessary to guard and guide the believer in the ways of righteousness. Since the church is a holy body, there are standards inherent to that concept of holiness. Further, the Christian is to live a life worthy of Christ. The society in which the church is situated looks on at the church watching its lifestyle for consistency with its profession. Inconsistency negates the church's witness and brings disrepute to the name of Christ.

Discipline can take different forms. With-holding the Lord's Supper from an offender, restraining an offender from active service in the church's name, and requiring an offender to limit social contact with others for the sake of propriety, are a number of ways discipline can be metered out. The Anabaptists

used the 'ban' as the ultimate disciplinary measure.⁷⁹ Such a practice is non-existent in South African Baptist circles.

Obviously there needs to be a balance between discipline and Christian freedom. Legalism and authoritarianism must be eschewed by all leaders and churches. Further, in seeking to keep moral standards leaders should not allow the church's teaching to become moralism. Christians are moral because of Christ, his redemption, and his teachings. Being moral per se does not make a person a Christian. Being a Christian demands moral commitment; hence the need of discipline.

CONGREGATIONALISM AND ECUMENISM

At the beginning of this chapter attention was drawn to Norman Maring and Winthrop Hudson's observation "that no single pattern of church government is prescribed in the New Testament."⁸⁰ Whilst this is cautiously accepted by many Baptist leaders, most would argue for a more dogmatic approach to congregationalism, based on their view of the primacy of the New Testament. Hence, the BUSA, for instance, would not support either Maring and Hudson's nor BEM's position. The Roman Catholic theologian Francis A. Sullivan understands Baptist thought correctly, when he asserts that

For Baptists ... only the New Testament can lay down norms for Christian ministry, and what one finds there are some general

79. D. Kingdon, 'Church Discipline among the Anabaptists'. The Way Ahead. Carey Publications: Haywards Heath. 1975, p. 86.

80. The reference is to Maring and Hudson, A Manual of Baptist Polity, p. 47. See also BEM (Geneva: WCC, 1982), p. 24, M III A 19, whose wording is almost identical: "The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the Church."

principles, but no one pattern or structure of ministry that all churches would be obliged to follow. Therefore Baptists are free to adopt a congregational pattern. ... On the other hand, since ... (Baptists do not find) in the New Testament sufficient basis for a sacramental concept of ministerial priesthood, or for the idea that episcopal succession is something essential to the nature of the church, (Baptists) ... feel free to reject these and to structure their churches without them.⁸¹

Sullivan goes on to say, concerning Catholics in ecumenical discussions, that "the New Testament by itself does not provide a sufficient basis for their church's position on what is essential for the apostolicity of ministry."⁸² This is an obstacle to fruitful dialogue, certainly with the more theologically conservative South African Baptist constituency. Sullivan acknowledges that any "future development of a convergence on the question of apostolic ministry is going to depend on progress in the area of basic questions about scripture and tradition."⁸³

Notwithstanding Sullivan's position, another Roman Catholic, Leonardo Boff, does not believe that the hierarchal structure of Roman Catholicism negates congregationalism. Boff maintains that the early church "was understood primarily as ... the community of the faithful, with the participation of all members in all things."⁸⁴ Further, according to Boff, the hierarchal structures of the church with its possessive sacral power slowly overtook the church. And while Boff acknowledges the

81. Francis A. Sullivan, The Church We Believe In. Paulist Press: New York/Mahwah, NJ. 1988, p. 199.

82. *ibid*, p. 200.

83. *ibid*.

84. L. Boff, Church: Charism and Power. SCM Press: London. 1985, p. 128.

historical necessity of such structures, he asserts that the system "left no room for the responsible participation of all the people in the affairs of the Church."⁸⁵ Thus, for Boff, congregationalism is a vital necessity for meaningful participation in the Church by all members, and one which does not negate the traditional Roman Catholic hierarchal pattern.

The BUSA would benefit from an in-depth study on the ministry section of BEM.⁸⁶ The denomination's more rigid views could well moderate through such an investigation. Stanley Grenz, a Baptist teaching in Carey and Regent Colleges, Vancouver, Canada, draws attention in his arguments for "democratic congregationalism", to BEM's affirmation that "Strong emphasis should be placed in the active participation of all members in the life and decision-making of the community".⁸⁷ The reason for this is the "communal" character of all ministry and the "collegial" nature of the ordained ministry.⁸⁸ Congregationalist structures are not inimical to ecumenical fellowship nor to unity. BEM is clear that the broad-based participation in ministry is an ecumenical objective. The three-fold character of the ordained ministry preferred by BEM⁸⁹ does not conflict with

85. *ibid.*

86. Perhaps something along the line of Kevin Roy's D.Th thesis 'Baptism, Reconciliation and Unity ...' (UNISA, 1994), which dealt, to some degree, with BEM's section on baptism.

87. S. Grenz, Theology for the Community of God. Broadman & Holman: Nashville, 1994, p. 721 and BEM, Geneva: WCC, 1982, p. 26.

88. BEM, p. 26.

89. For the discussion if this see below, p. 268: BAPTIST RESPONSES TO BEM.

its recommendation of congregational involvement.⁹⁰

Thus, as has been observed earlier in this chapter, in Baptist structures there has developed a need to balance the foundation of congregationalism with a leadership structure that directs without detracting from every member participation. From seemingly opposite ends of the structural scale, then, we observe similar needs expressed. The one major difficulty is the question of the authority of the episcopate. This we will consider when discussing the Baptist concept of mutuality in ministry and ordination in relation to discipleship.

SUMMARY

What we have tried to show in this section is that congregationalism is the historic Baptist pattern of church government. At the same time apostolic leadership and inter-congregational association, contrary to evidences within BUSA, are not incompatible with such a structure. Leaders are elected by the congregation to lead within the framework of the mandate given.

Baptists in the South African context must learn from the SBC to be wary of the CEO model, for this can negate congregational responsibility. Churches which have voluntarily gathered in association must recognise that in doing so they have limited their autonomy so as to co-operate with each other for mutual benefit. Further, discipline is needed for the good of all

90. See for instance BEM M.1, p. 20-21 "The Calling of the Whole People of God". Also see the relevant essays in Ecumenical Perspectives on BEM (ed) M. Thurian. Geneva: WCC, 1983, and more especially BEM 1982-1990: Report and Responses. Geneva: WCC, 1990, p. 74-80.

'ministry' by giving a brief exposition of the fourth Principle. We will consider the gifts of the Spirit in relation to ministry. We will also discuss the controversy over women in the Baptist ministry. Following this we will seek to grapple with the question of the Baptist concept of ordination. Finally we will respond to the BEM document as it pertains to 'ministry'. But prior to all these elements we must seek to place this fourth Principle in historical context.

MINISTRY IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Baptists have reacted negatively to an hierarchal and clergy oriented ministry because their view of ministry comes from a particular reading of the New Testament. In a number of manuals on Baptist polity the authors give some exposition of key New Testament texts which pertain to the concept, or extrapolate a theory of ministry from the theology of the laity rooted in the doctrine of the Church.⁹³ At the same time, we need to note the observations of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland's paper on Ministry, which states that "there has never been complete clarity and agreement amongst English Baptists" on the relationship of ministry to the church. Thus, the document concludes

we are not able, from Baptist history, to produce a fully worked out and all-embracing doctrine of the ministry that enables us to say 'here is what Baptists have always and in every place believed about the ministry'.⁹⁴

93. See for instance: Grenz, The Baptist Congregation, p. 61-63; H. Cook, What Baptists Believe. Carey Kingsgate Press: London, 1961, p. 94-111; Maring and Hudson, A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice, p. 87-108.

94. R. Hayden (ed), Baptist Union Documents 1948-1977. Baptist Historical Society: London, 1980, p. 26.

The fact that "many of the earliest Baptist ministers were converted from the Church of England,"⁹⁵ suggests that the concept and role of a paid ministry was not necessarily questioned too radically in the early days of the Baptist movement. As Leon McBeth continues, the "early Baptists distinguished between the ministry of the Word and ministry related to daily necessities."⁹⁶ However, with the growing understanding of the Baptist view of the church, a greater appreciation for the 'priesthood' of all Christians came into focus. As John Steely comments, "ministers - by whatever name they are called - are not necessary for the essence of the church. ... Their performance of official acts in the name of the church ... is done on an authority that they hold, as ministers on the church's behalf."⁹⁷ Steely further asserts that "the very distinction between laity and clergy is inappropriate in the Baptist understanding of ministry."⁹⁸ This last comment brings into focus a significant difference of opinion amongst Baptists. For instance, in Norman Maring's summary on responses to the World Council of Churches' Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry Document (BEM) for the Baptist World Alliance, he records one reply which requests that "a distinction should be made between an ordained ministry and the ministry which belongs to all Christians." And yet another reply "asks that the boundaries

95. H.L. McBeth, The Baptist Heritage. Broadman Press: Nashville, 1987, p. 76.

96. *ibid* p. 77.

97. J.E. Steely, 'Church and Ministry: A Southern Baptist Perspective.' Review and Expositor, LXXIX:2, Spring, 1982, p. 339.

98. *ibid*.

between the ordained and other ministries be delineated more clearly."⁹⁹ What this indicates is a wide set of opinions that have to be recognised and accepted when dealing with Baptist views on ministry. Further observations will be made below when we deal more specifically with Baptist responses to BEM.

THE BAPTIST CONCEPT OF MINISTRY

The Baptist concept of ministry must be understood in the context of discipleship since service, for Baptists, has always been a mark of discipleship. All Christians are called to discipleship; in fact, to be "a Christian is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ."¹⁰⁰ Together, then, with all Christians, Baptists acknowledge this call to discipleship. This is probably one reason why Baptists, generally, have not made discipleship a specific principle. However, when one reflects on Baptist theology, confessional documents and devotional works, it can be seen that discipleship is the underlying characteristic of how Baptists understand the reality of ecclesiology.¹⁰¹ This is Walter B. Shurden's presupposition when he asserts:

Christian discipleship is a style of living which involves choice - voluntary, conscious commitment. That was the theological axiom from which Baptists developed.¹⁰²

99. N.H. Maring, 'One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry'. Baptist World Alliance Commission on Doctrine and Inter-church Co-operation: Brighton, England. 1979, p. 6.

100. J.N. Jonsson (ed), The New Disciple. BUCED: Roodepoort. 1976, p. 40.

101. See the earlier section of this chapter, as well as the previous chapter on the Baptist view of the Church.

102. Shurden, Not a Silent People, p. 14.

L.O. Richards' comment is astute and pertinent:

While much has been said historically about the priesthood of all believers, a contemporary theology of the laity is sadly lacking. Of even more concern is the fact that today the people of God do not have a clear sense of their identity as a ministering people, each one called, empowered, and gifted by God to continue the work of Jesus in our world.¹⁰³

This lack of identity as a ministering people seems to be due, in part, to the lack of understanding of the church the people of God.¹⁰⁴ It also seems due to the lack of appreciation of the Old Testament roots of Christian faith. Further, reflecting on Abraham as an example, there seems to be a lack of recognition that the call to faith is at one and the same time a call to service, or ministry.¹⁰⁵ As the people of God, believers are called to fulfil their calling by serving the community.

Baptists have held convictions about a 'ministering membership' virtually from the beginnings of their development. John Smythe, for instance, in his Short Confession of 1609, says

That the ministers of the church are, not only bishops, to whom the power is given of dispensing both the word and the sacraments, but also deacons, men and widows, who attend to the affairs of the poor and sick brethren.¹⁰⁶

Even though Smythe makes the obvious distinction between the officers of the church, his statement indicates that 'ministry'

103. L.O. Richards, A Theology of Personal Ministry. Zondervan Publishing Co.: Grand Rapids. 1981, p. 11.

104. *ibid.*

105. See Frank Tupper's observations in chapter two, based on his article 'A Baptist Vision of the Church'. Review and Expositor 84:4 (Fall) 1987.

106. W.L. Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions. Judson Press: Valley Forge. 1969, p. 101.

was broadly based and not exclusively for 'bishops' (as he denotes pastors). And in the Second London Confession of 1677 and 1688, we read

Although it be incumbent on the Bishops or Pastors of the Churches to be instant in Preaching the Word, by way of Office; yet the work of Preaching the Word, is not so peculiarly confined to them; but that others also gifted, and fitted by the Holy Spirit for it, and approved, and called by the Church, may and ought to perform it.¹⁰⁷

Given their historical contexts, and the social and political settings, these affirmations are especially meaningful. Yet, notwithstanding these historical and confessional evidences concerning 'priesthood' and 'giftedness', many South African Baptists have not realized their potential ministries. Nor have contemporary leaders adequately taught the doctrine's relevancy. Part of the reason for this is a reservation towards charismatic trends. Further, this lack of clear teaching on 'priesthood' is due to a misunderstanding of the concept itself, which stems from the reaction to mediaeval Roman Catholic abuses of the priesthood, and from the limited view that 'priesthood' simply meant "the right to approach God himself."¹⁰⁸

In his reaction to the priestly caste within the Roman Catholicism of his day, Martin Luther stressed the priestly function of all the faithful. He stated: "we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians ... the priesthood is nothing but a ministry."¹⁰⁹ Luther is affirming here the fundamental character

107. *ibid*, p. 288.

108. V. Brandt, *Notes on Baptist Principles*. Baptist Theological College, Johannesburg. 1978, p. 27.

109. Martin Luther, 'An Open letter to the Christian Nobility.' The Works of Martin Luther, Vol. 11. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg

of priesthood, namely, access to God. Priesthood is a ministry of prayer. Millard Erickson supports this thesis, when he asserts that

each person is capable of relating to God directly. ... There is no need of any special intermediary. All have redemptive access to the Lord.¹¹⁰

Thus, direct access to God through Christ alone, with no human priestly mediation for redemption, is the initial meaning of the priesthood of all believers, or mutual ministry.

Another aspect of this definition has to do with the idea of mutuality in ministry. The idea of 'ministry' has already been mooted in the definition of priesthood. Here we are introduced to the whole concept of giftedness, and the responsibility of every believer for involvement in ministry. H. Wheeler Robinson maintains that

The ministry of the New Testament is ... a ministry of gift, the service of those who can preach or teach or prophesy because the Spirit of God given to them. ... [T]his ought to be implied when we speak of the Church as a spiritual society, and all this is implied when we accept Believers' Baptism.¹¹¹

Hence, the 'priesthood' of all believers means all Christians are to exercise some form of ministry, or service. And for Baptists, according to Robinson, this is because believer baptism demands it.

Press, 1943, p. 279. Quoted in Richards, Theology of Personal Ministry, p. 13.

110. M. Erickson, Christian Theology. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids. 1985, p. 1085-6.

111. H. Wheeler Robinson, Baptist Principles. Carey Kingsgate Press: London. 1938, p. 25-6.

Joe R. Stacker, a Southern Baptist, prefers the term 'shared ministry.'¹¹² Stacker bases his view on biblical examples, a number of which will suffice to make the point. Moses, Stacker maintains, "endured high levels of stress because he tried to do all the ministry for the people by himself."¹¹³ From Exodus 18:13-23 Stacker paraphrases Jethro's advice: "'Moses, share your ministry.' Jethro suggested that Moses appoint individuals from among the people who would serve as leaders of small, moderate, and large groups."¹¹⁴ After receiving Jethro's advice, "God told Moses that Israel was to become a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19:5-6)."¹¹⁵ This Old Testament idea is the foundation the writers of the New Testament used and then developed(eg 1 Peter 2:9).

Another example Stacker uses is Nehemiah. Stacker understands Nehemiah as a leader and a "workman" amongst the people. Stacker continues:

When the people saw Nehemiah's honest concern for their beloved land, they joined him to restore and rebuild. Such loving leadership encouraged the people to share the work. Nehemiah assigned the work and the defense of the city to those who would share the tasks. Willingness to share this task by those who came to work under Nehemiah's leadership led to a successful completion of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The success of the effort resulted from each person's effort and from God's leadership through Nehemiah.¹¹⁶

112. J.R. Stacker, 'Shared Ministry', in Review and Expositor 83:4 (Fall, 1986), p. 597-604.

113. *ibid.*

114. *ibid*, p. 598.

115. *ibid.*

116. *ibid.*

Shared ministry, therefore, does not negate leadership; it is a reality because of effective leadership.

The New Testament examples Stacker offers are equally interesting and helpful. Stacker appeals to Mark 3:13-14 saying that "Jesus called the twelve, who were neither clergy nor laity. ... Jesus shared his redemptive ministry with his disciples", for "disciple" was the only "order in the early church."¹¹⁷ Stacker gives no further support for this claim that "disciple" was the only "order." Neither does he clarify what he means by "early church." However, Stacker again refers to the "early church" when discussing Acts 6:1-7. One gathers then that the early church includes this period of the establishment of the church in New Testament times. If this is so, then the "diaconate" together with the distinct apostolic band was an "order" within the church.

Referring to Mark 10:35-45, where Jesus deals with the problem of James' and John's desire for status and authority, Stacker asserts

Jesus taught his disciples that authority comes through service to God and people. Jesus concluded the matter by telling his followers that he came as servant to give his life as a ransom for those captive to sin. Servant leadership is the ministry role shared by all of God's people.¹¹⁸

Further references given by Stacker include the sending out of the seventy (Luke 10:1-2), the election of the first deacons (Acts 6:1-7), and finally 1 Corinthians 3:9 where the apostle Paul affirms that the believers "are laborers together with God.

117. *ibid.*

118. *ibid.*, p. 599.

Our task is to do God's work. ... Shared ministry is a labor of love with God and with one another."¹¹⁹ Stacker uses these illustrations to support his view of 'shared ministry', an aspect of the 'priesthood of all believers'. He acknowledges that the term 'shared ministry' was not used by early Baptists, but he maintains that "the concept and practice were there."¹²⁰ Stacker appeals to Wilbur Stancil, who wrote that the "Baptist concept of a shared ministry is based on the common giftedness of all believers."¹²¹ We will deal with giftedness later on in this chapter.

Earlier we referred to the fact that shared ministry does not negate leadership. Shared ministry needs leadership; such a ministry is only really possible when leadership so implements it. Further, the people of God themselves must respond to this pattern, by seeing that service is mandatory for a true expression of Christian discipleship. Stacker's final word is equally important: "Shared ministry is not a program; it is a journey towards togetherness."¹²²

In seeking to understand and appreciate the Baptist view of shared or mutual ministry, there are a number of assumptions that need to be remembered. The first is the 'direct Lordship of Christ'.¹²³ Baptists believe that Christ communicates directly

119. *ibid.*

120. *ibid*, p. 600.

121. *ibid.*

122. *ibid*, p. 603.

123. See the whole issue of Southwestern Journal of Theology 33:2 (April) 1991, but especially Millard Erickson, 'Lordship Theology: The Current Controversy'; Stephen Hatfield, 'The Lordship of Christ: A Biblical Analysis'; Joe Trull, 'The Lordship of Christ: A Challenge for Ministers'.

and personally with his people, without an intermediary (priest) redeeming or interceding for them. Baptists also believe, because of this, that gifts of enabling will be given by Christ to his redeemed people for service.

The second assumption is the 'regenerate nature of the church'.¹²⁴ The church consists of believers. These believing people have been given the Holy Spirit, not only for regeneration, but also for ministry. No meaningful spiritual ministry can be performed without the Spirit of God. By virtue of the church being 'the people of God', a spiritual society, all believers are to be involved in ministry, or service.

