

**A Theological Inquiry into the Doctrine of the Sacrament of Baptism and
Rebaptism in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa**

by

Oswin Garnet Kretzmann

207514645

Submitted in fulfilment of academic requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Theology

in the School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics in the College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-Natal

(Pietermaritzburg Campus)

Supervisor: Prof. Lilian. C. Siwila

Co-supervisor: Dr. Helen Efthimiadis-Keith (AKA Helen Keith-van Wyk)

Pietermaritzburg, November 2018

Student's Signature: OGK

Date: 13/08/2018

Supervisor Signatures: Prof. Lilian C. Siwila

LCS

Co- Supervisor: Dr. Helen Efthimiadis-Keith (AKA Helen Keith-van Wyk)

HEK

Declaration against Plagiarism

1. The research and the conclusions reported on in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, are my own original work.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for the purposes of obtaining a degree, or examination, at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other copyrighted data, pictures, graphs or other proprietary information, unless specifically acknowledged and sourced as such.
4. This thesis does not contain the work of others, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from them. Where written sources are quoted, then:
 - a. The text has been re-written, but the general information attributable therein has been appropriately referenced.
 - b. Where direct quotations have been used, these have been included, in italics and within quotation marks, and are included in this dissertation's bibliography.
5. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables obtained directly from the internet, unless appropriately acknowledged, and any such sources are detailed in the thesis itself, and appropriately referenced in the bibliography.

As per University of KwaZulu-Natal regulations and requirements, I hereby declare that this dissertation has been produced solely as a result of my own original research efforts on the stated topic, unless otherwise indicated within the dissertation's text.

Signature of the Student

O.G.K.

Oswin Garnet Kretzmann

As the Candidate's Supervisors we hereby approve the dissertation for submission.

Signatures of the Supervisors

Prof. Lilian C. Siwila

Dr. Helen Efthimiadis-Keith
(AKA Helen Keith-van Wyk)

L.C.S.

Supervisor

Co-supervisor

Acknowledgements

My first word of deep thanks must go to God for God's Genius of mercy and help. When I was sorely tempted to back off, the Word of the Lord clearly came to me at least three times. In James 1:4 (MSG) I read, "Don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed"; and then from Habakkuk 2:3 (LB), "These things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled". Ultimately, in Philippians 1:6¹ (NIV), the message was that "God who begun a good work in you will carry it through to completion". I did manage to keep going, and now I feel compelled to acknowledge with all my heart the Genius and Love of God.

I am also extremely fortunate and grateful to have been allocated two supervisors, in Professor Lilian Siwila and Doctor Helen Keith-van Wyk, both of whom, especially Professor Siwila, despite their great strain, tolerated my naivety, never let me off the hook, gave me a lot of their time, and faithfully navigated me through the processes and requirements for objective study. Further, I am also indebted to the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal for the great generosity in covering most of the cost for this study, and the Methodist Doctrines Committee, under the leadership of Bishop Jonathan Anderson, for backing this project. Thank you also to Professor John Daniel, a friend, for his wisdom shared with me; and Kisitu Davis for assisting me with the proposal in its early stages. Both of these people enabled me to get off to a good start, along with Jenny Keyte, a book agent and friend now resident in the United Kingdom, who helped me to scour the Globe for relevant material, and Mr Simon Shezi at the UKZN Library, who also assisted me in my search for information on baptism.

When my computer crashed, and significant chunks of material were lost by pressing wrong keys, amongst the staff of Longnot Computers, Anitha Ramnarayan, Sarika Williams, and Ian Swynnerton, went out of their way to accommodate me with their kind assistance for the speedy recovery of material. And now I have Lachlan MacDougall at my side, patiently allaying my fears with regard to computer concerns, and helping me with their technical expertise in preparing the work for submission. Further, I am sincerely grateful to Trevor French for the expertise of his editorial work and the high standards and dedication that Pauline Fogg and her company set as copy editors.

Then last but not least, how could I adequately thank my dear wife Deirdre for her sacrificial and loving support, and for prayerfully driving me on with her persistent encouragement and advice, and our children Ashley and Heidi who, in having gone before their dad academically, went to great lengths in sharing their insights, and who were also hugely encouraging.

¹ All direct quotations from the Bible are found in the New International Version, unless otherwise indicated.

Abstract

This dissertation discusses the topic of baptismal convergence in relation to sacramental baptism. It is a theological exercise arising from pastoral concerns, for which both Biblical and theological answers are considered and required. The study relates to the enduring problems surrounding the practice of infant baptism in the MCSA, with concomitant requests for rebaptism. Statistical and anecdotal information drawn from across a number of sources confirm that, in some regions of the world, the practice of infant baptism is in decline, with an alarming drop in membership growth from new conversions. Methodist Ministers also struggle to cope pastorally with members who, despite being loyal, take issue with MCSA baptismal policy and practice. These members either feel obliged to leave the Church, or are compelled to do so, because of the MCSA's ruling that baptism is non-repeatable. Whilst in the past the MCSA has blamed the intrusion of rebaptism into sacrament squarely on Baptist and Pentecostal denominational influences, indications are that the MCSA's baptismal woes also derive from its own understanding and practice of paedobaptism. Attempts at resolution emanating from the WCC Lima Text Baptismal Directive seem however to have provoked new attempts at unity, and this enquiry into the possibility of the conjoining of two baptisms with current MCSA paedobaptist practice is seen as a possible valid measure intended to bring unity to the Church, overcome the problem of rebaptism, and allow this rite to become more sacramentally and evangelistically effectual. Qualitative insights concerning baptismal understanding have been obtained from as wide a spectrum of scholars as possible, along with other sources of theological debate, and from various paradigms of consensus which are being tried and tested in various parts of the World Church. The notion of convergence as a possible alternative to rebaptism arises from the idea of combining both baptisms into MCSA practice in sacramental and evangelical tandem. The combining of these practices into a single sacrament is a gap issue which seems to carry potential, especially since a union between the two baptisms seems to be the logical next step towards baptismal unity in the Church. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral of Authorities is the framework guiding this investigation, with dependence on a qualitative method of research which has been used, not only to find out whether baptism, if practiced in this way, is theologically acceptable, but also to provide the opportunity for members of the Methodist Church to become more united in their search for the true nature of the Spirit of Divinity. The findings of this study are tested according to MCSA sacramental and evangelical hermeneutical requirements, because such principles form the basis of what it ultimately means for the Bible to be the highest authority for all matters of faith and practice within MCSA doctrine and theology. The *modus operandi* for this task is to find movement in the discussion of the tenets of a debate surrounding this issue regarding convergence within baptism, which logically marks the stages through which this enquiry must pass for conclusions which would be, as nearly as possible, accurate and objective, to be arrived at with regard to this highly concerning matter.

Key Concepts Infant Baptism, Adult Believers' Baptism, Sacramental Baptism, Rebaptism, Theological Convergence, Validity, Viability, Methodist Church of South Africa (MCSA)

Acronyms/Abbreviations

BEM	:	Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry
DEWCOM	:	Doctrines, Ethics and Worship Commission
MCSA	:	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
NAV	:	New Authorized Version of the Bible
NCR	:	National Catholic Reporter
NIV	:	New International Version of the Bible
PCUSA	:	Presbyterian Church of the United States of America
RCIA	:	Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults
RUC	:	Rosebank United Church
SACC	:	South African Council of Churches
UKZN	:	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
UMCA	:	United Methodist Church of America
UNISA	:	University of South Africa
USA	:	United States of America
WLC	:	Westminster Larger Catechism (In this confession believers and their children are candidates for baptism according to Biblical instruction.)
WC	:	World Church
WCC	:	World Council of Churches
WWII	:	World War Two

Table of Contents

Declaration against Plagiarism	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Acronyms/Abbreviations	v
Chapter One General Introduction to the Study	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2.1 MCSA Membership Trend in Relation to Baptism.....	2
1.3 Origin of the Notion of Convergence	4
1.4 Motivation for the Study.....	4
1.5 Research Problem Outline	4
1.6 Type of Study.....	5
1.7 Location of the Study.....	6
1.8 Key Research Question.....	6
1.8.1 Research Sub-Questions	6
1.8.2 Sub-objectives	6
1.9 Theoretical Frameworks for Research Project Construction.....	7
1.9.1 Use of Theological Authority before and During the Reformation.....	8
1.9.2 Crucial Nature of the Wesleyan Way for Quadrilateral Authority.....	9
1.9.3 Design of Wesley’s Quadrilateral.....	11
1.9.4 Importance of the Wesleyan Application of His Quadrilateral	12
1.10 Research Methodology	14
1.10.1 Research Methodology for Quadrilateral Application	14
1.10.2 Qualitative Study	14
1.10.3 <i>Modus operandi</i> of Qualitative Methodology	15
1.10.4 Qualitative Study	15
1.10.5 Qualitative Research Steps Taken in Acquisition and Processing of Material	15

1.11 Possible Logistical Problems	17
1.12 Possible Theoretical Problems	18
1.13 Study Limitation and Scope	18
1.14 Conclusion	18
1.15 Thesis Structural Outline	19
Chapter Two Church Tradition: A Systematic Literature Review of the Church’s Understanding and Practice of the Doctrine of Baptism	21
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Origins of Baptism as a Sacrament.....	22
2.3 Earliest Post-Biblical Definition of Sacrament.....	24
2.4 Influence of Greek Mystery Religions.....	25
2.5 Reign of Emperor Constantine (306–337).....	26
2.6 The Influence of St. Augustine’s Baptismal Doctrine (Fifth Century).....	26
2.7 The Middle Ages of the Church (Seventh to Fifteenth Century).....	28
2.8 The Waldensians	29
2.9 The Lutheran Reformation (Fifteenth to Sixteenth Centuries)	30
2.10 Post-Reformation Period.....	31
2.11 Definition of Sacrament in the Modern Period.....	33
2.12 MSCA Baptismal Sacramental Lineage	34
2.13 Critique of Sacramental Infant Baptism	36
2.13.1 Critique of Infant Baptism from a Baptist Position.....	36
2.13.1.1 Waymeyer: Presbyterian Turned Baptist.....	37
2.13.1.2 No Direct Biblical Infant Baptism Command	37
2.13.1.3 Absence of Biblical Infant Baptism Example.....	37
2.13.1.4 No Compelling New Testament Evidence for Infant Baptism	38
2.13.1.5 Breakdown of Circumcision Argument	39
2.13.1.6 Redemptive Historical Discontinuity between Biblical Testaments	39
2.13.2 A Return to Prioritising Believer’s Baptism.....	40

2.13.3 Believer’s Baptism as the Sign of the New Covenant.....	41
2.13.4 Argument against Covenant as a Sign of Infant Salvation.....	42
2.13.5 Covenant is Believer’s Baptism	43
2.13.6 Plea for Biblical Consistency	45
2.14 Paedo-baptist David Wrights’ Self-Critique.....	46
2.14.1 Ascendancy of Infant Baptism in the West	46
2.14.2 Infant Baptism within Christendom	47
2.14.3 Ascendancy of Believer’s Baptism over Infant Baptism.....	48
2.14.4 Large-Scale Change in the Global Church	49
2.14.5 Indiscriminate Baptism and Disciplined Baptismal Practice	50
2.15 Believer’s Baptism as ‘Automatic Baptismal Regeneration’	51
2.15.1 Birth of a New Believer’s Baptist Understanding.....	51
2.15.2 Baptism as a Means to Grace	52
2.16 Surveys Results for Trends in Baptismal Belief and Practice	53
2.16.1 Global Trends	54
2.16.1.1 Are All Christian Denominations in Possible Decline?.....	54
2.16.1.1.1 Assessment	54
2.16.1.1.2 Pew Foundation Findings in Christianity Today (2012).....	55
2.16.1.1.2.1 Evangelicals Remarkably Stable in Membership Numbers	55
2.16.1.1.2.2 Mainline Church Membership Losses	55
2.16.1.1.2.3 Evangelical Church Number Growth	56
2.16.1.1.2.4 Born Again Evangelicalism.....	56
2.16.1.1.2.5 Other Findings	57
2.16.1.1.2.6 Assessment	57
2.16.1.3 Trends from the National Catholic Reporter (2016).....	58
2.16.1.3.1 Falling Rates of Baptism in North American Catholic and Baptist Churches	58
2.16.1.4 Paedo-baptism and Baptismal Efficacy	59
2.16.1.4.1 Causes for the Gradual Loss in Sacramental Infant Baptism Efficacy.....	59
2.16.1.5 An insight of a Trend of Baptismal Practice in Some African countries.....	62
2.17 Recovering the Purpose of Baptism.....	63
2.18 Baptist Views on the Teaching of Sacramental Baptism.....	64
2.19 Call for Reformation of Paedo-baptist Theology and Practice.....	65

2.19.1 Solutions to the Incorrectness of Rebaptism	65
2.19.2 Baptism of Adults	68
2.19.3 Baptism of Infants	68
2.19.4 Infant Baptism and Gospel Objectivity	68
2.19.5 Infant Baptism and God's Initiative in Salvation	68
2.19.6 Middle-Way for Combining Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal Components ..	69
2.20 Conclusion	70
Chapter Three	73
Perspectives on the Sacrament of Baptism and Implications for the MCSA.....	73
3.1 Introduction.....	73
3.2 Sacrament of Baptism Associated with Biblical Evangelism.....	74
3.2.1 Household Baptism as Evidence of Sacrament	74
3.2.2 Exegesis and Infant Baptism	75
3.2.3 Prevenient Grace and Infant Baptism.....	75
3.2.4 Service of Confirmation and Biblical Sacrament	75
3.2.5 Baptism as Witness in Infants	76
3.2.6 Sacramental Purpose of Baptism and the Mystery Factor.....	77
3.3 Sacrament Originating from Christ's Baptism	78
3.3.1 Objective Aspect of Water Baptism as Sacrament.....	78
3.3.2 Evangelical Subjectivity of Water Baptism.....	79
3.3.3 Objective Faith as Subjectively Present in the Church.....	80
3.4 Sacrament as Oneness in the Body of Christ	82
3.4.1 The One Baptism of Ephesians 4:4-5	82
3.4.2 Non-Repeatability of Baptism	83
3.5 Sacrament as God's Promise of Redemption.....	84
3.5.1. Covenant Baptism and Redemptive Promise	84
3.5.2 Two Sides of Covenantal Baptism	84
3.5.3 Divine Objectivity of Baptism as Covenantal Promise.....	86
3.5.4 Election of the Father	86
3.5.5 Reconciliation of the Son	87
3.5.6 Regeneration of the Holy Spirit.....	87

3.5.7	Rebaptism Practice	88
3.5.8	Bromiley’s Potential Convergence Baptism.....	88
3.6	Sacrament in the Independent Working of the Holy Spirit.....	89
3.6.1	Holy Spirit as Sacrament of Baptism	89
3.7	Baptism in the Holy Spirit by Water for New Birth	90
3.7.1	Roman Catholic and Reformed Baptism	92
3.7.2	Sacramental Role of the Holy Spirit in Water Baptism.....	92
3.8	Biblical Baptism Associated with Repentance	94
3.8.1	Repentance not Witness as New Testament Baptismal Prerequisite.....	95
3.8.2	The Holy Spirit Way.....	95
3.8.3	Baptism as a Means of New Testament Grace	98
3.8.4	Rebaptism	99
3.8.5	Baptism as More Initiatory than Confirming	100
3.8.6	Necessity of Water Baptism for Salvation	102
3.9	Holy Spirit Baptism Obviation of Water Baptism.....	102
3.9.1	Sacraments as Unnecessary for Salvation	103
3.9.2	Wesley’s Response	103
3.9.3	Wainwright’s Response.....	103
3.10	Sacrament is Old and New Testament Covenant.....	104
3.10.1	Covenantal and Sacramental Redemptive Plan	104
3.10.1.1	Covenantal Baptism and Divine Imitative	106
3.10.1.2	Subjective Precedence over Objective Covenantal Character	106
3.11	Sacrament in <i>oikos</i> Household Unit.....	107
3.12	Sacramental Operation through Covenantal Household Evangelism.....	111
3.12.1	Overview of Covenantal Baptism.....	112
3.12.2	Institution and Covenantal Undertones of Baptism in Matthew 28:18–20	113
3.12.3	Sacramental Covenant based on the ‘Promise unto You and Your Children’ (Acts 2:39).....	116
3.12.4	Responsibilities of Covenantal Promise	116
3.12.5	<i>Oikos</i> Formula for Sacramental Baptism.....	117
3.12.5.1	Household Baptism as Inclusive Baptism.....	117
3.12.5.2	Newness of New Covenant in Baptismal Sacrament.....	118

3.12.5.3 Accommodation of Infant Baptism in the New Covenant.....	120
3.12.5.4 Covenant Transition.....	121
3.12.5.5 Covenantal Theology and Baptism.....	122
3.12.5.5.1 Covenant of Grace	122
3.12.5.5.2 Covenantal Promise	124
3.12.5.5.3 Covenant of Grace Obligation.....	125
3.12.5.5.4 Covenantal Parties	126
3.12.5.5.5 Covenant Mediator as Central Figure.....	127
3.12.5.5.6 Covenantal Unity	127
3.12.5.5.7 Covenantal Sacraments.....	128
3.12.5.5.8 Nature and Function of Sacraments.....	129
3.12.5.5.9 Circumcision and Baptism.....	130
3.12.5.6 Theology of New Testament Child Baptism	132
3.12.5.7 Baptism in Jesus' name.....	133
3.12.6 Conclusion of Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism	133
3.13 Wesleyan Biblical Basis for Covenantal Baptism	135
3.14 Theories of Sacramental Baptism since Karl Barth.....	140
3.15 Theological Position of MCSA Baptism	141
3.16 Conclusion	142
Chapter 4 Implications of the Debates and Paradigms of Practice on the Sacrament of Baptism in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa	144
4.1 Introduction.....	144
4.2 Multilateral Conference Debates on Baptism	145
4.2.1 Multilateral Conference Dialogue: WWC Lima Conference on Baptism (1982). 145	
4.2.1.1 Baptism and Faith	146
4.2.1.2 Mutual Recognition of Believer's and Infant Baptism	146
4.2.1.3 Mutual Recognition of Baptism.....	147
4.2.2 Quadilateral Dialogue of Understanding for Four Sacramental Protestant Positions	149
4.2.2.1 Purpose of Baptism in Relation to Meaning.....	150
4.2.2.2 Relationship of Baptism and Sacramental Redemption.....	150
4.2.2.3 Reformed Covenant View.....	150

4.2.2.4 Lutheran View	151
4.2.2.5 Baptist View.....	151
4.2.2.6 Christian Churches and Churches in Christ’s View	152
4.2.2.7 Assessment.....	152
4.3 African Baptismal Dialogue: UNISA Debate (1983)	154
4.3.1 Focus of Debate	156
4.3.2 New Testament Baptism and Unity.....	157
4.3.3 Deictic Function of Baptism.....	157
4.3.4 Faith and Baptism.....	158
4.3.5 Divine Initiative and Baptism.....	158
4.3.6 Rebaptism Requests.....	158
4.3.7 Critique	159
4.3.8 Infant Baptism High Doctrine	159
4.3.8.1 Infant Baptismal High Doctrine and Church Community	160
4.3.8.2 Critique of Infant Baptismal High Doctrine	160
4.3.8.3 Infant Baptism Baptist and Pentecostal Critique	161
4.3.8.4 Defence of Infant Baptism	163
4.3.8.4.1 Structure of the Gospel	163
4.3.8.4.2 Bible-Only Baptism.....	163
4.3.8.4.3 Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace	164
4.3.9 Assessment	166
4.4 MCSA Kyara Baptism Conference (1983)	167
4.4.1 The Church Stands Firm on Baptism	169
4.4.2 Members Choice.....	170
4.5 Convergence Baptism Possibility in Conference Debates.....	172
4.6 Consensus Practice Paradigms.....	173
4.6.1 Organic Unity Global Paradigms of the Two Baptisms	173
4.6.2 United Church of North India Two-Font Unity Paradigm	174
4.6.3 Rosebank Uniting Church of Johannesburg	175
4.6.4 Presbyterian Church of New Zealand Dual-Purpose Model of Consensus Baptism	176
4.6.5 Roman Catholic Model for Celebrating Personal Renewal.....	178
4.6.6 Paradigm of an African Independent Church in Southern Africa	179

4.6.7 Anonymous Uniting Paradigm	180
4.7 John Wesley’s Paradigm of Repeat Baptism for Evangelistic Purpose.....	181
4.8 Conclusion	182
Chapter 5 Theological Foundations and Practices of the Sacrament of Baptism in the MCSA.....	184
5.1 Introduction.....	184
5.2 MCSA Theological Foundations for Baptismal Doctrine	184
5.2.1 Current MCSA Sacramental View	184
5.2.2 Baptism Defined According to God’s Covenantal Purpose	186
5.2.3 Evangelistic Purpose of Covenant Based on Sacrament	187
5.2.4 Similarities and Differences between Infant and Adult Believers Baptism	187
5.2.4.1 Biblical Evidence Factor.....	187
5.2.4.2 Prevenient Grace and God’s Initiative	188
5.2.4.3 Entry into the Church as the Body of Christ.....	189
5.2.4.4 Instruction and Baptism	191
5.2.4.5 Baptismal Separateness and Sacramental Integration.....	192
5.2.4.6 Over-Emphasis on Profession of Faith for Baptism as Repentance	193
5.2.4.7 Infant Baptism and Covenant Standing Problem.....	194
5.2.4.8 <i>Status Quo</i> Baptismal Consequences in the MCSA	196
5.3 Conclusion	198
Chapter 6 Convergence as Possible New Knowledge Based on Wesleyan Dialectical Theology.....	200
6.1 Introduction.....	200
6.2 Wesleyan Dialectic on the Possibility of Convergence	200
6.2.1 Wesleyan Dialectical Theology Context	203
6.2.2 Infant Baptism	204
6.2.3 Adult Baptism and Effects.....	204
6.2.4 Objective Grace Moves to Subjective Grace.....	205
6.2.5 Wesleyan Possibility of Baptismal Convergence.....	206
6.3 Divine Origin of Sacramental Dialectic.....	208
6.3.1 Dialectical Nature of Grace in Wesleyan Theology	208

6.3.1.1 Preventive Grace is Divine Initiative	208
6.3.1.2 Justifying Grace through Dialectical Response of Faith for Personal Salvation	209
6.3.1.3 Covenant as Biblical Dialectic Expression	210
6.3.1.4 Acts 19:1–7 as a Specific Example of Dialectical Action Repeat Baptism...	211
6.3.1.5 Theological Dialectic and Complete Baptism	214
6.3.1.6 Baptism’s Relative Importance.....	214
6.3.1.7 Rebaptism Today	215
6.3.1.8 Varieties of Rebaptism.....	216
6.3.1.9 Incomplete Baptism	216
6.4 Conclusion	217
Chapter 7 General Conclusion and Quadrilateral Test Finding.....	218
7.1 General Conclusion.....	218
7.1.1 Chapter 1.....	218
7.1.1.1 Deduction One	218
7.1.2 Chapter Two	219
7.1.2.1 Deduction Two.....	220
7.1.3 Chapter Three	221
7.1.3.1 Deduction Three.....	224
7.1.4 Chapter Four	225
7.1.4.1 Deduction Four	225
7.1.5 Chapter Five	226
7.1.5.1 Deduction Five.....	227
7.1.6 Chapter Six	228
7.1.6.1 Deduction Six.....	228
7.2 Quadrilateral Test Deduction and Finding.....	229
7.2.1 Passing the <i>sola scriptura</i> Hermeneutical Sacramental and Evangelical Test	232
Bibliography	234
Internet Sources	240
Appendix A: Certification A	243
Certification.....	243

Appendix B: Certification A02 244

Chapter One

General Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study and discusses how the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) might possibly respond to the existing problem of requests for rebaptism amongst its members by invoking the solution of John Wesley's similarly-stated debate concerning the issue of rebaptism arrived at nearly 300 years ago (Brewer 2011:128-131).

The investigation begins by looking firstly at the background and motivation for the study. Secondly, the research problem is outlined, along with the study's key objectives and questions. Thirdly, this introduction identifies the theoretical framework used in conducting the required research and the methodology used in performing the study's actual qualitative survey of sources. The chapter concludes by providing the overall structural outline for the entire study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Infant-baptised Church members sometimes seek a second baptism in the form of what is called a "believer's baptism"². These claim that their requests are in line with Biblical practice because they see it as a first adult "believer's" baptism after their spiritual new birth, which they consider they have never consciously received. The problem with this kind of request is that the practice of "rebaptism" is not approved by the MCSA, due to the Methodist Church's doctrinal ruling which states that baptism is non-repeatable: The MCSA Laws and Discipline declares that:

The Methodist position is clear and agrees with that of most major denominations that so-called rebaptism is inappropriate and may not be practiced for the following reasons: Rebaptism implies that the original baptism was invalid and calls into question the practice of infant baptism; implies that the prevenient grace of God was not active in the original baptism; it makes the response of faith and obedience the most important feature of baptism and obscures its significance as a sign of God's grace (MCSA 2000:4).

² Infant-baptised people feel that even despite their infant baptism they would like the Church to allow them to identify with and celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus and offer Him their service by means of something that is more tangible than being told that they have been baptised. Being given a second baptism is not however a rejection of their first baptism, but is in some way its fruition.

There are notable numbers of MCSA members across the whole of Southern Africa however, who defy Church policy by requesting rebaptism. These members therefore find themselves at odds with the Church, and resultant disputes lead to internal division and disunity. In order to address the issue of rebaptism, the MCSA has called upon its Ministers to investigate possible alternatives, in the hope that the simple reaffirmation of a previous baptism may by itself be an acceptable answer (MCSA 1989:58–59; 66–68). Requests for rebaptism nevertheless continue to be received and the problem this presents for both the MCSA and its Ministers therefore remains unresolved because current Church practice does not actually meet the baptismal needs of all its members.

Several reasons have been given as to why members seek a second baptism; the most common being that of outside baptistic influence, although this claim appears to be only partially true. A more fundamental reason may therefore be found in MCSA theology itself. Even though infant baptised members have undergone a Wesleyan type of “new birth” experience, which is fundamentally the result of the MCSA’s own paedobaptist theological requirement (MCSA 1989:60–61), they are still refused this second application of water. This refusal is problematic; both for members and the MCSA itself, since such Church members must either change their minds under pressure from MCSA policy, or leave the Church. This scenario thus necessitates that the MCSA itself needs also to reconsider and revise some of the aspects of its theological observances regarding baptismal practice (MCSA 1989:60–61).

1.2.1 MCSA Membership Trend in Relation to Baptism

The MCSA at various levels has seemingly not kept records of its membership and baptismal numbers since 1995 for a fully accurate picture, and on the 4th of October 2016, the MCSA’s Chief Executive Officer, Charmaine Morgan, hence wrote:

I have attached the 2015 and 2016 Conference Statistics. As you can see, not all Districts have entered all fields. From 1999 to 2014 no statistics were reported in the Yearbook. Before that, Membership was recorded as indicated above but not baptisms, conversions and confirmations. The 1990 Minutes of the MCSA Conference records membership numbers which are set out in three categories: Full Members 509 282; On Trials 66033; junior members (Sunday Schools and Youth groups) 177 663. There seemed to have been a huge upswing [however] from the 1990 figures to those of 1996: Full Members 983 988; On Trial Members 96 092; Junior Members 304 067. In 2015, however, the record reveals a huge drop: Full Members 44 4903; On Trial Members 23 666; Junior Members 68 352. The statistics of the MCSA [may give] us a general indication of membership, but we are concerned that some churches do not report their statistics at all, and many

do not keep an accurate record (C. Morgan, email letter re: membership and baptism statistics, 4 October 2016).

Since retirement ten years ago, and based on doing locum work in several churches of the MCSA, it has become clear that there are now fewer baptisms in the MCSA than in the past. Moreover, the formal welcoming of new believers into full membership of the Methodist Church is mostly comprised of the intake of people on transfer from other denominations, although even this seems to have become a scant occurrence. Confirmation classes, and classes for “enquirers”; i.e. people seeking the Christian Life, which are the two primary channels through which this denomination grows in numbers, appear also to be in a state of decline.

That the issue of rebaptism has not disappeared, and that requests for rebaptism are growing, is also acknowledged by MCSA Doctrines Committee Chairperson, Bishop J. Anderson, who wrote on the 12th October 2015 that “while in the past the issue of baptism and rebaptism may have been largely a conversation that concerned a relatively small number of people within the Methodist Church it is foreseen that this and related issues will become a matter concerning a far greater number of our people. Previously most of people instinctively accepted infant baptism, but we foresee this changing, requiring more informed academic work in response” (Anderson 2015).

The challenge of dual baptismal practice therefore has implications which need to be explored, because baptism is seen as more than simply a religious sacrament, but also of being a respected traditional cultural phenomenon. It has been observed moreover, that requests for believer-baptism usually surface in a paedo-baptist context whenever the Gospel of Christ is preached specifically with a call to repent and believe, and where people baptised in infancy are claimed to be born of the Holy Spirit (Konig, Lederle & Möller 1983:156–158).

Within the tenets of MCSA doctrine which strives for unity, and even though baptism as described Ephesians 4:5 is one, this rite has been separated into two unrelated practices. As a result, some members do not know which baptism should be the correct one. This raises the further question as to why indeed both should not be administered on an individual if this will assist towards the improvement of personal spirituality, church community cohesion, and serve as an incentive for Church growth? The challenge presented is therefore focused on whether it could eventually be considered theologically and ecumenically correct for infant-baptised members after their initial conversion experience of new birth to receive an additional baptism by means of a second application of water as a believer’s baptism (MCSA 1989:66).

1.3 Origin of the Notion of Convergence

The idea of convergence arose with theologians such as David Bandey (1976). Bandey argued that the reality of the situation on the ground required that baptism should be practiced from a holistic theological perspective, namely that as it is administered as a sacrament both the Divine initiative and human response factors should take into account. Hollenweger (1972:385–396) similarly proposed that baptism should emanate jointly from God’s promise of salvation, and the responses in attitudes towards their faith of individual human beings. Since both credo- and paedobaptism³ are premised on these principles, the WCC Lima text directive on baptism (Lazareth 1982:1–7) that urged a search for consensus around this matter also carries a hint of a convergence of baptism possibility. In addition, the MCSA’s Conference of 1989 had decided that the provision of viable alternatives for the problem to meet the ongoing requests from its members for rebaptism should be formulated (MCSA 1989:66–67).

1.4 Motivation for the Study

After many years of rethinking, debating and defending its baptismal position, there are now signs within the MCSA that a need to find a way towards baptismal unity is becoming an earnest quest once again (MCSA 1989:66). The need is therefore to address rebaptism in a way which broadly honours and maintains the MCSA viewpoint, while at the same time meeting the pastoral and spiritual requirements of those baptised in their infancy who desire a second application of water in the form of a believer’s baptism.

What members are generally looking for from such requests is seemingly not an alternative rite which is intended to repudiate their prior baptism – referred to as rebaptism – but one which enables them to consciously and physically know that they have been born of the Spirit of God according to Christ’s way of receiving baptism, and which thereby would serve as a witness to what Christ is redemptively doing in their lives (Kretzmann 2011:6–10). Such requests should then be seen as noble in motive, rather than regarded as a sign of rebellion.

1.5 Research Problem Outline

An increasing number of redeemed members baptised as infants seem to prefer a believer’s baptism as an alternative for the Rite of Confirmation for initiation into the Faith (Bandey 1976:73–75). There are two aspects to this process which are however problematic for the more

³ The baptism of believers and the baptism of infants

evangelically-minded reformed Christian, namely, a doubt about the Biblical authenticity of infant baptism on the one hand, and on the other, concern around the non-sacramental nature of the Confirmation Rite as being a biblically suitable alternative for believer's baptism.

Because "believer-baptism" enjoys clear Biblical foundations, makes this rite a more attractive proposition than that of a confirmation service because the confirmation rite is considered non-biblical and even non-sacramental (McGrath 2017:385–386). Due to the fact that in current MCSA policy and practice, these two types of baptism do not have any direct relationship, in that they are administered separately, it hence seems logical that infant-baptism could be combined with believer-baptism in MCSA practice to become a contributing factor through a complementary partnership for more effective ministry (MCSA 2000:2–4), and could thus correspondingly strengthen the unity of the Church as an establishment (MCSA 2000 Appendix: 18).

As relatively remote in time as in 1976, theologian Doctor David Bandey stated that baptistic practice within the MCSA was in need of reforming (Bandey 1976:94–97). The dilemma facing the MCSA today is therefore urgently to find resolution for the baptismal problem facing both its Anabaptist-leaning infant-baptised members and itself and to achieve this ideal in such a way that the biblical identity and integrity of its own stance on baptism is retained.

Using paedo- and credo-baptisms conjointly in the practices of the church, with infant-baptism preceding believer-baptism, provided that this is theologically and Biblically acceptable, seems thus to make sense. It must however first be ascertained whether such convergence is possible as an option, given that rebaptism is seen as completely taboo and both use more than one application of water. This study thus intends to contribute towards the need for a reconsideration of MCSA baptismal theology and practice, for possible reformation of the aspects in question.

1.6 Type of Study

As this study on baptism involves the identity and vocation of the MCSA as an established body, its subject matter necessitates a *missio-ecclesia* interrogation and critique of how this denomination understands what it is called upon to be and to do within the Southern African context. Because paedo-baptism is essentially a sacramental matter, a study of this nature requires profound theological reflection.

1.7 Location of the Study

The location for this study is therefore in the field of systematic theology, and is a paradigmatic reconsideration of the nature of the relationship between infant- and believer-baptism as sacraments in light of the problematic nature of the practice of rebaptism within the MCSA. As baptism is a doctrinal matter the task is to be pursued within the context of the sacramental and evangelical doctrinal requirements for baptism in the MCSA (Laws&Discipline 2000:6–8).

1.8 Key Research Question

Following on from the debate described on how the sacrament of baptism is practiced within the MCSA, the question this study thus seeks to answer is: How viable and valid would the convergence of infant- with believer-baptism be, and what implications would a merger between the two baptisms have for baptismal practice in the MCSA?

1.8.1 Research Sub-Questions

1. What can be deduced from a systematic review of literature regarding the Church's understanding and practice of the Doctrine of Baptism as a sacrament from the time of Christ?
2. What are the perspectives from various scholars, conference debates, and recent paradigms of praxis on the sacrament of baptism and their possible implications for the MCSA?
3. What are theological foundations and practices of the sacrament of baptism in the MCSA?
4. How can the MCSA address the problem of rebaptism in sacramental baptism in an attempt towards being more baptismally-united?

1.8.2 Sub-objectives

1. To explore the development of baptism as a sacrament.
2. To ascertain the Biblical basis of sacramental baptism, and its influence upon the teachings of baptism within the MCSA.
3. To understand the theological foundations of sacramental baptistic principles within the MCSA.
4. To determine what the MCSA can offer theologically in terms of the potential for convergence of the two baptisms (infant baptism and believer-baptism) as a proposed alternative for rebaptism, without in any way compromising the unity of the Church.

1.9 Theoretical Frameworks for Research Project Construction

Of deep concern to the Global Forum of the future of world Christianity is that the Church seems to have lost its voice of Divine authority in today's rapidly changing world. Neither is the church any longer consulted by secular power on matters of morality; secular power prefers rather to dictate its own brands of morality, which sometimes contradicts the Christian Gospel and its ethical requirements. The Church thus seems to be at something of a loss concerning how to recover its role of serving as the conscience of nations (Global Forum for the Future of World Christianity 2013).

The Church additionally, regularly experiences its own internal problems. These seem to stem from a tendency to forget that Jesus is the only Saviour of the World, in addition to not listening to the Word of God as recorded in the Bible. God and God's redemptive acts importantly need therefore to be rediscovered. Teachings from the Bible indicate that a God-encounter is required, but this will only materialise when a prayerful and humble return is made to the basics of Christianity in relation to what the Bible directs concerning its evangelistic purpose and the primacy of Gospel Mission (Keum 2013:3–7)

Differences between evangelical Christians over matters in need of a Divine answer invariably concern questions of who is right and who is wrong, and are not primarily about what is considered divinely right. Jesus faced similar encounters throughout His entire life and ministry. Once, when teaching in the temple courts, He was asked by the chief priests, "by what authority are you doing these things and who gave you this authority?" (NIV Matthew 21:23–27). This question indicates that there was doubt regarding who Jesus was (Matthew 12:9–37) (Henry *et al.* 1983:177–179). On another occasion, Jesus told such leaders that they had been led astray from the real Old Testament Word of God, by focussing on their own opinions and elevating their own interpretations, referred to scripturally as the traditions of men (Matthew 15:1–9).

Such interpretative traditions would have developed over a long period, and some of these would have become fossilised in the belief systems of contemporary Jewish scholars. Jesus, however, saw many of these pronouncements as peripheral rules made by humankind which obstructed the delivery of the core message of the Bible as presented in the Old Testament. The Word of God in the Old Testament had thereby become overlaid, and lost in the complexity of human interpretative imposition which prevented seekers after God from understanding, receiving and upholding the central values of the Jewish faith. The Christian faith has also

suffered the same fate in the long passage of time, when opinions and interpretation come to matter more than what the Biblical narrative literally states or implies about any problem issue relative to Christianity and its practice (Henry *et al.* 1983:127–129).

On one occasion when confronted by the devil, Jesus Himself needed to rely on the superior authority of the Old Testament Bible, and is what He did all through His life and ministry. This occasion was when the tempter (the demonic authority) put Him to the test (Matthew 4:1–11); the three counter-replies which Jesus gave all commenced with, “It is written”. He had thus appealed to the highest authority of the Old Testament Bible, in dealing with demonic rationale.