The third assumption that Baptists start from is the conviction that 'body' life is legitimate.¹²⁵ Although this term has been popularised and developed by Ray Stedman, all that Stacker is implying in his essay on shared ministry is in keeping with the idea of the 'body' or committed membership doing service for God.

EXPOSITION OF THE 1987 STATEMENT

D.F. Wright maintains that the priesthood of believers affirmed "the common dignity, calling and privilege of all Christians before God". It is a calling to "offer spiritual sacrifices."¹²⁶ Building on this Thomas Lea asserts that

124. See the section on this topic in the previous chapter.

125. See for instance, Ray Stedman, Body Life. Regal/GL Books: Glendale, Ca. 1972. Also Richards, Theology of Personal Ministry.

126. D.F. Wright, 'Priesthood'. S.B. Ferguson and D.F. Wright (eds), New Dictionary of Theology. IVP: Leicester. 1988, p. 531-2.

The primary emphasis of the New Testament is that the priesthood of all Christians demands the offering of the sacrifices of obedience (Rom.12:1), praise (Heb.13:15), and deeds of mercy (Heb.13:16).¹²⁷

South African Baptists would agree with this, with the caution of Philip Hughes, who says

These spiritual sacrifices are not in any sense redemptive sacrifices, but sacrifices of gratitude for the one all-sufficient redemptive sacrifice of Christ.¹²⁸

Samuel Mikolaski, a Canadian Baptist, makes some suggestions to add to the above. He maintains that the intercessory, praise, missionary, and socio-political aspects of 'priesthood', are rooted in the Reformation heritage.¹²⁹ For Mikolaski, 'priesthood' is "a devotional matter more than ... (a) practical and programmatic" one.¹³⁰

Being a disciple requires being involved in reconciliation. Reconciliation is a 'priestly' task which includes intercession, worship, service, and witness. Since all Christians are priests, and the priest's work is service, all service, then, is reconciliatory; all ministry has the objective of drawing God to humanity, and humanity to God, through Christ. No believer can 'opt out' of participation in, at least, these four categories.

127. Thomas Lea, 'The Priesthood of all Christians according to the New Testament'. Southwestern Journal of Theology, 30:2 (Spring, 1988), p. 21.

128. P. Hughes, 'Sacrifice'. W.A. Ellwell (ed), Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids. 1984, p. 876.

129. Samuel J. Mikolaski, 'The Contemporary Relevance of the Priesthood of all Christians'. Southwestern Journal of Theology 30:2 (Spring) 1988, p. 8.

130. *ibid.*

South African Baptists are convinced of their evangelistic mandate; they are people given to prayer meetings; their membership is regular at worship; they serve the community in a variety of ways. However, South African Baptists are weak on the matter of social justice. Some South African Baptists have spoken out against certain social ills, and have contributed in practical ways to helping the needy; but generally the Baptist record of active involvement against apartheid, for instance, leaves much to be desired. There is a desperate need for South African Baptists to formulate their own theology for a social ethic.¹³¹

Whilst a considerable amount of in-depth study needs to be made about "spiritual gifts" in relation to mutuality of ministry specifically and discipleship generally, the objective in this section is to consider the theme in relation to the dissertation's aim.

Since Baptists regard the Bible as being relevant to all periods of human life, they accept that the New Testament indicates that the gifts are relevant and important for today. Even those churches which reject the 'Charismatic Movement' as such, accept the contemporary validity of certain gifts. Churches across the world are investigating this issue, and being greatly

131. South African Baptists may well have begun a new journey if their 1993 Journal of Theology issue on 'Poverty and Wealth' is anything to go by. The denomination's theological training institutions could do well to start exposing their students to Walter Rauschenbusch's A Theology for the Social Gospel (Abingdon: Nashville, 1945. Reprinted 1990.). James McClendon's Ethics (Abingdon: Nashville, 1986) and Orlando Costas' Liberating News (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1989) are valuable to a lesser degree in this context. South African Baptists need to read Liberation and Black Theology with less suspicion and more openness so to learn some perspectives which may benefit them in their understanding of wholistic discipleship and meaningful mission.

enriched by their findings and experiences. South African Baptists, in their context, cannot ignore the phenomena; not that they have, but interest has been shown either by accepting the 'Charismatic Movement' uncritically, or becoming entrenched in a critical 'anti-charismatic' position. A number of books have been written about the gifts of the Spirit, books which South African Baptists have used in their studies.¹³² If the gifts of the Spirit are for all the people of God, then it is the Church's responsibility to assess those who are gifted, and use the gifts accordingly. Obviously, giftedness cannot be dealt with in a manner that creates conflict with other New Testament teaching on ministry. Further, the question whether the gifts passages are descriptive or prescriptive has considerable bearing on the topic under consideration. To discern whether a passage is descriptive or prescriptive is notoriously difficult, due to cultural elements, consistency of teaching throughout the Scriptures, and other hermeneutical problems. Throughout the New Testament there are evidences to suggest that both factors are involved.

The major biblical passages of the New Testament are Ephesians 4:11-12, Romans 12:6-8, and 1 Corinthians 12-14. One of the first questions that needs to be asked is "Are all the gifts

132. Fuller Seminary Church Growth professors Peter Wagner and Donald McGavran are probably the best known authors and proponents. Their attraction is that they blend their sympathies for the use of the Gifts with their 'homogenous' Church Growth principles. McGavran's Bridges of God (Friendship Press: New York, 1955) and Understanding Church Growth (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1970), and Wagner's Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow (Regal: Glendale, 1979) are key works for understanding Church Growth concepts. Other helpful contributors are Leslie Flynn, The 19 Gifts of the Spirit (Victor: Wheaton, 1974), John McGorman, The Gifts of the Spirit (Broadman: Nashville, 1974), British authors Donald Bridge and David Phypers offer Spiritual Gifts and the Church (IVP: London, 1973), and a Roman Catholic contribution by Francis A. Sullivan, Charisms and Charismatic Renewal (Servant: Ann Arbor, 1982).

actually listed in Scripture?" What about music, for instance? The literature used amongst Baptists vary in their presentations to such a degree that one learns not to be dogmatic.¹³³ South African Baptists do stress that disciples have to use the gifts they perceive God has given them constructively for the benefit of others, both in the church and in the community.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY¹³⁴

During the 1987 BUSA Assembly meeting in Cape Town, the question of women being ordained into the pastoral ministry was raised. The Assembly appointed an ad hoc Committee to investigate the matter, and to table a report at the 1988 Assembly. An interim report with recommendations was so tabled, followed by a final report, affirming the earlier recommendations, and presented to the 1989 Assembly.

133. See footnote above. The key books used by many South African Baptists include the above, which stem initially from the Fuller Theological Seminary Church Growth school of thought. Southern Baptist influences have been felt considerably in recent times through programmes like MasterLife, and other SBC oriented evangelistic and Church Growth approaches.

134. The role of women in ministry has become a controversy in most denominations, let alone the Baptist Union of South Africa. The following books have been consulted for this section. Obviously some are more helpful than others. The list is no particular order or preference: Alvera Mickelsen (ed), Women, Authority and the Bible (IVP: Downer's Grove, 1986), Shirley Lees (ed), The Role of Women (IVP: Leicester, 1984), Wayne House, The Role of Women in Ministry Today (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 1990), Roberta Hestenes (ed), Women and Men in Ministry: Collected Readings (Fuller Seminary: Pasadena, 1988), David Scholer, Selected Articles on Hermeneutics and Women and Ministry in the New Testament (North Park College and Seminary: Chicago, 1990), Gretchen Hull, Equal to Serve (Scripture Union: London, 1987), Mary van Leeuwen, Gender and Grace (IVP: Leicester, 1990), James Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective (IVP: Leicester, 1981), Mary Evans, Woman in the Bible (Paternoster: Exeter, 1983), Paul Jewett, Man as male and female (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1975), and The Ordination of Women (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1980), Colin Craston, Biblical Headship and the Ordination of Women (Grove Books: Nottingham, 1986).

Between the interim and final reports, the Executive of the Baptist Union arranged two conferences on "The Role of Women in the Church", one in Cape Town and the other in Johannesburg during March 1989. Virtually all the papers dealt with women in an eldership or ordained role, rather than the broader role, as was envisaged. Perhaps the speakers were more willing to grapple with the particular issues, risking some offence rather than to skirt difficulties.

The interim report of the ad hoc Committee (of which this writer was a member) began by detailing the procedure adopted:

In addition to a study of the relevant passages of Scripture, the Committee has attempted to acquaint itself with a wide spectrum of Evangelical and Baptist opinion on the subject. Journal articles were obtained and studied, and a member of the Committee corresponded with Baptists in the United States, Britain, and Australasia.¹³⁵

The Committee recognised the differences in interpretation and practice amongst Baptists worldwide as well as in South Africa. The report included an important observation that the Ministerial regulations of the BU makes "no stipulation whatsoever regarding the gender of ministers".¹³⁶ Up until 1987 no woman had been ordained within the BU. At the 1987 Assembly a woman's name was forwarded for Ministerial recognition. The validity of this proposal was questioned; hence the Committee's existence and the reports.

135. Report of an ad hoc Committee regarding the Ministerial Recognition and Ordination of Women. Baptist Union of Southern Africa: Cape Town, 1988, p. 1, section 1.

136. *ibid*, section 2.

The report maintained that whilst there was "no explicit example of a woman in pastoral office" in the New Testament,¹³⁷ the examples of women exercising pastoral care and leadership are many.¹³⁸ The report also indicated that the Baptist view of ordination was "a recognition of God's ordination of the ordinand rather than a sacramental bestowal of gifts or an entrance into a special priesthood".¹³⁹ Since God clearly calls and equips women for ministry there can be no objection to the ordination of women.¹⁴⁰

In keeping with Baptist ecclesiology, the report re-affirmed that local churches have the inalienable right to choose their own leaders "without prescription from the Union of Churches. The refusal to admit women to the pastoral office is not a condition of membership in the Baptist Union".¹⁴¹ Referring to the Ministerial lists, the report recognised that not every Minister was suitable for every church. However, suitability or aptitude, theological orientation, language, race or gender are not criteria for recognition; therefore such ought not to be used to preclude a candidate from Ministerial recognition. The report's conclusion is clear:

Where a woman gives evidence of a call to the ministry of the word and meets the other relevant conditions stipulated in the Ministerial Regulations, she should be accorded recognition

137. *ibid*, p. 2, section 3.1.

138. See the following section for the Biblical evidences for this assertion.

139. Report of the ad hoc Committee, p. 2, section 3.4.

140. *ibid*. See also the further discussion on ordination in this chapter.

141. *ibid*, p. 2, section 3.2.

and her name placed on the appropriate list. This would imply the right to ordination.¹⁴²

The final report tabled¹⁴³ at the 1989 Assembly expanded on some of the issues contained in the interim report, tried to incorporate some of the information gleaned from the March 1989 conferences, and did not change its conclusion that there should "be no objection to the inclusion of the names of women on the ministerial lists".¹⁴⁴

In dealing with the question of women in ministry it is tempting to try to grapple with the total issue. For the purposes of this dissertation what follows will be limited to dealing briefly with three areas of the current debate. The first is a simple presentation of the Bible's record on women in ministry, from both the Testaments. From the outset it must be understood that this section is not exhaustive. It is merely descriptive and suggestive within the bounds of its relation to the Baptist understanding of discipleship as ministry. A second area is exegetical, where some of the crucial texts in the debate are briefly evaluated. Thirdly, the hermeneutical issues involved are considered, especially the matter of 'authority'.

We begin with some biblical material. Generally, South African Baptists would not identify with those feminists who seek to change the actual wording of Scripture, especially the revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nor would they

142. *ibid*, p. 2, section 4.

143. The document was tabled for the Assembly's information and no voting procedure was necessary.

144. Report of the ad hoc Committee in respect of the Role of Women in Ministry. Baptist Union, 1989, p. 2, section 1.4.2 Conclusion.

identify with the mindset which ascribes masculinity as a description of God. But equally, South African Baptists would agree that such male terms are not de-humanising or disenfranchising to the female. Further, they would not support those within the Christian community who seem to regard women as being either in an inferior position, or being inferior people. Baptists regard both male and female as made in the image of God. Female and male are complementary. Humanity is male and female because both characteristics reflect the divine image. Further, various passages of Scripture use language in such a way as to suggest that God "acts" in a female pattern on occasions. Isaiah 66:13 is one such text where God speaks of comforting Israel as a mother comforts a child.

Attention is drawn to various texts and passages which state or suggest that women had a leadership role in the Old Testament¹⁴⁵ Miriam, in Exodus 15:20 is called a prophetess. In Micah 6:4 Miriam is called a leader, along with Moses and Aaron.

Deborah (Judges 4-5) is well known for her exploits of leadership. She is designated a prophetess. Nothing is said about a female prophetess being different to a male prophet. Further, nothing is said in the text that she was raised up because a man was not available or willing or able. Deborah became a prophetess simply because God called and appointed her. Huldah the prophetess in Josiah's time, was God's oracle. Even the high priest, as well as the other leaders went to Huldah for God's word. (See 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34).

145. See also Roberta Hestenes (ed), Women and Men in Ministry: Collected Readings. Fuller Theological Seminary: Pasadena. 1988, p. 216, for other suggested texts.

Ezekiel 13:17-23 records the condemnation of the false prophetesses, as does Nehemiah 6:14 about Noadiah. The condemnation was because they prophesied contrary to God's will, not because they were women. Even though the Old Testament evidences a prohibition of women in the priesthood, it certainly suggests that women prophesied.

Now, it is interesting that in the New Testament both sexes were included in the "priesthood of all believers", and women continued to "prophecy" (see 1 Corinthians 11:5). If we compare Joel 2:28-29 with Acts 2:17-18, one finds that the very point of the prophecy is that in the new era both men and women are to speak.

Comment needs to be made at this junction on "prophecy". Prophecy is, essentially, preaching.¹⁴⁶ If one assesses the task of the Old Testament prophets, one notices that they were preachers first and foremost. Many of the prophecies are expositions of the Torah, and constant appeals to the Torah are made for support for the prophet's declarations (see for instance Isaiah 8:20). There is no reason to assume that prophecy in the New Testament would be any different to that of the Old Testament.

When we turn to the New Testament¹⁴⁷, we note that Jesus had an open attitude toward women. Frank and Evelyn Stagg capture the essence of Jesus' relationship with women, when they say

It probably does no justice to Jesus to say that he was a "woman liberator." He came to liberate the human being. Jesus

146. See for instance, J.W. McGorman, The Gifts of the Spirit. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1974, p. 80.

147. See also Hestenes, 1988, p. 217 and p. 218 for other suggested texts.

both denied and affirmed his mother, in such a way as to offer her the personal identity that does not belong to the moment or the circumstance but to eternity.¹⁴⁸

What was true for Jesus' mother could be said for most, if not all the women Jesus had contact with. John 20:17 tells how Jesus instructs Mary of Magdala to inform the disciples of His resurrection.

Earlier, reference was made to Acts 2:18 in relation to Joel 2. It is clear from these texts that both men and women will prophesy once the Holy Spirit comes upon them - as against the restriction to males in the past. Acts 21:9 records how Philip the evangelist's four daughters prophesied.

Paul refers to Phoebe, in Romans 16:1, as a "servant" or deacon (Greek: diakonos). Herbert Carson, a Reformed Baptist theologian, concurs with the view that there were women deacons in the early church.¹⁴⁹ In the same chapter in Romans, Paul mentions Priscilla, along with Aquila, as "fellow-workers" (16:3); also Mary (16:6), Persis, Tryphena and Tryphosa (16:12), who worked very hard in the Gospel with Paul. D.M. Scholer maintains that the word used for "worked hard" here in Romans 16, is a word regularly used by Paul to denote the work of the Gospel, inclusive of the apostolic ministry.¹⁵⁰ Scholer's obvious inference is that these women were not involved in menial tasks,

148. E. and F. Stagg, Woman in the World of Jesus. Westminster Press: Philadelphia. 1978, p. 106.

149. H. Carson, 'Deaconesses'. Reformation Today 51, Sept/Oct 1979, p. 17ff.

150. D.M. Scholer, 'A Biblical Basis for Equal Partnership: Women and Men in the Ministry of the Church'. American Baptist Churches: New York. No date, p. 9.

but were partners in proclaiming what the early church designated 'Good News'.

Whilst one cannot dogmatically assert that these instances speak of women being in a stated office, it is instructive to note that the same terms are used for both male and female. Yet, it has already been noted that women were involved in "diaconal" responsibilities, ie: functioning as officials of the church. It is also interesting to notice the number of scholars who maintain that Junias (Romans 16:7) should in fact be Junia (feminine, not masculine). This would mean that there is evidence for at least one women being an apostle. At least three Baptist scholars are sympathetic to this view: Southern Baptist Roger Omanson,¹⁵¹ the American Baptist David Scholer¹⁵² and Noel Vose from Australia.¹⁵³

When one considers the Pauline corpus, we note that when Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11:5), he refers to the women who pray and prophesy in the public congregational meetings. Yet in 1 Cor. 14:34 Paul instructs the church not to allow women to speak, but rather to be silent. To justify this Paul appeals to the "law" and to social moral propriety ("it is shameful for a woman to speak in church"). In the letter to the Philippians (4:3), Paul speaks of Euodia and Syntyche as his fellow-workers. When one comes to 1 Timothy 2:12, we must remember a number of things. The first is that Paul is writing a

151. R.L. Omanson, 'The Role of Women in the New Testament Church'. Review and Expositor Winter 1986, p. 19.

152. Scholer, p. 9.

153. Noel Vose, 'Women in Ministry with Special Reference to Romans 16'. The South African Baptist Journal of Theology, 1992, p. 87-88.

letter and he is not seeking to be exhaustive on any given topic. Further, Paul's comment, that of the silence of women and their ineligibility to teach men, taken on its own, conflicts with other Scriptures, some of which have already been mentioned. If Paul is regarded as inconsistent, or contradictory, this reflects poorly upon the 'high' view of Scripture and its authority that Baptists claim to espouse. It is because Baptists claim a 'high' view of the authority of Scripture, that they maintain Paul cannot be contradictory. But it is not responsible exegesis to take a verse and dogmatically make it say something that it may not actually be teaching. The context of the verse must be considered.

All Christians, inclusive of Baptists, continually place cultural interpretations on Holy Scripture. Some illustrations will be instructive here: foot washing is mentioned in John 13, and practiced by Jesus Christ. But this practice is not regarded as an ordinance today. And why? Simply because the rest of Scripture does not teach it? Certainly, but also because the Church in general did not continue to practise the pattern (except the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic traditions, which do, on certain occasions only). The 'holy kiss' is another New Testament activity most Baptists do not practise today. There are a number of Scriptures that refer to this matter. It was a greeting amongst the believers in the early Church. 'Holy kissing' is not practised in Christianity generally, and certainly not within Baptist circles, mainly because the handshake is the accepted form of greeting. Another reason for not practising the 'holy kiss' is because in the West it can be construed as being sympathetic to homosexuality. A public, or

even a private greeting, exercised by kissing between the same sex, especially men, would be regarded as questionable. Also, in 1 Timothy and in Titus, there are directions to Christian slaves concerning their attitudes towards their masters and their work. Since slavery is not a current practice, Baptists have tended to apply the principle meaning of the text to "employers" and "employees". Baptists must beware of using the literal method in the most fundamentalist and obscurantist manner in seeking to be true to Scripture's teaching. Here are cases that are descriptive, but not necessarily prescriptive.