In order to arrive at the kernel of God’s Truth on any life issue not clearly dealt with in the Bible in order to find the mind of Christ, it is ironically necessary for Christians to ask the same questions that were asked of Jesus by His opponents: “By what authority are you doing these things and who gave you this authority?” (Matthew 21:23–27) (Henry *et al.* 1983:177–179). To provide God-directed answers in unclear spiritual and moral situations it is therefore imperative to find a theoretical framework of authority which would assist to deliver an objectively-derived result (McGrath 2017:104–134).

1.9.1 Use of Theological Authority before and During the Reformation

The difficulty confronting any need to engage Divine authority however is the overbearing need to overcome the subjective human factor. It goes without saying that the thought-processes for human thinking are limited, primarily because of their sinful bias; a tendency inherited from the original fall to sin. Bandey states that “when the Gospel comes, it finds people hungry and searching for satisfaction. It [however also finds] them lost, looking for community and accordingly create unsatisfying substitutes like hippie communes, fanatical political parties, weird sects, witchcraft, pseudo-oriental cults, satanism and such like productions that have nothing to do with God or God’s way of truth” (Bandey 1976:79).

None of these substitutes are however required, because they are not answers that appear in the Biblical record of what the Gospel of Christ redeemingly provides for all of humanity (Bandey 1976:79). Such matters can lead to too much subjective thinking, which is then prioritised over Divine objectivity, and after becoming automatic reflex can result in the making of subjectively-inclined decisions that are not fully Christian and therefore harmful (Bandey 1976:78–79). Because the propensity in human nature is to seek for what is wrong before a search for God is made, this subjective bias needs to be overcome to arrive at what is truly divine. If God is objective in God’s Being, with humans being subjective by nature and thus

possess the propensity to err, the question that begs answering is how humans can overcome their subjective personal biases in the need to become objective in their judgements, and thus be able to perform what is truly the will of God (NIV Colossians 3:17). Another problem that intrudes is the existence of a wide range of authorities that compete for supremacy for the influencing of Christian thought and decision-making.

There are indications from the history of the Church that despite taking the Bible as the highest authority over all other authorities (MCSA 2000:1–7), the message of the Bible has not always been prioritised and adhered to. Evidence of this exists from the Great Reformation, and is exemplified by the drowning of Felix Manz. Manz was condemned to die because of “the crime of obeying God’s Word as he understood it” (Bridges & Phypers 1977:95–96). The contentious issue in this instance concerned strong contrary views about the practice of *status quo* water baptism.

This unfortunate incident, and many other similar occurrences, would have arisen from making assumptions that were not Biblically-authoritative, or in accordance with the Christ-ethic. The need for a guiding and objective authority may thus not have been fully considered during the era prior to the Lutheran Reformation, but there can be no excuse for doing this in the modern period, because of what is now understood from the theologies of Martin Luther (c.16th) and John Wesley (c.18th) amongst others in terms of how to secure divine help.

1.9.2 Crucial Nature of the Wesleyan Way for Quadrilateral Authority

A tool which seems to fit the requirements as a guide and test of validity for the topic of this study is the Quadrilateral Framework of Authorities, as constructed by John Wesley, the father of Methodism.

The battle in debate about rebaptism, along with the differences which arise between evangelicals, often emanates from holding strong dogmatic views regarding the way in which the Quadrilateral authority instrument should be used (McGrath 2017:18). This scenario has likely developed because no formally agreed-upon formula for the application of the Quadrilateral of authorities exists in MCSA policy despite Wesley’s bequest. Because church members have been urged to be “truly Methodist”, this likely can only materialise when they remain fundamentally Wesleyan in their thinking (Olivier 2011:1–17). This also must of necessity specifically apply to the way that Methodists use Wesley’s Quadrilateral of Authorities. There is thus a right way and a wrong way of Quadrilateral usage according to Wesley.

Examples of the incorrect application of theological authority abound in the history of Christianity as, for example, with the marriage between state and Church during the time of Constantine (272–337 AD) (McGrath 2017:8-9) in which the Church allowed itself to be postured to and dominated by external secular powers (Bridges & Phypers 1977:85).

When Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in 313 AD (1977:77–85), he also made baptism the required means for citizens to become Christian as well as for their official entry into the body of the Church. This marks the point at which the Church began developing its present level of acceptance for a type of Christianity which does not completely fulfil the tenets of personal salvation, and continues to be a cause of the struggle in paedobaptist denominations (Wright 2005:7).

Another example of an authority wrong use was between St. Augustine and the Donatists in the fifth century and was fought over whether *traditores* Christians who sought a return to Christ and His Church could be restored to faith and membership of the Church and if so, how this could be done? The Donatists believed that if all the requirements for such a return were met, then re-incorporation of these members should be permitted, and expedited particularly by water baptism even though this would mean a repetition of a prior baptism. St. Augustine contrarily disagreed with this measure because for him baptism was non-repeatable (McGrath 2017:358–360; 386–388). Did the Church at that time intentionally seek instead to find an outside authority, as judge or arbiter in the matter?

Another case in point of the misuse of authority or lack thereof is St Augustine's creation of the doctrine of the cleansing away of original sin through baptism. By what authority did he invent this doctrine (Bridges & Phypers 1977:80f.), especially when a Biblical authentication in support of his decision would always have been required but is lacking (Wright 2005:25).

The so-called dark Medieval Period of Christianity also seems to have witnessed a fair share of compromise in terms of the role played by the Bible as Divine authority. Theological power at that time was intended to be subject to the Bible and Church tradition operating in a balance, with reason as an additional third authority. Church tradition and theological reason however, gained the upper hand, and thus became the final decision-makers for all matters of Christian theology. The consequent relegation of the Bible as supreme authority was, however, the one factor that purportedly brought about the spiritual and moral decay of the Church at the time (Bridges & Phypers 1977:87).

When Martin Luther, a 16th century priest of the Holy Roman Church, performed his critique of Church doctrine and practices on the basis of the primacy of the Bible, and its message of Jesus as only Saviour (Ephesians 2:8), the Reformation of the Church and society resulted therefrom (Bandey 1976:80–81). Later, Wesley, much like Luther, was compelled to conduct a re-appraisal of the beliefs and practices of the Anglican Church in the light of biblical revelation. This exercise led to his own new birth, then the social transformation of Britain and thus ostensibly prevented the bloody revolution in France from spilling over into Britain (Pratney 1983:27–28). Returning to the Bible as *sola scriptura* thus not only enables the Bible to become the primary catalyst through which God had worked in regard to the great Lutheran Reformation of the 15th century (Pratney 1983:27–28), but also led to the English spiritual revival through the ministry and theology of John Wesley during the 18th century (1983:72–77).

Wesley may not have been the original architect of the basic ingredients that comprise the quadrilateral framework, but the way he made use of “the quadrilateral method when deliberating over or defending doctrinal matters” (Maddox 1994:36), as Luther had done before him, proved to be the key for arriving at the Divine objective of the revival of Christianity and its co-timeous reformation of the Church.

1.9.3 Design of Wesley’s Quadrilateral

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral has been chosen as the authority framework for this investigation of sacrament because it consists of sources of authority which collectively should produce an outcome which should come nearest to finding the mind of God on the matter that is in dispute (Outler 1991:22–31) and in the case of this study concerns the rightness or wrongness of convergence baptism. The Quadrilateral instrument is made up of four sources of authority, consisting of Church tradition, experience, reason, and the Biblical record. These four authorities comprised of the following justifications are detailed by Wesley:

Tradition: As doctrinal formulation is required to remain in keeping with Christian orthodox tradition, the questions asked are about what the great scholars and theologians, both past and present state, as for example the issue of rebaptism being discussed in this work (Wesley’s Letters in Williams 1960:25–38).

Experience: As Christian truth needs to be vivified in the overall personal experience of Christians, Wesley sought practical examples which may assist in providing further theological insight for a disputed matter (Wesley’s Letters in Williams 1960:25–38).

.Reason: Wesley believed that every doctrine should be constructed and defended rationally. An appropriate question therefore concerns what contributions common sense, logic, and analysis can make to the issue under debate (Wesley's Letters in Williams 1960:25–38).

The Bible: Because the Bible is the highest authority for all matters of Christian faith and practice, its authority needs to be regarded as having the final say; it is hence necessary in this regard to ask as to what evidence the Bible provides for or against the issue being raised in the study of baptism as sacrament (Wesley's Letters in Williams 1960:23&37).

1.9.4 Importance of the Wesleyan Application of His Quadrilateral

The importance of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral framework lies not in the fact that Wesley is credited as having constructed it, but rather in the way in which it should be used. If the Quadrilateral is utilised as in the example of a Macquarrieian-recipe approach (Macquarrie 1966:15) in which all authorities are considered to be of equal value, the outcome arrived at would likely be subjective and the possibility of hearing God's Voice would thus be diminished.

Wesley also never used any of the authorities singly, but always them in a combined arrangement with the Bible as the highest authority so that the central theme of redemption detailed in this book could have the determining say; in this way error would be avoided and the result could be trusted as being accurately Christian. "For any view to be authentically Christian he often appealed to two or three" of the authorities (Maddox 1994: 36–47). The authorities of tradition, experience and reason needed always to be subject to the Bible as the supreme authority for an authentic verdict. Indeed, Wesley's so-called 'quadrilateral' of theological authorities could more adequately be described as the "unilateral rule of scripture within a trilateral hermeneutic of reason, tradition, and experience" (Maddox 1994:46).

Possible pitfalls regarding the interpretation of Scripture could thus be avoided when the Wesleyan way of Quadrilateral application is followed. In this thesis, the Quadrilateral of authorities has not been applied equilaterally in a "recipe" approach in which all four authorities enjoy equal status as advocated by Macquarie (1966:15) but should rather be employed as in Wesley, with the Bible as the supreme authority, along with support from the insightful contributions garnered through the other three stated sources of authority (MCSA 2000:3–8).

Wesley always commenced theological study by looking first for direct (or literal) evidence from the Bible, before drawing from Biblical inference, and it is clear that his handling of

infant-baptism had been managed in this way. Wesley was concerned that, where possible, bible information is to be confirmed by experience, and reason should be employed so that what the Bible declares should be clearly understood, and how its truth is to be applied. “The resultant exposition should be plain truth for plain people”– that is, free “from all nice and philosophical speculations and all perplexed and intricate reasoning” (Williams 1960:27–28). What we are currently witnessing in today’s world is how secular thought and trends in social behaviour are being presented as more important than the need to establish what God says and requires (Keum 2013:30).

It is reasonable to believe that Wesley was all too aware of the influence of subjective secular power in his time and this context would have influenced the way he constructed and applied the Quadrilateral Framework of Authorities. It was from this awareness and his construct of the quadrilateral framework that he was able to maintain the Lutheran Reformation *sola scriptura* principle as the factor that would uphold the Bible as the highest authority in the task of Christian hermeneutic (McGrath 2017:104). He saw that the Bible possessed a status that was above all other authorities, so that according to Quadrilateral processes based on qualitative methodology, debate may be able to move from the subjective realm to Divine objective probabilities (McGrath 2017:18). The Quadrilateral poles of authority were used by Wesley according to a biblically prioritised order so as to reach, maintain and propagate the real truth of Christianity.

The threat from subjective pressures is always real, in that for example, when reason (i.e. what debate, logic, creativity, coherence, and so forth consider God to be saying) is prioritised over what the Biblical record reveals (what God has said and is saying), over tradition (what Christian scholars have said, and the Church is saying God has said and is saying), and over experience, (what God is saying through the practices, trends of movement and needs of people) a collective result from this approach of Quadrilateral application would likely not be the truth of God. In this arrangement no superior objective standard of judgement beyond subjective human reason would be able to accurately gauge whether what has been decided is of God or not.

To ignore what the Bible says, diminish its authority, or even manipulate its text in any way, would lead to the serious possibility of faulty deductions being made. Examples of Quadrilateral misuse in the history of the Church are plentiful, and this is particularly apparent from the Medieval Period of the Church, extending from about 5 AD to 15 AD (Bridges & Phipers 1977:86–94; McGrath 2017:21–23). At that time, the observance of Church tradition

was placed ahead of the Bible, even though both were employed by the Church of the time as being *bona fide* authorities that were assumed to be equal in value.

Wesley's Quadrilateral Framework of Authorities thus appears to be the nearest to being an objective instrument for conducting this study of baptism because it would serve as an objective benchmark principle for Christian guidance and validity testing so much needed by a sometimes confused church in very evil world (McGrath 2017:104–112). How research methodology which needs to be channelled through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral of Authorities is to be applied is discussed in the following section.

1.10 Research Methodology

1.10.1 Research Methodology for Quadrilateral Application

The Quadrilateral of Authorities not only serves as the structural outline for this dissertation, but also is the channel through which material is acquired and a qualitative study is made possible. The four authorities of the Quadrilateral have accordingly been arranged so that the process of investigation moves in a logical order starting with tradition, followed by experience and reason and then the Bible. The Bible has been prioritized as the highest authority so that it can also feature at the end of the investigation as the ultimate test for validity and to have the final say for an objective result.

1.10.2 Qualitative Study

Qualitative study is intended to establish how Christians describe and experience their faith, and then be in a position to take suitable steps for the resolution of problematic issues that may arise for the overall advancement of the Christianity. Authors who combine in the construction of a definition of qualitative study include Polanyi, Hendrickson Jnr, and Serres (2011:102).

Because this research task is about the theological problem of rebaptism in the MCSA, and proposes an alternative, the method being used is driven by a qualitative dynamic. This dynamic enables the argument to develop logically and in the case of this study on baptism will play itself out within the context of the given Quadrilateral Framework of Authorities. The movement of argument will proceed from negative to positive and from positive to a possible objective conclusion. The focus in this connection is thus about the question of whether and within the context of covenant paedobaptism, the baptism of both infants and of believers can be validly converged.

1.10.3 *Modus operandi* of Qualitative Methodology

A qualitative methodology is also one in which thematic and analytical methods not only serve as vital tools in the step-by-step procedure of qualitative method (Braun & Clarke 2006:13), but also can assist in establishing prevalent themes, including those which may be camouflaged in the detail of information, and which could have unforeseen relevance for the logical unfolding of the debate being conducted. In the case of baptism, there are many themes relating to the topic of convergence, but only those that are relevant to the topic of baptism as a holy sacrament will feature.

1.10.4 Qualitative Study

Qualitative thematic analysis is expounded in more practical terms by Nouria Bricki, and Judith Green (2007:1–5), who describe this kind of analysis “as a method designed to help the researcher [not only] to think about all the steps that need to be taken to ensure that a good quality piece of work is produced, [but also] is characterized by its aims which relate to understanding aspects of social life. Its method in general, thus generates words, rather than number data for analysis (Bricki & Green 2007:3). The qualitative *modus operandi* of this methodology thus also requires the asking of pertinent questions relative to the topic under discussion. For the purpose of this work regarding the problem issues of baptism, questions raised are those that ask “what”, “why”, and “how”, rather than the quantitative ones that ask “how many” or “how much”. Questions regarding themes relative to the topic, and the utilisation of emerging sub-themes which could make a contribution to the current debate, have consequently also been asked. Generally, these questions regard what the authors and other source-materials say, as well as what they leave unsaid; and the final question stems from what the researcher’s proposal in light of what is revealed by acquired materials.

Finally, qualitative methodology is also designed to ensure that at the end of the task there is coherence between ideas that are not contradictory of the general flow of the argument, and provide statements that are clear in pronouncement. The methodology hence, shows how to i) systematically collect; ii) process; iii) analyse; iv) and interpret the available data with logical precision, so that the entire process leads to a point at which a cogent and objective deduction can ultimately be made.

1.10.5 Qualitative Research Steps Taken in Acquisition and Processing of Material

The sources listed in this dissertation’s Bibliography and the materials accessed from across the internet provide substantial information for the review task. These have been obtained from

a wide-ranging search conducted within the context of the Quadrilateral poles of Authority and have been sourced from: the MCSA; the researcher's own library of books. Also used were the libraries at the University of KwaZulu-Natal; the Seth Mokotimi MCSA Seminary; the Cory Library of Rhodes University in Grahamstown, RSA; the bookshelves of clerical friends and acquaintances, both MCSA and interdenominationally. Bookshops, such as the MCSA Bookshop and Baptist book-rooms; British, American and African suppliers of Christian books; conference debates; local and district MCSA Church seminars and retreats; personal discussions; letters and articles from the MCSA monthly newspaper entitled *Dimension*; MCSA executive authority information; the researcher's own snap-questionnaire applied to approximately forty MCSA ministers, which included all cultural groupings; from an overseas friend working as a book scout; WCC materials and journal articles; Church observation programmes and Christian practice; communications with paedobaptist Church members; sociological surveys which focus specifically on the movement of Church membership between denominational boundaries relative to Church practices concerning both baptism and evangelism. Ideas have also been generated from the Universities' school of lectures, seminar cohorts; the interactions of debate with fellow students and Christians from across a wide spectrum of denominational allegiance; and last, but not least, from the supervisors themselves of this project. After gathering in all the information the next step was to read and digest the information; extract the relevant passages, and make copious notes from debates, conference outcomes concerned with the purpose of baptism and the unity of baptismal practice.

Collected materials were subsequently been sifted to separate what seemed crucial from that is peripheral. Crucial information was then categorised and compartmentalised on both paper and computer and from there, has been worked into the dissertation's structure. A subsequent collation exercise was carried in which all relevant material was placed into the various categories from the themes that were identified, and which thereafter were aligned with the study's theme headings. This was done after all the information had been repeatedly read within context, accurately understood, and accordingly re-adjusted and corrected where this was necessary.

Qualitative questions which arose, such as those in asking: "what and where", and "how and why", were persistently used in the analysis and evaluation of the sources obtained. Only those answers obtained which are considered consistent with the topic subject, and the progression of thought from chapter theme to chapter theme, and subsequently to sub-themes, in forwarding the dissertation's stated argument objectives were retained.

In the case of surveys and numerical data, these were treated from a qualitative question-and-assessment angle to ascertain whether they could provide any further insight in the need to reach an objective decision with regard to whether or not convergence baptism can be considered a true expression of sacramental and evangelical baptism. A re-reading of the work several times has given the opportunity to detect and eliminate all language and theological flaws and to do any revision needed in order to ensure as much as possible that the quality of the final work presented would be of a high standard.

At the end of the task, and with everything seemingly in correct order, chapter outcomes summarised, and deductions made from all six chapters, an overall conclusion will have been made but only after the validity test by the *sola scriptura* sacramental and evangelical hermeneutic standard as required by the MCSA has been applied (MCSA 2000:2; 7).

1.11 Possible Logistical Problems

The reason for going wider than the MCSA, which is essentially an African Church, in the search for appropriate materials stems from the perceived absence of any ongoing research being conducted within the MCSA itself with reference to the issue of rebaptism ever since the MCSA's mandate of 1989 (MCSA 1989:58–68).

The Black African standpoint on baptism and rebaptism which, while it indicates a strong emphasis on baptism needing to be an expression of community cohesion, also reveals that baptism is a matter of personal decision and is growing in demand. Literature along this line has been found with fairly limited success. Being a constituent member of the WCC, the MCSA nevertheless relies heavily on the pronouncements of paedobaptistic scholars from other denominations, who are also members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) which body is made up of a multiplicity of racial and cultural categories and is thus an important source of information.

The research has not however hitherto come across any work, whether inside or outside of the MCSA, that is specifically devoted to a study of baptismal convergence. Contrarily, this in no way is a claim that material with reference to the possibility of convergence is not being produced, or that no global search is being conducted in the direction of this option (Wright 2005:Back-over Page; Witherington III 2007:Inside-cover page).

1.12 Possible Theoretical Problems

A core theoretical problem concerning the convergence of the two baptisms described in MCSA practice is that of exactly how baptism as a practice can be regarded and accepted as repeatable in a manner which avoids the possibility of a second baptismal application from being understood as a rebaptism.

A convergence of the two baptisms into a single entity appears to be an impossible option in the light of paedo-baptist theology which has ruled that baptismal application is non-repeatable. This constitutes the central challenge which this study seeks to address in overcoming the problem of rebaptism, but more especially is for the strengthening of baptismal unity and for more evangelical efficacy in the application of this rite within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

1.13 Study Limitation and Scope

This work is an investigation into the possibility that sacramental and evangelical baptism in the MCSA may become accepted as repeatable within the scope of an alternative option in which the two baptisms become conjoined. Although the Bible is generally viewed by evangelicals as the essential source of evangelical theology, this work is not primarily a bible study of sacrament, but rather is theological in focus.

The Bible does however feature heavily in this philosophical debate, because it functions as one of the Quadrilateral authorities. Because it has not been stated anywhere in the Bible that rebaptism cannot be practiced, or conversely, that more than one baptism can be administered, does mean that rebaptism is more of a theological problem than a Biblical one.

1.14 Conclusion

This first chapter reveals that there is disunity in the MCSA over its current policy and practice regarding water baptism as a sacramental practice. Problematic issues are associated with requests for what the MCSA views as rebaptism on the one hand, and the ruling that water baptism is non-repeatable on the other. The result is that requests for rebaptism create ongoing dispute and division, because the causes of these requests have never been objectively considered or settled acceptably.

These problems could however be handled through the introduction of a convergence notion in baptistic practice; in reconciling perceptions regarding the repetition of baptism, as distinct from rebaptism on the one hand, and by superseding of the Church's non-repeatability ruling

with another more innovative baptismal option one the other. A convergence option has seemingly never been thought of as being possible. How convergence baptism could become regarded as ecumenically possible is to be thoroughly guided in this study by the Wesleyan framework of theological authorities (MCSA 2000:2), and objectively tested by the sacramental and evangelical character of the Biblical narrative which qualifies the bible to be the highest and final deciding authority for true Christian decision-making as in Wesleyan theology and usage. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral Framework is used in conjunction with qualitative methodology in which the questions of “what”, “why”, and also “how”, are asked. The methodology is intended to ensure that the steps followed are accompanied by discussion and argument which are logical by process, coherent in nature, cogent in presentation and which, when combined, should provide an objective finding in keeping with MCSA *sola scriptura* sacramental and evangelical hermeneutical requirements (MCSA Laws & Discipline 2000:1–8).

1.15 Thesis Structural Outline

Chapter 1: Introducing the Study

Chapter one has dealt with the introduction to the study in terms of its background and motivations, and has outlined the study’s problem, objectives and key questions, along also with its theoretical framework and methodology, its logistical, ethical and possible theoretical problems, its limitations and scope, and also includes this structural outline for the research document herein produced.

Chapter 2: Church Tradition: A Systematic Literature Review of the Church Understanding and Practice of the Doctrine of Baptism

This chapter centres on the study’s first sub-question and its objective – how baptism originally developed within the history of the Church to become a *bona fide* sacramental Church doctrine.

The chapter then explores why attitudes on the adoption of baptism as sacrament have seemingly always been divisive. It also asks whether sacrament, in the form of the convergence of the two practices, might not become more unifying for the Church commensurate with greater evangelistic appeal as it was intended to be in the formative stages of the Christian church, than it currently is.

Chapter 3: Perspectives on the Sacrament of Baptism and Implications for the MCSA

This chapter is in answer to sub-question two of this investigation, which focuses on the Biblical perspectives of scholars around the sacrament of baptism since World War II. It also

examines whether these perspectives may contain the seeds of convergence baptism, with a concomitant positive effect on perceptions regarding MCSA baptism.

Chapter 4: Implications of the Debates, and Paradigms of Practice on the Sacrament of Baptism in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa

This chapter considers whether the potential for convergence could also feature in multilateral conference debates, and in the establishment of paradigms for consensus baptism which are already being tried in various parts of the world. This part of the study is in response to sub-question three of this thesis.

Chapter 5: Theological Foundations and Practices of the Sacrament of Baptism in the MCSA

In answer to sub-question four for this study, this chapter discusses the theological foundations and practices of the sacrament of baptism in the MCSA. It attempts to determine why the problem of rebaptism persists in this denomination. It thus sets the stage for determining whether convergence baptism carries sufficient potential to be accepted as a viable theology and sound practice within the context of MCSA baptismal doctrine and policy.

Chapter 6: Convergence as Possible New Knowledge based on Wesleyan Dialectical Theology

This chapter attempts to ascertain whether convergence baptism possesses the potential to become an acceptable and valid practice within the MCSA by means of a dialectical method of studying baptism based on Wesleyan theology and practice.

Chapter 7: General Conclusion and Quadrilateral Test Finding

After performing a thorough Quadrilateral analysis of the materials gleaned, the outcomes from this exercise will then be subjected to the final test of the sacramental and evangelical hermeneutic requirement (MCSA 2000:1–4) for a verdict of whether convergence baptism can become acceptable within the Church as a legitimate practice or not.

Chapter Two
Church Tradition
A Systematic Literature Review of the Church's Understanding
and Practice of the Doctrine of Baptism

2.1 Introduction

Survey material reveals that there is a general move away from infant baptism to the practice of believer's baptism particularly in Western paedobaptism in Barthian style (Wright 2005:7–10) and seemingly is also happening within the membership of the MCSA (MCSA Bishop Anderson's Letter, 12 October 2015). Perhaps the reason for this may be found in the practice of infant baptism itself. This rite possesses a propensity to promote regeneration at the level of water baptism but not of an independent new birth changed life (Wright in Schreiner & Wright 2006:8-9).

The discussion contained in this chapter centres on the study's first sub-question and its objective. It provides an accompanying discussion of how baptism originally developed and came to be viewed as sacrament; and how sacrament resulted in the generation of problems which may well have influenced current understanding and practice of this sacrament within the MCSA and its membership.

This chapter comprises a number of parts. The first of these is an introduction, followed by a determination and discussion of the growth of the notion of sacrament, and what could have influenced its development, especially with regard to perceptions of the practice which seem prevalent today. The chapter then presents a detailed and current definition of sacrament as practiced under the governing tenets presently active in the MCSA, and a critique is made of sacramental baptism based on the observations of baptismal scholars who provide arguments in favour of believer's baptism (Waymeyer 2008:1–7).

The chapter also provides believer baptist, A. B. Caneday (in Schreiner & Wright 2006) with the opportunity to critique his own tradition, and gives insight into the baptismal beliefs propounded by Stone-Campbell in its belief that believer's baptism is exclusively correct (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:285). This fairly recent understanding seems to be a believer-baptist version of *ex opere operato*, or mechanical (i.e. operational, or “automatic”) salvation.

Surveys of Church membership trends, which are only briefly looked at, seem to confirm the assumption that, because of the growing global negative secularisation, the paedo-baptist expression of Christianity is losing its general and populist appeal. “There will be fewer baptisms with growing secularization through coming decades because infants growing into adulthood are without a religious mooring. That people are seeking God but not the church is a growing phenomenon in regard to infant baptism” (*National Catholic Reporter* 2016:1) is one only such observation in support of this growing phenomenon, and is published in the *National Catholic Reporter* (2016). Allied to this is the statement of another survey which finds that the “label ‘evangelical’ is more popular among all Christian groupings contemporarily than other types of overt Christian expression (*Hermeneutics* 2012).

The way to meet the challenges presented by these trends is for more baptismal balance to be achieved within the body of the Church, and this should materialise by means of a recovery of the purpose of Biblical sacramental baptism as discussed in Wright (2005:102). Michael Green’s proposed middle way for the unity of baptism with regard to paedo-baptism (Green 1987:39) is likewise explored, and forms part of the chapter’s concluding section.

2.2 Origins of Baptism as a Sacrament

Stamm (2001:13) argued that the concept of sacrament did not begin with the Church, but originates from Christ and the first Christians as they understood the purpose and meaning of baptism, and other religious practices. As the Pentecostal account in the Bible (Acts 2) shows, the Church began baptising at the very outset of its history, and has continued to do so throughout the length of all generations up to the current day. For example, Justin Martyr writing his First Apology in around AD 150 describes a Church which baptised its converts, and who gathered on the first day of each week to listen to Scripture, pray together, and to celebrate the Eucharist in commemoration of the Last Supper (Stamm 2001:13–16).

A third century document called *The Apostolic Tradition*, written by Hippolytus of Rome, describes a similar pattern of Christian practice (Stamm 2001:13–16). As the centuries passed however, the Church’s understanding of the rite of baptism changed, and people have come to understand baptism less as an originally-intended initiation rite but more as an act which instantly cleanses the individual of the contamination of original sin. Baptism was thus performed as early in life as possible in order to provide redemptive spiritual protection against the possibility of infant death. This change of emphasis seems to have heralded the beginning of the belief in baptism as a form of sacramental regeneration.

Nothing however is mentioned in the bible as to why people were baptised in the early Christian Church, even although in the Acts of the Apostles, this practice is mainly associated with the preaching of the Gospel to large numbers of people in the open air, and in some instances at their homes (Acts 2:37–47). Whether therefore, infants were baptised from earliest Christian times has always been a subject hotly debated.

Baptist scholars, such as G. Beasley-Murray (1962), Kurt Aland (1963), Steven A. McKinion (in Schreiner & Wright 2006) collectively state that the issue of infant baptism is lacking in clear Biblical support, and that this is confirmed by an almost total lack of information surviving from the Patristic Era of the Church regarding this matter (McKinion in Schreiner & Wright 2006:186–188). Jeremias (1960) however, argues that there is no good reason to assume that infants were excluded at that time, because of the important position which they occupied in the Church, and confirmed in the pronouncements by Christ in chapter and verse bible statements (Bandey 1976:27).

The issue in question relative to the purpose of this research is to discover when baptism started to be viewed as a Church sacrament, as opposed to what was originally believed to be intended as a simple but powerful symbol that implies the acceptance of Christ's offered redemption.

The problem is that if people only began to be baptised as adults following the preaching of the Gospel, then unaware infants might necessarily be seen as excluded from receiving its to be bestowed redemptive blessing, and the possibility of viewing baptism as a valid sacramental rite as applied to infants thus become greatly diminished. Bandey accordingly argued that the scarcity of information from the early eras of the Christian Church on this topic makes it decidedly difficult to provide a confident answer in this regard (Bandey 1976:25–31).

If however infants were included at the beginning of the Christian Church, the issue is then whether any blessing imparted was considered to be a component of the purpose of baptism, in addition to the preaching of the Gospel (Bandey 1976:25–31). This question remains unanswered. Be that as it may, infant baptism had become established as an accepted sacramental practice in the Church by about AD 250 (Bandey 1976:31). Bandey further conjectures that the concept of sacrament arose because “a theological justification was found in the doctrine of ‘original sin’ which denied that infants were in a state of innocence” (1976:31). Jeremias thus argues that:

it was not infant baptism which was the innovation, but the doctrine of original sin which was substantiated by it. The doctrine supplied *ex post facto* justification for the existing custom of

infant baptism. The new doctrine affirmed that newborn infants were in a state of sin, and under the condemnation pronounced against Adam and all unredeemed mankind [*sic*]. It was vital therefore that they should be incorporated into the community of the redeemed for their cleansing and eventual complete redemption (Jeremias 1976:31).

In most Christian circles, discussion concerning the implications of the bestowal of this sacrament generally revolves solely around adult baptism in relation to the possibility of redemption. However, since the apostolic era, the practices of infant and adult baptism have become separated, even though in Biblical times, the focus was more on the family. A focus on family redemption for responding adults, and covenant as a blessing for their children was pivotal in Old Testament household covenantal religion, and the continuation of this practice is claimed to be demonstrated in the examples of household baptism provided in the New Testament (Acts 16:13–15, 16:31–34, 18:7–8; 1 Corinthians 1:13–17) (Jeremias 1962:77).

2.3 Earliest Post-Biblical Definition of Sacrament

McGrath (1993:493) describes sacrament as a rite which is deemed to have been instituted by Christ Himself. During the fifteenth century differences developed between Roman Catholic doctrine on the sacraments, and that of the Lutheran Reformers. Whereas the Roman Catholic Church recognised seven such sacraments, namely baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, marriage, ordination, penance, and unction, Protestants argue that only baptism and the Eucharist are to be ascribed the New Testament status (McGrath 1993:493). Be this as it may, baptism and the Eucharist are the only two sacramental rites which form a common ground for unity between all denominational branches of the universal Christian Church, with the exception of the Quakers, who neither practice baptism or Holy Communion (Davies 1986:454–455).

The New Testament, moreover, does not make use of the term “sacrament”. The Greek word *mysterion*, literally translated as “mystery”, is generally used to refer to the redeeming Work of God (McGrath 1993:420). Tertullian, however, seems to have been the first of the early Church Fathers who attempted to define sacrament in terms of its meaning (McGrath 1993:420). In doing so, he refers to the “mystery of God’s salvation”, the symbols and rites that were then associated with it, and he further points out that in Latin the word “sacrament” had come to also mean “a sacred oath”. Sacred oath, in this sense, refers to an oath of allegiance and the loyalty required from Roman soldiers. This military connotation for the word sacrament understandably corresponds with the need for the allegiance and loyalty of Christians to their God (McGrath, 1993:420).

There were thus two definitions of sacrament which existed before the Reformation: “that of Augustine (354–430 A.D.) – *accredit verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum*, Word is added to the element and it becomes a sacrament; and that of Peter Lombard (1164 A.D.) given in his *Book of Sentences* – *sacramentum est sacrae rei signum*, a sacrament is the sign of a sacred thing, specified in the formula which became famous – *sacramentum est invisibilis gratiae visibilis forma*, a sacrament is the visible form or expression of an invisible grace” (Marcel 1959:28).

2.4 Influence of Greek Mystery Religions

Jeremias (1960) observes that belief in baptism as sacrament became more and more common in the early part of Christianity, because Hellenistic Christianity had lost much of the understanding of the eschatological significance of the practice, and saw it increasingly as a sacrament intended for the remission of sin. A superstitious misconception of baptism thus developed, which regarded infant baptism as a mere charm that granted forgiveness and was thus “linked with the weakening of the concept of separation from the world and incorporation into the Messianic community that was so prevalent in Paul’s writings” (Bandey 1976:35–36). Bandey nevertheless claims that the theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries, such as Augustine, continued to be emphatic in affirming that the effectiveness of baptism was essentially due to the action of the Holy Spirit, and was thus not attributable to the water used in the actual rite (Bandey 1976:36).

The first signs of when baptism began to be viewed as a sacrament can thus be derived from the influence of Greek mystery religion, which seems to have been absorbed into the Christian practice of baptism during the first part of Christian history during the patristic era (c.100–c.700) It seems that this was when water baptism took on a magical redemptive connotation, that the individual became newly born during and as a result of the act of baptism as in the belief system of Greek mystery religions. The message of Christianity concerning the death and resurrection of Christ due to its similarity with Greek mystery religion subsequently became less vibrant, and infant baptism thus became more institutionalised. Infant Baptism had become invested with this notion, even though it is difficult for anyone to believe that infants themselves could undergo a death and resurrection experience (Bridges & Phypers 1977:96–106).

This development also occasioned the introduction of the rite of confirmation, which came to be viewed as a way of bringing infant baptism to salvific completion. This development seems

logical, and yet it is questionable as to why a second baptism, in the form of a believer's baptism, could not have been used instead, especially since adult baptism appears to have been the dominant practice at the time (Wright 2005:9). It was for this reason that reformers with Anabaptist leanings felt that the reforming of Roman Catholic doctrine by Martin Luther did not go far enough. Water baptism had been effectively excluded during the general reconception of the church (Bridges & Phypers 1977:97).

2.5 Reign of Emperor Constantine (306–337)

The influence of Constantine's conversion to Christianity, and the consequent issuing of the Edict of Milan in the year AD 311, in which every person in the Holy Roman Empire was required by law to be baptised, played a significant role in the way baptism was then viewed. During this period, baptism came to be viewed as redemptive, and the sacrament itself *ex opere operato* (conversion is performed by the act of water application itself). Baptised people were led to believe that they were Christian, even though they never experienced a life change through spiritual rebirth, or of needing to become practicing members of the established Church (Bridges & Phypers 1977:77; 91).

The Constantinian requirement may therefore also be viewed as that period of Church history when indiscriminate baptism became institutionalised, and people were led to believe that they could be Christian without experiencing any kind of personal new birth so long as they were baptized with water, which is a problem still baptismally endemic.

2.6 The Influence of St. Augustine's Baptismal Doctrine (Fifth Century)

Baptism became a divided practice for reasons related to the various nuances given to the meaning of the term sacrament, and this seems to have marked the beginning of the practice of rebaptism. The early centuries of Christianity were dominated by the legitimacy factor of baptism, and when a baptism was seen to be erroneously administered, this needed to be corrected with what was deemed to be true baptism (Dixon 1979:69–71). Tertullian, early in the third century for example, had already questioned whether it was correct to baptise infants (Dixon 1979:35).

The issue of dispute between St. Augustine and the Donatists in the fifth century concerned the need to accommodate the restoration to full Church membership of returning recidivists called

*traditores*⁴ (McGrath 2017:386). It is the fourth aspect of Augustine's definition of sacrament, the viewing of baptism as a means of imparting God's eternal and redeeming Grace however, which has caused the Church's ongoing divisive bedevilment. The problem of the separate administration of two baptisms was probably the reason for infant baptism becoming invested with all kinds of sacramental claims, and this problem has been exacerbated because its Biblical text and verse authenticity remains in doubt (Floor in Konig, Lederle & Möller 1983:72–74).

As head of the church, Augustine championed the view that baptism carries value in itself which brought about salvation by its administration without any response required from initiates (McGrath 2017:18). In keeping with this theory, new-born babies were believed to be in danger of dying without being saved if they had not received the sacrament of baptism for cleansing away of original sin.