The seemingly dogmatic assertion by Paul in Timothy should make us careful about the matter of women teaching men. Allied to this is the comment Paul makes about usurping authority. Surely it is the usurpation of authority as well as the act of teaching we must assess. Further, the statement is made in the context of women being modest, quiet, and submissive. In the light of this, and other evidences that women prophesied in public, is it correct to assert that the Timothy passage means, for all time, women cannot teach men? The thesis of R. and C.C. Kroeger¹⁵⁴ is that Paul is addressing the issue of heresy. They draw attention to the number of times Paul speaks to the issue in the Pastorals, and assert:

The prohibition against women teachers in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 must be understood in the light of the major concern over false teachers and teaching as it is stressed repeatedly in the pastoral epistles.¹⁵⁵

154. R. and C.C. Kroeger, 'May Women Teach? Heresy in the Pastoral Epistles.' Reformed Journal Oct 1980.

155. *ibid* p. 18.

The Kroegers point out that this prohibition seems not to be inclusive of other women mentioned within the Pastorals, eg: Priscilla (2 Timothy 4:19), who taught Apollos (Acts 18:24-28), and Timothy's mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). However, the point is well made that these instances are teaching contexts in private, not public. Nevertheless, if the teaching is done privately or publically, it is still teaching; and that of men by women.

The major concern of the Kroegers is to show that by an uncritical and superficial assessment of 1 Timothy 2:12, genuinely called people, especially women, are effectively disbarred from ministry. They state, as a conclusion:

There is a ... likelihood that the stricture refers to the heretical doctrines and practice of women and to their assertion that they have been given a special revelation which only they can impart to men.¹⁵⁶

Further, we cannot overcome the problem by the simplistic approach of differentiating between prophecy and teaching; the one being a "testimony" type utterance, and the other a structured exposition of Christian truth. As has already been intimated, as far as a number of Baptists are concerned, prophetic utterance includes the communication of truth, and therefore teaching is involved.

The biblical materials suggest that some early church meetings became unruly and authoritarian - by both sexes. Women, however, seemed to assert their "rights" to discuss the theme or to ask questions. It could be that these women were acting

156. *ibid.*

without the "recognition" of the leader of the meeting. The views of the Kroegers, discussed above, should be seriously considered.

Another factor in this context, is the statement about women gaining salvation through child-bearing (1 Timothy 2:15). If this is taken at face-value, then it implies salvation by works, which effectively eliminates the men from ever being saved! It also raises the question, for single women at least, about morality, since the Christian way restricts sexual intercourse to within the marriage bond. And childless married women are on the horns of an even more pointed dilemma.

Donald McLeod¹⁵⁷ is not in agreement with the suggestion of unruliness as the cause of Paul's strictures. His argument is that since man is the head of the women, just as Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1), women cannot be given roles of leadership over men. McLeod appeals to the creation order of Genesis, and the Fall, maintaining that because Adam was created first, and because Eve fell, woman cannot have the leadership role; she just does not have the capacity. McLeod makes an astonishing statement about the ineligibility of a woman presiding over family worship, due to the headship of the man. McLeod argues in the following way:

In the home and in the family the husband is the head. Authority, initiative and responsibility are vested in him. He is to rule. The wife is to obey, and her security lies not in her equality, but in the obligation imposed upon the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the Church.¹⁵⁸

157. D. McLeod, 'The Place of Women in the Church.' The Banner of Truth June 1970, p. 31-40. McLeod is a Scottish Presbyterian whose writings (often in Banner of Truth magazine) are influential in Reformed Baptist circles in South Africa.

158. *ibid*, p. 31.

The significance of this for our present purpose lies in the fact that the Christian congregation is simply the aggregate of families. In such a community the wife cannot occupy a position which is proscribed to her in her own home. If she cannot be the head of the family she cannot be the head of the congregation. If she cannot exercise authority over her husband within the domestic circle then she cannot exercise it over him - or over any other man - in the public assembly of believers. To put it briefly: If she cannot preside over family worship she cannot preside over public worship.¹⁵⁹

But McLeod in no way considers single women, or the solo parent. The application of this position would come into conflict with other, equally relevant, Scriptures. Further, McLeod maintains that the reference to "all churches" in 1 Corinthians 14:33-34, suggests a prescription for the universal church.¹⁶⁰ To be fair to McLeod, he does not deny some form of ministry to women. Women may teach other women and children, and women may exercise a host of practical and spiritual ministries; but they may not teach men nor have a leadership role over the whole congregation.

In the final analysis, the BUSA Committee found that there is abundant evidence in the Bible for women to practise ministry. This includes speaking and leadership roles. However, the Committee's research suggests that there are no clear examples in the New Testament that women were designated elders, or were actually pastors of local churches. There are some writers, though, who maintain that Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2) was a pastoral

159. *ibid*, p. 31-32.

160. *ibid*.

leader from Cenchrea. There is little conclusive support for this argument. The lack of evidence does not, of necessity, negate the possibility of women being pastors in the early church, and therefore of doing pastoral work today.

Contrary to the Committee's opinion is Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza's view:

While - for apologetic reasons - the post-Pauline and post-Petrine writers seek to limit women's leadership roles in the Christian community to roles which are culturally and religiously acceptable the evangelists called Mark and John highlight the alternative character of the Christian community, and therefore accord women apostolic and ministerial leadership.¹⁶¹

She arrives at this conclusion by a study of the Gospels of Mark and John, contrasting them with the Pauline and Petrine texts. Her study is particularly relevant as she heads this section 'Women as Paradigms of True Discipleship'.¹⁶² According to Schüssler-Fiorenza the two Gospels "emphasize service and love as the core of Jesus' ministry and as the central demand of discipleship".¹⁶³ In Mark, discipleship "is understood as a literal following of Jesus and of his example".¹⁶⁴ Following Jesus is the way of the cross, of suffering. Even though Schüssler-Fiorenza makes no mention of the Anabaptists, it is not difficult to see the similarity of the biblical paradigms.

If one asserts that women are not to take leadership roles, nor to teach men, nor to do pastoral work, then one should, to be

161. Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, In Memory of Her. SCM: London. 1983, p. 334.

162. *ibid*, p. 315.

163. *ibid*, p. 316.

164. *ibid*.

consistent, recall all women missionaries, stop women teaching teenagers and young adults, and prevent women from speaking in public, lest inadvertently men hears them. This obviously has serious implications, and raises questions which may be difficult, if not impossible, to answer.

A good number of observers, particularly from the more conservative and reformed groups, of which McLeod would be representative, have argued that even though God seems to have blessed through women in leadership roles, this is not His preference, and will have catastrophic results in due course.¹⁶⁵ It is questionable that such a comment has biblical or historical precedents to substantiate it. Indeed, Schüssler-Fiorenza claims that "leaders are not to take the position of rulers but rather that of slaves because Jesus gave his life for the liberation of many. ... Leaders and highly esteemed members of the community must become equal with the lowest and socially weakest members of the community by becoming their servants and slaves. Equality is to be achieved through altruism, through the placing of interests of others and of the community first".¹⁶⁶ Drawing from a broad consensus of biblical illustration, she makes it clear that God has designed the blessing to come through women; it is God's express will. One example of this is Schüssler-Fiorenza's portrayal of the women's loyalty contrasted with the men's lack of courage at the cross. She claims that

Judas betrays Jesus, Peter denies him, and all the male disciples abandon him and flee into hiding. But while the circle of the twelve male disciples does not follow Jesus on his way to the cross for fear of risking their lives, the

165. McLeod, 'The Place of Women in the Church', p. 40.

166. Schüssler-Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, p. 318.

circle of women disciples exemplifies true discipleship. ... Though the twelve have forsaken Jesus, betrayed and denied him, the women disciples, by contrast, are found under the cross, risking their own lives and safety. ... They are thus characterised (by Mark) as Jesus' true "relatives".¹⁶⁷

Schüssler-Fiorenza moves on to John's Gospel suggesting that whereas "Mark's instructions on discipleship center primarily around the necessity of suffering messiahship and suffering discipleship, the Johannine discipleship instructions focus on the motif of altruistic love and service"¹⁶⁸ In John's Gospel women are given a place of prominence; note Mary of Bethany, Mary Jesus' mother, Martha, Mary of Magdala, the Samaritan woman, and the four women at the foot of the cross.¹⁶⁹ The evidences of both Mark and John are in contrast, according to Schüssler-Fiorenza, to the Pastorals. These texts, she maintains, stress patriarchal leadership for both apologetic and cultural reasons; reasons she rejects as she unfolds her interpretation of the Gospels.¹⁷⁰

Baptists would still raise a number of questions here. The first is that this idea of women as pastors is new even though Schüssler-Fiorenza argues that women in leadership is recorded and taught in Scripture. But "newness" per se cannot be an argument to discount the reality of the question. Interestingly, American (Northern Convention) Baptists have accepted women preachers since the early 1800s.¹⁷¹ D.W. and L.S. Dayton draw

167. *ibid*, p. 319 -320.

168. *ibid*, p. 323

169. *ibid*, p. 326.

170. *ibid*, p. 289-294 especially.

171. American Baptist Leaders Speak. ABC: New York. 1986, pp 1 and 3.

attention to the fact that history reveals how many women preachers there were involved in the Wesleyan evangelical revival, and during the 19th century.¹⁷²

Another question is that of the appeals to background materials obscuring the simple reading of the Bible. The ordinary believer does not know the background to the books of the Bible, nor the issues behind the comments in the letters especially. The apostle Peter recognized difficulties in the Scriptures; he states this with particular reference to Paul's writings (2 Peter 3:16). Essential saving knowledge is abundantly clear in Scripture. However, it is true to say, that the concepts of Trinity, predestination, congregationalism, and a host of other Bible truths are not easy to discern nor explicate. But Christians believe them because through diligent study and reflection believers throughout history have found them in Scripture. Thus Baptist advocates of women in ministry leadership claim that Scripture and history support their position, difficult as it is for some.

The BUSA has to deal clearly with this question of women in ministry. Scripture and history reveal that women have been called to serve Christ and His church in ministry. The kinds of ministry vary according to time-period and situational need, in the light of God's sovereign purpose. Women in both the Old and New Testaments have led and taught men. However, the New Testament does not give any clear example of women as elders. The stress is on "clear" here, for much can, and has, been construed from various Scriptures as evidence. Nevertheless, the overall

172. D.W. and L.S. Dayton, 'Women as Preachers: Evangelical Precedents.' Christianity Today May 23 1975, p. 4 (822).

evidence for women in ministry is impossible to deny, without gross prejudice.

Where the Baptist Union is concerned, it leaves the choice of leaders to local congregations. BUSA, of necessity, recognizes local leaders, whatever the gender, as long as criteria is valid. One cannot be sure whether the wording of the Ministerial Regulations in the B.U. Handbook actually constitute 'criteria', but they do give us a guide. The 'criteria', as generally understood, are 1)call, 2)education, 3)moral standing, 4)ability. The Handbook does not use the term 'criteria', nor does it set out the requirements in that form. However, from various sections we can observe the use of the following terminology which suggests 'criteria'. Phrases like "adequate theological training"; "whose record in the ministry is fully satisfactory"; "knowledge of the Scriptures"; "completed a course of study in Baptist principles and polity"; "spiritual integrity"; "intellectual integrity" are used forcing us to argue that they are indeed 'criteria'.¹⁷³ Thus, apart from 'call', these 'criteria' coincide with the suggestions which have been made. It should be observed, concerning 'call', that this is the first matter a candidate is asked about. It is the most important characteristic about ministry.

A number of negative responses have been forthcoming from within the BUSA. The disquieting thing about these papers is that they reacted to the ad hoc Committee's report without considering the study document upon which the report was based. The fact that many other interested people requested the study document adds to the disquiet, for those who reacted negatively are considered

173. BU Handbook for 1993-1994, p. 244-5.

leaders within the Union. There are four papers that need referring to.¹⁷⁴

The first element of surprise when reading these papers is their lack of serious attention to Old Testament illustrations of women in leadership and prophetic roles. All four do make reference to the Old Testament, restricting their use mainly to the creation texts in relation to 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2. But not one interacted with the study document which drew attention to a number of important Old Testament illustrations (see the summary above). Nor was there serious evaluation of Old Testament evidences of women in leadership roles. Vernon Light does make reference to Deborah claiming that

Paul's appeal to the Law, i.e. the O.T., to support his teachings, also tells us that he did not view Deborah's judgeship, for example as a legitimate exception; clearly it and similar exceptions are not therefore to be used as the so-called clear passages by which to interpret 1 Cor 11:3-16, 1 Tim 2:11-14 and 1 Cor 14:34-35.¹⁷⁵

Paul's use of Genesis and the Law does not invalidate Deborah's leadership. Deborah was already a prophetess and was judging Israel before Barak made his request to her (Judges 4). Nothing in the context demands us to view her leadership in the army as an exception, let alone a legitimate one. Furthermore, the text tells us that Deborah sent for Barak initially to instruct him in the will of God. Only when Barak heard his orders

174. M. Holdt, 'The Authority of Scripture and the Role of Women in the Church'. Unpublished paper, 1989. A. Nieuwoudt, 'Women and Eldership'. Unpublished paper, 1989. L. Thomas, 'The Ordination of Women'. Unpublished paper, October 1989. V. Light, 'A Response to the Baptist Union Conferences on the Role of Women in the Church'. Published and distributed by the Newcastle Baptist Church, September 1989.

175. Light, 'A Response ...', p. 3.

did he ask Deborah to be present. Light uses no other reference from the Old Testament to support his theory. The passage he does use shows how much of his own bias is evident.

When Light deals with the Timothy passage, in common with so many others, including his three fellow respondents discussed here, he does not deal with the whole pericope. He presents a brief exposition of the particular verses under scrutiny, but leaves out comment on the equally important verses which speak of women being saved by child-birth. To develop a theory of ministry and an argument on Scripture's authority from only half a passage is questionable. Not to even consider important features of the passage is reprehensible.

The main concern of Martin Holdt is what he calls "the authority of Scripture as set out by the Apostles".¹⁷⁶ Nieuwoudt on the other hand claims to be concerned with hermeneutics and contextualisation.¹⁷⁷ Thomas considers the "gender" factor claiming that "... God's pattern in sexual identity involves a leadership relationship that we cannot deny ...".¹⁷⁸ Thomas does not quite say that God is male, but his unwillingness to use female attributes for God seems to indicate that for him God is indeed male. Light is also concerned with the authority of Scripture,¹⁷⁹ but at least his paper seeks to give a biblical (albeit a New Testament) rationale for his position on women in ministry.

176. Holdt, 'The Authority of Scripture ...', p. 1.

177. Nieuwoudt, 'Women and Eldership', p. 1ff and 6.

178. Thomas, 'The Ordination of Women', p. 3, his emphasis.

179. Light, 'A Response ...', p. 6.

Overall these four papers give little hope of helping serious Baptists grapple with such an important yet sensitive and emotive issue. By simply quoting Scripture and threatening Scripture's authority they tend to bludgeon rather than educate and liberate. Other papers offered during the March 1989 Conferences were mostly open on the issue and, even when they concluded against women's ordination, tended to be less judgemental. The end result, that local congregations retain the right to ordain whomsoever they wish within the regulations, does not answer the question whether the Union qua Union will give the same support for those women ordained as they do men. The results of a survey among South African Baptists during 1994 and circulated in September of that year concluded that

gender plays a significant role in the appointment of leaders. ... (I)t would be almost impossible for a women to be voted to a position of senior leadership in the denomination as a high percentage of respondents would vote against any female candidate on the basis of gender alone.¹⁸⁰

Inherent to this discussion on women in ministry is the question of ordination. There must be a separation of the two concepts of "ministry" and "ordination". This is important because no-one would really deny certain areas of ministry to women. (This can be seen by the number of essays on ordination in Baptist theological journals over the years.) The real issue at stake is women in the ministry of pastoral care, of women in the kind of leadership roles which have, hitherto, been held by men, and which have traditionally been restricted to men. What

180. Brian Harris, 'Findings of the Commission of Inquiry into Women in Leadership in the Baptist Union of Southern Africa'. Unpublished paper, September 1994.

Baptists understand by ordination must therefore be examined. At the outset, however, we state that there are differences of opinion over the meaning of ordination between the various churches.

R. Alan Culpepper¹⁸¹ after reviewing the Old and New Testaments' evidence for ordination, concludes that not only is there little in the Bible to support present ordination ceremonies, there is little evidence for ordination per se. The references to "laying on of hands" in the New Testament cannot be identified with present day understanding of ordination. If this is so for ordination, as such, how much more for the more controversial issue - the ordination of women? The following statement from the Ministerial Regulations of the BUSA, is helpful here. The Introduction to the Regulations reads:

Baptists believe in "the priesthood of all believers". In particular, they believe that no inherent distinction exists between Christians such as that underlying the use of the words "priests" and "laymen". A church may call any of its members at any time to perform any of those functions usually undertaken by its pastor.¹⁸²

At the same time, we believe that God calls some to undertake a recognised ministry, for which the Union requires theological training and vocational equipping. It remains the prerogative of the local church to call whom it will to undertake such ministry roles and to lay down whatever conditions are deemed appropriate. However, for the guidance of the wider Baptist family, where such a call is more widely recognized, and following an interview to ascertain that the applicant is adequately qualified for the kind of ministry being exercised, the person's name is to be found on the Ministry List.¹⁸³

181. R.A. Culpepper, 'The Biblical Basis for Ordination.' Review and Expositor Fall 1981.

182. BU Handbook for 1989-90, p. 195.

183. BU Handbook for 1990-91, p. 166.

Baptists claim, therefore, that there is no conflict between a general 'ministry' of all Christians, and a specific ministry like that of the pastoral office. This has been alluded to in the earlier section dealing with 'congregationalism' and leadership in that context. Key words for the purposes of the present discussion are "call" and "recognized". Present-day ordination, at least as it is understood in Baptist Churches in South Africa, is simply a public "recognition" by both the individual and the church, of the sense of "call" to serve. In fact, ordination and induction are very similar, except that ordination has the connotation of permanence and official recognition.

Perhaps the ultimate issue, then, is the question about official recognition, rather than allowing service. Few Baptist churches in South Africa disbar people from serving in the capacity they feel called to, with the exception of pastoral leadership by a woman, unless there are clear evidences which so demand that disbarring. There may be some restrictions by some churches for women to speak in mixed audiences. Many female missionaries are invited to talk about their fields of service in mixed worship services. To say this is not teaching is strained, for the woman is informing a mixed audience of the nature of her task, the circumstances of her going to the field, and the details of her call from God. The communication is authoritative since she knows better than the audience; she appeals to Scripture to justify her actions and subjective call; she claims a divine impress upon her life, and her response to this impress. To allow women missionaries on the foreign field, but to refuse women pastors in the home churches is, to say the least, inconsistent. It is true to say that the women on the mission

field do everything, if not more, than a pastor here at home does. If the local church, or union of churches recognizes a missionary who is female, why not recognize, and publically state this, a woman who is called to a local church?

BAPTIST RESPONSES TO BEM

As indicated in the introduction to this section, there are quite divergent views on ministry amongst Baptists. This is very evident when one reads the Baptist responses to BEM. Most Baptist responses are agreed that the ministry is rooted in Christ and the community of faith. There is difference of opinion, however, over the 'order' of ministry, the seeming sacramental character of ordination, and the apparent priestly nature of the ordained ministry, amongst other matters. Thus British Baptists observe that "a three-fold order of ministry is really the divisive question at issue."¹⁸⁴ Yet, when reading Nigel Wright's Challenge to Change, it seems that he gives tacit acknowledgement to the three-fold order when he makes reference to this in connection with his arguments for Baptist bishops,¹⁸⁵ though Wright wants his episcopacy to be functional¹⁸⁶ and not simply emphasising historical continuity. "The channels of continuity are the consecrated bishops by whose authority the affairs of the church are regularised."¹⁸⁷ In many Baptist Unions or Conventions, there is de facto a distinct three-fold order: deacons, pastors, and

184. Max Thurian (ed), Churches Respond to BEM, vol.1, p. 73.

185. N. Wright, Challenge to Change: A Radical Agenda for Baptists. Kingsway: Eastbourne. 1991, p. 178.

186. *ibid*, p. 174.