Bridges and Phipers argue that Augustine lacked Biblical authority in the formulation of this doctrine. Before long the cleansing of original guilt became more the justification for paedobaptism as being a salvific rite than of the cleansing away of original sin. By this understanding, baptism saves *ex opere operato*, which is, "by the work being worked" (Bridges & Phipers 1977:37), and was likely a consequence of the legacy of the Constantinian edict (Bridges & Phipers 1977:36–38). This view continues to be prominent in some circles of paedobaptismal practice, where sacrament without evangelisation is afforded unwarranted prominence.

While Augustinian theology regarding baptism was designed for various reasons, its central motive was also seemingly to counter the emergence of the practice of rebaptism, by imbuing it with sacramental status. This meant that baptism could not be repeated (McGrath 1993:394–396). Questions concerning the moral suitability of Church Ministers as celebrants, and the issue of a return to faith posed by *traditores* during this period, were matters much-disputed, and were frequently raised by the Donatists. During this period, Christians were forced into a position of becoming traitors of the Faith when succumbing to emperor subjugation. Some *traditores* did however, repent and return to the church (McGrath 2017:358–360).

⁴ *Traditores* were Christians who were under persecution for their Christian Faith in Emperor Diocletian's time (McGrath 1993 284–313), and were regarded by the Church as traitors of the faith when they relented to the pressure of persecution (McGrath 1993:393–394).

Being morally austere and rigid in their faith, the Donatist Christians held that *traditores* could only meaningfully return to the Church by means of a renewal of baptism, since this would be regarded as a sign of the genuineness of their turnaround back to real faith (McGrath 1993:394–396). The Donatists thus saw no reason why repentant and returning Christians could not be the recipients of more than one baptism, administered as a sign of their spiritual restoration within the body of the Church.

This practice was opposed by Augustine (AD 400), who declared that rebaptism was not a legitimate Christian practice, because any initial baptism administered in the name of the Trinity was required to be seen as a genuine sacrament, which could therefore not be undone (Bandey 1976:33) or repeated. Rebaptism then became officially outlawed, and this ruling has never been rescinded in general paedobaptist belief. This belief itself was probably reinforced by mainstream paedobaptist Christianity which seemingly vested it with a higher value as sacrament than is biblically warranted.

2.7 The Middle Ages of the Church (Seventh to Fifteenth Century)

The middle period of Church history, its so-called “Dark Age”, sometimes referred to as the Medieval Era, was subjected to the influence of a number of powerful dynamics “with the collapse or gradual disintegration of the western Roman empire in the fifth century [and] was the commencement of a face change in Western Europe” (McGrath 2017:21–29). The Church suffered from influences such as political, economic and moral power and went through an extremely difficult time in needing to cope with political, cultural, and even religious changes, which problems were further exacerbated by the rapid intrusion of Islam (McGrath 2017:21)

This Dark Age stretching from approximately the seventh to the fifteenth century ironically also witnessed some “immensely creative and innovative” (McGrath 2017:21–29) developments, which have become landmarks of Christian theology. The intrusion by this creativity has been a positive influence, and was seemingly and ironically the reason for what appears to be a lack of baptismal conflict related to who should be baptised during that time. At the same time, this period saw infant baptism becoming the dominant practice precisely because of the assumption that baptism was vested with sacramental power (McGrath 2017:35). Infant baptism thus became an institutional requirement in lieu of true redemption, which in turn became a major cause of the nominal observance of Christianity.

The distorted understanding of sacrament in the Roman Catholic Church which arose at that time, together with the less than exemplary conduct of baptised people who claim to be

Christian, were amongst the major reasons for strong reactions experienced from large sections of the Christian population (Bridges & Phypers 1977:99–102) against this church. These reactions resulted in the creation of what are sometimes referred to as “pre-Reformation reform groups” (Bridges & Phypers 1977:86–88).

Two of the more prominent of these groups were the Waldensians and the Paulicians who, by contrast to *status quo* baptism, opted for the practice of believer’s baptism, without formally rejecting that of infant baptism (Bridges & Phypers 1977:86-94). These groups saw nothing wrong with rebaptism, especially of those who came to them from what they believed to be a heretical Roman Catholic Church. The meaning of baptism as a sacrament within the Church had by then become a byword for automatic salvation, and paying for one’s own sin and the sins of those in purgatory became standard practice (Bridges & Phypers 1977:88–89:100).

It thus appears that for the first time in paedobaptist belief and practice, infant and adult baptism existed and functioned in a side-by-side but separate arrangement, while rebaptism became normal practice albeit on a limited scale. This period of the Church’s history also conversely witnessed the beginnings of a reversal of the view of sacrament as the automatic “dying and rising” in Christ, characterised by its presumed redeeming power (Bridges & Phypers 1977:89–94). Bandey (1976) confirms that:

two apparent issues of baptism that perpetuated the view of the church as a corrupt and spiritually cold institution during this period were the strong prevalence of belief in the magical power of baptism as in the Greek mystery religion of the early centuries of Christianity, and the question of the correctness of the baptism of infants viewed as an automatic cleansing away of the guilt of sin (Bandey 1976:31).

2.8 The Waldensians

While the views of baptism amongst the various Waldensian groupings were not always consistently similar, their common objective was that of reforming and reviving the Church as an institution (Bridges & Phypers 1977:86–94).

When Catholics were converted to these para-Church movements, and were concomitantly rebaptized, they were considered by the Waldensians to be moving from a false Church to a true one, seemingly because they then assumed the Donatist belief system (1977:90–91).

Luther had described Waldensians as baptising “little ones and rebaptizing those who come to them from us” (Bridges & Phypers 1977:90–91). The Waldensian practice of baptism was however primarily a reaction against Constantinian ritual, and is thus a prime example of a

respectable pre-Reformation Protestant movement which held “a dual approach to paedobaptism and believer’s baptism” (Bridges & Phypers 1977:91) introducing reformational change into baptismal theology and practice. It seems that this dual approach paved the way for how baptism would come to be administered as a covenantal and sacramental rite as a result of Waldensian change.

2.9 The Lutheran Reformation (Fifteenth to Sixteenth Centuries)

Marcel (1959) writes that for the reformers, the definitions of sacrament by Augustine and Lombard were far too vague and imprecise (Section 2.3). The only way to arrive at a precise definition was for them to concentrate on the ceremonies themselves, which through general agreement would then have become recognised as sacraments (Marcel 1959:29).

Some of the radical reformers, like Huldrych Zwingli and Conrad Grebel rejected infant baptism outright, because of its sacramental abuse and the lack of Biblical evidence in support of this practice (McGrath 2017:41) These reformers thereby came to be regarded as the progenitors of the Baptist Church. Other Church reformers, such as Luther and Calvin, saw the genuine aspect of infant baptism, and linked the practice increasingly with a covenantal emphasis in which human faith response played a greater role in the appropriation of the message of baptism’s evangelistic meaning (Bridges & Phypers 1977:105–112). These reformers began to be referred to as “paedo-baptists”, for whom baptism was increasingly viewed as legitimate practice based on covenant, and because covenant embraces both believing adults and their infants. While for Luther sacrament was to a great extent founded on covenant, yet within the believer baptistic grouping, sacrament did not initially play any sacramentally significant role, as baptism was regarded as purely symbolic in function (1977:89–94).

It seems that the view of baptism being regarded as a sacrament came about largely through an over-emphasis on and defence of infant baptism, which was initially to the detriment of believer’s baptism. The great divide between the two baptisms that grew over the centuries, finally exploded when the reformists under Luther are said to have split into believer baptist and paedo-baptist groupings. Those reformers who placed more emphasis on evangelicalism than on sacrament belonged within the Anabaptist grouping (Bridges & Phypers 1977:97–108). They became known as the radical reformers, because they finally came to the decision that Biblical baptism could only have reference to believer’s and not to children, to be practiced exclusively by the mode of immersion (McGrath 2017:41).

The purpose of baptismal practice was thereby also considered to be an evangelical witness of personal salvation received which was another reason for the exclusion of infants (Bridges & Phypers 1977:99). Luther on the other hand, is said to have remained paedobaptist in his sacramental approach, and based his stance on an interpretation of *sola scriptura* as signifying that something may also be regarded as being Biblical even though it is only implied in bible text and verse information (Bridges & Phypers 1977:90–91). The Biblical basis for infant baptism was hence justified by this view. The Baptist grouping however, following Calvin argued that only when something is explicitly stated in the Bible could it be regarded as truly Biblical (Bridges & Phypers 1977:36–38). The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century thus saw rebaptism practiced arising from the unresolved issue of who should be baptized and over division around its purpose all of which resulted in a permanent split between the reformers (1977:109–112).

The more evangelically inclined reformers reacted against the concept of baptism as a sacrament which they claimed denoted pseudo-regeneration and for them was a sign of the spiritual and theological depravity to which the Church had sunk (Bridges & Phypers 1977:113–116). Orthodox Protestant reformers however came to believe that sacrament was an indispensable component of baptism because it emphasises the primacy of God's action for the redemption of people. Humanity's response to God's prior action thus needs always to be of secondary importance in relation to the true redemptive message carried by baptism (1977:96–97).

Those who chose to remain as moderate reformers such as Zwingli and Melancthon stayed with Luther, who had himself largely chose to remain within the bounds of Roman Catholic sacramental understanding, whilst the radical reformers abandoned the notion of infant baptism altogether, for the reason that they held that sacrament is non-Biblical because it promotes nominal salvation (McGrath 2017:41).

These differences concerning what constitutes the true nature of Biblical authority continues to foment rivalry between followers of the two types of baptism and an ironic spin-off of this impasse is the perpetuation of the practice of rebaptism which while it is outlawed yet is based on the theology of the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5.

2.10 Post-Reformation Period

During this period, the purpose of baptism as an evangelical rite began to gain momentum, as demonstrated in the historical studies and surveys of David Wright (2005:9). Marcel, moreover

states that, difficult as it was for the Church reformers to construct an accurate definition of sacrament, it was only after the Lutheran Reformation that the only sure and satisfactory method of arriving at the most precise idea possible of the meaning of the word sacrament was to refer to the ceremonies which by general consent were being recognized as possessing special divine attribute and by general consent also to analyse them in order to define their essential and characteristic qualities (Marcel 1959:28–29).

Such a redefining was undertaken, but only in light of the careful study of Biblical baptismal narrative. Following on from the Reformation, the sacrament of baptism was resultantly defined more in terms of what the Bible states concerning this rite (Marcel 1959:29). The definition of sacrament thus became less opaque, and its practice began to become recognised by an increasing number of Christians as a Church ceremony which had been instituted by Christ Himself (Matthew 28:19), and which needed to be perpetuated till His return (1 Corinthians 11:26) (Marcel 1959:28–29).

Baptism thus became regarded as an extraordinary external sign inspired by God to display and explain with clarity those benefits which are spiritual and eternal in their nature. The sacraments therefore, were not only regarded as signs, but also were viewed as covenantal seals which could serve to confirm and strengthen the Christian faith (Marcel 1959:29). Marcel further concluded that it was “recognition of the worth of this biblical affirmation that gave the reformed doctrine of the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion their original character and grand precision” (1959:29).

This fresh development in sacramental understanding seems also to have been derived from a rejection of, and attack on, the Biblical validity of infant baptism from the earliest times of the Church. Sacrament as a covenant thus became the justification adopted for both types of baptism and their defence. Hence the reinforcing of the non-repeatability ruling and particularly as sacrament became specifically tied to the Death and Resurrection of Christ. Since the sacrament of baptism was based on covenantal justification, and seems to have been arrived at as a consolidating notion up until the time of the Reformation, the resulting impasse which arose between the two baptisms became entrenched warfare (Bridges & Phipers 1977:96) and there would therefore have been no real possibility of achieving consensus over the two baptismal practices within such a feuding climate.

As Protestant Reformers separated into various constituencies, they ultimately became completely polarised. Bridges and Phipers describe how “Protestant killed Protestant for the

crime of obeying God's Word as he understood it" (Bridges & Phypers 1977:96). This probably occurred, not only because infant baptism could not specifically be located in the scriptures of the New Testament, but largely because infant baptism came to acquire the status of being a form of mystery religion practice (Section 2.4), which could be indiscriminately used for the achievement of automatic salvation and this possibility was seen as false and became abhorrent to many of the Reformers.

2.11 Definition of Sacrament in the Modern Period

Augustine seems to have been the first Church Father who defined and laid down the general principles of the modern-day definition for the term sacrament (McGrath 2017:382). This definition is made up of four effective components: a physical or material element, such as water, as in the case of baptism; a "likeness" to what is being signified as its accurate and clear representation; an authorisation which signifies what it is supposed to represent, with the specific case in point being the authorisation of baptism by Jesus Himself as in Matthew 28:19–20; and finally, the efficacy by which baptism is capable of conveying, or of the conferring of benefits to recipients in accordance with what the ritual truly signifies (McGrath 1993:422).

The Augustinian view in which baptism washes away original guilt is an example of this fourth assumption, and his theory accordingly generated the belief that infant baptism constituted the automatic regeneration of those being baptised (Section 2.6) This fourth aspect of sacrament has fomented enormous disagreement amongst Christians, because it raises questions regarding how and when God works with regard to the administration of the water used in baptisms (McGrath 2017:383–386). Some of these questions include whether the Church is really invested with the power to confer the blessing of true sacrament upon the people whom it baptises; and also about when the salvific benefit of the practice actually accrues. Is it during the act of baptism or after a faith response the preached Word of God is made? And when by baptism does an infant actually enter God's covenant? Does the sacrament merely constitute a symbol of what God has done, is doing, and will do? Or, is there any truth in the insinuation that God automatically commits Himself to perform a salvific action during the act of baptism?

These are issues which have never satisfactorily been settled or answers provided, unanimously accepted by baptismal proponents. Another divisive factor was over whether "the sacraments of the Old Covenant", such as circumcision, and the "sacraments of the New Covenant" as a specifically Christian event can be consistent in relationship with each other (McGrath 2017:392–386).

What differentiated these two aspects of sacrament, according to theologians of this period, was that in the sacraments of the Old Covenant, the spiritual realities were only signified, whereas in the New Covenant, sacraments actualised what they were intended to signify (McGrath 1993:422).

Stephen Wellum is of the view that the Old Testament Covenant does not provide a Biblical basis for New Covenant baptism, because there is no connection between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism; these two covenants therefore remain mutually exclusive in both their respective significance and practice (Wellum in Schreiner & Wright 2006:160).

The Lutheran Reformers nevertheless, all eventually came to reject five of the seven rites regarded as sacraments by the Roman Catholic Church, and only persistently retained the practices of baptism and Holy Communion. Those Reformers influenced by Luther and his teachings argued that not only were these two sacraments instituted by Christ, but they were the only ones amongst the original seven Roman Catholic sacraments which possessed any physical expression that connected directly with God's promise of redemption (McGrath 1993:493).

Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer, originally had misgivings regarding word "sacrament", but like Luther, Zwingli later came to see that the sacraments also signified the taking of an oath (Section 2.9). Sacrament could thus refer to the things which "God has instituted, commanded, and ordained with the Word, which is firm and sure as if God had sworn an oath to this effect". Later, however, Zwingli came to view that the sacraments constituted a believer's allegiance to the Church, rather than contrarily being God's allegiance to His Church (McGrath 1993:423). All of these developments combined to be amongst those factors which contributed to the formulation and development of baptism as a Church sacrament.

2.12 MSCA Baptismal Sacramental Lineage

The MCSA inherited its doctrinal stance on sacrament primarily from the Anglican-cum-Lutheran lineage held by John Wesley, the son of an Anglican priest, who himself had become an Anglican Minister (MCSA *Know and Grow* 2010:65). As the Anglican Church tended to overemphasise the view that baptism somehow possesses redemptive quality (McGrath 2017:45–46), Wesley however saw the need to include in the emphasis a strong evangelistic component which he felt was indispensable for personal rebirth in his baptismal belief system (Brewer 2011:111).

This difference in sacramental understanding between Wesley and the Anglican Church was occasioned by Wesley's "new birth" experience in the Holy Spirit (MCSA *Know and Grow* 2010:67–68) Wesleyan theology therefore combines elements of orthodox sacramental Protestantism with evangelical revivalism, which itself originates from Moravian influence (McGrath 1993:54–55).

This combination of Anglican orthodox belief and Moravian Holy Spirit revivalism has in turn been carried over into MCSA baptismal doctrine which seeks to give emphasis to the coexisting pillars of sacrament and evangelicalism in its theology (MCSA 2000:2). This theological hermeneutical combination is in turn comfortably aligned with that described in the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Paper No. 111 document position called the Lima Text (Lazareth 1982:1–5) and to which the MCSA and the wider Methodist Communion subscribe and have made contributions. That the Lima document on baptism provides a clear balance between sacrament and evangelical response is revealed in the following MCSA doctrinal statement:

The Methodist Church throughout the world confesses the headship of Christ, acknowledges the Divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures as the supreme rule of faith and practice, rejoices in the inheritance of the apostolic faith, and loyally accepts the fundamental principles of the historic creeds and of the Protestant Reformation. Following also the practice and teaching of the New Testament, the Methodist Church is at once evangelical and sacramental. It recognises and observes two Sacraments, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper, as of Divine appointment and perpetual obligation. In the Providence of God Methodism was raised up to spread Scriptural Holiness throughout the Land by the proclamation of the Evangelical Faith (MCSA 2000:2–3).

The MCSA further states that the significance of the rite of water baptism lies in it emerging from a Divine Providential redemptive Source, which means that baptism is not only the badge worn by Christianity, but is more particularly an aspect of foundational ministry from which all satellite growth ministries should proceed (MCSA 2000:4). This is also reflected in MCSA theology which mentions that:

the Sacrament of Baptism was given to the church by Christ as an outward sign of the new life which God offers to all people through the work of Christ, and marks the entry of the person baptized into God's family, the Church. Baptism therefore proclaims God's grace and looks forward to life-long growth into Christ in the fellowship of the church. It calls for the response of faith which is also a life-long process. In the case of believers, the initial profession of faith precedes the baptism. In the case of infants, parents and sponsors who are themselves believers, promise to provide Christian nurture and to prepare the child for personal profession of faith. In both cases, the person baptized will be supported by the faith of the Church (MCSA 2000:4).

In paedo-baptism, only the infants of full communicant members⁵ are to be baptised, because adult believers are better-positioned in the Christian Faith than nominal Christians and non-believers to lead their children to personal faith in Christ. The personal saving faith of believing parents is required to be transmitted to their infants, which is one of the promises made during the baptismal service (MCSA 2000:4).

This noble ideal does not however always work out in practice, because of a propensity for this rite to be practiced indiscriminately, especially as the conditions and terms of baptism are not always strictly observed. In their critique of infant baptism, baptist advocators claim that the high incidence of nominal Christianity within paedo-baptistic Churches is caused by just this factor (Schreiner & Wright 2006:7). A corollary for this is found where these nominal Christians who are spiritually reborn then seek confirmation of this experience in the forbidden practice of “rebaptism” because of the MCSA ruling on the matter.

The current resurgence of requests for rebaptism is not a new phenomenon, because there is evidence of its existence in the earliest times of the Church. Acts 19:1–7 (adult believer’s baptism), and in 1 Corinthians 1:10–17 (household-baptism) are a few examples of this (Bandey 1976:47).

2.13 Critique of Sacramental Infant Baptism

The criticism of infant baptism has, in recent times, come not only from credo-baptists, but also from within the paedo-baptists school, and this observation is corroborated by trends of movement in membership between denominations, as revealed by religious surveys referred to later in this chapter as well as in Chapter Four.

2.13.1 Critique of Infant Baptism from a Baptist Position

The understanding of infant baptism as sacrament has not only fomented dispute and division within the Church, but also does not go all the way towards fulfilling the redemptive objective of baptism overall. Matt Waymeyer deals with this claim in his argument for believer’s baptism. The reason why it is important to include the viewpoint of Waymeyer is because he was

⁵ A full communicant member is someone who has been “welcomed into membership who has either been saved from sin or desires to be saved from their sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and shows the same in life and conduct, and who seeks to have communion with Christ Himself and His people by taking up the duties and privileges of the Methodist Church” (MCSA 2000:14; 4). Only regenerated adults are thus given this rite.

erstwhile paedo-baptist; to understand the reason for his change of mind change, and to react objectively as a learning response.

2.13.1.1 Waymeyer: Presbyterian Turned Baptist

Matt Waymeyer, originally a Presbyterian, “jumped ship” to a Baptist denomination based on having asked the question of how the church could have been wrong over the baptism of infants for so long (Waymeyer 2008:7). Waymeyer offers a number of reasons for his and the Baptist church’s rejection of infant baptism. The reasons identified by Waymeyer for turning baptist are: the absence of a direct command for infant baptism; the absence of a Biblical example of infant baptism; the absence of compelling evidence for this rite; the breakdown of the circumcision argument for infant baptism; the discontinuity of covenantal redemptive history between the Old and the New Testaments, and the true significance of Biblical baptism from bible evidence. These reasons will be discussed below.

2.13.1.2 No Direct Biblical Infant Baptism Command

From his investigation of the New Testament, Waymeyer concludes that “nowhere in Scripture are believers commanded to baptize their newborn children” (2008:11). In support of this view, he quotes paedo-baptist Geoffrey Bromiley, whom he says concedes that “parents are not disobeying any clear-cut command if they withhold baptism from their children” (Waymeyer 2008:11). Waymeyer would be correct if the legitimacy of infant baptism were to be taken as supported only by directly supplied Biblical information; yet his claim seems contradicted in the Bible’s very clear evidence of God’s abiding Love for all children and this makes it possible for infants to be included in the baptism.

2.13.1.3 Absence of Biblical Infant Baptism Example

Waymeyer also argues “that the bible contains no clearly stated examples of believers baptizing their infant children” (Waymeyer 2008:14). In justifying this argument, he quotes from several leading reformed paedo-baptist theologians, such as John Murray, who states that “We have no overt and proven instance of infant baptism [recorded in the New Testament] [Louis Berkhof had also stated that the] New Testament contains no direct evidence for the practice of infant baptism in the days of the apostles” (2008:14). Similarly, Charles Hodge pointed out that “in every case on record of the [apostles] administering the rite, it is on condition of a profession of faith on the part of the recipient” (Waymeyer 2008:14). Benjamin B. Warfield agrees that, “It is true that there is no expressed command to baptize infants in the New Testament, no

expressed record of the baptism of infants, and no passages so stringently implying it that we must infer from them that infants were baptized” (Waymeyer 2008:14).

Even though these paedo-baptist scholars may agree with Waymeyer’s believer’s baptistic contention over the Biblical lack of text and verse evidence for the practice of infant baptism, yet they continue to believe that infant baptism is biblical because it is inferred from covenant which is the foundation of Christianity.

2.13.1.4 No Compelling New Testament Evidence for Infant Baptism

Waymeyer (2008:27) however concludes that because infant baptism is not evidenced anywhere in the New Testament, infants do not qualify for the administering of this practice as a Biblical rite, and that believers should therefore not be obliged to baptise their infants. From there onwards, Waymeyer seems to theologise for the legitimacy of baptising infants. His rationale against infant baptism seems ironically to be an argument for his erstwhile position on baptism.

Waymeyer states that paedo-baptist generally makes use of the following Biblical examples: Acts 2:39–41: “The promise is to you and your children”; 1 Corinthians 7:14: “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by her believing husband, for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy”; Mark 10:13–16, in which Jesus says: “permit the children to come to me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these, and He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands upon them”; and also Ephesians 6:1, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this right” (Waymeyer 2008:27–45). While Waymeyer argues that all these examples do not refer to the baptism of infants at all he rather weakly contends that “paedo-baptist inferences drawn from these passages are neither good nor necessary, and the argument they make for infant baptism is far less than compelling” (Waymeyer 2008:46).

A substantial weakness in Waymeyer’s argument in opposing infant baptism is thus that he selectively uses text-and-verse evidence but does not draw from the deeper levels of meaning of the Biblical message of baptism. The fundamental message of Christianity is that because God loves all people, all people, inclusive of infants should be redeemed. This is surely the sacramental and evangelistic message of Matthew 28:18–20; John 3:16 and therefore of water baptism.

2.13.1.5 Breakdown of Circumcision Argument

Waymeyer further argues that paedo-baptist practice is based on Old Testament circumcision practice and not so much on New Testament covenant. This he states in five simple words: “baptism is what circumcision was” (2008:47).

The Jewish people in the Old Testament were able to become recipients of the Abrahamic promise simply by means of their physical birth into the nation. But when a male infant was born to Jewish parents, he was circumcised regardless of whether both of his parents possessed saving faith in Yahweh or not. In contrast, infants in paedo-baptist practice are baptized only if at least one of the parents is a believer (Waymeyer 2008:52–53).

Waymeyer’s argument however fails on two fronts; parents in the Old Covenant regime were believers in the Old Testament way. The faith factor is similar in both Testaments even though the Old Testament expression of faith does not go far enough redemptively as it is required to do in the New Testament; it also fails to take into account that New Testament baptism is the outcome of Old Testament covenantal circumcision (Matthew 5:17), the message of which is that all baptised people need to be redeemed by the Holy Spirit (MCSA 1989:61–62).

In infant baptism, Church members are born of water, and then require saving to belong, not to a nation, but to the Kingdom of God. This gift in turn carries important positive consequences for the spiritual wellbeing of the nation (MCSA *Know & Grow* 2010:70–71) This New Testament aspect of covenant therefore forms a part of the nature of the covenantal purpose of God for all people, because it bridges the gap between the promise of salvation and salvation fulfilled in the unconditional acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour (MCSA 1989:60–61).

2.13.1.6 Redemptive Historical Discontinuity between Biblical Testaments

Waymeyer (2008:73–83) further argues that there are significant aspects of discontinuity in the history of redemption itself, which undermine any possibility for infant baptism to be acceptably authentic. The element of “newness” embodied by the New Covenant is an example of one such instance. Waymeyer thus examines Jeremiah 31:31–34 and stresses that not only is the covenant “new”, but that it is also “not like” the Old one. Firstly, the disciples declare their personal repentance of sins; then confess that Christ is the only Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; and thereafter accept the need to be loyal followers of Christ. Only adult people are capable of this kind of reasoned response, and can thus go on to be saved, and therefore only they may truly receive baptism (Waymeyer 2008:88–109).

Waymeyer's biggest mistake however is that of overlooking that the main purpose of covenantal baptism is not primarily about the baptism of adults or infants, but rather is more about focussing on the saving Faith of Jesus and the need for the Grace of Christian response by means of repentance and faith. All baptism in this sense is believer's baptism. The argument for the continuity rather than discontinuity, of covenant is based on Matthew 5:17, and is precisely because "baptism is what circumcision was", which is thus the evangelistic motive for Christian covenant baptism.

That baptism has its origin in the Old Testament of the Bible, and contrary to Waymeyer since the Old Testament exists to support the New Testament sacramental and evangelical fulfilment of God's message, both infant- and adult-believer aspects of covenantal baptism ought not to exist in a relationship that separates them as is currently done in paedo-baptist belief and practice. It is this separatedness of the two baptisms that contravenes the message of Matthew 5:17, "do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them".

Because no clear definition exists in the Bible of what true Christian baptism is, this practice may be classified as an adiaphoric subject (Characterizing Baptism 2009:2), since it is a disputable matter which is able to accommodate a whole range of interpretations. Chapter three will deal with this heavily-nuanced factor of sacrament more extensively. Central to all the different and divided views, however, is the need to uphold baptism as an adjunct of evangelistic Gospel Ministry, in accordance with the purpose of Christ's coming. It therefore seems wrong to legalistically posture for any definition regarding baptism as being exclusively correct, as Waymeyer has seemingly done by the rejection of infant baptism in favour of believer's baptism.

2.13.2 A Return to Prioritising Believer's Baptism

Schreiner and Wright, with assistance of a number of their scholarly Baptist colleagues, e.g. T. George, S. Wellum, A. Caneday and M. Dever all making contributions in Schreiner & Wright (2006) towards a rethink of the meaning and purpose of Biblical baptism and do so under the rubric *Believers Baptism: A Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*. All of these contributors conclude that even though believer's baptism is sacramental in its own right, this rite still requires a proper theology of ministry around the Christian dedication of children (George in Schreiner & Wright 2006:18).

Even though, an individual does not automatically inherit either salvation or Church membership, “children of believing parents, do stand in a special providential relationship to the people and promises of God” (Schreiner & Wright 2006:18). These utterances by baptists seem to be similar to those made by proponents of paedo-baptism and yet they still reject the baptism of infants. Timothy George, in his forward to Schreiner and Wright’s volume (in Schreiner & Wright 2006:15–19) states that, while infants have an important place in the Church, baptism should not be administered to infants and children according to baptismal tradition.

Children may well come to saving faith and often do, and would thus be eligible for a believer’s baptism. George rather appears to subscribe to what is claimed by paedo-baptists to be the non-sacramental option of infant consecration. The all-round concern for children in both baptismal positions however is for the promotion of an appropriate theology in terms of how infants are to be admitted into and dealt with by the Church around the issue of new birth (in Schreiner & Wright 2006:17–xix19). Paedo-baptists may believe that this can be achieved more effectively, and thus would be more in keeping with Biblical prescriptions, by means of a sacramental approach (in Schreiner and & Wright 2006:17–19) while believer baptists believe in dedication or consecration as being the biblical and thus more effective way for true Christianizing.

There are nevertheless two fundamental aspects to the sacramental message of covenantal baptism which cannot be overlooked: the self-giving of God, as demonstrated by sacramental infant baptism; and the self-giving of humanity to God by means of repentance and faith, as represented by believer’s baptism. This seems to be the crux of the real issue in the baptismal debate but from which the two sides in the baptismal divide could forge some kind of uniting compromise. In the final analysis anyhow, these Baptist contributors make the invaluable point in their argument that people need to become believers because of the message received by their baptism, and not assume that they are truly Christian because of their baptism.

2.13.3 Believer’s Baptism as the Sign of the New Covenant

The common conviction behind the baptismal study of covenantal baptism (in Schreiner & Wright 2006) was to correct a certain form of infant baptism theology. This concern is primarily centred on Reformed belief, in which baptismal intention is seemingly that of bringing infant children into a covenantal environment in which those who know the Lord give the child every opportunity to grow into Christ’s Redemption.

Believer-baptists however, consider that this view to be fraught with difficulty and inconsistency, because, while paedo-baptists believe that Salvation is by Grace through Faith alone, yet this sign of Faith is given to infants who are not capable of exercising such Faith. For them, baptism practiced in this way contradicts the New Testament Gospel, and betrays a belief in baptismal regeneration which detracts from the true Gospel Message of Jesus Christ (Schreiner & Wright 2006:2).

Baptists generally also consider that infant-baptised adults may come to think that, by virtue of their baptism and membership of the Church, they belong to God, and yet this may not be true for them personally. The believers baptist argument is fair in that to baptise infants without due emphasis on baptismal Gospel requirements possesses the real potential to lead to the nominal observance of the Christian Faith without the indispensable necessity of being born of the Holy Spirit. Baptist opposition to infant baptism is thus summed up in a single statement:

We believe that baptism should be reserved for believers because it preserves the testimony of the Gospel by showing that only those who have repented and believe belong to the church. Only those exercising faith are justified. Restricting baptism to believers only, therefore preserves the pure witness of the Gospel. Additionally, believer's baptism demonstrates that the church is a new covenant community. The church of Jesus Christ is not a mixed community of believers and unbelievers (Schreiner & Wright 2006:1–3).

2.13.4 Argument against Covenant as a Sign of Infant Salvation

Schreiner further claims that baptism in the Epistles, especially 1 Corinthians 7:14, and extensively used by paedo-baptists to justify infant baptism, is an initiation rite meant only for believers, and that the text cannot rightly be interpreted as a defence for infant baptism. According to Schreiner (Schreiner in Schreiner & Wright 2006:95) when Paul said that the children are Holy by virtue of having a believing parent (1 Corinthians 7:14) he did not mean that they became believers because they had unconsciously been made part of Christ's Covenant (Schreiner 2006:95).

In the same verse of Corinthians, the unbelieving spouse is sanctified through the believing spouse, but it does not follow however that the unbelieving spouse should be baptised or included in the Covenant as people. So too with infants of believers; they are not automatically to be considered saved by merit of their parents' salvation, but rather should be seen as being in sacramental touch with the Holiness of God (Schreiner 2006:95–96). Schreiner thus concludes that belonging to Christ's Covenant simply means that the possibility of the Salvation of infants is enhanced by virtue of their having believing parents.

Those who practice infant baptism however, allow unregenerate people, namely the unsaved children of believers, to become members of the Church even though the Church is the community of the Spirit and not of unbelievers who are supposedly in Christ. When properly constituted, the Church is thus “composed of those who are members of the new covenant (Hebrews 8:8–13) and not those who belong to the old age under Moses” (Schreiner 2006:96). “[New Testament baptism] is [therefore] not applied with the hope that people will receive the Holy Spirit. It is applied because people have received the spirit and believed” (Schreiner 2006:96).

Schreiner additionally contends that if infant baptism is equated with Old Testament infant circumcision, then this places the infants of believers into the same category as the infants of heathen people, and heathens are not baptised because they have no Christian Faith (Schreiner 2006:92–96). It is however doubtful that Schreiner can make this kind of deduction for covenant infant baptism, particularly as Jesus who, as New Covenant fulfilment, came through the processes the Old Testament Covenant because He was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21–24).

If Jesus’ example of initiation is to be followed to the letter as an alternative for infant dedication, then baptist argument and practice would need to be more consistent. In order for this theory of infant dedication to be both Biblically true and logically correct it would need to be preceded by circumcision as was the case for Jesus (Luke 2:21–24).

Believer Baptist argument does however make the critical point that infants cannot be assumed to be born of the Spirit, simply because of their covenantal standing in the same way that humans are not horses if they sleep in horse-stables.

2.13.5 Covenant is Believer’s Baptism

In discussing baptism, and the relationship between the two assumed dissimilar baptismal covenants, Wellum (in Schreiner & Wright 2006:97–124) discusses a trend in baptismal theology where the validity of baptism is increasingly being viewed as a true baptism as based on Biblical covenant. This tendency is demonstrated in the theology of Randy Booth (in Brewer 2011), an erstwhile Baptist, who converted to the covenantal paedobaptistic school of Christianity. While this may be an acceptable development (Wellum in Schreiner & Wright 2006:97–124) Wellum warns that a New Covenant basis for baptism still requires serious critiquing and assessment.

Wellum understands that Reformed paedobaptismal argument is based on an explicit view of covenantal relationships in which an emphasis on the covenant of Sacramental Grace can only be sustained if it is able to provide strong Biblical warrants for this position. However, if this understanding is inaccurate, then the entire Biblical and theological support for such an argument disappears. Wellum further argues that a failure to correctly understand the proper relationship between Biblical covenants is what delegitimizes infant baptism as being truly covenant and therefore sacrament (Wellum in Schreiner & Wright 2006:124).

A truly covenantal approach to the Bible which preserves a proper Biblical emphasis on continuity and discontinuity between the covenantal communities of the Old and New Testaments, as well as on their respective covenantal signs can only be arrived at through the presence of specific information in the Bible record. This information in the Bible rather demands that an affirmation of believer's baptism should be carefully considered and accepted in regard to water baptism (Wellum in Schreiner & Wright 2006:160–161).

Wellum furthermore argues that the issues of baptism should not remain merely at the level of theological debate because much unites credo-baptism and paedobaptism, and yet there are also some profound differences. Such differences should not become blurred for the sake of argumentative unity alone. Ultimately, baptism is linked to the sacramental proclamation of the Gospel itself, since it expounds on the inherent wonders of free grace: "Baptism as a new covenant sign does not [however] of itself bring anyone into a state of grace but has been ordained of God as a proper sacramental means of grace that we ignore to our peril of spiritual life and mission" (Wellum in Schreiner & Wright 2006:160–161).

A study of baptismal convergence seems thus to be necessary, precisely because a covenantal expression of Biblical baptism allows for a God-given "household baptism" opportunity through which to evangelise infants at an early age, as the outcome of the message repentance and faith of believer's baptism. (Wellum in Schreiner & Wright 2006:97ff.).

The strength of paedobaptism is that it shows how infant-baptised people can constitute the mission field of the Church on the Church's doorstep. Children are thus brought to the Church by their covenant-baptised believing parents, to be disciplined and evangelised by means of teachings of Christ, repentance and faith (Matthew 28:18–20).

2.13.6 Plea for Biblical Consistency

Baptists have found that Biblical support for covenantal infant baptism, with its accompanying definition of sacrament, lacks the evangelical component, which therefore makes it difficult for baptists to reconcile with this practice. Baptists argue that the Biblical exposition of paedobaptism “is orientated more towards the Old Testament with a lack of attention to New Testament teaching on baptism, the church, the new covenant, and the responsive requirements of the Gospel” (Wright in Schreiner & Wright 2006:253).

Shawn Wright thus asks what recourse is available to resolve the ongoing debate between evangelical paedobaptists and protestant paedobaptists on “biblical grounds”, since only the Bible can be “the source of any rapprochement between the two positions” (in Schreiner & Wright 2006:253). How is this to happen, when both proponents, desperate as they may be to find a solution, make an appeal to the Bible as the highest authority as the main source of their position?