187. *ibid*.

superintendents/co-ordinators/directors; this latter office having a wider associational or denominational ministry, with varying degrees of authority. Notwithstanding some of the negative responses to BEM, Baptists do not deny the idea of specific ministries. The Baptists who responded to BEM accept the legitimacy of ordination.¹⁸⁸

In its response to the challenge of women in ministry, BEM states that the

Church must discover the ministry which can be provided by women as well as that which can be provided by men. A deeper understanding of the comprehensiveness of ministry which reflects the interdependency of men and women needs to be more widely manifested in the life of the Church.¹⁸⁹

BEM also claims that the churches "agree on this need", but they "draw different conclusions as to the admission of women to the ordained ministry". Many churches, having decided "that there is no biblical or theological reason against ordaining women", have done just that. At the same time, BEM states, "many churches hold that the tradition of the church in this regard must not be changed".¹⁹⁰ The issues for these churches lie in the "nature of humanity and (in) Christology".¹⁹¹

Criticisms of BEM's presentation came from both sides of the spectrum. Those in favour of women's ordination felt that BEM

188. Max Thurian (ed), Churches Respond to BEM, vol.1, 1986; vol.2, 1986; vol.3, 1987; vol.4, 1987. WCC: Geneva. Baptist responses are recorded in vols. 1, 3, and 4.

189. W.H. Lazareth and N. Nissiotis (eds), Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. Geneva: WCC. 1982, p. 24.

190. *ibid.*

191. *ibid*, p. 25.

could have been more "positive",¹⁹² or as the Burma Baptist Convention claim, BEM "seems to evade the question" of ordination of women.¹⁹³ Those against the process maintain that BEM has inadequately considered the "weighty ... arguments" against women's ordination.¹⁹⁴ All parties acknowledge the need for further discussion, thus not closing doors to ongoing dialogue. Ecclesiology particularly demands attention in this context.¹⁹⁵

SUMMARY

In this section we have attempted to show the Baptist perspective on the mutuality of ministry, commonly called 'the priesthood of believers'. Even though South African Baptists wholeheartedly believe in the mutuality of ministry, they are equally committed to a 'called' and trained pastoral and teaching ministry, commonly termed the 'ordained' ministry. This is not deemed inconsistent with the idea of 'giftedness'; in fact it is considered within the ambit of the gifts of the Spirit. God gives gifts to the body, and those gifts are both different in substance and different in function. Gifts of leadership, some of which are used in a 'full-time' capacity, are needed for the proper edification of the church. Thus, leadership is designed to help the people in the churches to exercise their gifts to the full.

192. J. Deschner and G. Gassman (eds), Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses. Geneva: WCC. 1990, p. 78.

193. *ibid*, p. 79.

194. *ibid*.

195. *ibid*, p. 80.

Notwithstanding the Baptist position on the autonomy of the local church, and that church's right to elect its own leadership, South African Baptists indicate considerable opposition to women being in the ordained ministry. Yet there is nothing in the ministerial regulations that negates the validity of women being in ministry. The fundamentalists within the Union, both reformed and non-reformed, base their opposition on a literal, though an inconsistent interpretation of the restrictive passages, especially 1 Corinthians 14:34-5 and 1 Timothy 2:11. The fact that a reworked set of ministerial regulations came before the BU Assembly in October 1991, is indicative of the concerns over clarity on this issue.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has investigated the Baptist concept of discipleship as "ministry". Every Baptist member is deemed to have a part to play in "ministry". Hence, the business meeting is a congregational activity. When all members gather to do the business of the church, this is regarded as 'governing' the church. This is a generalised view of "ministry". A more particularised aspect of "ministry" is what Baptists call "mutual ministry" or "the priesthood of all believers". This gives attention to the fact that each believer has direct access to God through Christ, and is not dependent on a sacramental priest. It also emphasizes the empowerment of gifts by the Holy Spirit. Gifts are given to all believers for the purpose of service, or ministry. These gifts and callings are given to women as well as to men. Key passages are considered, and our conclusion

is that Baptists have no ground to deny women access to the ordained ministry.

In keeping with the intent of the thesis we also consider the WCC's BEM document on ministry. Baptists are generally wary of the emphasis made by some traditions on the three-fold order of deacons, presbyters, and bishops. Yet, using other nomenclature for certain officers, Baptists do have and practice a multi-fold order of ministry which could, under certain conditions, be correlated with the more traditional three-fold order.

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CHAPTER FIVE

DISCIPLESHIP AS FREEDOM: THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO
THE STATE

Baptists have expressed their understanding of discipleship by their dissent from Erastianism.¹ They are committed to the 'free church' principle of the church's separation from the state. This principle includes "religious liberty" and the idea of "dissent". In some current manuals on Baptist polity these themes are fused together.² We will be following this pattern, even though the BUSA's 1987 Statement of Baptist Principles lists the two concepts of liberty and separation as different entities. Hence the term 'relation' in the title of the chapter; it indicates no mere separation, but a particular understanding of the relationship between church and state.³

In some cases the "teaching of the separation of church and state grows out of a conviction of the necessity for the

1. See D.D. Sceats, 'State'. New Dictionary of Theology. IVP: Leicester, 1988, p. 660. "...Erastianism, the subjection of the church to the authority of the state, even in matters of faith and discipline ...".

2. W.H. Brackney, The Baptists. Greenwood Press: New York. 1988; V. Brandt, Unpublished notes on Baptist Principles. Baptist Theological College: Johannesburg, 1988a, 1988b; H. Cook, What Baptists Stand For. Carey Kingsgate Press: London. 1961; S.J. Grenz, The Baptist Congregation. Judson Press: Valley Forge. 1985; H. Hobbs, The Baptist Faith and Message. Convention Press: Nashville. 1971; N.H. Maring and W.S. Hudson, A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice. Judson Press: Valley Forge. 1963; E.Y. Mullins and H. Hobbs, The Axioms of Religion. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1978.

3. E.F. André, 'The Baptist Understanding of the Relationship of Church and State'. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town. 1984; D. Walker, An unpublished response to the Statement on Baptist Principles, with special reference to point six: the Principle of Separation of Church and State. Submitted to the Executive of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. 1987.

church to be free to obey her Lord."⁴ Hence this freedom (or the synonymous terms liberty of conscience, or religious toleration) is not only a corollary of separation, but in fact the foundation for it. Other Baptist commentators have expressed this in similar ways. E.Y. Mullins wrote of "The Religio-civic Axiom: a free church in a free state,"⁵ whereas J.C. Anderson regards religious liberty as a "psychological principle" and argues that "the best way to defend the psychological principle of religious liberty is to adhere to the separation of church and state ... the political principle."⁶ Or, as Brian Haymes puts it:

It was out of loyalty to the absolute authority of Christ that the tradition of dissent began [Baptists] dissented from all suggestions that the state should decide the form of the church's belief and worship. They dissented from all government attempts at uniformity.⁷

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

To appreciate the Baptist position on this relationship between church and state some historical perspectives are necessary. Most of the radical Anabaptists went so far as to assert that it was unacceptable for Christians to serve in any state service, or to take up arms for any reason. Charles Villavicencio maintains that

sixteenth century Anabaptists regarded the true Church as a concrete expression of 'the present kingdom of Christ which is

4. Brandt, Notes, 1988a, p. 34.

5. Mullins and Hobbs, Axioms, p. 128.

6. J. Anderson, 'Old Baptist Principles Reset'. Southwestern Journal of Theology, 31:2 (Spring, 1989), p. 10.

7. B. Haymes, A Question of Identity: Reflections on Baptist Principles and Practice. Yorkshire Baptist Association: Headingley, Leeds. 1986, p. 20.

being established in the midst of and alongside the kingdom of this world; not ... deferred to some millennial future.' In a word, the Anabaptist vision is a boldly historical one, giving rise to the theological concept of the alternative community.⁸

Anabaptists viewed the church as an expression of the Kingdom of God, and therefore as being radically different from the state. The state had no place in the church, and vice versa. Anabaptists were ruthlessly persecuted precisely because their church order was considered anti-state.

The seventeenth century English Baptists were split into General and Particular Baptists.⁹ McBeth claims that the General Baptists "reflected more hostility toward civil government than the Particular Baptists." Further, many "early General Baptists were pacifists", yet asserting their "political loyalty to crown and country."¹⁰ "The Particular Baptists" says McBeth, "followed their Calvinistic heritage in giving high value to political loyalty and patriotic participation in civic affairs."¹¹ Hence the Particular Baptist Confession of 1689 could state: "It is lawful for Christians to accept and carry out the duties of public office." They had a responsibility to "maintain justice and peace in accordance with sound laws of the kingdoms and states which they serve."¹² McBeth seems to indicate that it was

8. C. Villa-Vicencio (ed), Between Christ and Caesar. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids. 1986, p. 61.

9. These terms denote the theological emphases of the groups. General Baptists were Arminian, stressing the general or universal character of the atonement. Particular Baptists were Calvinistic, limiting Christ's atonement to particular people.

10. H.L. McBeth, The Baptist Heritage. Broadman: Nashville. 1987, 83-4.

11. *ibid*, p. 83.

12. The 1689 Baptist Confession (Reprint). Carey Publications: Haywards Heath. 1975, p. 54.

out of their view of the relation between the church and the state that Baptists forged their understanding of religious liberty. Thus, John Smythe, in his Propositions and Conclusions of 1612, says that "the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with ... to force ..." people in matters of religion. The magistrate is to "leave Christian religion free ...".¹³ William Lumpkin maintains that these Propositions of Smythe's were still being used by English Baptists in 1651.¹⁴

William Brackney suggests that for Baptists in the New World during the early eighteenth century, "the debate shifted from the question of individual liberties to worship, preach, and baptize, to the question of community obligation contrary to one's conscience".¹⁵ In this case it was the tax imposed by Puritan-oriented local courts which violated Baptist conscience. Further, Brackney claims that

At their beginning, in the world of transition which England was in the seventeenth century, Baptists led other dissenters in championing the cause of religious liberty until the Toleration Act of 1689.¹⁶

Supporting this is William Estep's assertion that

It is a matter of historical record that Baptists were the first to advocate complete religious freedom in England, not only for themselves, but for Roman Catholics and Jews as

13. H.L. McBeth, Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage. Broadman: Nashville. 1990, p. 70; and The Baptist Heritage, p. 85. See also W.L. Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions. Judson: Valley Forge. 1969, p. 140.

14. Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions, p. 124.

15. Brackney, The Baptists, p. 92.

16. Brackney, *ibid*, p. 87.

well.¹⁷

However, A.G. Dickens argues that John Frith was "perhaps" the first in England to advocate toleration. Frith was associated with Tyndale, Coverdale, Bilney, Ridley, Latimer and Cranmer, all well known English reformers.¹⁸ He was influenced by the writings of Wycliffe, Oecolampadius, Hus, Tyndale and Zwingli, as well as Luther, showing Frith to have a "mind of high ability and independence".¹⁹ Imprisoned in 1532 and martyred the following year, Frith claims that the cause of his death was because he could not "in conscience abjure and swear that our prelates' opinion of the sacrament ... is an undoubted article of the faith, necessary to be believed under pain of damnation."²⁰ Hence, Dickens says "To a greater extent than any other of our early Protestants, Frith ... upheld a certain degree of religious freedom".²¹ We would thus moderate McBeth's claim, and suggest that Baptists were among the first to advocate religious toleration.

Religious toleration was regarded as dangerous to social stability, hence the insistence on credal uniformity. But, as H.L. McBeth says, the "Baptists denied that religious uniformity

17. William R. Estep, 'The Baptist Struggle for Freedom in The Historical Context'. Southwestern Journal of Theology 31:2 (Spring) 1989, p. 42.

18. A.G. Dickens, The English Reformation. B.T. Batsford: London. 1964, p. 68.

19. *ibid*, pp. 63, 78.

20. *ibid*, p. 78. See W.A. Clebsch, England's Earliest Protestants, 1520-1535. (New Haven and London, 1964).

21. Dickens, The English Reformation, pp. 78, 322-3.

was essential to domestic tranquility".²² McBeth also maintains that the early Baptists asserted the logic of the individual choosing his own religion since he must give account to God for himself.²³ This emphasis on the individual stems from the Protestant concept of justification by faith, says Christopher Hill. The

insistence that each believer should look inward to his own heart contributed to give protestantism its fundamentally individualist bias.²⁴

Brackney indicates that this was also Thomas Helwys' viewpoint. Helwys, he says

started with the dual premises that individuals, not churches, comprise the Kingdom of God, and that individuals are accountable for attaining knowledge of God's truth.²⁵

To deny or prevent people learning or teaching the truth of God was reprehensible. Therefore, "religious persecution has been harmful to the church and civil society, while toleration has been good for both."²⁶ Dickens concurs, saying that

While the Reformation was slow to produce genuine tolerance among its devotees, it soon destroyed the more solid psychological bases for religious persecution. Once Catholic Christendom had been succeeded by a multiplicity of national

22. H.L. McBeth, The Baptist Heritage. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1987, p. 86.

23. *ibid.*

24. Christopher Hill, 'Protestantism and the Rise of Capitalism', in F.J.Fisher (ed), Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 1961, p. 18.

25. Brackney, The Baptists, p. 88.

26. McBeth, Sourcebook, p. 86.

churches and dissenting groups, persecution also began to occasion practical disadvantages which could be seen, intermittently at least, to outweigh the advantages of uniformity. Such situations led to practical experiments in toleration, and where it was proved that such toleration could subsist without disaster, the more positive ideals of religious liberty were bound sooner or later to make their appeal.²⁷

We have already noted that John Smythe considered it wrong for the magistrate "to meddle with religion or matters of conscience ... but to leave Christian religion free".²⁸ "This statement in the early seventeenth century," says J.N. Jonsson, "is the first clear proclamation of freedom of religion and conscience which belongs to the heritage of Baptists, ever since a heritage to be practised by them as subjects of state, as equal citizens, in civil and religious affairs."²⁹ Hence, we begin to note that Baptist commentators apply the concept of liberty to perspectives broader than simply religious ones. Indeed, Keith Clements claims that the "democratization of society, the rights to religious and political liberty, the campaign against slavery and the slave trade, the early trade union movement in Britain, the movement for universal suffrage, education and civil liberties - all these were part of the classic Free Church witness".³⁰

27. Dickens, The English Reformation, p. 334.

28. See McBeth, Sourcebook, p. 70, and Anderson, 'Old Principles Reset', p. 43.

29. J.N. Jonsson, 'Missions and the Liberation of Human Life as Part of our Baptist Heritage', in Review and Expositor, 84:4 (Fall, 1987), p. 668.

30. K.W. Clements, 'The Freedom of the Church: Bonhoeffer and the Free Church Tradition.' Bonhoeffer's Ethics: Old Europe and New Frontiers. Eds G. Carter, R. van Eyden, H.D. van Hoogstraten, J. Wiersma. Kok Pharos Publishing House: Kampen. 1991, p. 163. Clements, a British Baptist theologian, includes Baptists in the term 'Free Church'.

Further, this is, in essence, what Haymes denotes as "the Crown Rights of the Redeemer ... the affirmation of the absolute authority of Jesus Christ."³¹ Haymes maintains this is also Thomas Helwys' position,³² as does Brandt,³³ which is to be expected since Helwys and Smythe worked so closely together in England and in Amsterdam prior to Smythe's death and Helwys' return to England.

The social, political, economic, and theological turmoil of the period must be recognized to appreciate fully the concerns of the Baptists. "Baptist passion for religious liberty was born out of specific circumstances and definite convictions about religious experience" says Brackney.³⁴ Persecution from state and church factions, social and political aspirations, and powerful inner spiritual experiences brought Baptists to realize that state legislation cannot and must not govern the true church. This was equally true for the Anabaptists, the English Baptists, and the American Baptists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Part of the Baptist struggle for liberty in America was due to the fact that the Puritan establishment in New England asserted their authority with intolerance and persecution of dissent.³⁵ Eventually it was John Clarke, lesser known than Roger Williams, but a more articulate theologian, who "fused the

31. Haymes, A Question of Identity, p. 20. Clements also makes this assertion in the next sentence of the above quotation.

32. Haymes, A Question of Identity, p. 21.

33. Brandt, Notes, 1988b, p. 52-3.

34. Brackney, The Baptists, p. 87.

35. *ibid*, p. 91-2.

freedom to dissent with the liberty to propagate religious ideas," and to plead for "freedom from persecution." The final result of this struggle in the American context was the Charter for Rhode Island, dated 1663. This document included a comprehensive clause concerning religious liberty, in which is stated "All and every person ... freely and fully have and enjoy his own judgements and conscience in matters of religious concernments."³⁶ Hence, Brackney asserts that

Baptists in America gave new meaning to religious liberty and a legal sanction to its practice that had specifically religious influences and earmarks.³⁷

In the light of these perspectives, Baptists maintain that when the church is linked to the state there is little distinction between Christian community and secular society. Thus there is scant sympathy for religious dissent. Historically, religious dissent was regarded as anti-state, and therefore suppressed. Hence on the European continent, and in England, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Anabaptists and the Dissenters were persecuted, because, amongst other things, they were regarded as being anti-state. C.W. Gaddy's comment is helpful at this point. This Southern Baptist ethicist says that

Freedom can never be properly understood or enjoyed in socio-political terms alone. ... To pursue authentic freedom is eventually to confront a spiritual reality. Though not unrelated to socio-political freedom, spiritual freedom transcends any political, economic, institutional, or individual declaration. ... The foundation of human freedom is construed from a redemptive relationship with God and a

36. *ibid.* p. 93-5.

37. *ibid.*, p. 91.

responsible relationship with other persons. ... The ultimate fulfillment of the desire for freedom and the realization of the potential for freedom which pulsate throughout humanity is to be found in a personal relationship to God. ... Thus, individuals experience freedom in devotion to an authority beyond themselves, that authority being God.³⁸

Gaddy must not be interpreted as saying that the socio-political factors in freedom are unimportant. Note that he says that freedom cannot be understood in socio-political terms alone. Freedom is a multi-faceted reality. However, it certainly is grounded in interpersonal social interaction. Hence, Jonsson is able to state that the "gospel of the kingdom of God and his Christ has no place for socio-human neutralism and detached piety. As Baptists we need to ... identify ourselves with those who are dreaming of human acceptance in society, and who are striving to be free partners in a free world".³⁹ Within this interaction humanity must be free to live according to religious conscience. No structure must be forced upon a person's religious convictions to the degree that conscience is compromised spiritually or morally. Again, Jonsson's comment is apt: "Freedom to be the person and the people God intended us to be, both in the community of faith and in society, has been a prophetic note within the Baptist voice in the past".⁴⁰ Sadly it has remained in the past, the past of the northern hemisphere. Certainly the prophetic note within the Baptist Union of Southern Africa has

38. C.W. Gaddy, 'Freedom'. Review and Expositor 73:3 (Summer) 1976, p. 294.

39. J.N. Jonsson, 'Missions and the Liberation of Human Life as Part of our Baptist Heritage'. Review and Expositor 84:4 (Fall) 1987, p. 675.

40. *ibid*, p. 667.

not been significantly evident. It is to this Union's history we now turn.

South African Baptists pride themselves for their considered testimony of championing the principle of religious liberty. The fifth clause of the 1987 Statement on Baptist Principles indicates this, even though the clause makes no reference to any particular historical context. Chris Parnell's popular book Being a Baptist reveals this in his discussion on freedom of religion whereby he refers to all religions being allowed to practice their principles freely under the law.⁴¹ Sadly there is no reference to the practical implications of the freedom of religion in the apartheid era in South Africa. This notwithstanding the fact that the book was published in 1980. The same is true of another popular South African Baptist book, The New Disciple (1976). Theo Pass wrote the chapter on 'Christian Citizenship' (pp 95-105) without a single reference to the Christian's responsibility to grapple with racial discrimination.⁴² The fundamental reason for this lack seems rooted in the view, held by the BUSA at the time, that apartheid was merely a political policy rather than one which was theologically justified, and therefore as the Message to the People of South Africa puts it, a "false, novel gospel".⁴³ It was only at the BUSA's Assembly in 1991 that the Union adopted a

41. C.W. Parnell, Being a Baptist. Baptist Publishing House: Roodepoort. 1980, pp 45-48.

42. T.B. McGee and J.N. Jonsson (eds), The New Disciple. CED: Roodepoort. 1976, pp 95-105.

43. J.W. de Gruchy and de Villiers (eds), The Message in Perspective. SACC: Braamfontein. 1968, p. 39.

resolution from the Christian Citizenship Committee which condemned apartheid and confessed the Union's complicity.

It is at this juncture in the discussion on the church's freedom, both its own and being free for others, that Dietrich Bonhoeffer's perspectives are valuable. Bonhoeffer has argued that "the freedom of the church is not to be confused with the institutional separation of church and state".⁴⁴ Baptists in South Africa have claimed to be free by adhering to their historical doctrinal formulation of the separation of church and state. However, the lack of involvement by Baptists in the ecumenical and socio-political struggles in South Africa indicate their bondage. Hence John de Gruchy maintains that

Just as the Constantinian settlement led to the captivity of the church to the state so that it could no longer exercise its critical and prophetic role with it, so the institutional separation of church and state can equally lead to the secularisation of the church and the silencing of its proclamation.⁴⁵

De Gruchy then poses the question as to the freedom of "religious communities to address themselves to socio-political issues if this accords with their tenents of faith." Furthermore he asks if religious freedom is "ultimately only congruent with the privatization of religion, or does it allow the exercise of public responsibility and prophetic critique?"⁴⁶ The answer, de Gruchy maintains, is recognizing that the church is not free

44. J.W. de Gruchy, 'Religious Liberty and the Freedom of the Church: Reflections from within the Context of South Africa.' Faith and Freedom (ed) R. Libowitz. Pergamon Press: Oxford, 1987, p. 128. See also D. Bonhoeffer, No Rusty Swords (Harper: New York, 1965, p. 104-5).

45. *ibid.*

46. *ibid*, p. 130.

simply because it has made statements to that effect in doctrinal formularies. Religious liberty that is true to its name

has to do with the freedom of the Word of God to address the world, and therefore to address socio-political issues as concretely as possible. The church's responsibility is to be a faithful witness to the Word, and in that task it finds its freedom.⁴⁷

Such a perspective is classic Bonhoeffer who maintained that the church is only free when it enables the Word to "gain a hearing", to give "a concrete witness to the gospel and therefore to genuinely human liberation", and to be faithful "in confessing Christ irrespective of what this means in terms of the size of her space in the world."⁴⁸ Thus the church's freedom is found in her espousal of "values which liberate from oppression, rather than dehumanize, is Christologically grounded, indeed, grounded in a theology of the Cross."⁴⁹ As the Lord of the church, Christ suffered; by following in the sufferings of Jesus, the church "exercises her public, national task, for it protects these values without which a nation cannot live in justice and peace." Further, the church "sides with those who are committed to the struggle for the liberation of the nation from oppression." Thus the church is truly a "confessing community", a "community of gathered disciples", and a "relevant public institution".⁵⁰

47. *ibid*, p. 133.

48. J.W. de Gruchy, 'The Freedom of the Church and the Liberation of Society: Bonhoeffer on the Free Church, and the "Confessing Church" in South Africa.' Bonhoeffer's Ethics: Old Europe and New Frontiers (eds) G. Carter, R. van Eyden, H.D. van Hoogstraten, J. Wiersma. (Kok Pharos: Kampen, 1991, p. 182-3). See also Bonhoeffer, No Rusty Swords, p. 100.

49. *ibid*, p. 184.

50. *ibid*.

Discipleship therefore must include commitment to social and political liberation.

In the context of political and societal change in the new democratic South Africa discussions on religious liberty, and hence the church's freedom, have again come to the fore. The reason for this is not that one foresees religious intolerance on the part of the state, even less persecution, but that in the context of religious pluralism there are new issues to consider and problems to resolve. Economic implications are also included in this discussion since at least three religious groups in South Africa have different 'holy' days (Friday for Islam, Saturday for Judaism, and Sunday for Christians). Will it be considered religious intolerance to penalise those who request time off to exercise their religious duties on these days? In this regard South African Baptists lodged a protest in 1990 with the Administrator of the Cape Province concerning the discrimination exercised against employees of the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB) who were not prepared to work on Sundays as a matter of conscience.⁵¹ Contemporary South African Baptists will need to affirm their identity as those for whom religious liberty is not merely a belief handed down through history, but a conviction that impinges upon the totality of life. This distinctive belief will have to come to terms with religious and cultural pluralism.

Yet another critical issue for Baptists (as for all Christians) is that of the 'secular state'. This term generally seems to suggest that, like in the North American context, no one

51. BU Handbook, 1990-1, p. 107.

religious body will have pre-eminence.⁵² This may well be the aim, but South African Baptists have a concern that the term 'secular' is understood properly, and that 'secular' does not become 'secularised'.⁵³ In the South African setting interest in this perspective is, perhaps, a reaction to the dominance of Christianity in the past. Baptists, as well as other believers, would not want an amoral society to develop due to reactionary attitudes to religious abuses of the past. In a pluralistic society there is the question of fairness and equality before the Law. Gordon Miller points out that Christianity emerged in a pluralistic setting, and therefore modern Christians need not be fearful.⁵⁴ Reading the Anglican responses to the question, sensitivity to abuses of the past and an awareness of the multiplicity of religions have been considered. Indeed, Courtney Sampson has stated that a "secular society is clearly the answer in a society which reflects a multiplicity of religions", since "Christian values enshrined in a Constitution is no guarantee that those values will be reflected in a country where many people are not Christian".⁵⁵ The current South African Minister of Water Affairs, Kader Asmal, assured a group of interested Christians that not only is religious freedom guaranteed in the

52. See for instance Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Pastoral Letter (8 June, 1995) and the July Good Hope, for his definitions.

53. A.H. Jeffree James, 'Baptists and the Secular State'. Unpublished paper, 1995

54. See G.G. Miller, 'Christianity in a Pluralistic South Africa - An Evangelical Perspective'. Scriptura 47, 1993, p. 22.

55. C. Sampson, 'Religion and State'. Comments given to Bishop Ndungane in preparation for the latter's submission. 23 May, 1995. Revd Sampson is an Anglican priest, Chaplain to the University of the Western Cape, Bellville, and acting Provincial Executive Officer of the CPSA.

Constitution, but that the idea of a 'secular state' is a misnomer!⁵⁶ For Asmal a nation that upholds the rights of humanity is a 'spiritual state'. Hence for him 'secular' is a negative concept, whereas 'spiritual' is positive and all-embracing. Supporting Asmal's view is Anglican Bishop Njongonkulu Ndungane when he argues for an African World View perspective on this matter.⁵⁷ The Black African view includes (1) God is regarded as the Supreme being and the source of all life. (2) All life is religious. There is no distinction between the secular and the religious, the spiritual and the material. Those who are entrusted with the administration of Public Affairs are understood as stewards of the Supreme Being, and as such are accountable to him and also to those they are called to serve. (3) The concept of "Ubuntu", which incorporates the community aspect of humanity. However we understand this notion of a 'secular state', South African Baptists could do well by considering the cohesiveness of humanity that Ndungane suggests.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Having briefly introduced the theme we now turn to a critical interpretation of the fifth clause of the BUSA Statement on Baptist Principles dealing with religious liberty. But how do South African Baptists understand religious liberty? This fifth clause states that:

no individual should be coerced either by the State or by any secular, ecclesiastical or religious group in matters of

56. Statement made in answer to this writer's question at a meeting at St Luke's Church, Diep River, Thursday June 1, 1995.

57. Rt Rev N.W. Ndungane, 'Submission to the Constitutional Assembly National Sector Public Hearings on Religion'. 26 May, 1995, p. 1-2.

faith. The right of private conscience is to be respected. For each believer this means the right to interpret the Scriptures responsibly and to act in the light of his conscience.⁵⁸

Baptist history reveals that early Baptists paid a high price for their convictions about religious liberty.⁵⁹ This indicates an understanding of Christian faith and discipleship which was not merely personal but social, and therefore instructive for contemporary Baptist thought. As Brian Haymes has noted in his observations on the current Baptist situation in Britain: "it is in the world that our discipleship has to be worked out, not just within the religious sphere."⁶⁰ For many South African Baptists, however, a pietistic withdrawal from the world has been their way of expressing this liberty, but this is clearly not the only way Baptists have dealt with this matter.

The Southern Baptist theologian Eric Rust defines religious liberty as

a term denoting the right of every man to worship God as his conscience dictates. It means equality before the law, not only of all forms of the Christian faith, but also of other religions.⁶¹

Baptists in South Africa seem to have accepted this definition, since up until recent times their Theological Colleges have used Hobbs' book as a text for their study course on Baptist Principles. Hobbs maintains that humanity is also to be free to

58. BU Handbook 1993-4, p. 226.

59. See the bibliography under footnote 2, and the relevant sections of J.E. Tull, Shapers of Baptist Thought. Mercer University Press: Macon, Ga. 1984, and B. Haymes, A Question of Identity.

60. Haymes, A Question of Identity, p. 24.

61. Quoted in Hobbs, Baptist Faith and Message, p. 141.

be unbelieving and non-worshipping if that be the desire, and that such wishes are to be equally protected by law. For Hobbs religious liberty is rooted in "the very nature of both God and man created in God's likeness", as well as in the "lordship of Christ".⁶² Reference to Brian Haymes's use of the phrase "the Crown Rights of the Redeemer" has already been made.⁶³ This term, maintains Haymes, "is a much more vivid and alive way of describing ... the absolute authority of Jesus Christ". "Lordship", "crown rights", and "authority" in this context are synonymous.

In his essay, Haymes uses "loyalty" and "commitment" interchangeably. Thus, Haymes can assert that it "was out of loyalty to the absolute authority of Christ that the tradition of dissent began",⁶⁴ and "commitment to Christ will always lead the church into social, political, and economic dissent." In fact, Haymes is unequivocal in his conviction that a fundamental "feature of Baptist identity (is) ... that the Crown Right of the Redeemer has social, political, moral, and economic consequences".⁶⁵ Such consequences, their recognition, and their living out stemmed from the conviction of the rightness of dissent. The early Baptists, maintains Haymes, "dissented from all suggestions that the state should decide the form of the church's belief and worship. They dissented from all government attempts at uniformity".⁶⁶ This belief and its corresponding

62. *ibid.*

63. See footnote 31 above.

64. Haymes, A Question of Identity, p. 20.

65. *ibid.*, p. 25.

66. *ibid.*, p. 20.

action did not come from a sense of fairness or tolerance or conviction as to human rights; it was based squarely on the sense of God's gift to humanity.⁶⁷ South African Baptist Victor Brandt makes an important distinction when he states that

the principle of freedom of religion is quite a different matter from the question of the freedom of the will. The issue at stake is not whether a person is naturally able to choose what pleases God, but whether a person has the prerogative to hold and practice religious convictions according to his convictions. It is not whether man can choose what is right - freedom of will, but whether man has a right to choose - freedom of conscience.⁶⁸

Brandt does go on to assert two other points: religious liberty is not a call for freedom in general, neither is it absolute or unlimited freedom.⁶⁹ Thus, the discussion is about religious liberty, not the freedom of the will. However, Baptists and other commentators observe that some other freedoms are rooted in this foundation.

When we consider the Statement on Baptist Principles, we note firstly that "coercion in matters of faith" is prohibited. This means that neither the state, nor the church, nor any group or individual has the right to forcibly constrain someone to obedience in matters of religion. Coercion is a form of persecution.

James E. Tull maintains that Roger Williams was "discerning enough to see the profound hypocrisy which lay behind the practice of persecution".⁷⁰ This echoes Helwys' assertion,

67. *ibid*, p. 21 and Hobbs, Baptist Faith and Message, p.141.

68. Brandt, Notes, 1988b, p. 51.

69. *ibid*, p. 51-2.

70. Tull, Shapers of Baptist Thought, p. 48.

says Brackney, that "persecution breeds hypocrisy and hypocrisy often breeds violence and plots against the king; further, as king and Parliament would not themselves be forced by the pope, so they ought to avoid forcing the consciences of others".⁷¹ Both the BUSA Statement, and Baptist commentators generally, are careful to limit their restriction on coercion to "matters of faith".

At the same time religious liberty should be upheld by law, entrenched in the Constitution. Stanley J. Grenz is clear that religious liberty must be protected by law "as far as one's actions do not cause injury to another".⁷² However, debate needs to be excised over just what is meant by "injury", for history is replete with examples of physical uprising to ensure religious freedom. Even in the twentieth century, the struggle for liberation in the 'third world' countries contains a religious struggle from Western European ecclesial domination. The religious foundation of this struggle is sometimes disregarded, with the accusations that religion is used to gain economic and political power.

The second feature of interest to us in this clause is contained in the phrase "the right of private conscience is to be respected." Over against the requirements by many churches that believers hold to a detailed confession or creed, Baptists have argued that no one confession or creed can fully summarize Scripture's teaching. Southern Baptist Glenn Hinson, a church historian, goes even further by asserting that "Free churches object to all confessions on the grounds that faith must be

71. Brackney, The Baptists, p. 89.

72. Grenz, The Baptist Congregation, p. 89.

voluntary".⁷³ To bind one's own conscience, voluntarily, to a particular summary of faith is one thing. To demand the same for all believers is another.

Concerning conscience, Brandt has made an interesting and helpful contribution. He draws attention to the fact that the New Testament places considerable emphasis on conscience, using syneidesis some thirty times. Brandt asserts that the apostle Paul seemed to make conscience a rule of conduct, a subjective indication of God's will. However, conscience is not infallible, but marred by sin. Conscience can be damaged, and it can be renewed. Renewal, however, comes from teaching not coercion.⁷⁴

Another helpful, and in the context of our theme, a more pertinent perspective on conscience, is made by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his discussion on ethics. "Conscience," he says, "is the sign of man's disunion with himself."⁷⁵ The reason for this is the fact that, according to Bonhoeffer, conscience has two parts: what is permitted and what is forbidden. That which is permitted is synonymous with good. It is, however, the forbidden that conscience responds to, reminding one of the disunion. In other words, conscience comes into play especially when that which is contrary to its understanding of what is good dominates life. Hence Bonhoeffer states that conscience "reacts only to certain definite actions ... forbidden actions"⁷⁶ If conscience is disregarded, Bonhoeffer claims, there will, of

73. E.G.Hinson, 'Historical Perspectives on Christology', in Review and Expositor, 88, 1991, p. 331.

74. Brandt, Notes, 1988b, p. 53-4.

75. D. Bonhoeffer, Ethics. Collier/Macmillan: New York. 1986 (1955), p. 24.

76. *ibid.*

necessity, "entail the destruction of one's own being, not even a purposeful surrender of it"⁷⁷ Notwithstanding Baptists' belief that they have upheld the flame of religious liberty and a biblical relation between the church and the state over the years, the socio-political conscience of Baptists is well-nigh destroyed by BUSA's disregard of the forbidden; the forbidden being injustice.

There must also be "responsible interpretation", which negates idiosyncratic interpretation. The views of known and respected Christian theologians should be considered before an interpretation is forwarded. The principle, as discussed here in the context of the BUSA, is not designed to generate individualistic doctrines, which contradict the Christian faith as embodied in Scripture. It is asserting that the believer has a responsibility to recognise the corporate character of doctrinal formulations. This suggests an ecumenical understanding of 'corporate', not simply that of the Baptist family. Hence, in seeking to understand the role of the church in the socio-political struggle, Baptists should consider the views of the ecumenical community; the Kairos, Damascus, and EWISA documents, for instance.⁷⁸ This they have not done, save to criticize and reject them, just as they did the Message in 1968.

77. *ibid*, p. 242.

78. The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church. ICT / Skotaville: Braamfontein, 1987; The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion. ICT / Skotaville: Braamfontein, 1989; Evangelical Witness in South Africa (Evangelicals Critique their own Theology and Practice). Concerned Evangelicals: Dobsonville, 1986. See also the critique given of the Kairos Document by SA Baptists in unpublished papers and in the SA Baptist magazine referred to in footnote 91 below.

Finally, the believer is "to act in the light of conscience". Freedom is not a licence to wallow in selfish indulgences, which brings disrepute to the name of Christ and the church. In certain circumstances the state may well have the right to intervene (for example, investigating alleged fraud) and apply the law to what may be criminal activities. But this can only be done if there is an acknowledged and shared code of morality in the community. Here again the ecumenical testimony to the church's moral role in society needs to be heeded by the BUSA. By claiming this aspect of the clause, the BUSA effectively withdrew from participation in conscientising its membership to the injustices of the nation. It acted in accordance with its conscience, but exacerbated its disunion as a Christian community.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE BAPTIST PRINCIPLE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Henry Cook asserts that "the only secure foundation for liberty is the New Testament; because the New Testament alone provides us with that view of man which makes the true conception of liberty possible."⁷⁹ He then supports his viewpoint by appealing to both creation and redemption. He states that

Man is a being of infinite worth, with rights of personality conferred upon him by God. He is not a mere thing, not a pawn in the politician's game, not a cog in the industrial machine, not a cipher in the omni-competent state; he is a man, God-created and God-redeemed, and as such his essential personality must be respected.⁸⁰

79. Cook, What Baptists Stand For, p. 167.

80. *ibid*, p. 168.

While agreeing that humanity is created by God, South African Baptists do not believe that humankind is automatically redeemed, as Cook seems to suggest. If, on the other hand, Cook is speaking of potential redemption, that humanity can be redeemed, and that God must do the redeeming, then there would be agreement.

Humanity's "infinite worth" is picked up again as Cook applies this to the broader spectrum of life. Cook affirms that the "sacrifice of the cross abundantly proves" humanity's worth to God. He then states that "no one who looks at him (man) from that point of view can fail to give him his rightful place, religiously, politically, economically, or socially".⁸¹ From this basis Cook moves on to show how, in his opinion, Christ persuades people. For Cook, humanity is "free to choose his destiny". Christ assumed this, Cook maintains. Further, "man in order to be man in the truest sense must choose the freedom which is available only in association with God".⁸²

The Baptist Faith and Message document includes a statement somewhat akin to Cook's position. It says that "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and he has left it free."⁸³ Both these views presuppose a spiritual state and an ability to make spiritual choices. There seems to be a fusion of ideas here - the right of religious belief and association, and the ability to make fundamental spiritual choices. It should be recognized, however, that both Cook and Hobbs ascribe to the concept of "soul

81. *ibid*, p. 169.