The difficulty in appealing to the Bible as the final authority is that the Bible itself is not culturally neutral, or homogeneous in its textual make-up, and therefore its depicted practice of baptism remains rooted in a plural cultural context. Wright (in Schreiner & Wright 2006:253–255) believes therefore that the issue of what is true baptism can be resolved if all paedobaptists honour the primacy of literal text and verse information provided in the Bible on any matter of faith and covenantal practice, just as Calvin and later Karl Barth did. Relying solely on Biblically-drawn inference as paedobaptists do seems to incorrectly favour an emphasis on the baptism of infants, with a similarly one-sided emphasis on baptism as a sacramental practice. The question that evangelicals on opposite sides of the debate are, nevertheless, currently facing is whether anything can be justified as Biblical, when it is only inferred from the Bible (Schreiner & Wright 2006:253–255). That a majority of Christians of all denominational orientations including evangelical literalists amongst them accept biblical inference as legitimate is exemplified in the acceptance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and of women taking communion, even though these are not expressly expounded on in the Bible. An impasse solution for the differences of baptism could similarly find general acceptance when the sacramental and biblical purpose of Christianity and therefore of baptism is sought by all proponents.

2.14 Paedo-baptist David Wrights' Self-Critique

David Wright's (2005) study is an honest appraisal of how infant sacramental baptism administered without any overt emphasis on evangelical requirement seems to be the main problem that generates Christian faith nominalism (Wright 2005:7).

Nominal Christians are described as those who possess the knowledge of Christianity, without possessing any experience of new spiritual birth who may practice an outward-vener form of Christianity without being in a heart entered relationship with Christ. Wright considers this lack of heart commitment to be the real cause behind paedo-baptist recession. Wright nevertheless contends that there are some positive developments which have occurred in the last century that reveal that Christians are becoming increasingly willing to be critical of their own traditions, and more open to the possibility of change. This has likely materialised because the practice of indiscriminate baptism has failed to turn people into practicing Christians (Wright 2005:7).

Wright was not critical of his own tradition in the manner of Waymeyer, because of a decision to move to believer's baptism, but instead remained loyal to his belief in the validity of paedo-baptism despite its stated failures and also because of the problems that characterize believer's baptism. "The universal baptizing of babies [called indiscriminate baptism] is not the only way to distort the scriptures, because this tendency is also prevalent in believer's baptism" (Wright 2005:7). Wright however, contends that consensus as called for by the WCC will only be possible when there is "recognition of believers' baptism as the normative form of baptism, and of infant baptism as an acceptable variation of that norm" (2005:8).

2.14.1 Ascendancy of Infant Baptism in the West

Concerning Christian baptismal liturgy, which serves as a source of information regarding the baptismal practice from the earliest patristic periods of Christianity, Wright confesses that "there is little evidence in these services that is tailored to suit the capacity of infant recipients. Leithart [had] helpfully found that the earliest baptismal liturgies were constructed on something like baptist assumptions, even when children were included" (2005:8). Wright was confounded that, "after paedo-baptism had become a universal practice in the West, infants were baptized in a ritual designed for persons able to speak for others, even to the extent that infants were 'made' to give all the appropriate responses through the mouth of parents, sponsors or priests" (2005:8).

2.14.2 Infant Baptism within Christendom

The term “Christendom”, according to Wright (2005:8–10) is defined as comprising any country which has officially taken on Christianity so as to include this belief as the religious norm for practice in its way of life. This would mean that if the religion adopted by the state would be Christianity, that country would then be deemed to be Christian in the expression of its belief creed. All citizens of such a country would resultantly be bound together through loyalty to the same religion, and this would also provide that country’s leaders with maximum political authority (Bridges & Phipers 1977:85) to rule for peace and prosperity.

Churches then become State Churches, even though not all of their citizens, or their governing powers, were necessarily truly Christian. This ideology would however provide secular governing authorities with the right to exercise power over the Church in the capacity of being the senior and superior role player (Bridges & Phipers 1977:85). Because the State would be supreme power would give the State the right to dictate to the church about matters of faith, doctrine and practice for which it may not necessarily be qualified.

Augustine of Hippo (353–430), who formulated the theology of sacrament, which led to infant baptism being viewed as regeneration in the later part of the fifth century, is an example of the consequences of this form of religious-and-secular marriage, also sometimes referred to as Christian “sacralism” (Wright 2005:12). In this arrangement, water baptism had become a convenient avenue to achieve both membership within the Church and citizenship of a country. Compulsory baptism has therefore enabled the practice of infant baptism to become one of the building blocks of Christendom (Bridges & Phipers 1977:85). Power-struggles, and other related problems have however, resulted from this form of union, particularly since Church and state were “coterminous in relationship but were guided by different and conflicting authority presuppositions” (Wright 2005:12). Relationships of this nature, moreover, become stumbling blocks for the Church with regard to its own internal affairs. For example, where there is a perceived need for reconciliation between paedobaptists and baptists further conflict could be caused if the operation of a sacrally mixed authority whenever intrusion was necessary because the basic viewpoints of both Christians and non-Christians are different and therefore incompatible. Even though the secular state would have every right to meddle in the affairs of the Church in a sacral arrangement it is reasonable to assume that a secular dominated authority remains unqualified to handle those issues which are required to be guided only by Christian norms. (Wright 2005:12).

Traces of a merger between state and Church are in evidence from the apostolic era. The Church State union began to develop under the earliest Christian Emperors of Rome, and especially during the early fourth century, under Constantine. The Church State arrangement has continued to exist down through the centuries to the Reformation, has survived the disruption of the Reformation and continues to exist despite the growing secularization of governments around the world (Wright 2005:12).

Reformed Churches which became State Churches or alternatively, National Churches, were Lutheran churches based mainly in Germany; the Reformed Church in Swiss and Nordic countries; the Presbyterian Church in Holland and France; and the Anglican Church of Britain (Wright 2005:12).

A sacral relationship between Church and state has not helped the cause of reform, largely because, when baptism became law, it allowed parents in these “Christian states the right to have their children baptized without any discrimination based on baptismal requirements” (Wright 2005:12). Reformers themselves became divided over this matter, with Luther on one side, and the Anabaptists, composed of evangelical Reformists, who had moved to believer’s baptism, on the other (Bridges & Phypers 1977:100; 101–109). The Anabaptists had no theological qualms regarding the practice of rebaptizing on demand of those already baptised in their infancy, while the orthodox reformers adhered strictly to the non-repeatable ruling of baptism (Bridges & Phypers 1977:106). This sacral church state arrangement which Wright describes as Christendom has however begun to crumble in the contemporary era with impact on the practice of both baptisms and paedobaptism in particular.

2.14.3 Ascendancy of Believer’s Baptism over Infant Baptism

Wright (2005:13) believes that Karl Barth’s move from infant baptism to an emphasis on believer’s baptism was what started the implosion of infant baptism as a dominant “player” in the Modern Era of the Church. Since Barth’s time there have been sharp theological shifts away from an orientation with Church State governing arrangements, towards an acknowledgement that Faith baptism (believer’s baptism) should become considered the norm (Wright 2005:13).

Wright further contends that this does not mean that baptising babies should be stopped, because infant baptism still has a vital role to play (2005:10). The fact that Faith baptism is thus becoming the current norm is also acknowledged in the Faith and Order Report of the World Council of Churches (Lazareth 1982:1–7). The WCC Lima Report is likewise claimed by

Wright to carry significant global influence for change from the two baptisms being separate to a believer's baptism-cum-infant baptism partnership (Wright 2005:10; 15).

Wright further believes that there are signs of hope for rapprochement of baptismal practice based on:

the growing evidence of sacramental thinking amongst baptist theologians, is from the increasing adoption of dual-practice polities to the highly significant development in the Catholic Church since Vatican II, exemplified in its impressive Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, and the inescapable emergence among major paedo-baptist communions, including Catholic and Anglican, of a consensus which holds faith baptism as the norm with which infant baptism must be coordinated (Wright 2005:10).

Wright (2005:15) also observed that Faith baptism is now gaining acceptance in a number of other mainstream paedo-baptist Churches, including the Church of Scotland, which had previously been strictly fundamentalist around the practice of paedo-baptism.

2.14.4 Large-Scale Change in the Global Church

The significant shift away from the Church State combinations within Christendom implies the presence of a new movement for theological reflection, according to Wright, and is a consequence of taking the New Testament, rather than the Old Testament, with greater seriousness in considering the theology on baptism (Wright 2005:15). This tendency is apparent also in the WCC Lima Text on Baptism which states, "While the possibility that infant baptism was practiced in the apostolic age cannot be excluded, baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents" (Wright 2005:14–15). This is similarly-stated in the catechism of the Roman Catholic Church (1994), which mentions that, "The practice of Infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the church [but] it is quite possible that from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole 'households' received baptism, infants may have been baptized" (Wright 2005:15–16). This is by contrast to Europe, which Wright refers to as the "Citadel of Christianity" (Wright 2005:10). Christian Faith conversely is expanding rapidly in Africa, much of Asia, and also in Latin America. This new trend in both the South and East is heavily-dominated by the baptism of converts only, and is thus termed "Pentecostal". (Wright 2005:7–9).

Pentecostalism is perhaps now in the process of becoming the predominant Christian paradigm, and is expressed in a number of highly diverse forms (Ross *et al.* 2016:473–488). There are various factors and changes which are now seen to be shaping the world, and, as such, the

Global Ecumenical movement no longer places its traditional roots squarely in the West (Wright 2005:8–9). World Christianity has changed to such an extent that its epicentre is now located in non-Western regions of the world (Global Forum for the Future of World Christianity 2013:13-15).

Wright (2005:9) claims that this new movement of Pentecostal Christianity has caused a seismic shift in the distribution of World Christianity, and this has had the effect of promoting a reconsideration of baptismal belief and practice. What is not mentioned by Wright however, is the large-scale movement of Christians from paedobaptist to believer-baptismal-orientated congregations, which is also reflected in the surveys conducted by research foundations that are to be scrutinised later in this chapter (Section 2.16).

There is also a move in Church practice “towards recognition of both patterns of baptism as equivalent alternatives”, as is the case with the Nazarene Church. Most of the “dual-practice” churches have reached this position by having become unions of paedobaptismal and faith-baptismal Churches, or, less formally, by embracing communities with divergent traditions, as in the American Evangelical Covenant Church (Wright 2005:16 in Footnote).

The present ecumenical climate has thus favoured the baptismal stance more than have the extant paedobaptist Churches (Wright 2005:16). The MCSA which has introduced a service of “Thanksgiving for New Born Babies”, (Wright 2005:32–33), is another example of the trend of shift by paedobaptist denominations towards believer-baptismal practice.

2.14.5 Indiscriminate Baptism and Disciplined Baptismal Practice

After providing an overview of understanding and practice of Christian baptism, Wright (2005) critiques the practice of infant baptism, as well as do a superficial examination of believer’s baptism. He traces the negative impact of infant baptism’s ascendancy over believer’s baptism to earliest times in the history of Christianity, and concludes that baptism in paedobaptismal denominations is in need of reform so that believer’s baptism can assume its rightful Biblical ascendancy over infant baptism.

Wright further states that a re-introduction of the discipline of a stringent “guarding of the gate”, with regard to the intake of people requesting baptism into the Church, is indispensable if baptism is to cease to be indiscriminate practice that promotes nominal redemption. Being a nominal Christian refers to someone who claims to be Christian, displays the outward trappings

of Christianity, but has not undergone a genuine new-birth transformation that goes with practical commitment to the Church (Wright 2005:102 Footnotes).

2.15 Believer's Baptism as 'Automatic Baptismal Regeneration'

Caneday (in Schreiner & Wright 2006:287–288) examines baptism under the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement, otherwise known as the “Christian Churches” or the “Churches of Christ” movement. The reason for including the Stone-Campbell understanding of baptism, which is a relatively new understanding of Christianity, is due to it appearing to be an adult-baptism version of infant *ex opere operato* form of regeneration.

2.15.1 Birth of a New Believer's Baptist Understanding

Following the second great awakening and spiritual revival in the United States of America in the early part of the twentieth century, a movement referred to as the Restoration Movement was birthed, variously called the “Churches of Christ”, the “Christian Church”, the “Christian Churches of Christ”, or the “Disciples of Christ” (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:303–304). Alexander Campbell, along with his father, who were originally Presbyterian, saw themselves as reformers of the Church as they knew it, and were thus the originators of this expression of Christianity (in Schreiner & Wright 2006:294–295).

The reforming maxim of this movement is premised on the need for the unification of all Christians to be on a specific view of the Bible which reads: “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent we are silent” (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:288). It was thus logical for this movement to associate with a baptistic expression of Christianity, mainly because of an aversion for infant baptism, and the favouring of a literalist-stance of the Bible (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:292).

For Campbell, the Presbyterian tradition which first guided him also inhibited him, and thus caused him to become deeply negative towards his legacy of the Christian faith. Contrarily, he also did not agree with the formal creeds and requirements of the Baptist Church, which he found difficult to reconcile with Biblical content (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:288). Campbell therefore, not only reacted against what he calls “his own bad education” in the Presbyterian Church, but also against the enthusiasm of revivalism. He contended that “throughout Christendom every man's [*sic*] religious experience corresponds to his [*sic*] religious education” (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:293):

Reacting against his religious education, Alexander Campbell eventually became convinced that in Scripture the assurance of the forgiveness of sins is found only in believing in God's promise of forgiveness and that His promise is received through immersion baptism and by no other means (Campbell 2006:294–295).

Christians are called upon to reform by being asked to abandon their creeds, confessions, and human instructions, and return to the primitive teachings of the Apostles (Wright in Schreiner & Wright 2006:295). Campbell had engaged in debate with many theologians, and it is thus clear that he linked baptism closely with the forgiveness of sins. In doing so, he argued that:

The blood of Jesus in reality cleanses all who believe...The water of baptism formally washes away our sins. Paul's sins were really pardoned when he believed, yet he had no solemn pledge of the fact, no acquittal but God through the blood of Christ forgives our sins by immersion, through the very act and in the very instant. The formal remission of sin is the act of baptism. Salvation though is only from the death and resurrection of Christ (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:296–297).

Campbell's view of baptism thus merged actual and formal forgiveness of sin, but only when the initiate receives baptismal immersion (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:299–300). A belief that characterises this new movement that grew rapidly in the twentieth century was that "anyone who received baptism without also receiving clear knowledge for the remission of sins needed to be baptized again" (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:301).

2.15.2 Baptism as a Means to Grace

Caneday believes that failure to distinguish between the means and the origin, when speaking of Gods' Salvation, wreaks havoc in Christian theology, and is thus a characteristic of the Stone-Campbell movement:

The apostles make it clear that God saves whom and when he chooses and that baptism is a sign of, but not the effectual cause of regeneration. Worse still is it to divorce a symbol and the reality that the New Testament holds together without embarrassment. Zeal to avoid baptismal regeneration which many perceive to be the necessary consequence of Alexander Campbell's teaching actually spawned another error, 'decisional regeneration'. This was an error rooted in revivalism that is now a traditional element in American evangelicalism. If the former error is to relegate the regenerating efficacy of the Spirit to the rite of baptism itself, the latter error assigns the same efficacy to the human decision to act upon. Thus, two traditions – evangelicalism and the Stone Campbell movement – developed side by side in America, occasionally sparring over baptism, but mostly ignoring each other as each group turned inward to tend to internal disputes (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:325–326).

There are however, encouraging signs concerning the diminishment of baptismal legalism in all traditions of baptism including in that of the Stone-Campbell movement. Caneday states that contrary to general belief about the Stone Campbell tradition, two of their largest and most well-known Churches have gone to great lengths to denounce baptismal regeneration and to unite (Caneday in Schreiner & Wright 2006:288; 328).

The relevance of the Stone-Campbell restoration movement for convergence baptism lies in the connection that it has with baptismal regeneration. Baptismal regeneration has always tended to be seen by believer baptists as the error of infant baptism, yet here is an example of a believer-baptismal movement being “guilty” of the same thing. An overemphasis on the liturgical form of baptismal response therefore seemingly leaves little space for the free working of the Holy Spirit in this practice.

Additionally, here is shown an instance of how a non-Biblical assumption can have no regard for the possible validity of other understandings of water baptism. Baptismal regeneration will however always be regarded as a threat when the two baptisms are practiced separately, because of their individual incompleteness and the one-sided ways by which they are viewed.

2.16 Surveys Results for Trends in Baptismal Belief and Practice

Trends in Church-affiliation from surveys have reference mainly within the American context, because as a traditionally Christian country and despite the shift of Christianity’s epicentre from the USA, this country still remains a leader of Christianity in the Western World, and thus still possesses enormous Global influence. What happens in America, sooner or later, impacts on other Western Christian countries, inclusive of Africa, and in particular South Africa (Ross *et al.* 2016:482–483). For this reason, this enquiry of sacramental baptism also employs religious survey material, not for the purposes of quantitative study per se, but instead for the generation of qualitative theological debate as taken from as wide a base as is possible.

The study’s objective is thus to ascertain whether survey statistics corroborate with what scholars are saying, and what experimental paradigms in baptismal practice indicate, because all the information put together could have a significant bearing on whether baptismal convergence can be read as a possible solution, and if so, whether this notion is valid and viable.

2.16.1 Global Trends

2.16.1.1 Are All Christian Denominations in Possible Decline?

An enquiry by Joe Carter, as introduced by Editor Rachel Evans of the Episcopal Church, investigates whether all Christian denominations are indeed in a state of decline. Evans writes, “If we look at year to year, short term trends, we may be able to detect a decline in some groups, especially in large denominations, but it makes more sense to look at long term trends” (Carter 2015).

The numbers processed by Carter are specifically taken from surveys of Christian denominations with paedobaptist and evangelical orientations, which include denominations such as, the Disciples of Christ; the Reformed Church in America; the United Congregational Church of Christ; the Episcopal Church; the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA); the United Methodist Church; the Evangelical Lutheran Church; the American Baptist Church and the Lutheran Missouri Synod. All of these denominations reveal losses in their memberships ranging from approximately 20 % to 67 % of their totals since 1965 (Carter 2015).

On the other hand numbers processed from believer baptist-oriented denominations, and also from two paedobaptist denominations are from the Presbyterian Church in America; the Evangelical Free Church; the Assemblies of God; the African Methodist Episcopal Church; and the Southern Baptist Convention. These all register increases in memberships since 1965, from a low of 47%, to a high of 1194%, as is the case in Churches of God in Christ (Carter 2015).

2.16.1.1.1 Assessment

Carter writes that, “Looking back 50 years to 1965 a clear and unequivocal trend line can be seen. Every one of the primary mainline denominations has seen long-term decline in membership while the non-mainline constituencies reveal increases” (2015:1–5). Hence the question: If mainline Churches have suffered decline in membership across a broad range, and non-mainline Churches have enjoyed increase, could Holy Spirit-dependant evangelism, which believer’s baptism strongly requires, be the factor which makes the difference? Paedobaptist scholars, Karl Barth, Markus Barth, James Dunn, David Wright and Ben Witherington III all observe that baptism, and personal-response evangelism, are closely-linked to the practice of New Testament baptism (Section 3.14).

According to the results of these surveys and of experience where baptism is intentionally performed as an evangelistic act, there appears to be at least a growth in numbers, with the converse being the case when baptism is practiced without any emphasis being placed on evangelism (Carter 2015:1–5). This however, does not necessarily indicate that a Church denomination with believer-baptist orientation is the only key for explaining this phenomenon. Baptism with an evangelistic emphasis is what appears to make the difference. The comparative figures from this survey nevertheless tend to confirm that a link between baptism and evangelicalism does indeed exist.

2.16.1.2 Pew Foundation Findings in Christianity Today (2012)

The Pew Research Centre performed a survey of what is called “the changing landscape of religion in America” (*Hermeneutics* 2015), which was conducted amongst more than 35,000 adults in both English and Spanish in order to ascertain whether American Christianity had changed during the period 2007 to 2014. The research centre’s surveys focussed largely on the evangelical element of Christianity (*Hermeneutics* 2015).

2.16.1.2.1 Evangelicals Remarkably Stable in Membership Numbers

The following findings were made that over the seven-year period in question (2007–2014); evangelical denominations had lost less than one-percent of their populations, which translates into about one in four American adults, or 25.4% in 2004, to 26.3% in 2007. These evangelicals however, still remain that nation’s largest religious grouping. Between 2007 and 2014, the Christian share of the population in general fell from 78.4% to 70.6%, which was seen as being driven mainly by declines in membership amongst mainline Protestants and Catholics. Unaffiliated denominations nevertheless, experienced the most growth and the number of Americans belonging to non-Christian faiths during this period also increased (*Hermeneutics* 2015:2).

2.16.1.2.2 Mainline Church Membership Losses

Mainline Protestants, moreover, lost almost 3.5% of their population-share, constituting less than 15% of American adults, while Catholics lost about 3% of their population-share, and came to stand at around 21% of American adults in 2014 (*Hermeneutics* 2015:2). These declines have allowed the religiously unaffiliated, who gained nearly 7% in population-share, to surge past Catholicism and mainline Protestantism to become America’s second largest religious grouping (22.8% of American adults) (*Hermeneutics* 2015:2).

2.16.1.2.3 Evangelical Church Number Growth

Evangelical Churches also added more than 2 million people to their ranks during the period under study, with an increase from 59.8 million in 2007 to 62.2 million in 2014. Meanwhile, mainline Churches lost 5 million people, and “as a result, evangelicals now constitute a clear majority” (*Hermeneutics* 2015:2), which comprises 55% of all US Protestants.

For these findings, the Pew Research Centre then categorised Americans according to denominational affiliation. Evangelical denominations include the Southern Baptist Convention, Assembly of God, Churches of Christ, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the Presbyterian Church in America and other non-denominational Churches. (*Hermeneutics* 2015:2).

Pew researchers accordingly asked, “Would you describe yourself as a born-again or evangelical Christian or not?” In response, about one-third of American adults (35%) identified as being Evangelicals in 2014, which was nearly the same as for 2007 (34%). Meanwhile, Americans who self-identified as Christians dropped from 78% in 2007 to 71% in 2014 (*Hermeneutics* 2015:2).

2.16.1.2.4 Born Again Evangelicalism

The label “Evangelical” seems to be a more popular description among all Christian groups in the USA than any other name. Today, all Christians in the USA, and possibly even generally, are more likely to claim that they have been “born again” or are therefore “Evangelical” in denominational affiliation. These responses can be seen as an expression of what seemingly best describes what it means to be a true Christian in the USA.

Half of self-identified Christians described themselves in this way in 2014, up from 44% in 2007. This included 72% of those in historically-black Protestant Churches, which was up from 67% in 2007. More surprising was that a rising proportion of adults belonging in other Christian traditions self-identified as being born-again, or Evangelical, include: Mainline Protestants (27% in 2014 vs. 25% in 2007), Roman Catholics (22% in 2014 vs. 16% in 2007), Orthodox Christians (18% in 2014 vs. 16% in 2007), Mormons (23% in 2014 vs. 21% in 2007), Jehovah’s Witnesses (24% in 2014 vs. 17% in 2007), and Spiritualist Christians (24% in 2014 vs. 15% in 2014).

Most Evangelicals in historically-black Protestant traditions self-identified themselves as being born again. By contrast, 15% of adults in Evangelical Churches did not identify as being born

again, or Evangelical. Neither did 21% of those belonging to non-denominational Churches, or 10% of those in Pentecostal Churches. Some Protestant-denominational families were found to be quite divided on this matter, including Methodists – 45% born again or Evangelical vs. 51% not; Presbyterian – 42% yes vs. 55% no; Lutherans – 33% yes vs. 63% no; Adventists – 63% yes vs. 29% no, and Restorationists – 66% yes vs. 29% (*Hermeneutics* 2015:2).

2.16.1.2.5 Other Findings

It was also found that, while Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assembly of God, had recorded impressive growth returns, non-denominational Churches had instead grown the most. “Non-denominational and Pentecostal churches held roughly an equal share of the population in 2007, at 9% of all Protestants, and 4.5% of all adults. But in 2013, 13% of Protestants and 6.2% of adults identified as non-denominational, while only 10% of Protestants and 4.6% of adults identified as Pentecostal. Baptists constitute the largest share of Protestantism by far at 33% of Protestants, and 15.4% of all adults in America” (*Hermeneutics* 2015:16; 32–33).

2.16.1.2.6 Assessment

This survey study makes a number of significant findings: while Christianity is in a mode of stagnation in some denominations of the US Christian Church, the number of those who claimed to be Evangelical Christians is on the increase. The key link between this trend and the practice of water baptism seems to be the Evangelical requirement factor of sacramental baptism, and of believer’s baptism.

Evangelicals are the largest group of Christians active in America, and showed almost no decline in numbers. Evangelical Churches, mainly of the Baptist and Pentecostal orientation, including unaffiliated new-fellowship Churches, all of which practice believer’s baptism by immersion only, are the most popular. Non-denominational and Assembly of God Churches are however growing the most. This survey is therefore consistent with the Fact Checker findings of Evans of the Pew Foundation Research Centre (*Hermeneutics* 2015), and seems to confirm that Evangelicals being Evangelical and believer-baptist in orientation may be considered the two most significant reasons for the reported growth in Church numbers.

Pew Research reveals that “Mainliners”, which is a term given to Christians who generally belong to reformed and some non-reformed paedobaptist Churches, may try to comfort themselves by claiming that all denomination are in fact in decline, but the research argues that this is not altogether accurate. While Evangelical Churches are not growing as quickly as they

once were, mainline Churches are found to be on a definite downward path in their memberships. One conclusion drawn is that the further mainline denominations move away from text-and-verse Biblically-based Christian practice, the closer they come to their own demise (Evans 2015:1–5).

It would be considered strange if the increase of Evangelicals and the movement of memberships from Mainline to non-Mainline denominations in the USA were not contemporaneously happening in other regions of the world. Given the fact that the world has become a Global Village, the movement of such members seems also to be a trend in Africa where it appears that mainline Churches now also emphasise a need for new birth in the Holy Spirit, in order to benefit from this believer baptist emphasis.

When there is therefore more evangelism and Holy Spirit-revival ministry regardless of what the denomination may be called, growth in membership numbers will likely materialise, although requests for rebaptism are also likely to increase in paedo-baptist denominations. These surveyed trends of Christian membership numbers, and the concomitant search for an evangelical brand of Christianity, seems to confirm David Wright's contention (2005:9), that the need is for a re-appraisal of baptismal policy in which a re-prioritising of believer's baptism over infant baptism is carried out for evangelistic objectives.

Another aspect of the link between believer's baptism and evangelical revivalism in respect of church growth can be found in reports from the *National Catholic Reporter*. This cause and effect scenario is looked at specifically from the angle of the practice of baptism and not primarily from that of Church membership number movement (*National Catholic Reporter* 2016).

2.16.1.3 Trends from the National Catholic Reporter (2016)

2.16.1.3.1 Falling Rates of Baptism in North American Catholic and Baptist Churches

The report from a survey conducted by the periodical, *Religion News Service*, published in the *National Catholic Reporter*, likewise raised the issue of falling rates of baptism in both Roman Catholic and Baptist denominations (*National Catholic Reporter* 2016:1). This trend is attributed to a growth in secularism in North America, already in its advanced stages in Western Europe, and in many other places in the world. While secularism has been identified as the reason for this drop in the number of baptisms conducted in both Catholic and baptismal denominations, there may in fact be additional explanations for this.

As regards Catholicism, Jesuit Father Jim Martin of *America Magazine* states that “parents don’t seem to understand the theology of [infant] baptism and rather tend to view baptism ‘as a rite of passage for the family’”, rather than what baptism really means – incorporation into the Christian community. Parents moreover, are surprised that preparation for this rite is considered necessary. Mark Gray, senior research associate at Georgetown University’s Centre for Applied Research, alludes to an increasing number of out-of-wedlock births, which, because they are embarrassed, is why single parents withdraw from social events that include Church attendance. Additionally, offspring from interfaith marriages are not always given Christian baptism, and this is also a growing phenomenon of concern *The National Catholic Reporter* 2016:1).

Contrarily, those baptisands interviewed revealed that “one in five people now claim no particular religious affiliation”, and the Reverend Frank Page, of the Southern Baptist Convention’s executive committee concluded that “people want God but are not happy with Churches” (*The National Catholic Reporter* 2016:1).

Despite the growing influence of secularism an additional dynamic that is taking its toll on Church numbers, this does not detract from the fact that, in Markus Barth’s words, “evangelism and believer’s baptism biblically go together” (Barth 1959:40) and there is enough evidence to suggest that baptism practiced as sacramental evangelism supports Barth’s claim.

2.16.1.4 Paedo-baptism and Baptismal Efficacy

Another question currently being raised with regard to why Churches from the Catholic and Protestant traditions appear to be experiencing declines in membership, while Evangelical and Pentecostal Church numbers are reportedly on a general increase is whether infant baptism should thus be abandoned, because it is not “delivering the goods” as it used to. In a study entitled “Paedo-baptism and Baptismal Efficacy”, Rich Lusk (2016) finds that a decline in American paedo-baptismal practice has been ongoing since the nineteenth century. He then goes on to deal with what he believes are the reasons for this decline, and how it may be countered. The reasons he offers are addressed in the next subsection (Section 2.16.1.4.1).

2.16.1.4.1 Causes for the Gradual Loss in Sacramental Infant Baptism Efficacy

Lusk (2016) writes that:

In 1857, Charles Hodge wrote an essay in the *Princeton Review* that predicted the decline of the practice of infant baptism. Based on statistics from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, Hodge pointed out that from 1812 onward the number of children being brought for baptism was radically declining in relation to the overall number of communicants. In 1811, there

had been 20 paedo-baptisms per hundred communicants; by 1856, the ratio was just over 5 per hundred. Hodge warned that more than two-thirds of the children of the Church have been ‘cut-off’ from the people of God by their parents’ sinful neglect and by the Church’s silent acquiescence therein (Lusk 2016:1).

This decline in infant baptism according to Hodge, was also taking place within other Reformed denominations. The Dutch Reformed ratio was only slightly better than the Presbyterians in 1856, at about 7 paedo-baptisms per hundred communicants, and within the New School Presbyterian Church six out of seven children were found to be left unbaptised (Lusk 2016:1).

The Congregational Church fared far worse in the mid-1850s, so that Hodge could truthfully claim, “In the Congregational churches in New England, infant baptism, beyond doubt, was dying out. Only the High Episcopalians seemed relatively unaffected by the trend” (Lusk 2016:1). As to what caused this sharp decline in covenantal baptismal numbers, and why they lost ground so quickly, Lusk indicates that this was not due to theological and social forces but because “America had become progressively and massively ‘Baptist’ in the early-to-mid-nineteenth century”. (Lusk 2016:1). Lusk thus contends that the observed drop in the number of baptisms was caused by the existence of two powerful cultural theological movements which he describes as “experiential revivalism and enlightenment rationalism”⁶ (Lusk 2016:1–2).

Revivalism and spiritual enlightenment, according to Lusk (Lusk 2016:2–4) had a down-side which was a counterproductive influence for the practice of infant baptism. He states that the recovery of the high view of sacramental baptism, which he believes is still the answer for the woes of paedo-baptism, may only likely materialise when clear teachings regarding Christian discipleship are given. Lusk writes, “if the historical thesis of this essay is right – namely, if paedo-baptism declined in America largely because of the declining views of sacramental efficiency – then we have a great deal to gain by recovering and re-articulating in fresh ways a high view of sacramental grace as taught by our fathers in the faith” (Lusk 2016:38).

Lusk’s claim generally confirms the findings from David Wright’s research (2005). Wright shows that, just as there is a clear connection between evangelicalism and church growth, there appears to be a converse connection between sacrament as baptismal regeneration and a decline in Church spiritual growth, and of member numbers. Membership decline is thus not only with

⁶ “Experiential revivalism” describes a person who has gone through an experience of renewal by the Spirit, or goes through a first-time conversion; while “enlightenment” concerns the obtaining of new insights from a concentrated consideration, or reconsideration, of the contents of the Bible. Both these are Biblically-described outcomes in the moving of the Holy Spirit, when the Gospel of Christ is communicated with repentance and faith.

regard to the inefficiency of paedobaptism, it is fundamentally caused by a lack of Holy Spirit revivalism and Biblical enlightenment, if the examples of this found in the Acts of the Apostles are to be taken into account and accepted as models to be followed by the Christian Church as directed by the Word of God..

A claim that the gradual loss of the sacramental efficiency of baptism is caused by Holy Spirit revivalism is thus not strictly correct. This contention does not take into account all of the socio-political realities which impact on the religious world of this era, and which cause a retraction from the Church and from Christ Himself (Keum 2013:3–7). These claimed causes of decline in paedobaptist numbers are aided by the fact that infant baptism itself seems to have lost its appeal in the modern era. Indeed, if it is claimed that infant baptism is not baptismal regeneration, the question can thus be raised of whether the high view of sacramental baptism has ever been an efficient method for evangelism within recorded Church history because of a lack of emphasis on the evangelical factor.

Wright therefore demonstrates in his study how, from the earliest ages of the Church, and especially from the Constantinian Era, the Church and the state were in a relationship of “holy and unholy wedlock’ and thus seemed to lose its calling and the distinctiveness of Christ as being only Saviour of all people” (Wright 2005:8). It had thus lost its evangelical ethos-hence the decline of paedobaptist numbers.

Would the phrase stated as “baptismal efficacy” as used by Lusk not come close to being an alternative phrase that is a disguise for “baptismal regeneration? Is this thus not another way of describing what in Old Catholicism was called transubstantiation? The term transubstantiation refers to a process whereby through consecration, the Eucharistic bread and wine are said to be changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. In the case of water baptism, what is a legitimate praying-over of the water of baptism may derive from a similar belief, that such is water transforms the physical element into the actual saving power of the Spirit of Christ, and Lusk (2016:36–38) seems to imply this for infant baptism in his argument for the high value of this rite.

Having said all this, it must however be noted that contributors to the baptismal debate in Armstrong and Engel (2007) which included both paedobaptists and baptists and which will be studied in the next section, reject any belief in *ex opere operato* regeneration in baptismal practice, and this rejection is issued by representatives of both positions (Kretzmann 2011:39–40).

2.16.1.5 An insight of a Trend of Baptismal Practice in Some African countries

The view of an observed trend in membership movement with relation to Christian baptism within the Church of Kenya is provided by Anglican priest and academic, Professor. Joseph Galgalo located at Limuru. Even though not geographically and organisationally a part of the Southern African Region, the Kenyan circumstance could nevertheless provide valuable insight for what is happening around baptism elsewhere in Africa. Kenya is thus, a “little window” next to South Africa, which can assist in ascertaining whether the dynamics of baptism in that country corroborate with the trends of baptism seen in Southern Africa, and elsewhere in global Christianity, as part of an ongoing search for baptismal consensus.

Prof Galgalo states that African Christianity reveals two main characteristics:

the first is a sustained exponential growth of Christianity, with numbers growing from about 10 million in 1900 to just over half a billion in 2015, and this growth is coupled with a very noticeable diversity of forms of Christian practice and teachings. In 2010, Christians in Africa were estimated to be about 518 million, equalling about 63% of the continent’s total population of about 823 million. The growth is not limited to any particular denomination and the increase in numbers results in the creation of a variety of new churches. That Kenya exemplifies this is indicated in the 2009 national census, where 31,877 734 out of the national population of 38 412 088 identified themselves with Catholic, Protestant and other denominations, giving a 9%age-points increase compared with the 1999 census (Galgalo 2015:1).

Galgalo, however, also says that there is a downside to this rapid growth, in that it is not always matched by qualitative growth. It is likely that in the vibrancy of growth, diversity in Christianity has materialised which has resulted in Africa having the greatest number of Christian denominations in the world. This diversity of Christianity makes it very difficult to speak of an African Christianity but should perhaps be spoken of as African Christianities (2015:1).

Speaking of Pentecostalism and charismatic movements, Galgalo adds that with the rise of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement a great mix of traditions has been the result and has become typical of any new church that is introduced. The phenomenal growth of both indigenous and imported Pentecostalism has deeply impacted older denominations and noticeably influenced Charismatic renewal movements. Mainline churches have had to modify the form and practice of their formal liturgical worship to retain their members (Galgalo 2015:6–9).

Galgalo thus contends that a major problem in the African Church today is that, while Sunday services attract thousands of people, there remains an increasing number of Christians who hardly attend Church at all. Nominal Christianity has therefore also become the main reason for the increasing practice of syncretism amongst African Christians (Galgalo 2015:4; 12–13).

Traditional religionists often possess no reservations concerning carrying the Bible in one hand and their traditional beliefs and practices in the other. There are many who would proudly identify themselves as being Anglicans, Methodists, Catholics, Presbyterians, or belonging to any other such established denominations, but may not be able to recall the last time they were in a Church, except where it may have been socially beneficial to do so. All this may be alarming, yet presents an ideal opportunity for the practicing of the Christian evangelistic mission and discipleship (Galgalo 2015:12–13).

Convergence baptism that intentionally consists of sacramental infant baptism in combination with evangelical believer's baptism, and operates through a mandated catechumenate methodology, could ensure that such evangelical initiates are not only truly born of the Holy Spirit, but are also thoroughly schooled in the teaching of Christ.

2.17 Recovering the Purpose of Baptism

Since the mission of Christian covenant is essentially redemptive in purpose because this mission highlights Gospel evangelism in which repentance and faith are to feature indispensably, this should not be seen as separate from baptism (Wright 2005:89) and is the clear message of Christ in Matthew 28:17–20.

To support his contention, Wright turns to the Lima Text of the WCC (1982), which urges that effort be made to desist from practicing infant baptism indiscriminately. Wright further states that:

the time is now ripe for a recovery of the New Testament integrity of baptism involving a more biblically realist understanding of baptism that is inclusive of infant baptism. Because fewer requests for baby baptism are now being made in many local situations a responsible baptismal discipline would be more feasible (Wright 2005:102).

Wright thus confirms the view that infant baptism, as it is currently practiced, has become an *ex opere operato* form of regeneration. He (2005:11–15) nevertheless, defends infant baptism, and argues that, despite the negative impact this practice has had in some eras of Christianity, it remains a *bona fide* Biblical and Christian practice. In this connection, he proposes measures

which could be used to overcome the twin-problems of nominal Christianity and automatic regeneration. In the light of this, Wright (2005:83–102) proposes a radical critique of infant baptism; a return to believer’s baptism, without dispensing with infant baptism; the rejection of vicarious faith; a return to the purpose of baptism as evangelism in which repentance is the central message, and the restoration of a high place for the catechumenate as a medium for evangelistic intake.

While the practice of believer’s baptism also represents no fool-proof guarantee against baptismal nominalism and *ex opere operato* redemption, a convergence scenario, in which the two baptisms exist in a relationship of functional complementarity, could help to alleviate the concerns that Wright mentions. Even with good Biblical instruction however, the studies conducted by Wright (2005) show that infant baptism, practiced on its own, will continue to promote indiscriminate baptism, which leads to belief in baptismal regeneration.

2.18 Baptist Views on the Teaching of Sacramental Baptism

A. R. Cross writes that Evangelical scholars have for centuries been at the centre of controversy regarding the mode chosen for the baptism of either believers or infants; baptism by immersion, effusion or sprinkling. Although these views have been repeated *ad nauseam*, there seems very little likelihood of ultimate concurrence. Only occasionally has the controversy moved on to the theology of baptism itself. Cross further states that he is “not suggesting that Baptists have got it right, while Paedo-baptists have got it wrong. Rather I have argued that in the main neither Baptists nor Paedo-baptists at present uphold New Testament baptism” (Cross 2008 EQ 80.3(1), 195–217).

The Lima Text on Baptism has provided the idea of practicing believer’s baptism and infant baptism side by side with some momentum. Another Baptist, J. M. Beach, notes that “after nearly 500 years of debate, some theologians are pleading for a truce within the Evangelical church” (Beach 2001:47–48). Wayne Grudem (1994) for example, may argue strongly for believers’ baptism yet does not think baptism ought to be a point of division amongst churches. He suggests that paedobaptists and advocates of believers’ baptism jointly acknowledge that “baptism is not a major doctrine of faith. This would require concession on the part of Baptists and Paedo-Baptists alike, so that both views of baptism could be taught and practiced in their respective churches” (Beach 2001:47–48).

As to what consensus baptism means in a uniting Church model as a way forward needs to be defined in a way that is all-inclusive Biblically and be theologically acceptable for the effectual

production of converts who are genuinely spiritually new-born. This is the challenge which Michael Green (1987) takes up in the next section.

2.19 Call for Reformation of Paedo-baptist Theology and Practice

Since infant baptism has caused many theological and pastoral problems through the years, a question that has been repeatedly asked is whether this rite should not be discarded altogether. Whatever has been attempted in terms of making infant baptism more effectual has seemingly not put an end to rebaptism, and there are possibly more infant-baptised Christians who have been rebaptized than the leaders of Churches care to know (Konig *et al.*, 1983:156–157). Perhaps then, this claim would be more convincing were more data to be acquired around the matter.

Michael Green talks about the need for reform of the paedo-baptism understanding, in view of the fact “that its indiscriminate use has led millions to assume blandly that they are Christians when they are not, and is a scandal that cannot be perpetuated” (Green 1987:72–73). Green does not however believe that infant baptism should be abandoned by the Church, because of infant baptism’s sacramentally ineffectual nature. He rather deals with why baptism as sacrament should not be repeated, while still asserting that the sacrament should be an ongoing evangelical witness (Green 1987:2) based on a third-way resolution possibility.

2.19.1 Solutions to the Incorrectness of Rebaptism⁷

Green argues that there is one basic answer for the incorrectness of rebaptism, which is that “rebaptism cannot be done” (Green 1987:89), because baptism means inclusion into the salvation history of our God, incorporation into the Church, and immersion in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, which are all factors that form the basis of its true sacramental

⁷Because baptism is the sacrament of entry into the Christian life, it is hard for those who request rebaptism to see that they do not need to enter the Church for a second time, having already been accepted into the Church through infant baptism. Yet they feel that their first baptism did nothing for them or anyone else. The Church may have brought them into its membership, but they did not themselves enter. A number of questions are raised in this regard, including: “Why do people want rebaptism and not Confirmation?” There are various answers which are given as the reason for wanting a second baptism. These are: There was not enough faith; there was not enough confession; or not enough water was used. Green further speculates that “most people want immersion probably because it is symbolically powerful in its depiction of the death and resurrection of Christ. In their infant baptism no feeling was possible”. He argues that the Christian life is however not meant to be comprised of a succession of self-gratifying acts, because baptism is belief in the crucified Messiah. Entering the life of Christ is not about feelings primarily, but about dying and rising with Christ. Baptism does not offer feelings of self-gratification, but an unrepeatable new life of being in Christ. The cult of religious sensation is quite harmful to true Christian discipleship, since for one thing, it is deeply subjective, and tends to ignore the objectivity of Gospel, by making the Gospel and baptism mere symbols (Green 1987:88).

meaning, and which are the reasons that rule out rebaptism as a possibility. Green (1987:90) further contends that this would be just as foolish as to petition for citizenship when already a country's citizen. Baptism is thus ever to be remembered, but never to be repeated (Green 1987:89). Baptism is the washing away of sins and is also the sacrament of justification. Both baptism and justification have been provided by Christ for us who are totally undeserving, and thus excludes any possibility of merit on the part of the individual. Both baptism and justification launch the individual into a life in Christ, and are unrepeatable, and a person can therefore no more be rebaptized than be re-justified (Green 1987:30–31).

Would baptism, however, not also be effectual where the conditions for repentance and faith are met? If these terms are not present in infant baptism, why is it not also mandatory for a person to be baptised again, even after a first-time personal fulfilment of these pre-conditions? Furthermore, why is the Church's Rite of Confirmation regarded as a more acceptable alternative in such cases, even though confirmation is not considered a sacrament or even mentioned in the bible? Green states that the Reformers did not rebaptize, because they rather spoke of "improving" on their original baptism, by which they meant making use of its promises, which had possibly lain fallow and unclaimed over the years; it is in this sense that they had "possessed their possessions" (Green 1987:89). Others of the Church's original reforming group became baptist in practice and therefore saw no theological problem in the administration of more than a single baptism on an individual. Green thus, cites Acts 8:9-25 as an example of the correctness of only a single only practice (1987:89). The "Apostles did not rebaptize", because there was evidence of the sacramental effects of the Holy Spirit in the lives of baptism's recipients. The disciples had prayed for them, laid hands on them, and the Holy Spirit entered them, and thence became evident in their lives, so there was no perceived need for baptism to be repeated (Green 1987:89).

Green further argues that infant baptism may not even need to be initially understood by the individual, because it is not primarily a mark of understanding, but a sign of the covenant between a gracious God and the individual. Baptism is therefore not a celebration of a person's faith, but of God's Grace. The person is baptised and nothing can unbaptize him/her. By definition, rites of entry cannot be arbitrarily repeated, nor can they be retrospectively invalidated (Green 1987:90).

Yet, if the non-repeatability ruling for baptism is considered altogether sacrosanct in Green's theory, why does infant baptism produce so many nominal Christians? Green does however concede that "infant baptism is no proof that an infant baptized person is truly Christian yet the

vast majority of churches baptize infants. They may be wrong but there must be good reason anyway why they practice infant baptism” (Green 1987:45). Still, it needs to be asked why paedo-baptist Churches decline in both memberships and in their baptismal appeal (*Hermeneutics* 2015:1-5).

Green offers a number of alternative rites which could be used to satisfy the need for believer’s baptism by infant-baptised converted Church members. These are: a rite of remembering, in which an opportunity is given to recall and enter into the event of the past, and to renew the vow of allegiance taken on the person’s behalf or a re-affirmation rite in which baptismal vows are renewed. Green states that if these are thought to be too small as measures, then a re-enactment of the previous baptism can also be performed. Re-enactment accords with the stated notions of remembering and affirming, in that this act may be seen as a way of bringing the past back into the present and recapturing its power, with the person’s own responses in play (Green 1987:91–94).

Green further conjectures that these may be viable possibilities, but like the rite of confirmation, there are two problems with all alternative approaches. The first is that the evangelical sacramental purpose of baptism does not seem to feature, which makes these alternatives more person-centred, with too much reliance on the vows of baptism, rather than on the Message of Christ as only Saviour from sin. Secondly, Green states that all these affirmations are concerned with what occurred in the past, but for infant-baptised converts who desire a believer’s baptism, the issue is more about the fulfilment of a need for something which is personal and deeply meaningful in terms of building a relationship with Christ in the present, and which serves as a witness to Christ and His saving work (Green 1987:91–94).

A rite of believer’s baptism can therefore best be used to demonstrate in a Biblically clear way an individuals’ identification with Christ in His Death and Resurrection, just as Jesus had sacramentally identified with all people for their salvation from sin through His own Baptism at the hands of John the Baptist, and later, through his baptism of suffering leading up to and on the Cross of Calvary. Green then returns his focus to the practices of believer and infant-baptism in order to re-affirm the validity of both in the sacrament of covenant baptism. He shows how both God’s initiative and human response are indispensable in each case, and also how the three main traditions of sacramental understanding of baptism can combine to offer an alternative emphasis for the impotency and divisions of water baptism (Green 1987:44).

2.19.2 Baptism of Adults

Green states that adult believers should be baptised, because this practice plainly exists in the record of the New Testament. There may not have been formal catechumenate classes to begin with in the early Church, yet “there is abundant biblical evidence to show that in apostolic days when people were baptized they were admitted into the fold forthwith [but with some informal instruction]. Thus repentance, faith and baptism took place in one fell swoop and immediately [thereafter] the adult initiate became a member” (Green 1987:44) (See Acts 2:37–47).

2.19.3 Baptism of Infants

A fundamental concern however, is about whether children should be baptised, and whether the first Christians did in fact initiate their children by baptism. Baptists, Open Brethren, and many House Churches in Britain, along with many fast-growing independent Churches, generally do not baptise infants because of the well-recognised belief that no adequate Biblical grounds for the baptising of infants exists (Green 1987:44–57).

In considering a number of objections to infant baptism, Green counters these by arguing that, “No argument can be produced against infant baptism which does not equally hold well against infant circumcision” (1987:44–57).

2.19.4 Infant Baptism and Gospel Objectivity

Green earlier contends that infant baptism is essential, because it points to “the solid achievement of Christ crucified and risen whether we respond to it or not; baptism is therefore the sacrament of our adoption, our acquittal, our justification” (1987:54). This, however, refers only to the objective side of baptism; the subjective aspect still needs to be catered for in the need for infant-baptised people themselves to respond to Christ for salvation (Green 1987:44–57). This side of human need cannot be written off as an attempt at subjective self-gratification and ephemeral as if it falls outside the bounds of needing the gift of Christian redemption.

2.19.5 Infant Baptism and God’s Initiative in Salvation

It is generally accepted by paedobaptists that baptism is the seal of the covenant of God between God’s Grace and human response to the Holy Spirit. The question for Green however is whether this sacrament should be attached primarily to humanity’s response, or to God’s Initiative? Believer-baptists and paedobaptists follow different paths in the matter (Green 1987:55).

For the adult person baptised, baptism primarily bears witness to what the individual experiences and does in responding to the Grace of God. For the paedo-baptist, baptism primarily bears witness to what God has done on the Cross of Christ, and can also do in making all things possible (Green 1987:55). And yet the two baptisms remain polarised, much to the impoverishment of both. Either the one is God's exclusive doing, or the other appears to be too human, yet each of these aspects has its necessary place in the sacrament of baptism. No one can repent without deciding to repent, and no-one can be reborn spiritually without the action of the Holy Spirit conveying the Gift of Christ.

2.19.6 Middle-Way for Combining Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal Components

Green⁸ then goes on to argue for the three views of baptism: Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal. Despite their theological differences, each has a place in God's sacramental economy of baptism and their vital roles require accommodating in any new theory which may be formulated. These essentials are: the prior working of prevenient grace as emphasised by the Catholic position; the need for an evangelical response in repentance and faith by the Protestant approach; and the Work of the Holy Spirit, as the only giver of redemption in the Pentecostal view (Green 1987:36–39).

Green further argues that covenantal baptism should therefore be able to form a combination of these three perspectives of baptism; Roman Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal. Despite the somewhat outdated Roman Catholic view that the Church possesses the God-given authority to confer salvation by means of baptism on an initiate, is not biblically sound theology. The church rather carries the important responsibility of making disciples, baptizing and teaching these people all the commands of Christ and will thus enjoy the presence of Christ and of His working with them in the power of the Holy Spirit for personal redemption and is a non-negotiable for baptismal policy (Matthew 28:17-20). In the Protestant emphasis, the call is to repent and believe, for the achievement of ultimate salvation, and is another aspect of the

⁸Green offers a solution for the division surrounding baptism, and also the problematic practice of rebaptism, by likening baptism to a title-deed for admission into the Kingdom of Heaven. Baptism is the objective (sacramental) pledge of God's acceptance, His arms extended to embrace people; or is like a marriage-service, in which vows are exchanged and a couple is declared husband and wife, although the marriage still remains to be consummated. Baptism can properly be spoken of as effecting what it symbolises, but does not do so automatically, or unconditionally. There is the need to repent and believe, room must also be made for the Holy Spirit in this process (Green 1987:38).

baptismal message that is indispensable for Christian salvation. In the Pentecostal view the emphasis is on the working of the Holy Spirit as the vehicle of Christian redemption for new birth, and is therefore also indispensable. All three aspects of responsibility thus form an essential part of covenant baptism and all would need to feature in a theology of consensus baptism.

This suggested way forward however, raises the question of why the two baptisms cannot find convergence within the context of the purpose of sacramental baptism involving all three of these indispensable elements (Green 1987:36–39). On the one hand, Green rejects rebaptism, because he, as with other paedo-baptists, contends that all baptism derives from the ultimate salvific act of Christ dying on the Cross, which cannot be re-invented or repeated. Contrarily, he states that the various affirmations of a previous baptism, by means of any number of potential water applications, remain permissible. This portion of Green's view makes it possible for a repeat of baptism, in the form of a believer's baptism for personal evangelistic purpose to follow an infant baptism in general baptismal practice.

The two baptisms would exist and operate according to the evangelistic and witnessing sacramental purposes of the Gospel of Christ, which is what Green vigorously stresses anyway. Any request for a second baptism need not thus be the same as a rebaptism; although meeting such requests would need to be a compromise rather than a mere affirmation of a previous baptism. This arrangement be more evangelistically and unitingly forward-looking than is *status quo* baptism. How these three aspects of sacrament can be combined is the subject for discussion in Chapter Six.

2.20 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the origins of sacrament and its development within Christianity. Reasons for the failure of infant baptism to convey an effectual message over the indispensable need for personal redemption by which lives are transformed (Wright 2005) seems to be a direct result of non-Biblical views of sacrament developed in the course of Church history.

The view that baptism is magical, as automatic *ex opere operato* salvation, and is the means to God's Grace, and the occasion when God is bound to perform His salvific task, are all associations and influences which infant-baptism, functioning as an independent Church rite, has passed on to initiates who have hitherto lacked new birth by the Holy Spirit and evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in their living. And yet, instead of enriching the lives of initiates with

the salvific benefits of Christ, baptism has given people knowledge of religion and pseudo-salvation with no real evidence of a change of character.

Wright's research shows that, because the practice of infant baptism has for a long time been ascendant over believer's baptism in Reformed paedo-baptising Churches, it has failed "turn people into practicing Christians or even churchgoers" (2005:7–8).⁹ Wright also finds that there is a general reduction of Christian numbers, mainly in paedo-baptising denominations, which is probably an indication that intentional evangelism, by means of baptism, is not being practiced. One of the surveys (*The National Catholic Reporter* 2016:1) however reveals that, while Baptist Churches in America also show a drop in the number of their members, membership in the Catholic Church, where paedo-baptism is the established tradition, has nevertheless increased. A reason for this difference was that baptism is practiced as an evangelistic event in that denomination.

The surveys that touch on membership and water baptism generally reveal that membership numbers have reduced, whether Catholic, Protestant or Pentecostal where Church ministries are not intentionally evangelistic and Holy Spirit-orientated (*The National Catholic Reporter* 2016:1).

Even though Pentecostalism seems to be growing rapidly within Protestant Christianity, Green's critique only deals with a small section of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church, which practices infant-baptism, seems still to be the largest Christian denomination in the world, while the Eastern Orthodox Church community seems also to have remained quite substantial in its membership. Be this as it may, believer-baptist evangelically-orientated denominations are generally recording increases in their numbers. If baptism is understood as an evangelistic message event that is intended to lead to redemption, rather than by itself being redemptive, this could well heighten the effectiveness of paedo-baptist baptismal practice. Where the evangelical message is missing however, even in believer-baptist communities, there

⁹ This corroborates the results from a number of religious surveys conducted in America (Fact Checker, 11 June 2016); the Pew Foundation (2015); Richard Lusk's book, *Paedo-baptism and Baptismal Efficacy: Historical Trends and Current Controversies* (Accessed from Trends of Baptism in Christianity, 26 July 2016); and also African surveys (Galgalo 2015/04/2), all of which reveal that there is a general decline in the numbers of baptisms, and also of membership numbers within paedo-baptist Churches.

has been a noticeable drop in membership. Practicing evangelistically-related bible baptism is thus both the calling and commission of Christ (Matthew 28:17–20).

All this information around water baptism gives weight to the need for the evangelistic aspect of sacrament to feature more prominently in the practice of infant baptism. These findings, however, may not completely solve the problem for spiritually new-born paedobaptists who desire a believer's baptism in that they would argue that they themselves have never ever consciously received a baptism either before or after their new birth.

Chapter Three

Perspectives on the Sacrament of Baptism and Implications for the MCSA

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the notion of baptism in the history of the Church, and the possible effects that the development of baptism has had in an attempt to be treated as sacrament. The various notions that have developed around the meaning and purpose of the sacrament of baptism have seemingly contributed to the high levels of nominal Christianity particularly amongst infant-baptised individuals. Infant baptism therefore seems to stand or fall in terms of its need to be an effective way in which Church sacrament is interpreted and applied. The fact that neither Jesus, nor the first Apostles of Jesus defined the meaning of baptism in any measure (Petrie 1965:33–40) appears to have been a significant factor in the development of the number of interpretations for the sacrament of baptism formed through the centuries. These have not always come close to providing a complete definition that would fulfil the Biblical evangelical purpose of baptism in terms of God's demonstrated covenantal plan and purpose for the redemption of all of humanity and be acceptable to all players. Current studies on sacrament suggest that change may have been made possible now by the emergence of interpretations which are turning the tide in a move back to a more balanced and holistic view of baptism as both sacrament and evangelicalism. The selected work of scholars for this study may thus turn out to be both sufficient and appropriate to assist in the search of how sacrament can be expressed in a more uniting and efficient form of theology.

This section of the study does not however seek to provide answers but explanations of what current baptismal thinking is. The chapter is based on sub-question two for the study which focuses on the Biblical perspectives on the sacrament of baptism and the effect that these views may have on the teachings of the MCSA on baptism.

The chapter will explore the concept of baptism using a range of scholars. The motivation for employing the investigations made by this range of scholars is threefold; first is to understand how these scholars define the sacrament of baptism; second, to ascertain whether the nuances of their sacramental understanding of covenant baptism can be complementary, and third to establish whether the convergence of the two baptisms, which seems indeed to be the two sides of the only one baptism, has any real potential. The sacrament of baptism is thereby understood within a broad context of views in at least twelve overlapping, and seemingly essential nuances

of baptismal meaning which dovetail into the formation of a logical and seemingly indispensable complementarity.

The purpose for the exercise performed in this chapter thus is intended to provide the MCSA with ideas and insights concerning trends in thinking, and the creation of new practices that can be employed in discussing baptism. This will help to discover whether a convergence of the two baptisms in MCSA practice as a possible model possesses the potential to exist within the context of the MCSA as a legitimately sanctioned Church practice.

3.2 Sacrament of Baptism Associated with Biblical Evangelism

Barth (1959) seems to have been the post-World War II (WWII) progenitor of critiquing one's own traditions, and accordingly undertook a biblically objective rethink of baptism as sacrament. He argues from the premise that, since infant baptism is not Biblically-sustainable from text and verse evidence, it is therefore not a sacramental rite, even though all forms of baptism, including the baptism of infants, administered in "the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit", are legitimate, and therefore non-repeatable. In doing so, he rejects the five examples of "household baptism" as found in the Bible, as representing any kind of decisive evidence in support of the practice of infant baptism.

3.2.1 Household Baptism as Evidence of Sacrament

As household-baptism is touted by paedo-baptists as providing ample Biblical evidence and a firm basis in justification of infant baptism, Barth finds that this form of baptism is dubious, because nothing specifically is said, or even implied with regard to infants being baptised. In the five instances of household baptism found in the New Testament Barth argues that:

I know only a thin thread to which one may perhaps hold (and then hardly) and for a proof of infant baptism from the New Testament. These [household baptism passages] do not explicitly forbid the supposition that babies may have been included...one thinks, however, of the sequence that is invariably kept even in these narratives – the preaching of the Word, faith baptism – and wonders, whether one really wants to hold to this thread...One can hardly come to any other conclusion but that the case for a New Testament proof of infant baptism is more than weak (Barth 1948:45).

The logic contained in Barth's argument follows the line that because sacrament does not exist in infant baptism, and because infant baptism does not exist in the Bible, God does not therefore sanction it.

3.2.2 Exegesis and Infant Baptism

Barth also argues against infant baptism from an exegetical angle. He finds that no exegesis can be performed on something which is not found in the bible. The absence of infant baptism from the bible therefore makes it possible for a type of speculation to be engaged in which cannot be substantiated by means of bible study alone. This exegetical factor cannot therefore be used as an effective defence of infant baptism, because it is impossible to perform exegesis of the so-called “passivity factor” in faith, with regard to the baptism of infants, and which paedobaptists use as a key in their arguments for covenantal baptism. Barth’s justification that infant baptism cannot be defended exegetically is because:

by exegesis it cannot be established that the baptized person can be a mere passive instrument (*behandelter*). But by exegesis it is established that the baptized is an active partner (*Handelnder*)...no infants can be such a person...Baptism in the New Testament in every case...is by a man [*sic*] who has come to faith...one is not brought to baptism; one comes to baptism (Barth 1948:42).

3.2.3 Prevenient Grace and Infant Baptism

Paedobaptists also speak of the indispensable value of prevenient Grace as a factor in the sacramental aspect of covenantal baptism, but then must also admit that there is no information in the Bible regarding this. Barth, however, contends that “the argument for an antecedent grace would carry weight only if the rightness of infant baptism could have been proved in some other way – in free and responsible baptism” (Barth 1948:53).

While Barth believes that infant-baptism lacks any real Biblical evidence, the sacramental emphasis for this rite can only make sense if it results in the conviction of sin and in a turning to God for true salvation. That the claim for prevenient Grace is at work during the baptismal rite is also disproved, because infant baptism fails to deliver in terms of turning people into fully-practicing Christians (Barth 1948:53).

3.2.4 Service of Confirmation and Biblical Sacrament

The rite of Confirmation, according to the tenets of paedobaptist theology, is intended to afford a response which then completes God’s sacramental message, as begun through the process of baptism. Infant baptism is not however a sacrament, because it has not been sanctioned by God according to the biblical record. Barth thus argues that infant-baptism, followed by a rite of confirmation, is a fundamentally flawed process, not only Biblically but from a sacramental point of view. It is therefore an unsuitable vehicle for conveying what infant baptism is intended

to message as sacrament. For this part of his argument Barth draws from Schleiermacher, who contends that “Infant Baptism requires completion and supplementing” (Barth 1948:47) and states that while Calvin and Luther rightly emphasised the Divine component of infant baptism, they nevertheless left out any perceived need for baptism as a ratification of the baptismal covenant, which is what baptism within itself requires. For this ratification to occur, another rite has needed to be invented, namely the rite of confirmation. He goes on to ask that, if confirmation is regarded as a half-sacrament, by what authority then is this done? If the rite of confirmation is devoid of sacramental status then it is disqualified from being a *bona fide* Christian practice. “Infant baptism can hardly [therefore] be preserved without exegetical and practical artifices and sophisms...on grounds which lie outside the biblical passages on baptism and outside the thing itself” (Barth 1948:49).

Barth additionally contends that Biblical baptism can only be considered a complete baptism when a person becomes a conscious believer that is followed by a believer’s baptism. This would then be a sign that the salvific requirements of baptism have been properly fulfilled (Barth 1948:49). In his justification for moving to believer’s baptism was because baptism in the bible is clearly associated with adults and is specifically connected with the essential and overriding need for the evangelisation of people to the Christian Faith.

3.2.5 Baptism as Witness in Infants

Giving witness to personal faith, which in the Bible is normally associated with responding adults, is another factor which rules out infant baptism for Barth. The association of baptism with adults in the New Testament could nevertheless be because this was seen as the norm during the early phase of the development of the Faith.

The role of children in a household of Faith seems however to have been a much later development, when the Church began to expand, and became more multi-cultural in membership. Barth nevertheless, claims that various incorrect hypotheses regarding the relationship between faith and infant baptism exists in the practice of paedobaptism. Amongst these hypotheses are that: first, the seed of the Faith is in the infant; second, the Faith of parents and congregations is a pre-requisite for baptism; and third, infants in covenant families are already in covenant community, and therefore are salvifically-privileged, which thus gives them the right to be baptised (Barth 1948:14–15). All of this is not explicitly taught in the Bible. Barth rather justifies his move to believer’s baptism based on the sacramental evangelical purpose of baptism rather than on baptism as an acknowledged sacrament:

Baptism bears witness to the Word, to God, to Jesus, to covenant grace, to faith, and to the Church. It is an event in which God, in Jesus Christ, makes man [*sic*] his child and a member of his covenant, awakens faith through his grace and the calling of a man [*sic*] to life in his church...Baptism is a practice in which man [*sic*] is not the most important figure, but is certainly the second most important (Barth 1948:14–15).

By moving away from infant baptism to believer's baptism, did Barth not thus take the sacramental element out of baptism? This seems not to be the case, because he rather relocated the basis of sacrament as being in the Gospel of Christ and not in what he regarded as being the Biblically-dubious practice of infant baptism.

Barth would have been aware of the danger of infant baptism assuming a pseudo-salvific role when given full sacramental status. There is however clear Biblical sanction for adult believer's baptism in Barth's theology, and believer's baptism as practiced after new birth for him would carry more sacramental impact for the individual than of infant-baptism alone.

3.2.6 Sacramental Purpose of Baptism and the Mystery Factor

Barth also reacted against the primacy of infant baptism, because of how sacrament is generally understood in paedobaptism. Sacrament is sometimes defined as a mysterious and miraculous happening which according to Barth is an inaccurate interpretation, and which does not square with Biblical information concerning baptism. Bandey (1976), states that Barth had emphasised that "baptism responds not to a mystery but to the sacrament of the history of Jesus Christ, of His resurrection, of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and is not itself a mystery or is [only] a sacrament" (Bandey 1976:50). As such, water baptism possesses two elements in its makeup: the Divine and the human. Both are required, and constitute what is believed in paedobaptist circles to be the means by which the goal of redemption is arrived at. The overriding value of baptism for Barth, is that it is located in its purpose (what it is supposed to do), and thus, for him is evangelistic by nature.

Barth thus argues strongly for the sacramental and evangelical primacy of believer's baptism because as he states it:

if baptism has no reference to the conscious acknowledgement of regeneration and faith, to the complete divine-human reality which is portrayed within it...if it cannot in reality make intelligible sense of the confirming in allegiance of the second of the chief actors, the one baptized...if it cannot be a matter of decision and confession at all...would it in this case be a full baptism? Is it not rather, and notoriously, half-baptism? (Barth 1948:48)

For Barth therefore, sacrament needs to be interpreted according to literal Biblical information, and should not be located in the act of baptism *per se*, but in the Gospel of repentance and faith which leads to the assurance of personal salvation. Salvation is not based on the assumption of God's mysterious working, which is a shortcoming that is merely based on the hope of being redeemed. The real basis for sacrament is therefore established as belonging in Divine objectivity, and is thus both the message and demand which motivates believer's baptism.

3.3 Sacrament Originating from Christ's Baptism

3.3.1 Objective Aspect of Water Baptism as Sacrament

Cullman argues that, even though Jesus was sinless He was baptised by John the Baptist, as symbolic of the universal repentance of all sinners and He thus received the role of the suffering servant by taking upon Himself the sin of all people (Cullman 1950:18). Cullman calls this baptism a "general baptism", because, through vicarious and victorious suffering, Jesus gave baptism its objective sacramental character. This event in Jesus' life carried inclusive dimensions, inasmuch as it was meant for the benefit all people who wanted to and could, respond to the call of the Gospel; both men and women, and eventually also children. Cullman states that: "Christ's death and resurrection procured for all men, and independent of them, a general baptism which was a sign of the prevenient grace of God in action", and as such, "fulfils the role of the objective side of baptism" (Cullman 1950:70).

Christian baptism commenced with Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan, and was the beginning of God's revelation of the purpose of Jesus' coming to earth. Jesus was baptised for sin not because he was a sinner, but rather in order to sacramentally identify with sinners for their salvation from sin. John 1:29 affirms this by saying: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world".

The connection of Christian baptism with John's baptism is that John's baptism was a preparation from Divine initiative for repentance. Jesus' baptism was however unique because it was followed by the baptism with the Spirit of God for people to be born of that Spirit. That Christian baptism is both a fulfilment and repeal of Old Testament circumcision is explicitly present in Colossians 2:11ff which states that: "in Him you were also circumcised not with a circumcision done by the hands of men ['subjective'] but with the circumcision done by Christ ['objective baptism']".

This message is similarly implicit in, Romans 2:29: “a man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical”, in Romans 4:1ff., and in Galatians 3:6ff.: “you are all sons [*sic*] of God, through faith in Jesus Christ...If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise”, as well as in Ephesians 2:11ff., “therefore, remember that formerly you who are gentiles by birth and called uncircumcised by those who call themselves the circumcision”.

Cullman argues that in the light of these Biblical statements, Barth’s argument against infant baptism is the weakest point in his doctrine of baptism, since even if one concedes that the Reformers’ proofs for infant baptism are not quite watertight, the Reformed argument does need to be taken seriously (Cullman 1950:57). The difference between Barth and Cullmann is that the latter’s emphasis is on the salvific purpose of Christ’s coming is for all people, which therefore indicates that baptism cannot be sacramentally and Biblically limited to only those who are able to consciously respond as adults.

Cullmann explains that, in having two parts, Christian sacrament has both an introduction, as preparation, and an evangelical conclusion. This is clear from the baptism of the twelve Ephesians found in Acts 19:1–7. This account demonstrates that the baptism of the Ephesians at the hands of the apostle Paul of which John the Baptist’s initial baptism of repentance was a preparation. The conversion of the Ephesians was confirmed only after the two baptisms were performed and the Holy Spirit had come upon them, and indicates that baptism is both sacrament and evangelical by nature (Cullman 1950:57–58).

Cullmann thus locates the sacramental factor for Jesus’ general baptism in the salvific nature of His suffering performed for the benefit of all people, and which thus constitutes the objective side of the sacramental message of baptism. The second part of the sacrament comprises a response of faith, and is therefore baptism’s subjective component.

3.3.2 Evangelical Subjectivity of Water Baptism

Objective baptism requires a subjective counterpart for its message of prevenient grace to become personal redemption. Baptism is not therefore only a sign of God’s provision, but also speaks of an individual’s response to that provision. The covenantal context in which baptism is administered not only requires recognition of the need for Divine action, but also of a personal response in terms of a receptive faith.

The first act of the baptismal event tells of God's provision for salvation, which excludes human effort or merit, and the second refers to personal response, not as a work but as a surrendering of oneself to Christ's saving Grace. If however, Jesus is the only Saviour of people, in what sense is a person saved by Grace through faith alone? Is faith not a work for salvation by a responding person? And how does this relate to infants? How did Cullmann justify the inclusion of infants in the act of baptism, when infants are incapable of faith?

Cullman's reasoned reply is that, "within the mortal life of the person baptized, which is of the one who has been received into the church of Jesus Christ, baptism is the starting point of something that happens" (Cullman 1950:58). The gift of regeneration is hence available in this context, which is how baptism is designated in Titus 3:5, and in 1 Peter 3:18–22. Entering the Church through baptism means that "the individual has been made the object of salvation" (Cullmann 1950:59). But are not all people the objects of salvation anyway? Is this not the reason why God sent the Holy Spirit "upon all flesh" (Acts 2:17)? Paul speaks of the baptism of responding listeners as an event which has already happened (Cullmann 1950:59). Romans 6:1ff does not however refer to those not yet baptised, but teaches that what happened to the Romans by baptism was indeed an act of salvation and Cullmann goes on to explain how infants too may become the objects of salvation by their baptism.

3.3.3 Objective Faith as Subjectively Present in the Church

Cullmann places heavy emphasis on the need for response in baptism by the community of faith, as the context in which Christian faith would be active. He denies however, that the collective faith of the congregation serves as a "substitute for the personal faith of the infant", but states that if faith were lacking in the congregation assembled for the baptism, the Holy Spirit at work would be absent from the consciousness of the people. Wherever a believing congregation assembles for worship however, the Holy Spirit is present and at work. Because the Holy Spirit is not limited in power He draws all people to God, inclusive of infants. Cullmann quotes Paul who says that "by one spirit... [all] are baptized into the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13)" (Bandey 1976:53).

By baptism, infants are also incorporated into the Church, and because the Church is where Christ, the once and for all saviour of all, is active by the Spirit, conscious faith is communicated through adult Christians, which is what ignites in children. In this sense, baptism takes the place of circumcision as a sign of Christ and his Gospel work. Cullmann concludes therefore, that both adult and infant baptisms are to be regarded as equally Biblical because as

he puts it, “the essence of the act of baptism is the reception of a member into the divine covenant of the body of Christ in whom the covenant with Abraham is [sacramentally] fulfilled by God the Holy Spirit” (Cullman 1950:70).

That faith is conveniently present at the moment of baptism is exemplified in a household baptism approach. The faith of the family head and of all other adult believers present is offered to, and received by, those in need of salvation (Cullmann 1950:53). In support of this argument, Cullmann quotes Acts 16:31 which states that salvation is promised to the Philippian jailer and his house, and that he and his family were all baptised. 1 Corinthians 7:14 is another example which confirms this possibility of the sacramental influence of faith being passed on from believing adults to non-believing members of the family (Cullmann 1950:53).

Cullman concludes that Biblical references to baptism can thus be read as baptism before faith (in the case of infants), after faith (for the saved), and saving faith (during the baptism). The faith of the congregation is however critical, as it belongs to the act of baptism, and is provocative because the congregation imparts the influence of faith through their devotion of prayer for God to complete the miracle of His saving work in those persons baptised, whether infant or adult (Cullmann 1950:54–55).

The sacrament of baptism is thus firmly located by Cullman in the purpose of Christ’s coming, His baptismal life of suffering, His death on the Cross, God’s action, and the personal faith of the people who make up the body of Christ, and who possess the objective Faith of Christ in their lives for subjective influence. Cullman concludes that:

Sacrament in baptism thus signifies that a person is set within something already done for all people by Christ at Golgotha on Good Friday and Easter, and the individual becomes a passive object of God’s sacramental and salvific activity within the body of Christ (Bandey 1976:52).

This theory would be most acceptable if it worked every time baptism is administered. Some Churches are filled with baptised people who have no experience of saving faith, and can thus only be regarded, although kindly, as nominally Christian. Because this is a weakness of paedobaptism, one wonders if personal saving faith would not be better achieved if baptism were to come after salvation, in accordance with Baptist belief, and in line with Barth’s argument. Accomplishing this, would need a move away from the current emphasis placed on infant-baptism to one of making believer’s baptism the primary rite, without overlooking the need for infant-baptism to continue to play an indispensable sacramental role.

3.4 Sacrament as Oneness in the Body of Christ

In spite of Christendom being divided, the Christian Church generally still recognises a single baptism. Robinson thus argues that baptism should promote unity, because it brings people under a baptism which may be considered “once made” (Robinson 1962:158).

3.4.1 The One Baptism of Ephesians 4:4–5

Ephesians 4:4–5 states that “there is one Body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all”, and is what constitutes the essential and vital nature of Baptism as Sacrament. Robinson argues that the practice of the “one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5) should lead to baptismal unity, which materialises when baptised Christians consciously recognise their sacramental oneness in the oneness of the Body of Christ. Robinson seems to prefer Cullman’s argument for the origin of sacramental baptism as opposed to Karl Barth’s definition, that sacrament is located in the baptism of Christ who was baptised at the hands of John the Baptist. This rite did not therefore emanate from any ritual, as originated by the post-apostolic Church. Cullman’s concept of the Baptism of Christ as being a general baptism is accordingly considered by Robinson to be “a sound generalisation of the meaning and purpose of baptism” (Robinson 1962:159).

The baptism of Jesus constitutes His whole existence in the form of a servant, and all that is included in His being upon this earth. He came “not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45; Isaiah 53) (1962:160). Christian baptism simply reproduces in the life of the Christian the “one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5) of Jesus, begun in Jordan and completed in the resurrection. Robinson also refers to Titus 3:4–7, where he finds that there is a merging of the action of baptism with the saving events of Jesus: “But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man appeared, not by works done in righteousness, but according to His mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us (Titus 3:4–7)” (Robinson 1962:164).