82. *ibid*, p. 171.

83. Hobbs, Baptist Faith and Message, p. 139.

competency", whereby the individual soul has the ability to deal directly with God.

A South African Baptist, Ray Holmes, has attempted to give a biblical basis for religious liberty. In some brief notes⁸⁴ on the subject, Holmes begins with creation. Humanity is a reflection of God's image (Gen 1:27). Notwithstanding the fall into sin, and the subsequent bondage of the will, Baptists have consistently believed that creation gives humanity a worth and dignity in God's sight that even sin cannot eradicate. Holmes then moves to Christian morality, a set of absolutes based on the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5), and their New Testament interpretation. These absolutes remain the basis for Christian morality, in both personal and corporate spheres. The Commandments create a framework for liberty. Because believers are free, they obey God and love their fellow humans. Believers do not become immoral because they are free. As mentioned earlier by Brandt,⁸⁵ freedom or liberty is never absolute or unlimited; nor in this context must we mix freedom of will with that of conscience.

Next, Holmes maintains that obedience to Scripture, either clear text or understood principle, gives substance to freedom. Holmes quotes Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-32. In both these passages, Peter claims that he proclaims the "good news" about Jesus in obedience to God, and since he was before the Sanhedrin we understand this as a reference to Yahweh. What is inferred from this is that since God commissioned the preaching of Christ,

84. R. Holmes, 'Notes on Baptist Principles: Religious Liberty'. Baptist Theological College: Cape Town. 1986a.

85. Brandt, Notes, 1988b, p. 51.

believers are to obey, and authorities are to be tolerant, even encouraging this preaching. This also has a bearing on church/state relations. These Scriptures suggest that the early disciples refused to allow the state to deny their liberty of Christian conviction as to belief and proclamation. The persecution that came upon the church did not stop the preaching of Christ; it made it more intense.

The conscious reality of Christ's Lordship is another factor. "Christ sets us free to love and serve him".⁸⁶ Christ's Lordship is seen in his sovereign act of freeing humans from the bondage of their sin, enabling them to love and then follow him in service. The following Scripture passages are used to support this position: John's Gospel 8:36, Romans 8:1-11, and Galatians 5:1. Jesus makes people free; believers are free from condemnation. Freedom from sin has a social implication. The apostle Paul appealed to the Lordship of Christ in Philemon's life when he (Paul) sent Onesimus back. Onesimus was to be treated no longer as a slave, but as a brother. The implications of that in the economic structure of the day was significant. If Christ frees individuals from sin, and those 'freedmen' are to love one another as Christ loved, then it stands to reason that what one desires for oneself should be equally desired for others.

Drawing another argument from the nature of the church, Henry Cook quotes Troeltsch, as saying that the religious community (in contrast to the religious institution) "... has

86. Holmes, Notes, 1986a, p. 2.

evolved its social ideal purely from the Gospel and from the law of Christ".⁸⁷

The implication for Baptist identity is clear: Baptists are to re-evaluate their claim to be guardians of the religious liberty of the church and the individual believer. South African Baptists have not really been free.⁸⁸ And, while they have advocated freedom for other faiths, it has been a 'paper' freedom, for Baptists have upheld the dominance of the Christian belief system. Added to this is the necessity to recognise that religious liberty impacts upon other societal liberties, *viz*: economic, political, social and cultural freedoms.⁸⁹ These freedoms, British Baptist David Russell believes, constitute true liberty. Recognition of these freedoms would help South African Baptists, in particular, to recognise the validity of liberation theology. This is not a far-fetched idea since liberty is a component in the quest for wholeness. Wholeness includes the desire to break the chains of economic, political, cultural, religious, and social oppression. South African Baptists

87. Cook, What Baptists Stand For, p. 189. Note should be made here of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's assertion that "Weber's and Troeltsch's distinction between Church and Sect is historically and sociologically untenable". Sanctorum Communio (Collins: London, 1963) p. 190.

88. For instance, neither Dr A.J. Barnard, Principal of the Baptist Theological College, Johannesburg, from 1952-4, whose contract was terminated because he could not subscribe to a fundamentalist view of Scripture, nor Dr John Saunders, lecturer at the Baptist Theological College, Cape Town during 1984 and whose contract was terminated due to his apparent political views which were at variance with the BUSA leadership of the time, were free to be different. The freedom they exercised in theology and politics made them different, and that made them unacceptable to the BUSA.

89. See the pamphlets by D. Russell, Baptists and Liberty. BUGBI: London, no date nor pagination. S.L.Hastey, Baptists and Religious Liberty. Historical Commission of the SBC: Nashville. 1979, no pagination.

generally are critical of liberation theology. Few, however, have responded to it except for a number of articles discussing the Kairos Document, published in 1985, a South African theological-political exposition of the concerns of the day.

Notwithstanding Louise Kretzschmar's observation⁹⁰ that the BUSA's reaction to 'Kairos' indicates it being "out of step" theologically, most of the commentators noted aspects they could identify with, especially the issues of injustice, the socio-political implications of the gospel, and the point that God is concerned with the poor and oppressed.⁹¹ Kretzschmar is correct, however, in saying that ultimately 'Kairos' was "rejected"⁹² by White South African Baptists. Some Black Baptists in the Baptist Convention of South Africa, whilst not using the usual nomenclature of liberation theology, apart from 'empowerment', have expressed their own concerns and interest in that theology.⁹³

90. L. Kretzschmar, 'A Theology of Dominance - An Alternative History of the South African Baptist Union', in The Barkly West National Awareness Workshop, (eds) D.Hoffmeister and B.J.Gurney. Baptist Convention of SA: Johannesburg. 1990, p. 31.

91. See the following articles on the 'Kairos' document: E. André, 'A Baptist Response to the Kairos Document'. Unpublished paper, Cape Town, 1987; P.A. Holness, 'Kairos: God's Kingdom or Man's?'. The SA Baptist, September, October, November, 1986; R.G. Mathie, 'A Baptist Response to the Kairos Document'. Unpublished paper, Johannesburg, 1987.

92. Kretzschmar, 'Theology of Dominance', p. 31.

93. See the relevant chapters by Hoffmeister, Madolo, Mhlope, and Mkwai, in D.Hoffmeister and B.J.Gurney (eds), The Barkly West National Awareness Workshop. Baptist Convention of SA: Johannesburg. 1990.

SUMMARY

In this section we have presented a case for discipleship as "freedom". We have suggested that discipleship, to be true to the Baptist heritage and to the biblical intent, must seek not only freedom of religion but also the freedom to be prophetic. Baptists recognise that freedom of religion is not a catch-all for antinomianism. Human society can never have absolute freedom in all areas of life. At base level Baptists maintain that sin is the root of all limitations of freedom. Sin causes humanity to abuse its freedom, and therefore a divine mandate has to be implemented.

Drawing from both Anabaptism and the English Baptist tradition we point out that the BUSA needs to retrieve its heritage of freedom. The freedom these early Baptists sought after became the foundation for modern democracy and other civil liberties. The prophetic character of this Baptist movement has been singularly absent from the BUSA's witness to the state. The current new dispensation in South Africa affords the BUSA opportunities to bear significant witness to these cherished freedoms, especially in the context of religious pluralism and the secularisation of the state.

Liberty impinges upon the conscience. Reflecting on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's contribution to the study of the place of conscience, we indicate our support for his view that moral destruction ensues if conscience is disregarded. The BUSA lost integrity due to its inadequate response to injustice and racial discrimination in South Africa. Integrity can be regained, however, by participation with the ecumenical community in the quest for social justice and reconstruction.

Freedom has, in more recent times, been discussed as social liberation with the corollary liberation theology. South African Baptists have, by and large, rejected liberation theology essentially because it is deemed to be politically and economically too close to socialism and communism.⁹⁴ Baptists in South Africa need to recognise that the reasons for dismissing liberation theology have more to do with fundamentalist hermeneutics and an inherently westernised and conservative Christian view of society than due to a well reasoned critique of that theology.⁹⁵

THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

The principle of religious liberty is the foundation of the principle of separation of church and state. Victor Brandt's comment is helpful:

The teaching of the separation of Church and State grows out of a conviction of the necessity for the Church to be free to obey her Lord. ... Baptists have asserted that religious liberty was hindered by the activity of civil government in religious affairs.⁹⁶

However, lest we think this means absolute separation of the two entities, H. Wheeler Robinson reminds us that "From the beginning of their history Baptists have been in the forefront of the

94. See the discussions by various South African Baptists in both the BUSA and the BCSA in the texts noted above in footnotes 90 and 91 above.

95. An extended discussion on liberation theology is beyond the immediate parameter of this chapter. A helpful and stimulating book related to liberation theology and the Anabaptist tradition is D.S. Schipani (ed), Freedom and Discipleship: Liberation Theology in an Anabaptist Perspective (Orbis: Maryknoll, 1989).

96. Brandt, Notes, 1988a, p. 34.

battle for political and religious liberty"⁹⁷ Most South African Baptists have tended to overlook this in their interpretation of the relationship between Church and State, to their detriment.

Yet, as Robert McAfee Brown asserts "religious liberty is more a gift of the secular tradition than of the religious one, and this is a salutary warning against claiming too much for one's own tradition".⁹⁸ Franklin Littell maintains that the separation of Church and State "by itself provides no guarantee whatever of effective religious liberty".⁹⁹ In support of his statement, Littell gives illustrations from Nazi Germany and Communist East Germany, where, he says, "separation of church and state has been followed by the establishment of a new ideological state-church, coercive and neo-sacral".¹⁰⁰ Thus it is imperative to base arguments for any form of separation or relationship of church and state squarely on an adequate philosophical and biblical foundation of religious liberty, as we have tried to do in the earlier section of this chapter.

The concept of 'separation of church and state' has always been an emotive issue within Baptist thought. In the American context, H.P. Fairfield, commenting on Article 1 of the U.S. Bill of Rights, says that the Law "has been interpreted to

97. H. Wheeler Robinson, The Life and Faith of the Baptists. Methuen:London. 1927, p. 148.

98. R.M. Brown, 'The Protestant Tradition of Religious Liberty', in Journal of Ecumenical Studies 14:4, Fall, 1977, p. 21. Brown's observation is based, in part, on Rabbi Gordis' remarks.

99. F.H. Littell, 'Foundations and Traditions of Religious Liberty', in Journal of Ecumenical Studies 14:4, Fall, 1977, p. 8 (576).

100. *ibid*, p. 9 (577).

mean the complete separation of church and state".¹⁰¹ He goes on to draw attention to the problems this has created, especially with regard to Roman Catholicism, which views "the authority of the Church as superior to that of the State". This call for 'complete' separation is a peculiarly North American phenomenon, rooted in inbred anti-Catholic sentiment.

Notwithstanding this 'complete separation' entrenched in the Bill of Rights, and established in some Baptist Statements of Belief, many Baptists in the USA practice something quite different. An illustration of this is seen in the Moral Majority movement, founded by Jerry Falwell, a Baptist. Falwell's group has a large following among Independent and Southern Baptist churches. Issues like prayer in public schools, abortion, education, defence, free marketing, and general political involvement are featured on the Moral Majority agenda.¹⁰² In Moral Majority, Baptists team up with groups from a variety of interests. B.J. Leonard regards these sentiments as the 'New Religious / Political Right'.¹⁰³ These sentiments and the people who espouse them ignore the fact, says Leonard, that America is a pluralistic society.¹⁰⁴ The danger, inferred not stated, is a return to civil religion, albeit a Protestant Christian one. Leonard asserts that "attempts at Christianizing the Republic may serve to undermine the church's prophetic calling to address

101. H.P. Fairfield, The Anatomy of Freedom. The Philosophical Library: New York. 1957, p. 66.

102. E.G. Hinson, 'Religion's Tryst with Politics', in Review and Expositor 83:2, Spring, 1986, p. 210.

103. Bill J. Leonard, 'Southern Baptists and the Separation of Church and State', in Review and Expositor 83:2, Spring, 1986, p. 201.

104. *ibid*, p. 205.

government policy".¹⁰⁵ If South Africa's recent history is anything to go by, Leonard's fears are well founded.

According to E.F. André,¹⁰⁶ Baptists in South Africa fall into three main categories with respect to politics: quietists (24%), moderates (57%), and activists (19%). The quietists regard the Union as too involved in socio-political issues. The activists see the Union as too conservative and isolationist. The moderates, André maintains, "did not question the church's socio-political responsibility, but were cautious about the degree of involvement and were reluctant to come into conflict with the state."¹⁰⁷ Overall, André concludes, "The Union may therefore be expected to continue with its low-key approach" to socio-political concerns.¹⁰⁸ Very little has changed since 1984, when André wrote this.

The BUSA, generally, does regard social and political issues as important, but secondary to individual faith and the quest for personal salvation and assurance. Salvation and its ethical implications in society at large are distinct entities. As J.N. Jonsson puts it:

The gospel was viewed from the stance of triumphalism, which means that the socio-political issues could be screened from a distance, not necessitating any in praxis perspectives. The gospel was preached in personalized allegory and spirituality, with ethical issues belonging to the worldliness of White parochialism.¹⁰⁹

105. *ibid.*

106. André, 'Baptist View of the State', p. 98-101.

107. *ibid*, p. 99.

108. *ibid*, p. 101.

109. J.N. Jonsson, 'Baptists in Socio-political Life in South Africa: Historical and Theological Reflections Covering the Past Thirty Years', in American Baptist Quarterly 3, 1985, p. 246.

Hence, André maintains that this "somewhat 'docetic' approach leads to quietism, but not to total withdrawal and non-participation".¹¹⁰ Participation, but severely limited. The BUSA has contributed to the expressions of concern, even to the opposition of discriminatory legislation. But contribution is not really participation in the redemptive activity of 'liberating the captives'. André confesses the BUSA's "sin ... of omission".¹¹¹ He acknowledges the "disproportionate emphasis upon matters such as temperance, censorship and Sunday observance," and admits that even when criticism of discrimination or injustice was made, there was "little or no follow through other than the submission of the relevant resolution to the relevant authority".¹¹²

The sixth clause of the Baptist Union's Statement on Baptist Principles maintains that Baptists in South Africa believe in

The principle of separation of church and state, in that, in the providence of God, the two differ in their respective natures and functions. The Church is not to be identified with the State nor is it, in its faith or practice, to be directed or controlled by the State. The State is responsible for administering justice, ensuring an orderly community, and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The Church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and care for all mankind.¹¹³

Some respondents believe this call for a complete separation of church and state in the South African context was done with

110. André, 'Baptist View of the State', p. 103.

111. *ibid*, p. 104.

112. *ibid*, p. 105.

113. BU Handbook 1987-88, p. 179.

little consideration of the implications. David Walker's comments on this clause are worth noting. He maintains that "a strong emphasis on separation is inappropriate".¹¹⁴ At the same time Walker allows "that a kind of independence must of necessity exist in church-state relations".¹¹⁵ In times when the state poses a threat to the church's life, a strong statement is needed. However, Walker maintains, in the South African context this is not the case. Walker's concern lies in two areas:

1. The idea of the Christian State with its particular South African expression of Christian Nationalism As Baptists I believe we must reject this idea for two reasons: Firstly it involves a christianizing of the state which denies their mutual independence. Secondly, because it violates the principle of religious liberty. ...

2. The idea of two separate spheres in which Church and State operate. This suggests that church and state exist side by side and each must mind its own business.¹¹⁶

The central focus of Walker's concern is that the Principle "easily creates the impression that the separateness of church and state is a separateness of purpose and concern which means that our only real mission is the salvation of 'souls'. Any other activity only has meaning as it contributes to this".¹¹⁷ Walker reports that the letter he received from the BUSA's General Secretary, Revd Trevor Swart, was "a general, non-committal reply ... to the effect that the Executive were aware

114. D. Walker, 'Response to the Statement on Baptist Principles, with special reference to point six: the Principle of Separation of Church and State'. Unpublished document submitted to the Executive of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa on 15 July, 1987, p. 1.

115. *ibid.*

116. *ibid.*

117. *ibid*, p. 3.

of the points ... raised, and (that) they had been considered".¹¹⁸

Interestingly Southern Baptist historian Glenn Hinson points out that the Black churches in America "have never separated church and society or religion and politics in the way white churches have".¹¹⁹ Further, Hinson says that "in Black churches one may find a variety of attitudes towards political involvement, but most churches support considerable direct political activity from local to national level".¹²⁰ Hinson refers to Martin Luther King, Jnr and Jesse Jackson as examples, both of whom are Baptists. To reflect his convictions on this matter, David Walker suggests the following alternate wording of clause six.

The principle of mutual independence between church and state, in which it is seen that the church is not to be identified with the state, nor is it to be directed or controlled by the state. Church and state together serve God's purpose in the world, though their roles are different. The state is responsible for administering justice, ensuring an orderly community, and safe - guarding the welfare of its citizens. The church is responsible for preaching the gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and care for all humankind. This role division does not imply a separation of concern or an absence of mutual responsibility, particularly the responsibility for the church of witnessing to God's will for society.¹²¹

118. Personal correspondence from D. Walker to J. Harris, June 21, 1991.

119. Hinson, 'Religion's Tryst', p. 213.

120. *ibid*, p. 214.

121. Walker, 'Response to the Statement on Baptist Principles', p. 3.

Walker's suggestions were not utilised by the Union's Executive. The original clause of Statement was retained, and has not been changed since.

A CRITICAL INTERPRETATION OF SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

The BUSA places the relationship of church and state in 'the providence' of God. But what precisely does this mean? Nigel M. de S. Cameron maintains that providence

is the beneficent outworking of God's sovereignty whereby all events are directed and disposed to bring about those purposes of glory and good for which the universe was made. These events include the actions of free agents, which while remaining free, personal, and responsible are also the intended actions of those agents. Providence thus encompasses both natural and personal events, setting them alike within the purposes of God.¹²²

T.H.L.Parker is dissatisfied with a definition of providence without clear reference to Christ. Thus he asserts that providence has at least three aspects, a summary of each is as follows:

Providence is God's gracious outworking of his purpose in Christ which issues in his dealings with man. ...[W]e are saying that from the beginning God has ordered the course of events towards Jesus Christ and his incarnation.

God's providence served also the purpose of bearing witness to God among the heathen. ...The purpose of this witness of providence was simply to render man inexcusable for not knowing God.