The essence of sacrament in Cullman’s definition of its origin, as being located in the baptisms of Jesus by John and by the Holy Spirit, through a life of redemptive suffering, is extended to “include all who have been baptised into Christ’s body the Church” (Robinson 1962:158–164); baptism therefore cannot be repeated. For Robinson baptism was thus not “created by the Church, but is only that which the Church administers” (Robinson 1962:158).

3.4.2 Non-Repeatability of Baptism

Using Ephesians 4:4 as a text-and-verse starting point, Robinson proposes that the one baptism refers to its own nature, and is the reason why unity is conferred on all who are baptised with water, because they are thereby baptised into the one Body of Christ. Technically therefore, all baptised people have already been united, as there is only one Body of Christ. This reality of Christian baptism should thus preclude any possibility of division between baptised Christians, because it represents both the intention and benefit of baptism as covenant. Behind the sacrament stands the historical act of Christ, the baptism that is prior to all other baptisms, and which gives baptism both its efficacy and its non-repeatability character (Robinson 1962:170–171). It is therefore not necessary to look primarily at Bible texts and verses, as Barth did, for a crystallisation of how true baptism should be defined (1962:160–175).

Robinson, nevertheless, does not seem to lay stress on the importance of the message of baptism which requires a faith response of repentance for salvific implementation. The division between the baptism of Christ, culminating in the crucifixion as an objective event, and the baptism of an individual as a subjective response, in which repentance and faith both feature, are thus collapsed into being a single event. This happens in the same way that the bread and the wine are perceived by some Christians to become the actual body and blood of Christ by an act of consecration.

Baptism in Robinson's theory seems to have become a co-saviour with Christ, and implies that the status of Christ and the status of baptism are identical, which thereby also is the reason for baptism's non-repeatability. In Robinson's theory moreover, there seems to be no such a thing as indiscriminate baptism. This aspect of his theology of infant baptism is discredited by its end result which is revealed by the proliferation of baptised people who do not show or give witness to having Christ in their lives and does not deal with the problem of nominal Christianity. Robinson also does not deal with why the two baptisms differ even though are related,

Be all this as it may, Robinson's message of needing to see the oneness of all Christians in the one baptism should be taken seriously, and this recognition may assist in the quest for further baptismal unity. Despite Robinson's theory about the need for unity, infant baptism continues to be problematic, because in some of its interpretations its message lacks in terms of the need for humility of response for personal redemption. Convergence baptism however, may thus be a more effectual option for the resolution of these problems.

3.5 Sacrament as God's Promise of Redemption

Through critique of his own tradition, just as with Barth, Bromiley (1979) raised the bar of sacramental baptismal understanding by emphasising that because Biblical covenant is based on promise, baptism is also about the promise of redemption. In order to justify his argument that covenantal baptism is both promise (sacrament), and fulfilment (evangelical) of promise, Bromiley examines the origin of the purpose and plan of covenant as it relates to all forms of baptism, but most especially to household baptism (Bromiley 1979:1–11).

It is difficult, in Bromley's opinion, to envisage that children would always have been excluded by the apostles doing household baptisms. Household baptism is biblically inclusive, because God seeks the salvation of adults and their children, and does so through covenantal promise which began in the period of the Old Testament. In this connection, Bromiley states that, "it is not irrelevant that in the first gospel appeal in (Acts 2) the apostle Peter makes it plain that the word and work of God are still covenantal in scope for 'the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call'" (AV Acts 2:39) (Bromiley 1979:4–7). Whereas in Marcel (1959), sacrament constitutes covenant, and while Jeremias (1960) emphasises the *oikos* factor of covenantal sacrament, in Bromiley sacrament is in Trinitarian promise with its ultimate need for fulfilment (Bromiley 1979:38–65).

3.5.1. Covenant Baptism and Redemptive Promise

Promise is used repeatedly in relation to covenant in the Old Testament, and also with baptism in the New Testament. Promise is thus the vital thread which stretches from the beginning of Genesis, in God's salvific dealings with His people based on forgiveness and grace, and goes through various stages of development, culminating in the birth of Jesus in redemptive fulfilment. This provision of redemption is then sacramentally and evangelically offered to all people. This offer includes the promise of the Holy Spirit in whom is thus also found the promise of repentance and faith which enables the initiate to freely decide whether to obey God by accepting the requirements of His covenant, which are therein sacredly embodied, or not (Bromiley 1979:36–37).

3.5.2 Two Sides of Covenantal Baptism

Bromiley, like his scholarly predecessors, studies the two sides of covenantal baptism – God's sovereignty and His initiative – and human response: which are primary and supreme on the one hand and ultimately necessary, but secondary, on the other.

Bromiley supports Marcel's (1959) argument that covenant is the sole Biblical basis for infant baptism, because he sees it as being squarely premised on the promise of redemption in the Old Testament and the fulfilment of promise in the New Testament, and thus constitutes the core of God's message as contained in the supplied sacrament of paedobaptism. Acts 2:38 is an example of the objective-cum-subjective sacramental basis for baptism and reads, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38–39).

In this Biblical text, the subjective aspect of repentance and faith precedes the objective sacramental component. The new life received by repentance and faith on the part of the infant being baptised, when old enough to understand is however assigned not by a believer's baptism but by means of the confirmation rite provided for in paedobaptist theology. Baptism, as a sign of Christ given to the individual, according to this theology, takes the place of the Old Testament covenant of circumcision, which constitutes, in its essence the meaning of sacrament.

Bromiley thus argues in favour of paedobaptism, with baptism seen as consisting of both sacrament and evangelical ordinance, which he believes, as other paedobaptists do, constitutes the total essence of sacramental baptism (Bromiley 1979:33–37).

In paedobaptism, the focus for this implied sacrament is generally placed more on the infant, who, in helplessness cannot personally respond. This helplessness is said to demonstrate that only when there is a total lack of human effort on the part of an individual, as characterised by the total helplessness of infants, is an expression of faith indicating that the sacramental process of prevenient grace, which leads to God's saving grace, has begun to function. Conversely, in believer's baptism, the sacramental message is that new birth by the Spirit has already been understood upon being received. These two aspects of covenantal baptism however, are currently seen as incompatible features of the one ultimate baptism, which confirms again that they are in fact two aspects of the same rite.

Bromiley further contends that baptism consists of three vital elements of sacramental promise, which are: the promise of covenant with God; the promise of redemption through Jesus, based on the baptism of Christ; and emanating from these is the promise of the prevenience of the Holy Spirit for new birth and life everlasting (Bromiley 1979:3–11). This understanding of

sacrament not only accords with Michael Green's theory of sacrament (1987), but is an important quintessential variant, because it emphasises the true Triune aspect of God's nature.

3.5.3 Divine Objectivity of Baptism as Covenantal Promise

Bromiley says that people have invested baptismal meaning with magical functions, and even automatic salvation, because of a theology which views baptism as a means to grace. This theology however, finds no support either in the teaching and practice of the New Testament baptism, or even in the anticipatory signs and practices of the Old Testament (Bromiley 1979:29). In this connection, he writes that, "in the New Testament the connection of baptism is not with what [people] do, with our conversion our confession, but with what God does for us and in us in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit (Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5)" (Bromiley 1979:34).

Bromiley's definition of baptism is similar to that of Green (1987), but has a more Trinitarian bias because it is founded on Matthew 28:19: "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Bromiley seems to be saying that this deeply rational concept suggests that, since baptism is rooted in Trinitarian communion, it could be interpreted as the attainment of faith in a Triune God in initiating such a communion (*koinonia*) with His people, who hence become His children by their baptism. Bromiley expands on this with his concept of "election", explained in the next section.

3.5.4 Election of the Father

Bromiley emphasises that baptism in the name of God the Father is an acceptance and declaration of the supreme fact that God represents and embodies Love, in His purpose for all people. God is the author of our lives, and this is indicated by the sign and seals of the covenant, and by its fulfilment. Baptism is thus an entering into of the Triune Name (and nature) of God (Matthew 28:18f), which leads to the bestowal of His elective and Saving Grace. Humankind, as it is thence implied, could not himself have decided to either have been created, or indeed be capable of saving himself [*sic*]. Election thus implies the absolute primacy of God. What counts first and foremost is God's "calling" (Bromiley 1979:42), and this constitutes the very foundation for Holy sacrament. This further means that when a person is baptised, they are baptised into a purpose already accomplished by God in His Triune embodiment. Baptism does not bear witness to a salvation which only becomes real when the individual believes, "It bears witness to a salvation which God brought into being when He acted for us in fulfilment of His grace. The purpose and promise of God are held out to us as purposes already fulfilled in this

way” (Bromiley 1979:50–51). How does Bromiley then overcome the seemingly inaccurate understanding of automatic salvation that is implied in paedo-baptist covenant theology?

3.5.5 Reconciliation of the Son

The need for a personal relationship with God for constant interaction between God and the saved person is the purpose and promise of covenantal baptism. For this relationship to materialise, reconciliation between God and His people needs facilitation which can only occur when there is initiative and response between the two parties to be reconciled. The possibility of such reconciliation has already been fully achieved through the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and baptism is viewed as a process which somehow carries the person into the reconciliation of the sacrifices made by Christ on humanity’s behalf, with the recognition that the prevalence of evil through sin within the individual remains the barrier which needs to be destroyed and forgiven (Bromiley 1979:54–55).

This should then become the core of an individual’s personal and committed-to God response. And yet the Father and the Son on their own are most remote in time from people, even though Jesus, by His Life, Death and Resurrection not only became the New Covenant by embodying it, but also holds a sovereign position within the Holy Trinity that makes it possible for humanity to reach and respond to God.

3.5.6 Regeneration of the Holy Spirit

Bromiley therefore states that “Baptism into the name of the Christ declares to us the supreme fact that the fulfilment of the divine purpose in Jesus Christ can only and first be appropriated with the assistance of the Holy Spirit by an individual” (1979:65–66). The Holy Spirit brings Christ to people and people to Christ, and this process “signifies the secondary, but very necessary, subjective side of baptism” (Bromiley 1979:67), designed for salvation by means of new birth. As to when precisely the Spirit moves in relation to the application of baptism is not however clearly stated in the Bible.

The movement of the Holy Spirit does sometimes coincide with the consecrational rite of baptism. It would however, be impossible to determine with absolute certainty whether the moving of the Holy Spirit is coincidental with the administration of baptism or not. Sacrament is nevertheless made up of all three persons embodied in the Holy Trinity, and each is required to play a role in the message of baptism and feature in acting for the redemption of people. Dunn (1970), Bromiley (1979), and Green (1987), amongst others, are all in agreement over

the Trinitarian understanding of God's action in relation to the achievement of the purpose of baptism.

If the Father and the Son are to feature separately from the Holy Spirit, then a third of the Trinitarian aspect of sacrament the Holy Spirit which is the implementing portion of the message of sacrament would be seriously excluded, and this undoubtedly seems to be the major reason for the ineffectual nature of paedo-baptist current practice as per David Wright (2005).

3.5.7 Rebaptism Practice

Bromley's view is that infant-baptised adults should not be rebaptized after admission into the faith. Those being baptised should rather be taught more effectively the Divine meaning of their infant baptism as a sacramental sign and seal of the objectively saving work of God. They should also be instructed in how to see in this paediatric experience of new birth the pre-initiation of the fulfilment in them of God's work (Bromley 1979:109).

Bromley does not however offer any solution for the problem which infant-baptised people experience in regard to their desire for a believer's baptism following their conversion, beyond stating that a repeat of baptism is wrong.

When the church clarifies the issues of faith and discipleship, and apostasy helps to bring them into sharper focus, a constant need for adult baptism will arise. Far from being a threat to infant baptism, this will serve the better to bring out its [baptism's purpose] and meaning. Similarly infant baptism when it is properly given can prevent a subjective misunderstanding of adult baptism, not invalidating it, but referring to its true and only basis in the electing, reconciling, and regenerating work of the Triune God of which it has its primary significance as the sign and seal (Bromley 1979:110–111).

Having made this declaration, Bromley stops short of taking what could be the next logical step for paedo-baptist practice: the convergence of the two baptisms in their common sacramental and evangelistic purpose for all people to come to redemption. Baptism for Bromley can only thus be affirmed but not repeated.

3.5.8 Bromley's Potential Convergence Baptism

This portion of the argument against the repetition of an individual's baptism may also provide the basis for the argument which justifies the repetition of baptism, because it is based on sacramental and evangelistic requirements, which are the essential purpose of paedo-baptism and also because in a culturally-orientated African community worldview, believer's baptism is more appealing to people's affinity with its rich symbolism than is infant baptism. This

scenario however, brings into focus the real dilemma of how infant-baptism as a community-cultural event with its seemingly contradictory need also for the rich symbolism provided by believer's baptism, both required by the African worldview, can be met without transgressing into the area of rebaptism.

In Bromiley, sacrament is nevertheless a reference to Divine objectivity, based on the election of God, the reconciliation of the Son and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, all three Persons of the Godhead, play specific indispensable roles in the different stages of God's redemptive work, and in the need for people respond by faith.

3.6 Sacrament in the Independent Working of the Holy Spirit

Following Barth's move away from an emphasis on infant baptism, the defence of Cullman and Robinson presented for infant baptism, and Bromiley's Trinitarian community emphasis, Lampe's contribution is an investigation into the "relationship between baptism and confirmation particularly in regard to the [claimed] sacramental reception of the indwelling of the presence of the Holy Spirit" (Lampe 1951: vii) during the application of these rites. The question then, is whether the Holy Spirit is always active in baptism, and also during other similar rites of devotion to God, or whether the Holy Spirit works independently, even though His work is considered by some to be coincidental with the rite.

3.6.1 Holy Spirit as Sacrament of Baptism

Lampe sought evidence from the New Testament, especially in regard to the role of the Holy Spirit concerning what Paul called "the sealing of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:30). Lampe also investigates the patristic theories of the Spirit's role in baptism, confirmation and the laying-on of hands, to ascertain whether the Holy Spirit is always at work in any or all of these rites.

Lampe found that, while the Holy Spirit is closely connected with baptism in the Biblical record, and is sometimes assumed to also be active during confirmation services, there is nothing in the Bible concerning whether the laying-on of hands, and the sealing of the Spirit, have anything to do with the rite of Confirmation which follows on from infant baptism. Lampe therefore finds that there is "no foundation in the New Testament, nor any clear testimony in the early Fathers, for the view that in the Christian dispensation God's people are sealed as His own possession by undergoing an outward and visible ceremony, other than the baptism with water" (Lampe 1951:306).

Lampe consequently rejects as unscriptural the view that the Promise of the Spirit – which the ascended Christ received from the Father, according to the Apostle Peter’s Pentecostal sermon – is implemented only through the apostolic ministry (i.e. through the person of the Bishop during Confirmation), and that the initiate is, at the same time, sealed by that same spirit for redemption. Lampe rejects this, “because it is a theory which implies that no unconfirmed person [by a bishop] is a true Christian” (Lampe 1951:306), because it leaves an impression that the work of the Holy Spirit is that of an automaton.

Lampe further argues that the laying-on of hands for the coming of the Holy Spirit has more to do with certain special occasions, by rather symbolising fellowship, solidarity and incorporation into a single unity with those performing these actions. Those who receive it are sometimes endowed with special *charismata* of the Spirit, in appropriately carrying out of their missionary work (Lampe 1951:308).

Lampe nevertheless, does not reject the rite of Confirmation which follows on from infant baptism, even though no direct evidence for this practice exists in the Bible. He claims that the value Confirmation is mainly linked to an attempt to preserve, “elements of doctrine and practice” (Lampe 1951:322). Lampe further concludes that, if the implication of the teaching of the New Testament and the early Church is kept in mind, there are therefore no grounds for accepting that “the doctrine that is in this rite of confirmation, that a man [*sic*] can receive the seal of the Holy Spirit, by which he [*sic*] is signed for eternity;... [and is] the means by which alone one can be made a full Christian” (Lampe 1951:322). This finding therefore rules against the validity of the argument that baptism as a sacramental rite is always the occasion when the Gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred, especially when and because this ministry is performed by a priest or bishop.

Another nuance of baptism’s sacramental meaning is that which emanates, not so much from the Words of Scripture; Baptism by merit of Christ’s redemptive suffering; the redemptive promise of the Christian Trinity; the One Baptism of Christ and the Holy Spirit’s presumed mechanical working in Christian rituals of devotion, but consists instead of the indispensable reception of baptism in the Holy Spirit. James Dunn (1970) discusses this point from the perspective of the Pentecostal belief-system in the next section.

3.7 Baptism in the Holy Spirit by Water for New Birth

Dunn’s study (1970) primarily concerns how a person becomes a Christian in relation to the sacrament of water baptism. In examining Pentecostal baptismal doctrine, he finds that there is

a specific process which is followed in the Bible in what he describes as the “initiation conversion procedure” involving baptism with water. While baptism is regarded as necessary for entry into the believing community, it is of secondary importance for personal salvation, and is only a means to this end, but not a means to achieving Grace itself.

Dunn thus follows the Pentecostal argument, which excludes infant baptism in the administration of water baptism. Sacrament is rather to be located in the objective working of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit alone, in Jesus’ words, expedites new birth (John 3:5). Dunn justifies this claim in a literal study of Biblical information regarding baptism relative to the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Dunn 1970).

Dunn argues that the Pentecostal viewpoint is an accurate reading of Bible information. In this understanding of baptism as sacrament, baptism is not considered the salvific action of Christ, but is instead the sign of a need for Holy Spirit new birth. Pentecostals have resultantly shifted the focus from all the other aspects of baptism to the Holy Spirit as the giver of Christ’s Gift of redemption. Pentecostal baptism is thus administered only after supplicants have received new birth by the Spirit. The action of the Holy Spirit therefore, needs to be emphasised even more than repentance and faith, because the Holy Spirit’s salvific role is the provision of Grace and is the giver of repentance and faith. Without the working of the Holy Spirit there can be no conviction of sin and repentance and is what is taught in the Bible (John 16:5–15) (Dunn 1970:1–7). For Pentecostals therefore, “the gift of the Spirit is the central element in water baptism in the total complex event of becoming a Christian” (Dunn 1970:back-cover page), which means that only those who receive the Holy Spirit can accurately be deemed to be Christian, whether baptised or not.

This distinctive factor in the initiation-conversion process of water baptism, as Dunn calls it, should therefore embrace the emphases of the three main streams for Christian redemption, because they all play a sacramental role within an initiation which makes it possible for personal redemption to become real, and not remain at the level of assumption.

In Catholicism, the Church is regarded as the most important element in the practice of baptism because as authorised by Christ it is to be managed by the Church. The church is assumed to be endowed with Divine salvific authority through a process of apostolic succession, which enables it as a God-created establishment to convey salvation (Matthew 28:17–20). Protestants, on the other hand, emphasise the preaching of the Gospel with repentance and faith, which in itself is sacramental in accordance with Karl Barth’s thinking. The need for a faith response is

thus a non-negotiable requirement for the achievement of salvation. In Pentecostalism, however, the role of Jesus as baptiser in the Spirit, and the reception of Spirit-baptism, is what matter most, and for them is the indispensable sacramental aspect of water baptism. While all three are required in the initiation process for the assurance of personal conversion, the role of the Holy Spirit working in relation to the message of baptism remains critical. The Church may attempt to confer salvation, and its ministers may preach the Gospel for people to repent and come to Christ, yet without the baptism of the Holy Spirit there can be no genuine redemption.

3.7.1 Roman Catholic and Reformed Baptism

Dunn (1970) disagrees with how sacrament is defined in Catholicism. Even though the Church needs to play an indispensable role, sacrament in Catholicism appears to have become an institutionalised “commodity”. Dunn states that this also applies in some of the other paradigms set by Reformed theology:

In both Catholic and Reformed theology, a commonality is that ‘sacrament’ is classically defined as having two parts: ‘an outward and sensible sign’, and ‘an inward and spiritual grace’, which is thereby signified. Neither of these by themselves however constitutes a true sacrament. A sacrament exists in these two understandings where the sign and grace are brought together into one operation and become a single action. The outward part [the sign]...actually conveys and confers its spiritual part (Dunn 1970:6).

Dunn contends that this definition of sacrament misrepresents the New Testament teaching on baptism in that the “confusion of water-baptism with Spirit-Baptism inevitably involves the confusion of water with Spirit, so that the administration of water becomes nothing other than the bestowal of the Spirit” (Dunn 1970:5–6). Pentecostals, therefore, have correctly reacted against both the mechanical sacramentalism of extreme Catholicism, and the meaningless Biblicist orthodoxy of religious Protestantism (Dunn 1970:224–229).

3.7.2 Sacramental Role of the Holy Spirit in Water Baptism

While water baptism has nothing to do with salvation, baptism nevertheless points to the Saviour, who sanctifies with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and thus becomes the ratification of salvation to which baptism points. The New Testament never uses baptism as a description of the total event of becoming a Christian (including repentance, confession, water-baptism, forgiveness, etc.). In the New Testament, *baptisma* and *baptizein* are never used as concertinaed words; their meanings are always clear-cut and precise (Dunn 1970:6). “The Holy Spirit may be a servant of baptism yet His action is distinct from the rite and is superior. This is made clear

in the role of John the Baptist, who when calling people to repent and come to Jesus stated, ‘I baptize with water but Jesus will baptize with the Spirit’” (Matthew 3:7–12). John had prophesied that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire and yet Jesus Himself did not baptize with water. In Acts 1:8 Jesus acknowledges that that He was the chief baptizer with Spirit (Dunn 1970:6).

In Catholic and Protestant positions, however, the experience of the Spirit is discounted as too subjective and mystical, while faith which is essentially an affirmation of Biblical propositions is entirely favoured. New Testament evidence however, clearly shows that in the early Church, the Gift of the Spirit is what remains indispensable (Acts 19:1-7). Baptism is, therefore, not the most important factor, even though water baptism in the New Testament is presented as the medium through which entry into the discipling ministry of the Church is achieved (Matthew 28:18–20).

In the preaching of John the Baptist, water-baptism has no part in future Messianic baptism beyond symbolising and preparing for it. Therefore, to say that John’s Baptism gave or conveyed forgiveness, or resulted in forgiveness, is a mistake, since it is God alone who conveys the forgiveness directly into the heart of the repenting person. “Baptism was the means John used to stimulate repentance and to give it occasion for full and public expression – he may even have regarded baptism as the necessary form for expressing repentance – but that God conveyed forgiveness through baptism we cannot say on either grammatical or theological grounds” (Dunn 1970:22).

Dunn further explains that,

as a type of Christian conversion-initiation, we see that entry into the age of the new covenant is a single complex event, involving distinct actions of man (baptism) and God (by the Holy Spirit). These are bound together by repentance and commitment which is expressed in the former and results in the latter (Dunn 1970:37).

For Dunn therefore, the sacrament of baptism is located in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as an independent, though not an unrelated participant. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit is conveyed only when water baptism is administered, but that it should rather be viewed as a specific event outside of water baptism, which needs to be earnestly requested. Dunn concludes that the Holy Spirit in the Bible features more prominently in relation to initiation into the body of Christ in the New Testament, than water baptism does (Dunn 1970).

Redemption is therefore, not the role of water baptism, but is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the supreme and indispensable factor in the whole complex event of baptism as initiation-conversion, and is also what constitutes baptism's true sacramental meaning:

Baptism is given its proper New Testament role, neither more nor less – *viz.* as the expression of the faith to which God gives the Spirit. Spirit baptism and water baptism remain distinct and even antithetical, the latter being a preparation for the former, and a means by which the believer actually reaches out in faith to receive the former, but water baptism is not the vehicle of the Spirit (Dunn 1970:227).

The place and working of the Holy Spirit is the indispensable and effectual aspect of sacramental baptism. Why the Holy Spirit is indispensable and critical for baptism is dealt with more extensively by Witherington III, who studies the repentance aspect of this conferred sacrament.

3.8 Biblical Baptism Associated with Repentance

Through a reconsideration of the Biblical basis for paedobaptism, and by new insight obtained from a reinterpretation of traditional passages of scripture, where differences in perspectives on the two baptisms are located, Witherington III hopes that changes for improved unity between proponents of the two baptisms might be made (Witherington III 2007:3–5).

Concerning the need for clear Biblical evidence for the legitimisation of this practice, Witherington III contends that, “In the New Testament we have some texts with infants but no baptism and some texts with baptism but no infants; the New Testament cannot therefore prove infant baptism by producing examples of it from biblical texts” (Witherington III 2007:2).

Witherington III however, accepts that both infant and believer's baptism are Biblically-correct, but sees that the message of baptism is essentially that of repentance, as brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit: “Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off” (Acts 2:38–39). He therefore moots what he calls a “third option” evangelistic Biblical model as a possible way of overcoming the differences between infant and believer's baptism.

For paedobaptists, the question is then: “whether the New Testament provides a pre-sacramental foundation for such a practice, so that infant baptism could be said to be a

legitimate theological development from New Testament principles and practices that involve water baptism” (Witherington III 2007:2).

Witherington III further claims that baptists also face difficulties when confronted with the need for New Testament evidence, as required by their own doctrinal stance that baptism in the Bible is to be received only after a new birth experience. The other problem for baptists is that there are no examples of baptism in the New Testament which shows that the children of Christian parents, subsequent to their conversion and entrance into the Church, can therefore be assumed to have been baptised (Witherington III 2007:2–3).

3.8.1 Repentance not Witness as New Testament Baptismal Prerequisite

Witherington III’s approach in the study of water baptism, like Bromiley (1979), is from the perspective of a Trinitarian premise, which thus also commences in Matthew 28:19, “Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”. He argues for the purpose of Christian baptism as arising from the promise of redemption. Since the central theme of covenant is the golden thread which runs from the beginning of the Old Testament through to the end of the New, is also the factor which intersects with Bromiley’s view.

In the Old Covenant the promise of redemption is by circumcision as an outward physical act, and is limited to infant and adult Israeli males. However, in the New Testament the Old Covenant promise is the fulfilment of circumcision by means of “circumcision of the heart” is unlimited, because it is for men, women and children of all the nations. The Old Testament sign of promise is thus sublimated into becoming a Christian sign which is represented in baptism. Baptism is therefore, an expression of God’s offer of New Covenant salvation to all people by means of the Gospel of Christ (Witherington III 2007:15).

3.8.2 The Holy Spirit Way

Witherington III substantiates his argument for baptism as repentance by examining its Biblical basis, and for this refers to Luke 3:21–22, which describes how the Spirit had come upon Jesus, after Jesus had prayed and then was baptised. Moreover, the voice from Heaven spoke not while Jesus was receiving water baptism, but only after the Spirit had descended upon Him. This appears to indicate that “the coming of the Holy Spirit was a new stage in salvation-history” (Witherington III 2007:35) which thereafter became the norm for Christian baptism, as also is Dunn’s view.

Water baptism and Spirit baptism are however, to be distinguished here, as in Lampe. The former prepares for the latter, and the latter confirms that submission to God's Righteous Will and Plan is reciprocally expressed in the former. The sequence of events is important here; first water baptism and then the baptism in the Spirit. Water baptism is therefore but a preparation for baptism in the Holy Spirit (Witherington III 2007:36).

God's Work and His call to repent, as well as His Gift of the promise in the initial miracle at Pentecost, all therefore appear to precede any response of faith by supplicants. Peter says: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37f). What Witherington III finds here is the sequence of events: a call to repent; baptism itself; and then the receipt of the Promise of the Holy Spirit.

In this initial example of the administering of the rite, no mention is made of prior confession of sins, or of any profession of faith, but only of the act of repentance, and presumably also submission to water baptism. But if, as Dunn says, the reception of the Spirit is the beginning of Christian experience, and of entrance into the Church (the new covenant of the new age), then Witherington III's contention that water baptism must still be regarded as a preparatory act for the future eschatological gift, as is the case in John's baptism of Christ (Witherington III 2007:34) and the preparation is by means of repentance.

If there is an approved sequence to be derived from this text, therefore, it appears as: water, then Spirit; or even repentance-water-Spirit; but not Spirit then baptism. What is, moreover, important is that water baptism is used as the vehicle for repentance, and thus serves as the beginning of a faith response to the Gospel. If someone objects that one cannot exercise faith without faith going before, then this is correct because, "it should be remembered that the Holy Spirit may convey grace that leads to repentance and faith before the Spirit confers Himself in response to these things" (Witherington III 2007:58).

Witherington III finds further support that baptism is an opportunity of repentance in John's Gospel. John's narrative speaks of the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin, and of righteousness and judgement as being the essential requirements for salvation (John 16:5-11). The preparatory work of the Holy Spirit can be seen, in both cases, as being the call to repent. Thus, the one is a call to prepare by means of repentance for the objective coming of Christ, and the other is a post-advent-of-Christ preparation which leads to subjective repentance, and the sincere reception of personal salvation.

Acts 10:44ff states that, “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word”, which is also seen as a statement being pertinent to the argument for baptism needing to be regarded as an act of repentance. Peter thereafter had asked, can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” Repentance could therefore comprise part of what it truly means to receive God’s Word.

Personal receptivity to the Word is also brought about by the Holy Spirit, who convicts of sin, which in turn, leads to repentance, after “they heard the word”, but it was, more especially, a word of repentance which was then followed by baptism. In this case, the order is slightly changed; the Word of the sacramental Gospel is conveyed by the Spirit, in which repentance is offered, and then Holy Spirit baptism is experienced which is followed by water baptism (Witherington III 2007:61).

The way in which God’s Grace and the Spirit work interchangeably are not however obtained according to any mechanical formula, but function with salvific flexibility according to the mind of God. The wind blows where it will, and so too with the working of the Holy Spirit (John 3:8).

That water baptism itself does not make a person a Christian is demonstrated in the story of Simon Magus in Acts 8. This narrative shows that water baptism must not be confused with Spirit baptism. In Matthew 28:18, the message is similarly clear that baptism does not make a Christian of a person. Witherington contends that even if some sort of confession of faith is made this is no assurance that a candidate possesses saving faith, or is indeed worthy of baptism (Witherington III 2007:66–67).

The order of procedure in this case is thus, water first and then acceptance of the Spirit. The Ethiopian eunuch example found in the New Testament (Acts 8:26–40) substantiates Dunn’s contention that, just as in Jesus’ experience, the Spirit descended not as the supplicant’s head but only after he rose above the water, just as Jesus emerged from the river. “Thus we are not free to see Spirit baptism as part of water baptism. Again, the order is of water first, and then the Spirit in close succession, the former being preparatory for receiving the Spirit for a truly Christian experience” (Witherington III 2007:69).

Acts 19:1–7 is a further example of water baptism preceding Spirit baptism. There is evidence that a short space of time exists which occurs between water baptism and entry of the Spirit, which indicates that, even though these are not identical, they are however closely interrelated (Witherington III 2007:71–72).

The accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts 9 and 22 are also worthy examples in this regard. Witherington III argues that it is better to speak of Paul's conversion not as a crisis-event, but a crisis-experience, extending over three days from his experience on the road to Damascus to his ultimate baptism (Witherington III 2007:73). In Paul's conversion, however, it appears that water baptism and Spirit baptism took place simultaneously, even though they are not considered synonymous. This may explain why there is some difficulty in establishing which is which from the contents of Paul's New Testament letters (Witherington III 2007:73). Witherington III nevertheless argues that, "on the basis of Acts, there are no grounds for the view that a confession of faith is a prerequisite for baptism. Repentance appears to be such a prerequisite in some cases, as well as a willingness to submit to water baptism, yet there is no message in Acts on the necessity of a confession prior to water baptism" (Witherington III 2007:75).

Witherington III's argument that baptism in the Spirit, with repentance following on from this, as the *sine qua non* for becoming a Christian, is a strong one indeed. This fact, in itself, coupled with the narrative found in Acts 2:38f, and also in Acts 19:1-7, intimates that water baptism is intended to be a preparatory initiation rite, and that repentance by the supplicant can therefore be considered as being an indispensable part of the overall process (Witherington III 2007:77). Witherington III's argument is thus important in this debate for the validation of infant baptism, because it indicates, from the examples in the Acts of the Apostles that baptism could come about either before or after conversion. If before conversion, this permits both the baptism of babies and of responding adults. In the case of both, repentance is still however to be regarded as necessary for personal new birth by the Holy Spirit.

3.8.3 Baptism as a Means of New Testament Grace

The question for Witherington III then is whether Paul believed that baptism saves, and whether children are redeemed by their baptism or not (Witherington III 2007:79). In answering this question he examines the Death and Resurrection texts of Romans 6:1-7 and Colossians 2:11-12. He concludes that baptism is hence regarded more as a symbolical illustration than as a means for the attainment of Grace:

First of all, what baptism depicts is the work of God in the life of the person, such that the old sinful nature dies. Baptism does not depict human faith response to the work of God, but rather what precedes and enables it: the divine work which brings people back to the crucial point. In Romans 6 and Col 2 Paul is thinking of missionary baptisms and in these texts Paul is not dealing

with the second order or second-generation question of what to do with infants or small children of believers (Witherington III 2007:86–87).

The greater baptism than water baptism is therefore the baptism by the Spirit according to both Witherington and Dunn (1970). The Spirit immerses and grafts a person into Christ, but this is achieved not by any human being or any human rite worked by human hands. It is worthy of note though that Paul does not associate baptism with resurrection, but with death and burial, and thus does not draw on the Hellenistic or mystery-religion notions concerning the dying and rising up of the supplicant through the administering of the baptismal ritual and this requires repentance. Baptism, for Paul, is followed by repentantly looking back to the event of Christ's death, and depicts the believer's need to die to sin once and for all and hence to its burial. This act of repentance thus foreshadows Spirit baptism, the actual act which produces in the supplicant what water baptism only symbolises (Witherington III 111 2007:86–87).

As far as it can be determined from these Bible sources, Paul does not view water baptism as the means of achieving God's Grace, because only the Holy Spirit is responsible for this task. Baptism is thus only considered a symbol of what Christ achieves in terms of redemption. Moreover, "over-theologizing water baptism could have the unfortunate effect of diminishing the importance of the marvellous [gift] that it symbolizes: cleansing from sin, washing away the old self, the death and burial of the old nature and the like" (Witherington III 2007:88) and the need to repent.

3.8.4 Rebaptism

Witherington III, understandably, does not favour a form of rebaptism which seeks to replace a legitimate baptism as in the recipient's original baptism, with another application of water. To attempt to do this is negative, because it is not sacramentally evangelistic. He explains that:

while it is mentioned in passing in the little credo statement in Ephesians 4:5, water baptism was to become part of the faith confessed. It is to be 'one' like the 'one' true faith, and like the 'one' true Lord. Unlike Jewish ritual cleansing, baptism was not to be a repeated ritual. It depicted the one-time rite of passage from being the old person to being a new person. And by definition one only crosses the line once into the covenant community for the first time, just as one can only step into the river for the first time once (Witherington III 2007:89).

Witherington III further contends that confusion reigns' concerning what is meant by the use of the word "one" in Ephesians 4:5. The word "one", repeatedly used in Ephesians 4:5 is normally taken to mean "once", or "only one time", but this is incorrect as it rather refers to the singleness of the entity, and not simply to a single application of water. This observation by

Witherington III allows in the possibility for baptism to be repeated, not as a replacement measure as in rebaptism, but as a legitimate sacramental evangelical possibility.

3.8.5 Baptism as More Initiatory than Confirming

Witherington III seems to allude to the possibility of a repetition of baptism but not as in rebaptism, by observing that,

for Paul water baptism was doubtless an initiatory rite rather than a confirmatory ritual. The baptism of the Samaritans demonstrates this. They were baptized before they could demonstrate the Holy Spirit in their lives. The baptisms of infants and of adults can and should be distinguished but are of the same essence. One is a boundary marker and the other actually enacts what the rite only depicts. Galatians 3:27–28 makes this clear (Witherington III 2007:90).

The same link which connects the Old Covenant with the New, and thus fulfils the evangelistic purpose of Christ's Covenant, may be the same with regard to a theology of the convergence of the two baptisms. In assessing John 3:5, "no one can enter the Kingdom of God except he is born of water and the Spirit", Witherington III states that, "there is nothing that can be learned about the order of baptism in this text, even though the order is water then the Spirit. There is no reason here therefore for seeing in John 3:5 that water is necessary for salvation" (Witherington III 2007:94).

All in all, John the Apostle is seen as being concerned that "we must get beyond the lifeless water to get to the spiritual living water that comes not from the sacrament but from Jesus Himself" (Witherington III 2007:99). If this is the case then the passive factor of infant sacramental baptism can move on to become a lively evangelically active believer's baptism in which repentance and faith is accompanied by the seeking of the Holy Spirit. Because this can only be demonstrated by the combination of the two baptisms is another reason for the convergence possibility. In providing a rite-of-passage analogy of baptism Witherington III makes this point all the more poignant and reveals that centrally there has to be completion in terms of the materialization of personal salvation for baptism to have been practiced as a truly sacramental and evangelistic event. Both baptisms are thus needed to complement each other in mission of Christianity:

Water baptism is like enrolment at school, the school of Christ. Just as parents, apart from and without the consent of their offspring, enrol their children in the school, so is it in the case of infant baptism. In no case is it presumed that the child being enrolled by baptism already knows and accepts what is going to be taught. On the other hand, when an adult enrolls in a school he/she enrolls on his/her own volition, but has some knowledge of the content of the course, and has

accepted the responsibilities of course requirements. Water baptism is then not a confirmation that the pilgrimage is completed, or even well under way, but it can be seen as recognition that the journey has already begun (Witherington III 2007:125–126)

Because baptism is based on the call to repent and believe, progress also for greater unity between the infant and believer-baptistic aspects of the one baptism could thus materialise by means of the reforming of their relationship. Witherington III argues that:

While baptists have seen a connection of repentance, faith and water baptism as normal in the New Testament yet they have placed the order of baptisms, Spirit then water in an unusual arrangement. While infant baptists have got the order right, yet they have failed to pay attention to the normal order of initiation which is of water and then Spirit and thus there is close connection between repentance, faith and water baptism (Witherington III 2007:127).