The God who gives man life also preserves him while he is on the earth. ...The disciples are reminded ... of their creaturely relationship to God, and are freed from all anxiety about their earthly future.¹²³

122. N. M de S. Cameron, 'Providence', in New Dictionary of Theology. IVP: Leicester. 1988, p. 541.

123. T.H.L. Parker, 'Providence', in Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids. 1984, p. 890-1.

If we apply this to the Principle, we note that not only is civil government part of God's gracious provision for an ordered society, but it also has redemptive characteristics. Hence, if divine providence is the source of government, any thought of a radical separation becomes fallacious. Frank Stagg suggests that if the radical view of separation is taken to its logical conclusion, then "the church could not even pray for the state, to say nothing of judging it", nor could the state grant "protection to the church, not even protection for freedom of worship".¹²⁴

In seeking to understand the relationship between the church and the state, we must also define the concepts 'church' and 'state' in this connection. We have already studied the Baptist view of the church in detail in chapter two. By way of reminder, the church is that body of committed Christian believers in human community visible in various parts of the world. The definition can legitimately include believers from the past ages, now dwelling in the presence of God. But, for our purposes here, we will limit our definition to that of human community currently existing. The state, on the other hand, is the governing body of a community, with such power and authority to preserve good and to restrain evil. The above definition is drawn from, among others, Helmut Thielicke, who goes on to say that

the State is ordained by God as a necessary remedy for corrupt nature. ... The State contains an element of both judgment and grace. It involves judgment to the degree that, in its restraint of evil, it calls fallen man in question. It is an order of grace to the degree that God's gracious preservation

124. F. Stagg, New Testament Theology. Broadman Press: Nashville. 1962, p. 304.

is in many ways displayed in it. ... The State is thus a sign of God's goodness. ... It follows that the State is an emergency order of the fallen world, not an order of creation.¹²⁵

A perspective more in keeping with an historical Baptist approach to the state is that of John Yoder's. He maintains that

The state is not instituted, i.e., established, but rather accepted in its empirical reality, as something that God can overrule towards His ends. Paul therefore does not mean that in the divine acceptance of the state there is implied any ratification of its moral standards or political purposes, or any theory of the proper state.¹²⁶

Notwithstanding the problems of complete separation, Baptists have tried to define their views so as to know when and why they may speak to the state, and when and why the state may speak to them. It is the fundamental nature of the two entities which becomes the starting point for understanding. The church is a spiritual organism whose membership is made up of all who freely confess Jesus as Lord, and these only. The state, conversely, is comprehensive, including all people irrespective of religious faith or lack thereof. The state should recognize all religions.¹²⁷

As to the essential functions of church and state, Holmes says they are equally separate, but only as to party politics or

125. H. Thieliicke, Theological Ethics, Volume 2: Politics. Fortress Press: Philadelphia. 1969, p. 143-4. This text has been used for a number of years in the Theological Colleges within the BUSA.

126. J. H. Yoder, The Christian Witness to the State. The Institute of Mennonite Studies, Faith and Life Press: Newton, Kansas. 1964, p. 75, his emphasis.

127. R. Holmes, 'Notes on Baptist Principles: Separation of Church and State'. Baptist Theological College, Cape Town. 1986, p. 1.

state functions. He refers also to economic benefits from the state to the church, but unlike the Southern Baptists in America who reject state funding for Christian activities, Holmes is uncommitted, leaving the question unanswered. Where the State is concerned, Holmes asserts that it must not interfere in the church's responsibilities, nor seek authority in or over the church, nor use the church for political ends, nor favour one religion over another.¹²⁸

These basic characteristics of separation are not wrong, nor conflict-creating in themselves. There is, however, no reference, in Holmes' exposition, to the overlapping or legitimate interaction between the two entities. But it is this very lack of reference to legitimate interaction that seems to be the cause of so much confusion. The delineation of what is not acceptable and the omission of what is acceptable has caused difficulties in many Baptist minds. As Ellis André has said, this radical separation has lead "either to pietistic withdrawal or to an ineffective witness for fear of over involvement in politics".¹²⁹ In fact, both positions are evident in South African Baptist circles. It is because of of such a critical separation with its ineffective witness and withdrawal that we must again turn to the 'Kairos' document, for it shows a more biblical response to the state.

Rejecting "state theolgy" and giving a serious critique of "church theology", Kairos advocates "prophetic theology". This means a theology that "concentrates on those aspects of the Word of God that have an immediate bearing upon the critical situation

128. *ibid.*

129. André, 'Baptist View of the State', p. 1.

in which we find ourselves."¹³⁰ This demands "a reading of the signs of the times", i.e. becoming aware of the issues the gospel speak into. Such a theology is "a call to action", which includes repentance and change. Prophetic theology is "confrontational" because it faces up to evil, especially social injustice and oppression. At the same time Kairos claims to be pastoral, hopeful, and spiritual,¹³¹ but not triumphalist in the fundamentalist fashion. Justice, peace and liberation of society are the goals aimed for, which includes the spiritual foundations for such social values. Kairos clearly asserts that the state is the objective of the church's prophetic witness. At the same time Kairos in no way rejects the concept of state per se; rather, given the particular South African setting, it assumes that the state has operated with a religious mindset that is heretical. This mindset and its accompanying abuses can be redeemed by its adhering to the church's biblical witness and by its repentance from oppression and injustices against the poor and disenfranchised (in the South African context this means the Black majority).

The state's task, A.N. Triton reminds us, "is to discourage social evil and to encourage social good." Cross referencing Romans 13 with Acts 16, Triton comments on the apostle Paul's attitude and actions when government violates its biblical mandate. Triton says that Paul "wanted to compel the authorities to recognize and fulfill their God-appointed task." A further comment from Triton is helpful here:

130. The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church.
ICT:Skotaville: Braamfontein. 1986, p. 17.

131. *ibid*, p. 17-18.

What passages like Romans 13 prove is that part of God's providential order for mankind is that he has built into society certain structures and restraints to facilitate and preserve as much good as possible. A State that does not obey its divine mandate should be reformed and not blindly obeyed.¹³²

In his observations on the "dialectic" of Romans 13 and Revelation 13, J.L. Garrett maintains that the two passages

afford distinctive emphases within the New Testament canon: the one of submission, obedience, taxation, respect, honour, and acceptance of the God-ordained and God-serving establishment and the other of the omniscient, Satanic, and persecuting state - now beast or monster - that calls unto itself divine worship and is hostile to Christians, although ultimately subject to the victory of Jesus Christ. Both belong to the New Testament canon: the one to the epistles and the other to apocalyptic. Rather to assume that only one applies to the encounter of modern Christians and the modern state, should not Christians recognize, accept, and seek to implement the dialectical obligations of obedience and of disobedience to which these texts so clearly point?¹³³

Thus Garrett agrees with Triton, maintaining that Christians do not merely acquiesce to the state's dominance (suggested by a superficial reading of Romans 13 with no reference to other relevant passages), but rather evaluate governmental legislation or activity in the light of the fact that Revelation 13 is another reality.

At the same time we need to take heed to John Yoder's reminder that Revelation 13 is "not a discussion of what it is that makes a state an unjust state, but rather of the unfaithfulness of spokesmen of the church who relate to the state in an idolatrous and unfaithful way".¹³⁴ South African Baptists

132. A.N. Triton, Whose World? IVP:Leicester. 1970, p. 47-9.

133. J.L. Garrett, 'The Dialectic of Romans 13:1-7 and Revelation 13: Part Two'. Journal of Church and State 19:1, 1977, p. 20.

134. Yoder, The Christian Witness to the State, p. 76, his emphasis.

have tended to accept Romans 13 uncritically, which has caused them to view any application of Scripture to the political and societal arenas as a violation of the apparent teaching therein. This is evidenced by the BUSA's rejection of the 'Kairos' document, notwithstanding that document's emphasis on hope and moral guidance in the morass of confusing and oft conflicting views on the church's role in society.

Baptists in South Africa view the world in a negative and almost fatalistic way and, due to the dominance of premillenarianism, expect apostacy and rampant evil in the age prior to the return of Christ. Yoder's comments are appropriate here:

We should then better say that Romans 13 and Revelation 13 represent the two dimensions of the life of any state. In any state we can see self-glorification and the combining of religious and political motivations. ... Yet, on the other hand, every state as well is, in the words of Romans 13, "under God", with its justice and its injustices equally integrated within God's universal redemptive plan. No state can be so low on the scale of relative justice that the duty of the Christian is no longer to be subject; no state can rise so high on that scale that Christians are not called to some sort of suffering because of their refusal to agree with its self-glorification and the resultant injustices.¹³⁵

The BUSA Statement seeks to present a concise description of what they regard as a divine mandate. The Statement gives a three-fold description of the state's task. First, to administer justice. This presupposes a particular concept of justice. To do this properly one would need, *inter alia*, a bill of rights, a fair constitution, defined legislation and the rule of law. One would also have to motivate the foundations of such. Second, the state is to ensure orderly community. This requires social

135. *ibid*, p. 77.

planning, adequate housing, crime regulations, law enforcement. Third, the state is to promote its citizens' welfare. This includes social security, adequate education, and sufficient pensions. What the Principle does not say is what these concepts mean, nor how they are to be worked out. In other words, Baptists have not proposed a theology of the state; rather they have simply made a doctrinal statement.

There are Baptists in South Africa who interpret the church's task as that of being the moral guide of the state.¹³⁶ It is a truism to say that the church's message is God's prophetic voice to the whole of society, inclusive of the state. The church is to remind the state constantly that its power is limited, and that it is responsible and accountable to God for its actions. Stagg's position is worth noting. He says

The principle intended by those advocating 'separation of church and state' is a proper one, but the statement of it is quite unsatisfactory. Separation of church and state, taken strictly is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament and contrary to what apparently is intended by those using the term. Actual 'separation of church and state' can only end in one's destroying the other. Proper relationship, not separation, of church and state is what is to be sought, each free to become its true self.¹³⁷

Ultimately, then, the concept of a 'Christian state' is invalid. A state can use Christian ethics and norms (a Christian value system) by which government is guided. When there is a fusing of church and state, invariably the state begins to dictate to the faith and practice of the church.

136. For instance André, 'Baptist View of the State', 1984, and Walker, 'Response to the Statement on Baptist Principles', 1987.

137. Stagg, New Testament Theology, p. 303, his emphasis.

ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FREEDOM

Robert McAfee Brown reminds us that in 1948 the World Council of Churches "established various guidelines for religious liberty", which became the basis for many discussions, leading to the following "clear statement of the theological rationale for religious liberty".¹³⁸ The WCC statement says that

Christians see religious liberty as a consequence of God's creative work, of his redemption of man in Christ, and his calling of men into his service. Accordingly, human attempts by legal enactment or by pressure of social custom to coerce or to eliminate faith are violations of the fundamental ways of God with men. The freedom which God has given in Christ implies a free response to God's love and the responsibility to serve fellow-men at the point of deepest need.¹³⁹

Brown goes on to affirm this statement as a positive rather than a negative formulation; it is a Gospel consequence not a grudging concession. The formulation is universal not partial; religious liberty is for all in all circumstances, rather than being legitimate under certain circumstances. It is a central rather than a peripheral theological concern. Religious liberty demands service not merely proclamation, hence "arrogance, superiority, and condescension are all ruled out" Brown asserts.¹⁴⁰

At the broader level of church and state relations Lukas Vischer maintains that the ecumenical church can "no longer ... regard the state as a pre-established authority to which people owe unquestioning respect. Rather is its authority derived from

138. Robert McAfee Brown, 'The Protestant Tradition of Religious Liberty', in Journal of Ecumenical Studies 14:4, Fall, 1977, p. 22 (590).

139. W.A. Visser't Hooft (ed), New Delhi Report. Association Press: New York. 1962, p. 159. Quoted by Brown in the above essay, p. 22 (590).

140. Brown, 'Protestant Tradition', p. 22-23 (590-1).

the degree to which it represents the community and the will of the community".¹⁴¹ This does not negate the church's view of the state as a divine institution. On the contrary, says Vischer, "it will understand the task set the state by God in history which it can either fulfil or fail to fulfil".¹⁴² If the church is to proclaim and maintain justice in society, "it needs a certain measure of critical freedom in relation to the state. It will use this freedom to try to influence the state to fulfil its task in society".¹⁴³

Baptists in South Africa have to recognize that liberty relates not merely to worship. As the 'Kairos' document maintains, thus giving a distinctly South African support to Vischer's perspectives, there needs to be freedom "to engage prophetically in the struggle for justice and liberation of society and, if need be, to resist unjust laws."¹⁴⁴ To be prophetic the church has to be involved in community, not separate from it. Thus for both John de Gruchy and Dietrich Bonhoeffer the parable of the wheat and the tares illustrates this involvement.¹⁴⁵ If the church is to be both a "gathered community" and a "responsible public institution" it has to be actively engaged in the socio-political as well as the spiritual concerns of the society. One without the other creates a truncated witness, as seen in the BUSA especially.

141. Lukas Vischer (ed), Church and State: Opening a New Ecumenical Discussion. WCC: Geneva. 1978, p. 10.

142. *ibid*, p. 11.

143. *ibid*, p. 12.

144. J.W. de Gruchy, 'Freedom of the Church and the Liberation of Society', in Bonhoeffer's Ethics, p. 173.

145. *ibid*, p. 177-8.

SUMMARY

In this section we have attempted a critical exposition of the BUSA's Principle of Church and State relations. Any relation between church and state has to be founded on a particular freedom, namely, freedom of religion. With this freedom, other freedoms are developed, creating a society that is free.

The South African Baptist Statement on Church and State needs to be revised to recognise and to state explicitly that there cannot be absolute separation between the two institutions. The church must always be the prophetic and moral voice to the state. In other words, a 'gathered' church must also be a 'confessing' church otherwise it petrifies.¹⁴⁶ The church must certainly not be governed by the state, otherwise it has no power to speak to the State on matters pertaining to faith and morality.

CONCLUSION

For Baptists, discipleship means "freedom". This primarily means for Baptists in South Africa freedom to worship without interference and freedom to be obedient to God and conscience. But it also implies freedom not to worship, equally without infringement of law. Following closely on the back of freedom of religion is the relation the church has with the state. Involvement in society has been a time honoured Baptist commitment - certainly for English Baptists. The English Baptist

146. See Keith Clements' analysis of Bonhoeffer on this point, in his 'The Freedom of the Church: Bonhoeffer and the Free Church Tradition'. Bonhoeffer's Ethics: Old Europe and New Frontiers. Eds G. Carter, R. van Eyden, H.D. van Hoogstraten, J. Wiersma. Kok Pharos Publishing House: Kampen. 1991, p. 159.

tradition has always felt strongly about the church being the moral and prophetic voice to the state. South African Baptists have a common history on this matter, but they have not been as consistent in their expression. The English Baptist Keith Clements indicates that in the current British context the Anglicans are the "most significant social teachers and prophets in English Christianity since 1918".¹⁴⁷ Clements asserts that church and state related issues in Britain are dealt with predominantly by Anglican bishops. This is also the case in the South African context.

The ideal is that when the church is free from state authority it can and ought to speak up for truth, justice, and compassion. However, South African Baptists have all too often acquiesced to the demands of the state. The Baptist Union itself continues to struggle with racism and inequity amongst its congregations and ministers. The state's influence (both Colonial and Nationalist) can be seen in both the structures of the Union and its relations with the State. Whilst South African Baptists spoke to the National Party government about discriminatory legislation on occasion, their method was low-key, and "somewhat reticent to make public statements".¹⁴⁸ This rationale was designed to negate any accusation from member churches of the Union that the Executive is 'meddling' in politics. As André says:

Baptists have on occasion taken refuge in a faulty inference drawn from local church autonomy. Some argue that no corporate

147. *ibid*, p. 164.

148. Jonsson, 'Baptists in Socio-political Life', p. 243.

action is appropriate since the Baptist Union cannot speak for the autonomous churches. This is clearly a non sequitur.¹⁴⁹

Further, as Jonsson indicates, there were those who felt that to express "serious misgivings about government policies" was "anti-state and disloyal to South Africa".¹⁵⁰ If some of the letters to the Editor of Baptists Today (the official newspaper of the BUSA) are anything to go by, then there are those who still feel this way.¹⁵¹ There is still considerable reticence to make public statements on socio-political matters.

Until more recent times many white Baptists in South Africa have not regarded discriminatory laws as a violation of the gospel. Ellis André observes that

The Baptist refusal to regard apartheid as incompatible with the gospel was seen most clearly in the Union's reply to the Message (to South Africa). To most Baptists apartheid is a false ideology but they would not describe it as a heresy.¹⁵²

It is probably true to say that many white Baptists in South Africa still do not regard the theological justification of apartheid as a Christian heresy. The BUSA's perspective on the church's relationship to the state is seriously inadequate. This hinders their perception of their identity. Their distinctiveness is no more.

South African Baptists need to be open to the help the ecumenical movement can give them to reverse some of the ravages of the confused view they have of church and state relations.

149. André, 'Baptist View of the State', p. 105.

150. Jonsson, 'Baptist in Socio-political Life', p. 244.

151. See the Appendix to André's thesis.

152. André, 'Baptist View of the State', p. 106-7.

South African Baptists have taken 'separation' so far beyond the original idea that they have become supporters of a state ideology. Racism, that pervasive heresy propagated by the state, has influenced Baptist thinking, structure, and attitudes. Radical changes must be made if true discipleship is to be seen.

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mission from the perspective of Baptist identity understood as discipleship.

Chapters two to five provided a critical exposition of the 1987 Statement of Baptist Principles, produced by the Baptist Union of Southern Africa as a result of some serious dissent from historically held practices within the Union. In chapter two, we presented a critical interpretation of Baptist ecclesiology. An explanation of the Statement was given together with a Biblical rationale for the Baptist view. Using ecclesiologists from the different Baptist traditions and from other Christian confessions, we sought to interact with the BUSA perspective so as to gain greater clarity and appreciation of the views portrayed. We then considered ecumenical aspects because of our conviction that Baptist identity can only be retrieved in an ecumenical context. We found that given their separatist understanding of the church, their hesitancy to use the ecumenical 'marks' to describe the church, and their reticency to be prophetic in the realm of social justice, Baptists in South Africa find it very difficult to participate in the ecumenical movement. And this, notwithstanding the fact that Baptists were founder members of the Christian Council, members of the South African Council of Churches until 1968, and observers of that same Council until 1976.

South African Baptists have to consciously and critically analyse their ecclesiological perspectives from an ecumenical perspective, not with a view to abandoning them, but to deepen and broaden them. In this way Baptists will not only overcome their suspicion of the ecumenical movement and the ecumenical

character of the church, but also deepen their own self-understanding and thus make their unique contribution to the ecumenical church. In the light of this conviction, we provided examples of ecumenical bilateral discussions between the Baptist World Alliance and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and between the American Baptist Convention and the Roman Catholic Church in the USA.¹ These indicate the fruitfulness of such ecumenical encounters for both sides of the dialogue.

Baptism is inextricably linked with the Baptist view of discipleship. In chapter three we sought to explain the Baptist view on believer's baptism by immersion. The objective, however, was not merely to re-iterate old arguments. By drawing attention to the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition, for instance, we noted that immersion was not the only mode of baptism used by the Baptist movement. South African Baptists would do well to recognise the validity of all modes of baptism, yet without compromising their conviction that the candidate is as important (if not more so) than the mode of the rite.

We also discussed the place of the child in Baptist theology. We observed that children should be regarded as disciples, or at least "potential disciples" who are in the process of "faith development" and who will, hopefully, become "maturing participants" within the church. Further, we considered the Baptist responses to the World Council of Churches' Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry Document. The upshot

1. See the relevant sections recorded in Confessions in Dialogue (ed) Nils Ehrenstrom. WCC:Geneva, 1975, pp 28-29 and 72-74.

of our findings in these responses is that some Baptists elsewhere in the world actually accept believers who have been baptised by other modes than immersion. South African Baptists would benefit from becoming more open in accepting the validity of other modes of baptism, and grappling with other theologies of baptism.

Chapter four was entitled 'Discipleship as Ministry'. Baptist identity is seen in its view of church government and its understanding that every member has a 'ministry'. In this chapter we combined two clauses of the 1987 Statement. The reason for this was to emphasize the character of discipleship as related to a particular form of government and ministry; hence the term 'structures'. It is from the idea that the church is a regenerate body that congregationalism holds sway as the Baptist form of government. However, congregationalism does not negate a clearly defined understanding of leadership, even though Baptists eschew hierarchalism. This also applies to mutual ministry, or the priesthood of all believers. Baptists regard 'ministry' as the task of the body of Christ, not a structure within the church. At the same time Baptists recognise a special "call" of God to certain people to perform particular tasks. Those "ordained" to these special tasks, are not given a sacral status, rather the ordination ceremony recognises that the ordinands are simply gifted with particular abilities for the "edification of the body".