Witherington III thus seems to throw into sharp relief how the “two baptisms” by nature are incomplete and are kept this way by order of their separateness. The sequence in baptism should be as in Dunn – first baptism, and then Spirit baptism. Obedience to God as the crucial response for discipleship should remain the starting point (Matthew 28:17–20). Baptism is not however to be seen as the beginning of the confirmation process, but is the beginning of an initiation process, as in the case of infant-baptised adults’ subsequent repentance and faith for achieving salvation.

All sides in the debate should however take into account that Christian children are not in the same position as the children of pagan parents with regard to their baptism (Witherington III 2007:131). A question which begs answering therefore is whether infants standing in covenant by reason of their paediatric baptism, should be required to repent, or should they merely be asked to come to faith by accepting that they are Christian based on their earlier baptism.

Witherington III claims that there is nothing wrong with baptism as an occasion for giving witness to what Christ has done in the initiate’s life, but then neither is there anything Biblically wrong with a baptism which carries the message that the baptised individual should also be born of the Spirit, so long as the central message of the Gospel regarding baptism remains emphatic in its requirement for repentance. This kind of proleptic, anticipatory message can thus also be applied to infants, because all people should be required to repent of their sins as soon as this is possible in order to be salvifically reachable (Witherington III 2007:86–87).

3.8.6 Necessity of Water Baptism for Salvation

Personal salvation is by the Holy Spirit alone, but water baptism, as a call to repent, is a necessary message which generates the hope of, and search for, Trinitarian salvation. That water baptism is not necessary for salvation is made clear in 1 Corinthians 1, where repentance, faith, Spirit baptism, Christian life, and perseverance till death, all occur as necessary factors relative to Salvation and Christian living; water baptism is only considered necessary for Christian obedience (Matthew 28:19).

Water baptism is not an act of God, though it is a gift from God to the Christian community which comes with an attached confession of repentance and of faith. Within itself however, it is none of these things, since it does not necessarily convey grace. This is exemplified in the case of Simon Magus (Acts 8), where only acceptance of the Spirit can constitute the sign of the covenant, but is contrarily not the seal of its ultimate reception (Witherington III 2007:127–134).

There is thus high potential for a baptismal convergence possibility in the repentance model, as articulated by Witherington III. This could be made more possible by an arrangement which combines the two baptisms. Infant baptism would provide the prevenient Grace aspect of the preparation by means of repentance, which is followed by Holy Spirit new birth, as is demonstrated in believer's baptism. A question which requires an answer however is whether water baptism is entirely necessary if the Holy Spirit works independently of the application of this rite. This is an issue which Robert Fischer deals with in the following section.

3.9 Holy Spirit Baptism Obviation of Water Baptism

Fischer's study investigates whether water baptism is necessary for salvation. (John 3:3; 5; 8) The Brethren (Quaker) movement, and also more recently, the Salvation Army, do not practice water baptism. Their belief is that Baptism in the Spirit alone is both essential and sufficient for personal salvation from sin (Fischer 2010:8). This argument raises the question of whether Quaker Christian Churches or movements which do not observe the sacraments of water baptism and the Eucharist should be regarded as "sufficiently" Christian and thus be regarded as *bona fide* members of the universal Christian Church.

In defence of the Quaker position, Barclay, a contemporary of John Wesley, set out to prove from the Bible that baptism is not necessary for redemption. Barclay argues from a point of the distinction made between John's Baptism with water and Jesus' Baptism with the Spirit, and

contends that there is only one baptism required for true salvation, which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Fischer 2010:8).

3.9.1 Sacraments as Unnecessary for Salvation

Barclay justifies his argument by stating that the earliest Apostles practiced many aspects of the law which the Church later realised were not entirely necessary. The event of Pentecost (Acts 2; 10) and the experience of Cornelius in his home (Acts 10) only feature baptism by the Holy Spirit. This indicates that water baptism is not necessary for Church membership and personal salvation (Fischer 2010:8).

Barclay notes that the great commission recorded in Matthew 28:18–20, does not mention water at all. He contends that “into the name” indicates a joining of the “power, domain and likeness” of the personalities of the Triune Divinity, and is what these passages actually mean. While Barclay is correct that water is not referred to at all in this text, there is however also no indication of the possible rejection of its use.

3.9.2 Wesley’s Response

Wesley’s response to Barclay is that there is one outward baptism, and that is the baptism of John while the inward baptism is the baptism of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Jesus never practiced water baptism, but submitted to John’s baptism, and was then baptised with the Holy Spirit. Jesus only ministered Holy Spirit baptism by having sent what God had promised. If water baptism is the outward sign of spiritual baptism, then the true substance of baptism is that of inner spiritual baptism, and that alone is essential. Because baptism in the Spirit makes up the main part of the content of true faith, Wesley therefore considered it possible to be Christian without having been the recipient of water baptism (Fischer 2010:15).

3.9.3 Wainwright’s Response

Wainwright’s conclusion is that from within his Methodist tradition, he sees the administration of water baptism as a sure sign that God enacts salvation; yet from within the Religious Society of Friends, their “reading of the scriptures rather sees God as enacting salvation through direct Spirit baptism” (in Fischer 2010:15).

This short study highlights the differences between the ways that Methodists understand Wesley in his view on baptism. The differences are between those who believe that the Holy Spirit is essentially ministered through baptism and is the means of achieving Grace, while others believe that Holy Spirit baptism is distinct from water, but must be received in addition

to the administration of water. The latter alternative seems to be the surer way for the achievement of true redemption.

If the Holy Spirit operates through water baptism, and baptism in this sense is necessary for salvation, the danger of this belief is that nominal redemption becomes a distinct possibility, which is the danger that David Wright highlights (2005:7–8). If however baptism is understood as a message which demonstrates the need for new birth, then water baptism would not be strictly essential for salvation, but necessary instead as a Divine method of proclaiming the Gospel, and would therefore be needed as an adjunct of the Gospel message of Christ.

Convergence baptism seems not to be possible in any view which excludes water baptism from Spirit baptism, as is expounded in Barclay's theology. What Barclay's argument importantly does however is provide evidence from literal Biblical information that only Christ by the Holy Spirit redeems, and is not done by baptism itself. Water baptism merely points to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and of itself, does not possess any specific salvific merit, which is also an essentially Wesleyan viewpoint. The acceptance of the thief on the cross by Jesus during His crucifixion into Paradise is based solely on his crying out for mercy which was duly granted (Luke 23:42–43) without the necessary use of any kind of initiation rite.

A combining of the two baptisms into one system, which is the idea behind convergence baptism, but needing to be fittingly designed, could convey the message that, unless a baptised person is born of the Spirit through the Gospel of repentance and faith, that individual will not enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:3–8).

3.10 Sacrament is Old and New Testament Covenant

Beyond what the Holy Spirit does – the provision of redemption through Jesus Christ and the preaching of the Gospel – there is God's more fundamental plan of redemption, and its attendant structure. This redemptive plan consists of the covenantal approach which existed long before the Bible was written and humanity became aware of Divine intervention, but is nevertheless all about what the bible and its purpose is all about. The next group of theologians, who mostly argue in favour of covenant as sacrament, is based on the claim that covenant is the true Biblical basis for how baptism should be understood and practiced.

3.10.1 Covenantal and Sacramental Redemptive Plan

A justification for baptism as sacrament is generally founded on covenant, of which Pierre Marcel (1953) is the chief exponent. Marcel claims that "covenant is the sole biblical basis for

infant Baptism” (Marcel 1953:198). While there may be no text-and-verse evidence for infant baptism, as there is for believer’s baptism, the Bible is essentially a document in support of covenant, and is the record of the substance of God’s plan for His redemptive dealings with all people of the world. Covenant is, thus, the sacramental reason which legitimises a theology of baptism that is inclusive of the baptism of infants.

According to Marcel in New Testament covenant, the sign of circumcision is replaced with the sign of Jesus as Redeemer. The New Testament’s use of water replaces the Old Testament practice of circumcision, and this thus demonstrates that the Old Covenant is fulfilled in the new. Covenant from Jesus’ Era onwards becomes a matter of a changed life from within, rather than primarily of human effort for the achievement of changed behaviour. This inner covenantal transaction enables the individual to obey God from the heart, and this is demonstrated by living out the covenant from within, through the Holy Spirit’s Work of new birth in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36:25–29) (Marcel 1953:80–98).

God’s covenantal plan for salvation thus includes men, women and children, because all people are in need of God’s redemption. Baptised people cannot divest themselves from the baptism, just as no-one can take this sacrament’s bestowal away from them. Whatever the person may become after their baptism does not nullify their stance under the sign of Christ as an expression of God’s saving work. Marcel argues that all of this is remarkably true, not only of believers baptised as adults, but of children placed into covenant, and baptised by virtue of such covenant as God’s Promise of their redemption. It is just here that the true choice lies for those infants baptised who, “will have to make up his/her mind” (Marcel 1953:208) of whether to receive Christ or not in their adult life. Marcel advocates that God’s Covenant thus signifies that children can be baptised legitimately, without faith or repentance, because their baptism enables them to stand permanently under the Sign of the Cross (Marcel 1953:209–210).

According to the New Testament texts, faith and repentance are not in every instance manifested before baptism by those who are baptised. In reacting to Barth’s understanding of sacrament, Marcel states “that it is completely illegitimate to draw from the few examples in the Bible [as Barth and believer-baptists do] that in every instance faith and repentance were demanded before a person was baptized. The opponents of infant baptism wish to make a unique and absolute rule for the administration of baptism which is binding without exception but is something the Bible does not do” (Marcel 1953: 211–212). Repentance and faith may not always precede baptism in the New Testament, and yet this information should not be a reason for making either of these optional.

3.10.1.1 Covenantal Baptism and Divine Imitative

The supreme value of covenant as the basis for baptism is that covenant signifies the presence and action of sacramental initiative, and is thus the most important reason for the baptism of infants. The initiative for redemption always remains with God, and was considered the fundamental purpose of the Old Covenant. This is carried over into the New Testament, where it has found covenantal fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

References to baptism in Acts are not however definitions of baptism, nor do they speak of baptism as new birth. Rather, they associate the rite with evangelism, and integration into Christ and His Body, the Church. The Holy Spirit has a close association with baptism in this context. Baptism in the Epistles of the New Testament is however more of a description of sacramental baptism than its authoritatively-obtained definition is. Neither are the references to repentance and faith the grounds for baptism, for adults or for children, but rather “the promise of the covenant of which, in both cases, baptism is the sign and the seal” (Marcel 1953:212).¹⁰

3.10.1.2 Subjective Precedence over Objective Covenantal Character

The objective character of covenant does not find precedence over the subjective aspect of baptism in practice, according to Marcel. Marcel justifies this contention from the evangelical aspect of the sacrament, since it is the starting point for personal faith (Marcel 1953:213), and because it draws attention to God’s offer to humanity, made through Jesus Christ, and by the working of the Holy Spirit. God declares that God sacramentally adopts children for His own, even before their birth, and this is stated in the Old Testament by the prophetic saying that, “God is also the God of posterity (Genesis 17:7)” (Marcel 1953:217). Marcel thus states:

It follows that the little children born to Christian parents are not baptized in order that they may begin to be the children of God, as though they had previously not in any way belonged to Him and had been aliens from the church, but rather in order that it might be declared by this formal sign that they are received into the church as being already members of Christ’s body (Marcel 1953:217–218).

This logically means according to Marcel that “in biblical scripture children are always counted with their parents and reckoned to be in solidarity with them” (Marcel 1953:206–217).

¹⁰ The children of covenanting parents were originally drawn into the covenant through the male figure who was circumcised and thus was made an heir of the promise of salvation. Peter and Paul, Apostles of the early Church, upheld this arrangement recorded in the Bible and it became part of the fabric of the Word of God (Acts 2:37f; Acts 16:31; 1 Corinthians. 1:13–18; 1 Corinthians 7; 14).

While God is seen as adopting children as His own before they are even born, Marcel says little about their personal need to respond by repentance and faith for new birth salvation (John 3:3–8). Even though he speaks of the subjective faith aspect of sacrament as needing to have the precedence over objective baptism in the practice of baptism, he attempts to make space in his theory for the indispensable need for a Gospel faith response, but seems to fail in doing so.

While Marcel believes that the Biblical sacramental purpose of baptism is for redemption, *inter alia* for both believing adults and their infants, and while he holds that both baptisms are therefore Biblically valid, he does not deal with the relationship between the baptisms of the one covenant, or of any possibility of repeating baptism on baptized individuals.

Marcel does however, emphasise the evangelical aspect of faith as the starting point of the Christian life; objective baptism as prevenient grace does not assume precedence over the subjective faith aspect of the sacrament, as in the sacramental theologies of Cullmann, Jeremias, and Robinson, and also of the MCSA. Barth and Marcel, despite their disagreement over the fundamental validity over the infant aspect of baptism, would however uncannily be in full agreement over the response aspect, because both view faith (subjective response) baptism as being the objective aspect of baptism, and on this basis the aspect of faith which includes repentance, is required to be primary.

3.11 Sacrament in *oikos* Household Unit

Paedo-baptists also argue their case for Biblical covenant as being the valid basis of infant baptism, because its roots are contained in the Old Testament sacramental practice of covenantal circumcision. This logical carry-over from the Old Covenant into the New Testament is called the New Covenant, and covenant itself is the sole factor which sacramentally justifies infant baptism.

The specific rationale behind this claim is that, in the Old Covenant regime, Jesus' coming was predicted and He would come to institute a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31ff.). This coming would entail the use of God's sacramental covenant as the plan by which God would seek to save men, women and children from their sins. This Divine provision which is primary and a specifically sacramental matter needs to be applied through the *oikos* household covenant approach. Jeremias champions this theory, which he then uses in support of Marcel to provide additional sacramental justification to the baptism of infants (Jeremias 1962:76–77).

He argues that the five specific examples of household baptism in the New Testament, though they may not be specific proof of the conscious presence of infants during these baptisms, are nevertheless significant in covenant baptism. The presence of children in these instances is implied in the terminology used, and Jeremias argues that even though the focus of evangelism in this approach was initially aimed at consecrating adults, it would also have been directed at all others present within these domiciles at that time (Jeremias 1962:77).

Evangelised and baptised adults of covenant households are held responsible by God for bringing their unsaved family members to Christ for His salvation, and this is also an argument for the early baptism of infants, because it emphasises that, “New Testament theology about baptism is wholeness in its character” (Jeremias 1962:84). All members of a household are thus seen as comprised of a single unified grouping in the sight of God (Jeremias 1962:85).

The *oikos* factor of covenant in the New Testament is, moreover, regarded by Jeremias as indisputable evidence for the continuity of covenant between the Old and New Testaments, and constitutes the Biblical legitimacy factor of infant baptism. The *oikos* method of achieving evangelism is sacramental, because it expresses God’s initiative that is the same in both the Old and New Testament Covenants as God’s established method for bringing both Jews and Gentiles to Christian redemption.

As Hebrew infants were included in God’s Old Testament covenant through an act of circumcision this rite has been transformed into a sign of the need for a circumcision of the heart in New Testament covenant. As opposed to only males being circumcised under the old epoch, in the Christian era circumcision of the heart applies to both male and female people. As in the case of the Hebrew faith, converts from heathenism and paganism are yet compelled to respond through the observances of covenant, because this is God’s sacramental method of implementing His commitment to be present salvifically in the lives of all adherents of the Faith. The same theology and approach would have been adopted with regard to the practices of the early Christian Church, which was initially made up almost entirely of Jewish converts.

Jeremias’ case for infant baptism, based on an *oikos* approach of covenant, is thus indisputably a God-given plan in which opportunity for the evangelisation of whole families, based on sacramental requirements, is provided (Jeremias 1962:77).¹¹ If baptism included infants during

¹¹In support of his argument for the inclusion of infants in baptism from the inception of personal Christian Faith, Jeremias quotes a number of New Testament texts, including: Acts 21:5,21; 1 Corinthians 7:14; Ephesians 6:1, 4, Colossians 3:20, 1 Timothy 2:15, 3:4, 12, 5:4, 10, 14, and Titus 1:6. These texts, added to the instances recorded

the first two centuries of the Church, this would be a convincing substantiation for the practice of infant baptism as sacrament in the Apostolic Era, but is something which, however, requires further investigation.

It was over this issue that Jeremias and Aland – both New Testament scholars themselves – clashed. Aland contended that infants were not baptised in the first two centuries of the Christian Church; Jeremias contrarily, argued that because *oikos* baptism was an Old Testament practice inclusive of infants, and was thus more likely entered upon in the Apostolic Era of Christianity than not, makes it reasonable to assume that this tradition had continued into the Patristic Era. Jeremias therefore reaffirms his view that children should always to be included in the baptism of households, based on their parents' Christian standing with God by reason of their new birth. The root of *oikos* practice is therefore to be squarely found in Old Testament Covenant (Jeremias 1962:32).

Jeremias accordingly reasoned that if adults were converted during the first two centuries, what then would have done with their children, and conjectures that they would have brought them along and also “had them baptized” (Jeremias 1962:76). He further argued that, if there was indeed an increase in the numbers of children within the Church at around the end of the second century, which Kurt Aland (1962) argues is the real explanation for the rise of infant baptism over the centuries' intervening, it cannot conclusively be stated that this was the only reason for the introduction of the practice of infant-baptism.

Children and infants were therefore always present, and have “played a significant part in the Church” (Jeremias 1962:77). Even though the focus on evangelism which follows on from baptism has been on adults, children are likely also to have been included (1962:77), so that following on from their baptism, they could then be taught the principles of discipleship in preparation for their ultimate redemption in Christ.

Furthermore, information obtained from Tertullian, Origen and Cyprian, all of whom were contemporaries, does not give any indication that infant baptism was in any way an innovation which seemed to begin spontaneously sometime during the third century but rather that these church fathers “were unanimous in showing that it was then the [most] natural and traditional practice of the church” (Jeremias 1962:75). This contention by Jeremias is especially supported

in the Gospels that feature Jesus and children, are all convincing instances and expressions of the Divine Care being taken that support the practice of infant baptism (Jeremias 1962:77).

by Tertullian (200 AD), who questioned whether it would not be wiser for children to be baptised, when they could instead later answer for themselves (Dixon 1979:35), rather than at the time of their baptism in infancy.

Aland (1963), however, disagreed by arguing that up until the second century, children were considered innocent in terms of sinfulness, and that baptism would thus not have been seen as required: “They need baptism only when sinfulness awakens, that is to say at a more advanced age” (Jeremias 1962:77–78). Jeremias, however, finds that this aspect of Aland’s argument does not square with the facts of Christianity found in the historical record of Church during the second and third centuries after Christ:

A superstitious misconception of baptism, which regarded it merely as a charm by means of which forgiveness granted once and for all could be obtained, became more and more common. This resulted in the postponement of baptism to a time when disaster struck or death threatened the ‘dissenters’. Dissenters are threatened from all sides; therefore, let us baptize our children as quickly as possible (Jeremias 1962:84).

Infants therefore appear to have been baptised at that time, albeit sometimes for the wrong reasons. Jeremias further argued that, because “New Testament theology about baptism is wholeness in its character” (Jeremias 1962:84), this also makes it likely that children were included in this rite. He supports his argument with statements from the New Testament:

The whole people of God were baptized when they passed through the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 1:10ff.), the whole family of Noah was saved in the Ark, symbolising baptism (I Peter 3:20ff.); the promise of the Spirit referred to the ‘houses’ (‘to you and your children’, Acts 2:39). They are seen as one unit in the sight of God. The faith of the father of the ‘house’ as representing his family, along with the faith of the mother, embraces the children as well, and the universal character of Christ’s grace reveals itself in that it is the ‘houses’ which are summoned to believe and are baptized (Jeremias 1962:85).

For Jeremias therefore, infant baptism is Biblically legitimate, particularly because it is based on covenant, and covenant is the structure through which God works in families. Jeremias thus contends that, baptism’s Biblical legitimacy cannot therefore be questioned, and neither is there any logical necessity for a subsequent baptism to displace it, or attempt to nullify it by means of the administering of rebaptism (Jeremias 1962:85).

It seems logical therefore to contend that infant-baptised members of covenant households in the early period of Christianity went on to receive believer’s baptisms, after receiving new

birth by dint of their personal faith despite a lack of specific evidence. *Oikos*¹² household baptism, as the underlying Biblical basis for baptism could thus be seen as justification for the baptismal convergence possibility as a true expression of baptism as sacrament.

The contest between Jeremias and Aland polarized the two baptisms into a level of competition that made them appear to be irreconcilable. A fresh look at this scenario, in the need for the Church to return to evangelism for all people, based on Matthew 28:17f as its central focus is necessary.

The next group of theologians, several of whom are erstwhile Baptists and spearheaded by Gregg Strawbridge, make a combined case for the validity of paedobaptism based on Matthew 28:17–20. They demonstrate how covenant as sacrament can be a most effective practice for all the understandings of baptism, and could throw light on whether the convergence notion is both valid and viable, or otherwise.

3.12 Sacramental Operation through Covenantal Household Evangelism

In discussing sacramental operation through covenant household evangelism, Marcel (1959) argued for covenant as the sole Biblical basis for all understanding of baptism, whereas, Jeremias (1960) focuses on justifying this basis through his study of the *oikos* household method for covenant redemption. Strawbridge (2003) debates how vitally important the family is in the *oikos* covenant plan, and that it is a logical and most effective method of reaching men, women and their children evangelistically for their redemption.

Most of these Baptist contributors inclusive of Gregg Strawbridge (2003) shifted from holding an exclusively believer's baptistic view to an acceptance of covenant as constituting the true biblical basis for sacramental baptism inclusive of children.

These authors ask whether children of believers are to be considered as belonging intrinsically to the covenantal community with the privileges and responsibilities which go with covenant, or whether these are to be regarded as unbelievers, like the children of heathen adults. Does God promise these children of covenant parents anything? And if so, how do they feature in God's covenant plan originating in the Old Testament and then in the four Gospels and the epistles of the New Testament? (Strawbridge 2003:6–8). All of these authors acknowledge that

¹² In both Old Testament and New Testament faith, *oikos* refers to a household in which men, women and children are present.

there are two requirements in sacramental baptism for baptism to be biblically effectual: the God-provision, and a human-response factor. God's provision is normally associated with the ministering of infant baptism, and on the other hand human response described as evangelicalism is emphasised in the practicing of believer's baptism (Chapell in Strawbridge 2003:24–27)

Following on from these introductory statements is a discussion which reveals why these contributing scholars have revised their view of baptism away from being strictly believer's baptist to one which incorporates the practices of the baptism of infants and of adult believers. While there may be nothing new in what they say, their insights may prove helpful when considered in the context of a study of baptismal convergence. What then, do these scholars present as constituting a true biblical definition of covenant and its practice, and why?

3.12.1 Overview of Covenantal Baptism

An overview of covenant, which is the main concern behind these authors' combined effort, is reflected in the five accounts of household baptism in the New Testament scriptures. It is possible, but unlikely, that those baptised in these examples of household baptism were mature enough to make a true commitment of faith and yet the presence of infants at these occasions can neither be excluded nor be conclusive.

In this chapter Bryan Chapell makes a careful distinction between those who believe, and those who are simply baptised (Chapell in Strawbridge 2003:21). Chappell states that the Biblical benefits of covenantal baptism are implicitly granted, not because baptised people are guaranteed to become committed believers, but simply in order to be able to say that God makes promises for salvation to believers and also to their children. This means that the devotion of parents from a sacramental covenantal paedobaptism point of view is considered by Chappell to be both crucial and indispensable. God chooses parents to evangelise their own children, in the same way that God had blessed Abraham, who was covenantally-commissioned to pass on this blessing to his family. According to Matthew 28:18-20 Christ would always be present when the commission of Matthew 28 is obeyed and fruit would be born as stated in Mark 16:20. (Chapell in Strawbridge 2003:25–26).

Chappell's contribution reveals the potential for convergence baptism, because the basis for this possibility is detailed in Jeremiah 31:31. This text implies that covenant carries a message of both commencement and completion in regard to Divine action with reference to covenanting people. Since covenant originates from God in the Old Testament, and is signified

by physical circumcision, God similarly initiated and planned the New Covenant arising out of the Old Testament for baptism's fulfilment (Chapell in Strawbridge 2003:25–26). The process thus concerns the sacramental practice of circumcision; the circumcision of the flesh in the Old Testament, and that of the heart as provided for by Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. This summary forms the practical sacramental basis for a view of Biblical baptism which embraces both believers and their children.

The contributions of the remaining scholars and their erstwhile baptist peers together provide a step-by-step unfolding of the definition of baptism as covenantal sacrament, and reveals how covenant is a logical evangelistic plan for the redemption of all people and their need for discipling. If the arguments of these scholars are coherent and consistent within the overall redemptive plan of God as detailed in the passages of the Bible, this should contribute towards making a convincing finding regarding whether covenant, when understood as convergence baptism, can be an effective alternative means of practicing sacramental and evangelical baptism as a positive counter for rebaptism and nominal Christianity.

3.12.2 Institution and Covenantal Undertones of Baptism in Matthew 28:18–20

Since the fundamental purpose of Christian covenant baptism is dedicated to the evangelisation of communities, it is the sacramental responsibility of all covenanting communities to carry out the Biblical mandate as commissioned by Christ and stated in Matthew 28:17–20. It could thus be argued that Matthew 28:17–20 is a foundational statement for New Covenant practice because it is Christ's plan for the fulfilment of the prophetic word of Jeremiah 31:31. A discipling of all nations has always fundamentally meant the accrual of new converts, but nothing in Matthew excludes children, or seeking adults – or either and both of Jews and Gentiles – from the privileges of baptism. The effect of baptism is thus a key in the process of achieving the successful discipling of all nations. This sacramental plan of covenant is thereafter, confirmed by the events of Pentecost, and the preaching of the Gospel as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The Book of Acts can therefore be seen as just such a demonstration of covenant in sacramental and evangelical action (Dorani in Strawbridge 2003:39–42). The question however that begs an answer is whether the statement given in Matthew 28:19–20 embraces only adults within the practicing of the baptismal rite, or is it inclusive of infants, and if then infants too, how possible would it also be for them to become disciples? Beasley-Murray (1962) argues that Matthew 28:18–20's statement is exclusively an example of believers' baptism and states his justification thus:

It might be considered as self-evident that disciples are made by the preaching of the Gospel and that such as have become disciples are then baptized and the baptized proceed to instruction. The two participles – baptizing – teaching – successively follow the action of the main verb (Beasley-Murray 1962:88).

If however, baptism is seen as a gift of God's grace why, additionally, should it then not be provided for people of any age? Is it age which makes someone eligible for God's grace? That there is no clear command or definition for the baptism of either believers or infants given in the New Testament is clearly stated by Hallesby (1964:19).

Matthew 28:19 is the only text found anywhere in the New Testament which can be considered prescriptive of baptism in its essence (Witherington III 2007:53). Some researchers believe however that Matthew 28:17-20 was a creation of the early Church. The Words of this Triune-formula for baptism were placed into the mouth of Jesus Christ, as if He had had spoken them. Beasley-Murray disputes the veracity of this early church creation theory (Beasley-Murray 1962:83) by concluding that Matthew 28:19 can only strictly be meant as applying to "born again" Christian-believing supplicants. Whether this is the case, one way or the other, a plain reading of the text speaks only about the disciplining of nations; baptism in the name of the three Persons of the Trinity; the teaching Ministry of the Christ; and the promise made by Jesus to be with the disciples till the end of the age (Matthew 28:17–20). The publication of the New King James Version of the Bible, and the fact that this passage was originally written (and subsequently translated) within the context of a newfound Pentecostal zeal for evangelism that constituted the very beginnings of the Christian Church, makes 'the creation [of this] by the church theory' highly unlikely, according to Beasley-Murray (1962:84–90).

What does this text truly imply? Did Jesus then have in mind men, women and children? Was Jesus actually saying that baptism was to be administered only through immersion? And should baptism therefore be provided only after a supplicant's rebirth as a witness of Christ's work in the lives of people? Additionally then, what also would the purpose of all truly this be? These are all issues which continue to be debated and theorized *ad nauseam*. Be this as it may, all other references to baptism contained in the Bible which are assumed to be expressions of covenant also need to be dealt with in the light of the pronouncements in Matthew 28:19. The question, then, is whether Beasley-Murray's interpretation can be considered as the most accurate explanation, and how then should this question be decided? Because the Biblical passages found in Luke 24:4–7 "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem" and further in John 20:21, "as the Father has sent

me so I am sending you”, and in (Acts 1:8) “you will receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon on and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the world.” give no indication regarding what the correct deductions of Matthew 28:18–20 should be, they are rather to be considered as being general statements, that are inclusive, and which therefore seem to support the definition of the word “nations” which can be taken also to mean the acceptance of infants for christian discipling.

Matthew 28:18–20, possesses four main themes (Dorani in Strawbridge 2003:30). These demonstrate that baptism is not conducted as a private ceremony between God and the individual, because the word “all” appears in total four times within this text – “all authority”, “all the nations”, “teaching all”, and “all the days of this age”. The occurrence of the word “all” indicates that, since the commission explained is broad, also means that the institution of baptism participates within its breadth (Dorani in Strawbridge 2003:30). Baptism is thus always practiced within the context of coming to Christ for the purpose of achieving salvation by means of a discipling method. Matthew 28:17–20 is thus primarily a summary of the Christ’s covenantal evangelical mission to the nations, which consists of first, the making of disciples, then the practice of baptism, and followed by teaching the commands of Christ for the Jews first, then the Gentiles, and finally the pagans (Acts 1:7-8).

While Matthew 28:17–20 is an account of the institution of the mission of covenantal baptism by Jesus yet He Himself never baptised anyone with water. This He left for the church to do. In the commission of Matthew 28:18–20 the command to make disciples of all nations which is prioritized, with baptism and teaching playing supplementary but imperative roles,” but “It [would however] be more accurate to say that Christ inaugurated Christian baptism rather than commanded it” (Dorani in Strawbridge 2003:33–37).

That a discipling influence can commence from as early as the pre-birth stage of new life, is found in the case of Jesus’ and His salvific impact on John the Baptist who in contact with the baby Jesus is described as having leapt whilst still in Elizabeth’s womb (Luke 1:39–42). In light of this possibility, Dorani’s broader interpretation of Matthew 28:17–20 is that adult disciples and their children could indeed be accepted for baptism (Dorani in Strawbridge 2003:39–42).

3.12.3 Sacramental Covenant based on the ‘Promise unto You and Your Children’ (Acts 2:39)

Joel Beeke and Ray Lanning’s contribution in Strawbridge (2003) in the case for infant baptism, is a justification of covenantal infant baptism (Strawbridge 2003:49–69) based on Acts 2:39, ‘For the promise is to you and your children, and to all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call’. They contend that baptism’s sacramental meaning and scope reach back to the Old Testament covenantal practice of circumcision. These words are prophetic and are described in Hebrews 10:1 as the “shadow of good things to come” and were promised when “God spoke in times past unto us” (Hebrews 1:2).. The period of the prophets of faith (Hebrews 1:1) was passing away, and a new dispensation was described and planned for fulfilment in “these last days”, that is after Jesus had ascended into heaven. He was thereby exalted to His position at “the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Ghost, he [*sic*] has shed forth this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:32–33). There was thus already Biblically-predicted impending change prior to the New Covenant era: “The pattern of God’s sacramental dealings with believers and their children, as old as creation itself, would continue as a constituted principle of the visible church. Baptism should thus be administered to believers and their children, and was clearly stated by the Apostle Peter: ‘for the promise is to you and your children’, Acts 2:39” (Beeke & Lanning in Strawbridge 2003:49–50).

3.12.4 Responsibilities of Covenantal Promise

In covenant, there is promise of change which is however no genuine substitute for personal regeneration which is the reality of the promise. Parents who presume that their children are already regenerated by virtue of Christ’s covenant on the basis that they have already been baptised may see no need to later explain to them that they must be born again, or indeed why this must happen. William Young calls this “hyper-covenantism”, because the covenantal relationship in this belief thereby effectively replaces any real need for the later actual conversion of those baptised as infants (Young in Strawbridge 2003:67).

The promise by God, and the promises parents make on behalf of their infants, need to be evidenced as true in the personal experience and changed lives of their children. The need is, therefore, for parents to emphasise that salvation is achievable by faith alone. God will always be true to His promise, so the language used in the enactment of covenant is concomitantly stated in terms of, “I will and you shall” (Young 2003:67–69).

Covenant therefore presents a unique sacramental opportunity for the evangelisation of children, because these are seen as having been Biblically included in this covenant. Such can be done most effectively within their own homes, especially since this is a covenantal Biblical norm, and the Christian home moreover is logically and ideally positioned as the place for life in Christ to begin.

3.12.5 *Oikos* Formula for Sacramental Baptism

Watt's contribution to the discussion lies in the claim that Jeremias, like Stauffer before him, points to the so-called *oikos* formula, in combination with the use of the adjective "all" in the accounts found in Acts 16:33 of the Philippian jailer, and of Crispus in Acts 18:8. Watt claims that this is evidence that,

no single member of the household was excluded from baptism. As ancient societies experienced the powerful role of extended families, which included (stem) members (father, mother, children, grandparents) along with more distant relatives (single aunts, uncles, cousins etc. and even sometimes domestic servants or slaves), so by analogy in our new family under the Master – a primary profession of faith in Christ by one individual held [sacramental and evangelical] implications not only for the person's own baptism but for [all other members of] the family as well (Watt in Strawbridge 2003:80–81).

3.12.5.1 Household Baptism as Inclusive Baptism

The use of the language of the household within the Biblical world opens up the possibility of the baptism of infants, but by itself cannot be decisively used in deciding the matter once and for all. In his argument for the exclusivity of believer's baptism, Beasley-Murray (1962:315) objects to making the Biblical household *oikos* factor into a watertight case, because it is not known whom exactly made up such households, and the *oikos* formula in support of infant baptism therefore appears for him to be a myth (Watt in Strawbridge 2003:82).

Watt, however, disputes Murray's "myth claim" for *oikos*, by arguing that it would be out of character should a patriarch such as Abraham, or a lawgiver such as Moses, or even some other itinerant believing Israelite father, present his infant for circumcision, but not afford the same consideration in presenting them for baptism. Consequently, the burden of proof is on those who would claim that children were not participants of *oikos* baptism in Biblical terms, because the culture of those days automatically assumed that children were usually part of the covenanting family (Watt in Strawbridge 2003:82–84).

Family solidarity and not individualism, was then seen as being the norm for Patriarchal cultures found in the Israelite communities, Herodian Jews, and even pagan societies located in and around the Mediterranean at that time. The scale is thus tipped by Murray in favour of the argument for the inclusion of all family members in such baptisms. It had been that way since the time of Noah (Genesis 7:1), Abraham (Genesis 17:12–13), Joshua (Joshua 24:15), and David (2 Samuel 12:10), all the way down to the overseers of the early Church (1 Timothy 3:4). The head of the family would usually speak on behalf of those who belonged to his family, and when the head of the family was baptised, so too were they (Watt in Strawbridge 2003:82–84).

3.12.5.2 Newness of New Covenant in Baptismal Sacrament

Jeffrey Niell (Strawbridge 2003:128) studies the newness of the present covenant, and in the process compares the New Covenant passages found in Jeremiah 31:31–34 with those recorded in Hebrews 8:8–13, in order to determine whether covenant in the Old Testament persists in the New Testament, and whether the two are, in essence, the same for both Testaments. What, then, is “new” about the New Covenant, and what has this to do with the issues surrounding baptism? John MacArthur, a Baptist, had claimed that there is one significant ethnic distinction between belonging to the Abrahamic Covenant on the one hand, and salvifically belonging to the Christian New Covenant, on the other. The essence of the New Covenant is that everyone in it acknowledges God salvifically, but this was not the case in the dispensation of the Old Covenant. Baptism is therefore distinct from circumcision, because under the Old Covenant regime, no one knew God in the true salvific sense (Niell in Strawbridge 2003:129–130). Niell however, disagrees with this baptist view, by contending that no Biblical reason exists why children should be excluded from New Covenant membership. This truth may only be understood and accepted when it is recognised that the whole of Jeremiah 31:31–34 is concerned with the sacramental newness of the dispensation provided for within the New Covenant.

The New Covenant factor has always existed, but has remained concealed within the perceived tenets of the Old Covenant. That this is the case is revealed by the fact that the covenantal people in the New Covenant become a completely different people overall. Jeremiah 31:31 does not teach a radical separation between the people of the Old and New Testaments, and this is confirmed in Hebrews 8:8. In Hebrews 8:10 God’s covenant is forged with the House of Israel. Paul is in agreement with this, and thus refers to the saints as “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16). God did not initiate a new standard of conduct for His people during the New

Covenant era; the author of Hebrews 8:10 also believes this, and backs this claim by quoting from Jeremiah 31:31: “I will put my laws in their minds and write them in their hearts” (Niell in Strawbridge 2003:131–132). Moreover, there are no major differences realistically to be found between the Old and the New covenants, and where there are differences, these are not as regards the essential nature and membership of the two Covenants (Niell in Strawbridge 2003:133).