In this chapter on ministry we also dealt with the role of women, and showed that there are biblical grounds for justifying their ordination. It is an issue that is problematic for some Baptists in South Africa. However, when

we consider the history and theology of Baptist ordination we notice that, concomitant with Baptist convictions on the laity/clergy tension, there is, in our opinion, no valid biblical and theological reason to oppose women in the ordained ministry.

The fifth chapter also combined two clauses, those of Religious Liberty and Church-State Relations. Again, although the 1987 Statement separates these two clauses, many manuals on Baptist polity² fuse the two, basing Church-State relations on the foundation of religious freedom. Hence the heading 'Discipleship as Freedom', for no believer or church can be free in any state without that state's recognition and acceptance of complete religious liberty, not merely a toleration of religion. At the same time the church can never be truly free if it is not speaking prophetically to the issues at stake in society. This invariably means the church has to be socio-politically involved. If the church abdicates its responsibilities here (and we have argued that the BUSA has done so to a large degree) it loses its credibility not only with the oppressed (whatever form this may take), but also with other socially concerned people and with God.

A PROPOSAL FOR A CONTEMPORARY BAPTIST IDENTITY IN ECUMENICAL CONTEXT

Clearly the first step for creating a contemporary identity is for BUSA to rejoin the ecumenical movement as full members through its official organ, the South African Council of Churches. It is commendable that the 1993 Assembly agreed

2. See the relevant footnotes in that chapter.

to investigate the possibility of rejoining the SACC as observers. But it is tragic that the 1994 Assembly voted that no further motions pertaining to ecumenism be tabled. This being the case, it is unlikely that the BUSA will develop into a holistic Christian tradition, influencing others and being influenced, all for the greater unity of the faith. This separatist attitude by the Union has marginalised the BUSA within the wider Christian community. This view may well be objected to in the light of the BUSA's membership of the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA). Membership of this body should not negate the importance of dialogue with the wider church. Baptists have much to offer the ecumenical movement. The ecumenical movement has much to offer the Baptists. As can be seen by the bilateral discussions within the WCC, ecumenical dialogue can be mutually enriching. It behoves BUSA to work towards ecumenical unity for the sake of the gospel as well as their own identity.

Secondly, we would concur with Louise Kretzschmar's view that together with "a less fundamentalistic hermeneutic, Baptists need to develop a broader understanding of Christian spirituality".³ She makes it clear that there should not be "a false separation between social concern and the discipleship of the Christian, (nor) between the church's worship and its prophetic witness".⁴

Thirdly, churches in the Baptist Union need to consider opening themselves up to admitting to full membership those

3. L. Kretzschmar, 'The Privatization of the Christian Faith amongst South African Baptists'. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1992, p. 287.

4. *ibid.* See also J.W. de Gruchy, Theology and Ministry (London: Collins, 1986).

applicants who, although baptised as infants, are now convinced Christians, and desire to worship and serve within the family of Baptists. Admittance into membership, however, should not require rebaptism. The suggestions made in chapter three based on McCay and McNutt's proposals should be given serious consideration.

Fourthly, Baptists need to strive for greater consistency in their understanding of ministry. A far more articulate presentation of the balance between congregationalism and elected leadership, inclusive of the ordained ministry, needs to be made.⁵

Along with many other Christian traditions, Baptists would benefit from a far more open investigation into the role of women in the ordained ministry. This should not be understood as a 'sop to feminism', but as a sincere effort to understand the Scriptures in their historical sense, and to grapple with what the Holy Spirit seems to be saying in the current era. The series of study conferences on the place of women in ministry held by the Baptist Union during 1989 only raised the issues. Nothing concrete was resolved. The fact that it was re-iterated that the local church was at liberty to ordain whomsoever it wished, within the parameters of the Baptist Union's bye-laws on ministry, served only to avoid serious dissent by fundamentalists who did not want the Union to give sanction to women in ministry. That women's names are included on the ministerial lists does not indicate anything

5. Perhaps Baptists Today could publish brief articles on the subject, or the Executive of the Union could commission the production of a booklet similar to Dr Chris Parnell's popular works on deacons, as well as his other books referred to in this thesis.

more than that: they are on a list. No recommendations are to be read into their inclusion. Both the Executive and the Assembly need to promote actively the value of women in the ordained ministry.

When it comes to the relationship of the church to the state, South African Baptists have to consciously search their own house and put it in order. Of prime importance here is the clause in the 1987 Statement that deals with this relationship. The Statement must be revised and made current.⁶ Further, another clause needs to be added, that of recognising the necessity of not locking the denomination into an historical framework. Statements of faith or principle are good and necessary from time to time, as church history proves. But each confession is bound to its own historical period. Baptist theologians and historians in South Africa have to recognise and accept this.

Since Baptist history, confessionalism, and practice have been used (granted in many cases unwittingly) to perpetuate racism and inequality within the Union, there needs to be a confession of such sins, repentance from specific sins, and structures set up whereby transformative changes can be made. New attempts to renew meaningful fellowship with the Baptist Convention of Southern Africa have to be instituted.

Another area Baptists would benefit from in their pursuit of an authentic identity is a social historical theology. By this is meant an inclusion in Baptist theology and thinking of social aspects of the Gospel. Referring to Baptist unity in

6. See the proposal by David Walker to the BU Executive, July 1987, and which is referred to in chapter five.

South Africa, Kretzschmar says "only an approach that takes the distortions of the history, theology, and structures of the BUSA into account, can hope to emerge with a meaningful and realistic vision".⁷ This observation of Kretzschmar's is relevant to the quest for identity as well as for unity. Recognition of distortion, unwitting or deliberate, is an important factor in determining an identity. A willingness to address distortions and a courage to hold to what is considered true and historically enduring are two equally necessary features for writing history.

DISCIPLESHIP REVISITED

In the Introduction to this thesis the essence of Baptist identity was proposed - discipleship, and in chapter one a detailed interpretation of this motif was given. In this concluding chapter the objective is to broaden the material presented in the first chapter.

This thesis has already proposed that Baptists in South Africa commit themselves to the ecumenical movement, not uncritically, but sincerely making efforts to be part of the widest Christian community. At the same time, together with the call to discipleship and ecumenism, this proposal wants to re-inforce the traditional conviction that 'mission' is integral to discipleship and consistent with ecumenism.

Reference has already been made to the BUSA's new vision. As it stands, that vision, in our opinion, is too vague. Orlando Costas makes this assertion:

7. Kretzschmar, Ph.D. Thesis, p. 289.

The true test of mission is not whether we proclaim, make disciples, or engage in social, economic, and political liberation, but whether we are capable of integrating all three in a comprehensive, dynamic, and consistent witness.⁸

Comprehensiveness, dynamism, and consistency is what is needed for a meaningful vision of identity. South African Baptists need to develop the wherewithall to inculcate such a vision. Instead of comprehensiveness, for instance, mission is expressed almost solely in terms of mono- and cross-cultural evangelism. The church growth principles of the "Fuller School" are espoused by many churches. What few of these churches seem to realise is that Donald McGavran, founder of this school of thought, wrote against the gathered church principle, a principle precious to Baptists. The gathered church principle hinders the mission of the church, maintains McGavran. He asserts that

mission station churches are lacking in the qualities needed for growth and multiplication. They are, in truth, gathered churches, made up of individual converts ... (whose) ... lives ... have been so changed, ... that they feel immeasurably superior to their unconverted relatives.⁹

McGavran's problem seems to be the converts' "superiority" which has alienated them from their people. However, the axe has been laid at the wrong root. It is not the principle of the gathered church that is the problem, but the people themselves and, perhaps, their teaching. But, McGavran continues:

8. Orlando Costas, The Integrity of Mission. Harper and Row: San Francisco. 1979, p. 75.

9. Donald McGavran, Bridges of God. Friendship: New York. 1955, p. 56.

gathered churches are 'beach-heads' into the habitat of the human spirit, while the People Movement churches are 'break-throughs' which open up race and nation to the beneficent liberating influences of the Good News.¹⁰

George Marsden maintains that "McGavran identified the gathered church concept as one of the chief defects of modern missions."¹¹ Marsden goes on to state that for McGavran this

sectarian and individual approach reflected ideals that might be appropriate to 'disciplined nations' with nominal Christianity, but was inappropriate for non-Christian lands. In contrast to traditional evangelical concepts, such discipleship did not involve leading each church member into a documentable conversion experience. Rather, more in tune with the open-church tendencies of twentieth century liberal Christians or the methods of Christian advance.¹²

If Marsden's interpretation of McGavran is correct, then for Baptists a serious problem occurs. The problem is that since their inception, according to McGavran, the principle of the gathered church has been wrong. The stress on individual conversion is now regarded as "sectarian" and "inappropriate." It is true that Baptists are sectarian in some ways, and that their stress on individualism has at times been inappropriate. But to say that the concept of the gathered church is wrong per se, goes too far. It is the way the concept is worked out that becomes the problem. Some paedobaptist churches hold to a gathered church principle, but see it differently to Baptists. Their approach is inclusive whereas Baptists are exclusive. Our suggestion throughout this thesis is for Baptists to

10. *ibid*, p. 99.

11. George Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids. 1987, p. 241.

12. *ibid*.

consider their identity and practice in a more inclusive and less exclusive way.

South African Baptists have been suspicious of Liberation Theology. This is evidenced by the responses to the Kairos Document.¹³ And yet it could be said, with some validity, that the Baptist heritage, especially when linked to Anabaptism,¹⁴ contains the core of the quest for liberation, as expressed in the Kairos Document. As a leading Baptist theologian in Britain, it is significant that Keith Clements speaks so positively of the Kairos Document.¹⁵ If one considers the appeals for religious liberty and the separation of church from the state by the Baptists' forebears, put together with their passion for true spiritual renewal, the statement inferring that Baptists are in the tradition of liberation theology is not farfetched. Indeed Baptist theologians like Orlando Costas, Jorge Pixley, and Norman Gottwald¹⁶ are openly sympathetic to this position. Even the conservative theologian Clark Pinnock has expressed his appreciation for liberation

13. See chapter five of this thesis, and especially E. André, 'A Baptist Response to the Kairos Document'. Unpublished paper, Cape Town, 1987; P.A. Holness, 'Kairos: God's Kingdom or Man's?'. The South African Baptist. September, October, November, 1986; R.G. Mathie, 'A Baptist response to the Kairos Document'. Unpublished paper, Johannesburg, 1987.

14. See Daniel S. Schipani (ed), Freedom and Discipleship: Liberation Theology in an Anabaptist Perspective. Orbis: Maryknoll, 1989.

15. See Keith Clements' discussion of the Kairos Document in his Learning to Speak: The Church's Voice in Public Affairs. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. 1995, p. 35ff.

16. See for instance The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics, Norman K. Gottwald (ed). Orbis: Maryknoll, NY. 1983. Both Gottwald and Pixley have essays in this volume. For Costas, see above.

theology and its emphasis,¹⁷ though he has subsequently moved away from his earlier commitment.¹⁸

Baptists have their roots in the sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformation. From this ancestry Baptists have examples of the maxim that the church needs to be always open to reforming structures and practices so to reflect Scriptural truths in the contemporary setting. Baptists within the BUSA have not always shown a willingness to reflect upon existing structures and, where necessary, change. The Baptist Convention of South Africa, however, has done this profitably, as can be seen in their use of the Anabaptist tradition, for instance.¹⁹ The BUSA's commitment to the priority of evangelism, understood narrowly, subsumes all other concerns. Change, however, ought to be inculcated because both the biblical evidence require it and the practical needs of contemporary society demand it. Our own conclusions as to the way ahead for the BUSA are reflected in Hans Küng's book Reforming the Church²⁰. We have taken the suggestions Küng offers for the Roman Catholic church and applied them to the needs of the BUSA. Together with some observations from Jürgen

17. Clark Pinnock, 'An Evangelical Theology of Human Liberation'. Sojourners 5:2 and 3, 1976.

18. Clark Pinnock, 'A Pilgrimage in Political Theology: A Personal Witness'. Franky Schaeffer (ed), Is Capitalism Christian? Crossway: Westchester. 1985.

19. See the various essays in The Barkly West National Awareness Workshop, (eds) D. Hoffmeister and B. Gurney. Johannesburg: Baptist Convention, 1990.

20. Hans Küng, Reforming the Church Today: Keeping Hope Alive. Crossroad: New York. 1990. Although Küng is writing about the Roman Catholic Church, there is much that is applicable to Baptists. The footnotes indicate where I draw my material from.

Moltmann, K ng's comments are helpful for the changes required within the BUSA.

A renewed Baptist identity must be linked to, but not infatuated with its past heritage.²¹ This means that Baptists must "reflect" their origins, but constantly return to Christ himself for their current guidance. This reflection and return to the fount demands a recognition of the church as "the people of God and as a community of believers" now, in the present. It also requires an understanding of its mission as "service", and its meaning to be as broad as possible. Further, the denomination must be at pains to stress a leadership style that is in keeping with the mission of the church: servanthood, giving direction without authoritarianism.

Another factor, K ng would suggest, is that the church must "preserve" the great Catholic tradition. K ng is quick to assert that he is not referring to parochial traditions. This tradition is inspired by the Gospel, but supported by the well established theological convictions hammered out in past history. The tradition must also have genuine piety, intellectual openness, and evangelical concerns reflected in it.

Contemporary identity means engaging in the tasks of the present, the essence of which is not self perpetuation, but addressing wrong, and using the church's resources to meet society's needs. For Baptists, as for other Christians, this will always include the declaration that God has sent Jesus Christ to bring hope, repentance, faith, and renewal of life

21. *ibid*, p. 155.

to all who will receive him. For this to be effective, the church's leadership has a significant role to play.²²

Küng's second area for a renewed church is the emphasis on "partnership."²³ What he means by this is an openness to move away from male dominance, to a position where the church "no longer tolerates sexism and patriarchalism." This requires the inclusion of women at every level of the church's life and ministry. Reference has been made to this in chapter four, when we dealt with the controversy of women's ordination within the BUSA.

The call to partnership impinges on denominationalism. In retrieving their identity, Baptists must eschew a narrow denominationalism. The BUSA cannot afford to regard itself as an exclusive body. An openness to all confessing Christian groups must be evident. At all levels there has to be a deliberate involvement in ecumenical relations. For this to be effective, Baptists must put their own house in order. Other churches and the world around about will take no notice of the Baptist message if there is inconsistency within Baptist ranks.

Baptist identity must reflect a universal character. This relates not only to the principles believed as Baptists, but also the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic facets of faith's expressions. Whereas Küng juxtaposes Eurocentric (and specifically Roman imperialism) and universal characteristics, South African Baptists have to recognize a plurality of cultures and religious traditions bearing on their identity.

22. Based on Küng, *ibid*, p. 156-7.

23. *ibid*, p.157-8.

They need to become more aware of being African. This requires them to reject absolutist, colonial, imperial and especially paternalistic attitudes towards others, particularly those Baptists within the Convention. Further, this particular feature of a renewed church respects the expressions of other faiths, and becomes willing to listen and learn from those faiths. Nothing of the Christian faith is lost or compromised by listening to others. Listening may well create opportunities to proclaim the Gospel.²⁴

Baptists can take note of K ng's appeal for the dispensing of discrimination and an inquisitorial aggression. South African Baptists are generally suspicious of those who express their beliefs differently. The pragmatists look askance at those who are more philosophical and theological, and vice versa. At recent BUSA Assemblies, theological and political differences have revealed considerable aggression and marginalising. Friendships are broken, individuals are sidelined, and aspersions are cast on the characters and theological orthodoxy of men and women in the ministry. This, in turn, is reflected in the churches.

K ng requests the exercise of forgiveness, the cleansing of the guilt of the past, and a new start towards intercommunion. Baptists must consider these appeals and apply them within the Union. A new sense of identity will fail before it has begun if forgiveness, cleansing, and a renewed commitment to unity is not evident.²⁵

24. *ibid*, p. 161-3.

25. *ibid*, p. 164.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the call to discipleship means that Baptist identity becomes an identity of openness, an identity of "open friendship" towards others, as Jürgen Moltmann so aptly puts it.²⁶ This in no way negates the richness of the past and the influences of the various strands of Baptist heritage. Rather, it recognizes the past and determines to move forward holding "respect with affection" for others.²⁷ Since the BUSA has rejected any further formal discussions with the ecumenical movement, the friendship Moltmann speaks of cannot be developed at present. Elsewhere Moltmann has argued that

every theology must include reflections upon its own point of view ... and on its own place in the social and political situation. ... To make one's own point of view absolute would be stupidity. this does not amount to relativity. ... To see one's own view as relative to that of others means to live in concrete relationships and to think out one's own ideas in relationship to the thought of others. To have no relationship would be death.²⁸

South African Baptists, by their refusal to participate in the wider ecumenical movement, have severed a significant relationship. Baptists will certainly not experience "death" (Moltmann's phraseology),²⁹ but their expression of discipleship will indeed be truncated and compromised. Since the BUSA, as an entity, has rejected ecumenical dialogue, it behoves interested individuals to forge these links.

26. Jürgen Moltmann, The Open Church. SCM: London. 1978, p. 50.

27. *ibid*, p. 51.

28. Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God. SCM: London. 1974, p.10-11.

29. *ibid*, p.11.

The gospel calls humanity to an attitude of inclusion, or acceptance, for "acceptance is the atmosphere of humanity."³⁰ By "atmosphere" Moltmann means a life-giving characteristic. Exclusivism is a self-propagating characteristic. South African Baptists need to become inclusive not exclusive, especially in relation to other church traditions and the socio-political issues that impact upon the church and society. Moltmann suggests that when a church divests itself of its social and political responsibilities, it will take on other features to compensate.³¹ Our observation is that South African Baptists have become privatized, more fundamentalistic, and a-contextual as a result of their non-involvement in ecumenical and socio-political affairs.

Discipleship means that, in terms of ecclesiology, Baptist churches should become more open and welcome unreservedly all who respond to Christ regardless of gender, age, or race, affirming that they belong, have a ministry, and are free to worship and be prophetic in the concrete community in which they live. Such a Christian community is truly liberating, says Moltman. Further, Moltmann maintains that

Functioning with this meaning of community, we would no longer come together in order to confirm for each other the eternally same stories, jokes and opinions, but would rather create an open and hospitable community which would bring friendliness into the unfriendly corners of this society.³²

30. Moltmann, The Open Church, p. 27.

31. Moltmann, The Crucified God, p. 17.

32. Moltmann, The Open Church, p. 32-33.

Without our determined acceptance of others in concrete social contexts, we cause those people to suffer by "isolation and rejection."³³ Our plea to South African Baptists is to strive for an identity that is truly Christian, holistic, and faithful to their Reformational heritage. Moltmann's point is valuable here: "Christian identity can be understood only as an act of identification with the crucified Christ ..."³⁴ Hence identity is not loyalty to a system, personal experience or decisions, but solely to Christ, who has concretised his identity with humanity in social and political contexts. Discipleship is the "long obedience" in this same direction.³⁵

33. *ibid*, p. 28.

34. Moltmann, The Crucified God, p. 19.

35. This phrase is drawn from Eugene H. Peterson's book A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society. IVP: Downers Grove, 1980.

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