Religion internally is therefore no different from the Old to New Covenant, as is stated in: Deuteronomy 6:4–6: “I will put my laws in their minds and will write it on their hearts”, and repeated in Hebrews 8:10. Religion which is of the heart has thus always been part of God’s redemptive intention, and was not newly-conceived specifically for the New Covenant era. The Holy Spirit was clearly present and active prior to Christ’s ascension (Nehemiah 9:20; 30; Zechariah 7:12; Proverbs 1:23), and the writing of the law of God into the hearts of humanity (Hebrews 8:10) found in the internal operation of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:25-29) are therefore not genuinely new in the so-termed New Covenant dispensation. With regard to Divine initiative, God who takes the initiative in the New Covenant is also not a new factor. Instead, He is seen as saying in effect: I will affect the new covenant’ (Hebrews.8:8). Neither is a covenantal relationship only to be found in the Old Covenant: “I will be their God and they will be my people”, which also appears in Hebrews. 8:10 is also not a new factor in the New Covenant. From Old to New Covenant, those described as affected by God’s Promise of covenant are likewise referred to as “my people” or “the people of God” (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:7–13). Knowledge of the Lord is also concomitantly the same in both the Old and New Covenant (Hebrews 8:11). That Divine mercy exists in both Covenants is stated in the words of Hebrews 8:12: “I will be merciful to their iniquities and remember their sin no more”, and is also found in Psalm 103:8–14 (Niell in Strawbridge 2003:130–140).

Neill thus concludes his argument by claiming that Jesus Himself was really the only new ingredient for the New Covenant. Jesus has fulfilled the ceremonial law of covenant, and the ceremonial religious observance had been abrogated by reason of Jesus becoming High Priest, through the perfect sacrifice of His Life on the Cross. Calvin had thus argued, “that the newness was not so much about the substance, but refers to the form only”, while Kaiser has written that confusion surrounding the New Covenant comes from “attaching a modern meaning to the word new”. This contention is borne out in Jeremiah’s usage, in which “new” is meant to signify “renewal” – this can be understood from the use of the same Hebrew word with reference to the “new moon” (Neill in Strawbridge 2003:142–145).

The context in which this is considered thus refers to that created by, and for, Ceremonial Law, which is new in the sense that this law is written on the hearts of the people (Ezekiel 36:25–29). The new factor in the New Covenant is thence only a renewal of what has always been present in the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is, likewise, therefore neither new in its nature, nor its membership. A single Covenant of Grace has always existed, and God’s elect have been justified in their practices and beliefs in the same way throughout redemptive history – by Grace and through Faith of God alone (Ephesians 2:8). Because the quotation from Jeremiah in Hebrews 8 does nothing to establish a change of the membership of those who are in covenant with God, children are not excluded from the practices of the New Covenant, and its membership still includes both believers and their children (Luke 1:21–24; Ephesians 6:1–9) (Niell in Strawbridge 2003:155).

Simply stated, Jesus replaces the priest (or priests) of the Old Covenant within the context of the New Covenant by uniquely becoming its High Priest, and baptism which replaces circumcision may therefore be considered as a sacramental advance of the New Testament over the Old Testament in its standard of requirement and children thus need to be part of the New Covenant plan as they were in the Old Covenant dispensation.

3.12.5.3 Accommodation of Infant Baptism in the New Covenant

Pratt, in his Chapter of Strawbridge’s volume deals with how infant baptism is accommodated within the New Covenant. He claims that the New Covenant had been used to argue against infant baptism theologically at first, because it was thought that Jeremiah had stated that the New Covenant could not be broken. Also in Jeremiah 31:32, the prophet had used the words “not like the old covenant which the forefathers broke” (Strawbridge 2003:156–167).

Warnings of breaking God’s covenant are given in every instance of covenant in Israel’s history, which also reveals that this nation suffered severely because of these breakages. Secondly, the New Covenant is fully-internalised in the New Testament. Paedo-baptists often speak of baptised children participating in the external aspects of covenant, without any apparent inward transformation being achieved. This raises the objection of how it would be possible for baptism to be given to people, in the external sense, without the possibility of, and the indispensable need for personal spiritual transformation? Thirdly, all participants in the New Covenant are said to qualify for redemption, as indicated by Jeremiah 31:33–34. Paedo-baptists consistently stress that baptised children have been taken into the covenant, but are not thereby automatically saved from sin. The criticism, however, is that infant baptism introduces

unbelieving people into the New Covenant community, which therefore dilutes its spiritual strength. How is it then possible to believe in infant baptism, and also practice it, when God Himself has declared the New Covenant to be inviolable, internal, and thus reserved only for those saved who also know the Lord (Pratt in Strawbridge 2003:158–161)?

What more then, did Jeremiah mean when he announced the provision of a New Covenant with God? This question requires to be looked at in the context of the time of the Hebrew exile. Jeremiah spoke about this in terms of reprimand, hope and warning for returning exiles. Pratt further contends that this issue needs to be looked at and understood against the background of the Community of God, and in the context of the argument for the inclusion of baptised infants within them (Pratt in Strawbridge 2003:167).

How then too has the New Covenant been fulfilled in the Christian faith? Pratt states that at least three New Testament authors explicitly declare that the Christian Faith itself is the actual fulfilment found of Jeremiah's prophecy. Jeremiah 31:31–34 is quoted, in whole or in part, seven times in the writings of Luke, Paul, and of the author of the Biblical Book of Hebrews. The most prominent of these references mentioned is found in Luke 22:20. Paul also refers to Christ's words in keeping with this (1 Corinthians 11:25), when speaking of himself, and of his company as the ministers of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6).

For the writer of Hebrews, the superiority of the Christianity over Old Testament practice is demonstrated by identifying this faith biblically with the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24) (Pratt in Strawbridge 2003:167–168). And yet, until Christ returns to earth again, children will continue to be baptised, just as covenanting believers are found to have circumcised their sons in the writing of the Old Testament. Children are baptised as expected heirs of the New Covenant, and are thereby blessed with the heritage of faith and special privileges, along with all the Divinely-required responsibilities, inherent and attendant thereon (Pratt in Strawbridge 2003:174).

3.12.5.4 Covenant Transition

The transition from the Old Covenant to the New is thence a smooth unfolding of God's Sacramental Redemptive Plan, and because the two Covenants are organically-connected in God's Economy of Revelation, they are essentially One Covenant, and this is convincingly expressed in the view of Randy Booth (Booth in Strawbridge 2003:199).

The words of Christ, and of the New Testament Apostles, affirm that the Covenant of the Old Testament also applies to members of the New Covenant. The family unit, or covenantal household, is central to the Work of God's Redemption in both the Old and New Covenants, since He continues to set apart both believers and their children for their redemption. "The New Testament is wholly dependent upon the revelation of the Old Testament and constantly refers to its authority; Christ is the object, the Messenger, and the Mediator of both the New and Old covenants. The unity and continuity of the two covenants is established. Believers and their children have always been members of the covenants" (Booth in Strawbridge 2003:199–200).

To argue that the New Covenant had its origin only in the New Testament is to ignore the source of God's sacramental saving plan for humanity. To argue thus would only do injustice to the important place of infants in both the Old and New Covenants, by removing the possibility and sacramental necessity of their redemption from sin of infant baptized people in their later years when covenantal understanding is possible.

3.12.5.5 Covenantal Theology and Baptism

Because there is very little theological construction concerning a definition for the term "covenant" in MCSA doctrine, a coherent and cogent practical exposition of the purpose and practice of covenant in baptism is detailed in the work of Cornelis Venema, entitled *Covenant Theology and Baptism* (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:201–202).

Venema provides a paradigm for the notion of covenant which is made up of a number of essential concepts and practical components, which best describe how covenant baptism should function according to divine purpose, and also why covenant, as understood in this way is crucial in the provision of a biblical basis in a theology of water baptism for personal redemption. The question however remains as to whether the contents of Venema's theology coheres with the theologies of scholars already discussed in the book entitled, *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* edited by Strawbridge (2003)?

3.12.5.5.1 Covenant of Grace

All initiatives and forms of ministry found in Scripture are salvific, and because covenant is their basis, all should thus be sacramentally evangelistic. In Methodism, this is often referred to as prevenient grace, or that grace which goes before (Lewis 1954:65–67). Redemption would necessarily not be possible without the Grace of God. Venema describes the Covenant of Grace as being centred on God's provision of love to fallen sinners that restores them "to communion

with God and only in this way [would] fallen sinners find salvation and life” (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:206).

Grace is both the provision and commencement of covenantal experience for all individuals found within the collective of Christian individuals. In older theologies, covenants were regarded more as agreements between the parties, in which God is seen as the offended one, and people who were thus found responsible as His offenders. In more recent works concerning the nature of covenant however, the sovereign and unilateral initiative of God has received far greater prominence. There is therefore more of a growing mutuality between God and humanity in their different conditions, but “these do not imply an equal standing between God and His people in the covenant but [rather indicates] that God graciously sustains, maintains and ensures covenant fruitfulness” (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:207–208).

Fundamental then to the practice of baptism is not so much the rite *per se*, but the people it should really be serving, and is the same focus of ministry in the MCSA (MCSA 1954:52). The Grace of God signifies that God offers His free and undeserved love seen as love in action; God is thus also perceived as being a gracious God who is concomitantly known as being willing to take appropriate redemptive initiative (Lewis 1954:66–67).

Belief in the initiative of God arising from God’s grace in the message of covenant baptism is consistent with what the previous scholars have contributed thus far in terms of Jesus being the new reality of the New Covenant (Niell In Strawbridge 2003:127f) and is believed is what Jesus had in mind when He gave the commission to disciple the nations, baptize and teach in Matthew 28: 18–20. This also accords with Doriani’s argument (Strawbridge 2003:30f) who postulates that God’s Grace should not be viewed as commencing only in the New Testament-period, but should rather be accepted as having been present in the Old Covenant. Pratt’s assertion (Strawbridge 2003:156f) about the commencement of grace is similar. The initiative that God took in Old Testament Covenant to form a relationship with people, arose from His Grace which is no different to the grace present in the New Covenant tenets of the New Testament.

The Grace of God is also the grace of promise, and the grace of promise is furthermore the grace of salvation, and further, the grace of salvation operates from and through the grace of covenant, which includes men, women and children, as demonstrated in the Old Covenant by means of household circumcision, and in the New Covenant by virtue of household baptism. The required response in terms of humanity’s faith is also the direct result of God’s Grace, and is experienced through a personal relationship between God and His people.

The practice of Covenant baptism is thus both overarched and undergirded by the Grace of God's presence which is directed at men, women and children and this would be consistent with the intention of Jesus' in Matthew 28:18–20. Doriani (Doriani in Strawbridge 2003:33–37) contends that covenant as the expression of God's grace is demonstrated in the obedience of the Apostles when preaching of the Gospel of repentance and faith attendant on baptism recorded in Acts 2:37–40. Covenant as evangelistic responsibility also accords with the views of Joel Beeke and Ray Lanning. They contend that covenant is an obligation on caring parents and the Christian community to evangelize the children of their households (Beeke & Lanning in Strawbridge 2003:49–69).

3.12.5.5.2 Covenantal Promise

In support of his scholar peers Venema argues that the benefit of covenant is based on the promise of God to bless all who enter into a covenant relationship with Him, and is why Genesis 3:15 is often referred to as being the “first Gospel” of promise. The Lord God, who also came to Adam and Eve following upon their fall to sin, pledges to provide a seed of borne of the woman who will ultimately crush Satan's head.

The purpose seen here is that God has redeemed His people for communion with Himself, in order to overcome the wiles of the satanic tempter. God's covenant with Noah is anticipated with Noah and his family (Genesis 9), as well as is in the formal establishment of His Covenant of Grace with Abram in Genesis chapters 12, 15 and 17. God's actions and revelations are furthermore also an account of God's mercy and faithfulness which are thereby not deserved by anyone. God's promises to Israel find their fulfilment in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20; Luke 24:44), and as such are limitless in their embrace and blessing of all people. Central to the covenant of promise however “is the gift of salvation, in which there is forgiveness, acceptance, the renewal of life, obedience to God by the working of the Holy Spirit and a life of final glorification” (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:208).

What is controversial with regard to covenant as promise is whether promise-fulfilment is achieved directly through baptism, especially in regard to the baptism of infants, or whether it is conveyed quite independently of this rite. In the MCSA, baptism tends to be viewed as both a sign and a means to God's Grace without the rite itself being essentially salvific (MCSA Laws&Discipline 2000:4; 14-16). Yet, the wording of its policy and service rites leave the overall impression of a belief in baptismal regeneration, which may well have caused many a baptised person to believe that they were truly Christian when in fact they were still only at the

nominal stage of faith. This part of Venema's theology is nevertheless consistent with William Young's theology (Strawbridge 2003:67), that covenant is about promise in the Old Testament, and in the New Covenant is about promise (objectively) fulfilled through the coming of Christ, yet, still needing to be (subjectively) received by each individual through personal surrender to Him. Until then, covenant, and therefore also baptism, remains at the stage of being merely promissory. A response of repentance and faith would be the only way to overcome the prevalence of what Young has termed "hyper-covenantism" in covenant baptism (Young in Strawbridge 2003:67). Hyper-covenantism signifies that covenant is believed to be salvific within itself without any perceived need for either personal repentance or faith. These Gospel responses are both contained in covenant and somehow take the place of repentance and faith

3.12.5.5.3 Covenant of Grace Obligation

Another question arises at this point concerning whether observance of the covenant entered into with God is conditional or unconditional: "On the one hand, the covenant of grace is unconditional, in the sense that God initiates, establishes and sustains it through Christ, as the atoning sacrifice and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit" (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:210–211). Humanity is thus exempt from independently seeking to merit salvation (Ephesians 2:8), and yet, God makes demands for contemporaneous co-operation for the materialisation of redemption in people.

The manner therefore in which this covenant is administered makes baptism a conditional rite, because certain requirements need to be met. Examples of conditional covenant are found in, the obedience requirement first set in the pre-fall covenant of works (Romans 5:12–21) and the curse upon covenant-breakers (Galatians 3:13). Whereas faith and obedience are not meritorious conditions, they are nevertheless necessary responses for the covenantal promises, and within themselves bear the indispensable fruit of God's Grace (Ephesians 2:6–10). This means that without complying with these conditional requirements of repentance and faith the sinner will not be redeemed (Venema, in Strawbridge 2003:211). While the MCSA practices both infant and adult baptism, and because the evangelistic brunt of such an emphasis is to be born mainly by an emphasis on the prevenient grace of Christ, the MCSA tends to favour infant baptism because this practice carries the proclivity to promote the unconditional nature of grace (MCSA 1989:59). An imbalance is thus created by viewing covenant grace as being an expression of prevenient grace alone, because in this scenario human response becomes theologically paralysed and thus renders the evangelistic purpose of the baptismal message in terms of the need for conscious repentance and faith unnecessary.

Because covenantal obligation involves terms of agreement based on the Gospel of Christ, this further indicates that covenanting parties need to be formed, and implicated in covenantal gospel commitment, for no other reason than that God is committed to this plan, and from His side unfailingly honours the same commitment. All this is in the coming of Christ, who was made to be sin even though he was sinless (Isaiah 53) and it is in this sense the He was repentant and faithfully obedient even to death on the Cross (Philippians 2:5-14).

That an obligation of God's Grace as an act of obedience is an essential part of covenant is clearly articulated in Venema, and ties in well with the Biblical requirements of covenantal baptism which is emphasised in his theology. Obedience according to gospel conditions forms a vital part of preaching the Gospel of the New Covenant, because the requirements of repentance and faith are both clear and prominent in the Acts of the Apostles. God's plan for covenantal redemption does not therefore render the responsive obligations required by the Gospel of Christ redundant (Young in Strawbridge 2003:67).

3.12.5.5.4 Covenantal Parties

Is covenant entered into by God only with believing adults, or with both believers and their children? Throughout the history of theological reflection on this matter, Christians have addressed this particular question by speaking of the "dual-aspect of covenant", or, as in Methodism, "the double practice" of paedobaptism. For baptistic Calvinistic Christians, the answer is that God covenants only with elected adult believers. This is stated in the Westminster Confession, which reads that the purpose of covenant is "to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life by His Spirit, to *make* them willing and able to believe" (emphasis added) (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:212–213).

In MCSA paedobaptist belief however God seeks to covenant with all people, so that all may be saved. The real issue in this connection regards whether it is Biblically correct for baptism in terms of covenant to come before redemption, or be administered after acceptance of this gift. If baptism follows on from redemption, then only believing adults should be baptised, but if before, then infants and covenant-seeking adults would also qualify. The latter view is central to Wesleyan-cum-MCSA belief. It is, however, impossible to be dogmatic in the need to give an unequivocal answer that is biblically precise to this question on grounds of the message in Matthew 28:18–20. This message implies that infants do have a place in discipleship baptism. Acts 2:37 onwards seems confirms this. Both texts seem to signify inclusivity, as also does the practice of household baptism for the purpose of evangelism (Watt in Strawbridge 2003:82).

Interpreting the meaning of salvation in terms of election, and in which salvation is reserved for a selected number of people, is a view that does not seem to square with “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...so that none should perish” (John 3:16). Methodists in line with Wesley believe that all need to be saved and can be saved to the uttermost (I Timothy 2:1–7). Matthew 28:17–20 is also a text which seems to counter an electionist theology, because its narrative that conveys the Great Commission of Jesus speaks of the four “alls” of baptism for redemptive discipling, is for the benefit of all the nations (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:31–39).

3.12.5.5.5 Covenant Mediator as Central Figure

A mediator is someone who functions neutrally for both sides in a dispute, and assists both groups to find a common ground for the obtaining of a solution that is reconciling. “The central figure in the act of redemption [for humanity] related to in the Scriptures is Jesus Christ the son of Abraham, the son of David” (Matthew 1:1). Hence, “as in the Old Testament a lamb was sacrificed as a mediatorial act, so Jesus fulfils that role in the new covenant. Jesus is interpreted as the focus of Genesis 3:15 in relation to the promise of consummation of the covenant and this is also described in Revelation 21–22” (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:215). This aspect of Venema’s case also accords well with the discussion concerning the newness of the New Covenant, in which Jesus has always been known, whether by prophecy in the Old Covenant, or fulfilment in the New Testament (Luke 22:14–20), as being be the new factor of the covenant plan, and is dealt with by Jeffery Niell (Niell in Strawbridge 2003:143–145; 155).

A mediatorial salvific role between God and His estranged people played by Jesus alone is not however enough of a reason for baptism to be the “be all and end all” of God’s salvific action. Being disciplined means that, all who have been redeemed need to be formed into a sacramental community as the family of God in which Christian relationships are fostered. Covenantal baptism thus also exists for the promotion of right relationships between God’s people. That there is to be unity in covenant is fundamentally reflected and deduced from God’s own Triune nature.

3.12.5.5.6 Covenantal Unity

Venema claims that Reformed theology has always believed that there is only one covenant of grace which has existed throughout the course of the history of redemption. There may be a diversity of dispensations and administrations, yet they do not essentially differ in their substance. The covenant of the promise of salvation is described in the same way throughout

the Bible. The Mediator in the covenant is thus the same in every dispensation of covenant which affords the offer of God's Grace. The Gospel of Grace preached in the Old Covenant is hence the same as the Gospel as preached in the New Covenant. The obligation of the Covenant of Grace is therefore also fundamentally the same throughout the course of covenants various administrations (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:216–218).

There is therefore, also no crucial hiatus between the Old and the new apportionments of the One Covenant and this has been confirmed by Booth (Booth in Strawbridge 2003:199–200). This author argues that if it is believed that the New Covenant has its origin only when Christ came among us, then the Old Covenant basis of God's sacramental saving plan for humanity would have to be removed from Christian theology (Booth in Strawbridge 2003:199–200).

3.12.5.5.7 Covenantal Sacraments

Venema defines the sacraments in accordance with other paedo-baptists, as visible signs and seals of the covenantal Gospel. These are not the seals of personal salvation, but are instead the seals of God given to His people as an attestation of redemption life promised, and made available through the Gospel (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:218–219). They may be Holy signs and seals which are part of God's covenantal message and plan, yet the question remains whether they possess the capacity to be of salvific assistance to people seeking salvation; and could they also be helpful towards infants who need to come to faith when they are old enough through the instruction provided by their believing parents and the Christian community.

The efficacy of baptism is however the point at which sacramental dispute enters. The question here is whether baptism as covenant is symbolically efficacious, or is also simply another means of attaining grace. The problem with a purely symbolic of salvation theory, is that nothing in this view tells of God's Role in the redeeming message, while the difficulty with baptism as a means to grace is that if this is indeed the case, then people will be tempted to put their faith for salvation in baptism rather than in God as their only true saviour from sin. Venema contends that the salvific efficacy of baptism need not be,

tied to the moment of administration; yet notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but exhibited, and conferred by the Holy Spirit, to such (whether of age or infant) as that grace belonged unto, according to the council of God's will, in His appointed time (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:219).

Covenant as sacrament thus holds a particular function in accordance with its nature, as is defined in the next section of this work.

3.12.5.5.8 Nature and Function of Sacraments

Sacraments are defined as Divinely-authored and appointed, and are thus not human inventions or actions. As such, “they are not ‘badges’ of Christian profession but ‘tokens’ of God’s grace to people with an emphasis on God’s grace” (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:219). They are another form of preaching the Gospel, which takes on a visible form, and functions according to the signs and seals of what God has promised redemptively to do already begun in the Old Covenant era. There is however, a correspondence which occurs between the visible signs and seals of sacrament, and that to which they point. For example, the washing away of sin and regeneration by the Spirit, authenticate and assure believers of their new birth by Christ. It is stated in the Westminster Confession that the Holy Spirit provides the sacraments their efficacy, in the same way that the Spirit does in the preaching of the Gospel by spoken word or reading. Both require the same response from supplicants as does God’s Word. Within themselves however sacraments are mere representations of redemption (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:219–220).

This claim poses a dilemma though, in that Venema seems to hint that there are two options for arriving at the point of salvation. The one way is by means of the Gospel of Christ, the Gospel which was prepared for by John the Baptist who, in pointing to Jesus, preached a baptism of repentance, and which was then practiced by the Apostles of the New Testament, following the lead of their Master. In this, Jesus stated that, because the kingdom of God had arrived, the people needed to repent and believe (Mark 1:1–18).

The other way to salvation, and seemingly believed by many, is by means of covenantal practice. The Bible nowhere however presents covenant practice as an alternative for the preaching of the Gospel as the means of salvation from sin. God’s covenantal plan of salvation is executed and implemented only by Jesus and His Gospel.

Venema himself nevertheless upholds the view that only Jesus redeems, and this aspect of His theology is also consistent with what the other contributors to the baptismal debate in Strawbridge generally believe. These believe that the sacraments do not exist as an alternative for the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, but are a complementing and guiding means in visible form designed to assist people in their search for personal redemption.

3.12.5.5.9 Circumcision and Baptism

Venema acknowledges that a transfer from Old Covenant circumcision to baptism under the New Covenant is a distinctive feature of New Covenant theology. Baptists however, say that the signs of circumcision and of baptism are dissimilar, and are thus also different in their applications. Replacing circumcision with baptism cannot therefore, be simply derived from the rite of baptism alone, when compared with circumcision as a New-Covenant practice. Venema contrarily argues that while believer-baptists claim that the sacrament of circumcision is only a sign of outward membership, and not a sign of inner spiritual blessing, this does not accord with the purpose of covenant in both the Old and New Testaments. Circumcision, in the Old Testament is virtually identified with the covenantal relationship itself, which is a relationship of communion and fellowship between God and His people (Genesis 17:11), chosen to be His servants, so that all may be saved. As a visible sign of invisible grace, circumcision reminded the Israelites of their need to have the defilement and corruption of their sinful bias removed (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4) (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:221).

It is therefore in this sense that the Israelites needed to be redeemed. In the Old Testament however, circumcision has to do more with outward physical change, and this rite makes no difference in terms of needing a change of lifestyle even though covenant is forgiveness proclaimed (Jeremiah 31:31). If however there is no change of heart for the removal of sin, outward religious practice alone cannot be claimed to make any difference to the life of any person. It is the inner sin factor which needs to be removed and it is for this purpose that Jesus who is the New Covenant has come, not only to forgive sin, but more additionally to set the individual free from sin by the grace that flows from and through God's forgiveness. Whereas physical circumcision is a sign of God and His covenantal requirements, water baptism is considered a sign of Christ as Redeemer who sends the Holy Spirit to conduct the cleansing of sin and for the granting of God's gift of new birth (John 3:5) for a changed life and lifestyle (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:221–222).

It is on this basis that Paedo-baptists rely on a continuity theory between the two covenant aspects of the Bible and therefore argue that circumcision need not necessarily be seen as a hiatus existing between this Old Testament Covenant practice and New Covenant baptism. In the New Testament, Paul teaches that circumcision was for Abraham a sign and seal of the righteousness of his faith in God (Romans 4:11). Abraham was not circumcised for simply outward reasons, but through this rite became the father of all who then believed, quite apart

from the physical circumcision requirement to begin with. It is no surprise then that Paul treats baptism in the New Testament as the counterpart of Old Testament circumcision (Colossians 2:11–13). Baptism has thus become a spiritual form of circumcision: “What was formerly confirmed by circumcision [in the Old Testament] is in the New Testament confirmed through the sacrament of baptism as the forgiveness of sins, the washing away of sin, and fellowship with Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit” (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:221–222).

As to who should receive Biblically-proposed baptism, and also its promise of salvation, is therefore a critical question in the debate. While circumcision and baptism are different in their respective temporal meanings, yet the same spiritual purpose is intended for both in terms of incorporation into the community of God where fellowship with God himself and the people of God may be enjoyed (Venema in Strawbridge 2003:220). This happens only because physical circumcision has changed from Old Testament to the New Testament to become the spiritual circumcision of the heart (Colossians 2:11). Hence, when baptism ceases to issue a message of the need for repentance and new birth, there is a sense in which it goes back to Old Testament circumcision, which further means that Christianity without a change of heart for the removal of sin would remain at a nominal level for those having gone through the process. How this kind of nominal-Christian and Old-Testament-like end-result could be avoided through the administration of baptism is therefore the critical question.

The problem around having the semblance of Christianity without an active inner spiritual life in the Redeemer Himself is always a distinct possibility in infant baptism. Neither is believer’s baptism entirely free of this possibility. And yet this theological flaw does not biblically disqualify either infants or adults from receiving this rite. The circumcision of the flesh is a sign of the need for a circumcision of the heart, which because it is based on the Old Testament-cum-New Covenantal plan for redemption should therefore yield results which are consistent with God’s salvific plan for men, women and children alike, as previously articulated. In this regard, Venema’s theology aligns with the views of William Booth in “The Case for Covenant Infant Baptism” (Strawbridge 2003:199–200) in that both authors specifically deal with the transition of grace from the Old Covenant to the New by arguing that this process of covenant is a smooth unfolding of God’s sacramental redemptive plan in which the two Covenants are organically-connected in God’s economy of revelation and are therefore essentially one Covenantal entity.

3.12.5.6 Theology of New Testament Child Baptism

Douglas Wilson's study concerns the place of children in relation to baptism as covenant. As a convinced Baptist, and using a concordance, he looked up every passage in the Bible that contained the words "baptize", "baptist", and "baptism", and discovered that many of these terms relate to children. "Paul Jewett once said that when baptism is considered as an isolated topic, the Paedo-baptist case is weak, but when the discussion moves to the subject of covenant the Paedo-baptist case becomes a juggernaut" (Wilson in Strawbridge 2003:288).

Because Wilson's father, an established Baptist had taught his son how to study the Bible, he began to understand that the debate surrounding baptism should be more focussed on people, on both adults and children, rather than on the rite of baptism itself. His reason for this is that the redemption of people is the primary Biblical objective and concern of covenant as sacrament. The bible may not specifically teach infant baptism, but infers it in the same way that the Bible teaches much about women, but does not say a word about whether women should partake in communion, but it has always been taken for granted by the Christian Church that women should participate. A move towards a view of baptism that is inclusive of infants is thus not only possible, but also is fundamentally necessary because it is a matter that is not so much about a rite but about the importance of people.

All Christians believe that God does not change, and if He is the author of both Testaments, then His sacramental promises in both covenants also do not change, and this makes it imperative to believe that the sacraments are for both believing adults and their children (Wilson in Strawbridge 2003:288–298). Wilson thus claims that the inescapable reality, from a literal reading of the Biblical material in regard to covenant around children and baptism, is that God has placed children through their believing parents within the covenantal community, and therefore by this covenantal and sacramental quality seeks to save them from their sins.

Children thus need to be treated as being members of God's Covenant, along with their believing parents, even though they are without personal faith initially. These need to be ignited by the covenantal faith of the Christian community for their own personal salvation. If they are treated as strangers to God, and to His covenantal plan, then their parents are in fact teaching them contrary to what God has covenantally and sacramentally called believing parents to do from the beginning of the Judaeo-Christian history of the church (Wilson in Strawbridge 2003:201; 298–302).

It should simultaneously be recognized that what God has called believing parents to do can also be achieved through the baptistic rites of presentation and dedication, as in the case Jesus' initiation (Luke 2:22–24). It may therefore be argued, that the example of the initiation Jesus in Luke 2, and Jesus' own circumcision, which although being Old Testament in origin, should not be discarded, even though this ritualistic practice does not, on the surface, appear to be the same as infant baptism as a sacramental act (MCSA 1989:63).

Wilson's argument concludes in favour of baptism as an issue needing to be focused on for the evangelical welfare of infants. This objective is consistent with the collective contributions of argument and concern for believing parents and their children as detailed in the justification for baptism as Biblical covenant by the other contributors of this debate in Strawbridge (Wilson in Strawbridge 2003:206--302).

3.12.5.7 Baptism in Jesus' name

The crowning point in the argument in favour of the inclusion of infants in covenant baptism comes from Sproul, who contends that baptism in Jesus' name is a sacramental exhortation not to neglect children in the name of Christ Jesus. Jesus not only taught this, but exemplified this in His caring for little children and their place within His heart (Mark 10:13–16) (Sproul in Strawbridge 2003:303-310).

Sproul argues that sacramental baptism therefore also means that children need to be prayed for, and by means of baptism be included as their covenantal right in the community of Christ from the very outset of their lives, and thereby also be assured of their own later expedient redemption. Children thus baptised should never however be allowed to believe that baptism alone redeems; but rather that their covenantal baptism is a Divinely-commissioned medium by which they can be and need to be saved (Sproul in Strawbridge 2003:307–310).

By baptism children are given a faith “kick-start” of repentance and faith so that later they can fully accept Christ for their own personal redemption. Covenantal practice is thus considered a powerful theological model for Biblical baptism, especially as it teaches that children are also loved enough by Jesus for Him to want them saved, and also for them to become His sacramental disciples within the church alongside their baptised parents.

3.12.6 Conclusion of Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism

As Strawbridge's book is made up of a range of contributors, it is not only a convincing justification of covenant sacramental and evangelical baptism, but also stands as an example of

how the pendulum's trend now sees it swinging in reverse; from believer's baptism alone, to a more inclusive paedo-baptismal theology in which covenant infant baptism is recognized as being thoroughly biblical.

The movement from the exclusivity of believer's baptism, to one of it being instead more inclusive, fundamentally stems from a reconsideration of the Biblical narratives regarding baptism. The book's contributors moreover may argue from a Calvinistically orientated perspective, whereby God is claimed to have elected some to be redeemed, and others not (Strawbridge 2003:2) yet their argument is biblically potent.

Moreover the sacramental emphasis arising from the recognised Sovereignty of God may be overly prominent within this study, yet the consistency between the contributor's complementary arguments not only presents a convincing exposition of the overall spiritual meaning of covenant as bible practice but also provides a firm case for the legitimacy of baptism as covenant. Baptism in this understanding is however to be treated as being primarily an evangelistic event, rather than within itself being a redemptive act.

A Calvinistic pre-determinist outlook need not however make any difference for those who hold to an Armenian view in which it is believed that God seeks to save all people from their sins because the case in this study is for biblical covenant and thus is for the baptism of both infants of believers and adult believing parents as an evangelistic sacrament.¹³ This compendium of scholarly contribution in Strawbridge thus leaves no doubt that covenant baptism is to be mainly about adults and infants and their need for redemption. Household baptism is a Divine evangelistic institution, and serves as an opportunity to target the head, or heads of families, amongst those evangelised. Being the redeemed adult heads of the home places these adults in a strategic position to pass on the ministry of the Gospel to members of their families and friends. Strawbridge is thus convinced about the sacramental evangelistic effectiveness of using baptism by means of a household covenantal approach, to reach people evangelistically for their redemption, was more likely than not the original practice in the early church (Strawbridge 2003:12).

In discussing some of the Polemics on Anabaptism from the Reformation onwards, Strawbridge states that, in addition to rejecting infant baptism, the early Anabaptists also had other concerns;

¹³ The Calvinistic redemptive theory is that only God knows who will ultimately be saved, which makes it necessary for all to hear the Gospel of salvation for a personal response. As God is Sovereign, the elective decision is (His) responsibility (McGrath, 4th Edition 1993:380–385; 487–488).

amongst these was that they fundamentally worked for the ultimate reconstitution of the Church (Strawbridge 2003:267). The more important issue in Anabaptist development was however, the rejection of “Constantinian approaches to church membership by favouring instead voluntarism and the separation of the church from state” (2003:267).

There is thus tacit acknowledgement here for the justification of a sacramental evangelical understanding of “rebaptism” in the arguments presented in Strawbridge’s book, not as repudiation of a previously legitimate baptism, but as a practice which functions from evangelistic intention. When infant-baptised adults go on to be saved, there could thus be no good reason why their repentance, faith and surrender to Christ may not be acknowledged as an evangelistic confirming and witnessing response as typified by a believer’s baptism, rather than through the non-sacramental rite of a confirmation.

It is well-known that in paedobaptistic doctrine and practice this cannot be done, because of the ruling against the repeatability of baptism. Yet information has it, “that in the earliest days of Anabaptism in the Wassenberg area, infant baptism was not so much repudiated as was the christening ritual. We see then that [this form of] rebaptism did not necessarily go hand in hand with a rejection of paedobaptism” (Strawbridge 2003:267).

3.13 Wesleyan Biblical Basis for Covenantal Baptism

Wesley is included at this point in the discussion, because he is the founder of Methodism, and this study requires engaging with him before proceeding to the MCSA position on baptism, for both an accurate perspective on his thinking, and for the testing of his theology relative to the notion of convergence baptism herein presented.

In the absence of specific information for infant baptism in the New Testament, Wesley was compelled to rely more on pure inference. For him, there was sufficient confirmation that paedobaptism was an expression of covenant, and that this constituted the “true biblical basis of water baptism belief. For example, Deuteronomy 29:10–12 is fulfilled in the New Testament and forms the biblical background of the commission to disciple, baptize and teach all nations [infants included in the concept of ‘all nations’] (Matthew 28:18–20)”.

What the Old Testament teaches about covenant in Genesis (12; 15) and especially Genesis 17:4, Genesis 17:7 and Deuteronomy 29:19–22 is also implicit in Matthew (28:19f). In these passages from both Testaments of the bible, it is clear that the recipients of God’s Covenant are responding adults, and in the New Testament, baptised adults who respond do so not only for

themselves but also on behalf of their infants, and of all who are seen as belonging to covenanting households. Infant baptism is thus included as the New Covenant ratification of the Old Testament rite for the circumcision of infant Jewish males (Wesley's Treatise on Baptism 18th C: 194–195).

The New Testament meaning of baptism is thus linked with the Old Testament covenant, as explained in Colossians 2.12, where baptism and circumcision are seen as not only being juxtaposed, but to also enjoy a parallel relationship, yet without any intersection. The change from the Old to the New Covenant is signed by means of replacing circumcision with water baptism, and is thus the new message for New Covenant redemption, as juxtaposed with that of the Old Covenant in which baptism may be considered to be a symbolic circumcision of the heart (Wesley's Journal Notes 18th C:746).

According to Wesley, Ephesians 2:8 contains a summary of the Gospel for Salvation – which is not simply the Gospel in addition to baptism as an appendage for the achievement of salvation. In Acts 2:38ff., Acts 22:16, and in Titus 3:5, baptism is described as new birth, and these references are linked with John 3:3–7 (Wesley's Sermons 18th C:45). In I Peter 2:17 and Titus 3:5, baptism is considered as cleansing, and is a means towards the attainment of new birth. John 3:5 is thus a key scripture for Wesley in the theology of baptismal regeneration – as an outward sign, as well as a means for inward change, stemming from the operation of what Wesley famously calls prevenient grace (Wesley's Journal Notes 18th C:311).

Wesley's journal further shows that both Romans 6:4, and Ephesians 5:26, teach that baptism signifies both death and resurrection in Christ, the two most essential ingredients in Christian conversion. Baptism is thus also considered a sign of being grafted into a life with Christ (Wesley's Journal Notes 18th C: 540), and by it the individual is initiated both inwardly, and physically, into the body of Christ, the Church. Just as Jesus, as an infant, entered into covenant with God through His own circumcision, so Christians are admitted into the Church by their baptism, and this fact requires that children also be included in the baptismal rite (Wesley's Treatise on Baptism 18th C:190).

Infants should be baptised with their parents, because Deuteronomy 29:19–22 teaches that “infants can be saved [when they are able to understand] by being in covenant through their parents” (Wesley's Treatise on Baptism 18th C: 195). “Circumcision as a sign of the old covenant rite has been replaced with baptism, which is the sign of the new covenant” (Wesley's Treatise on Baptism 18th C: 194). As Hebrew infants were circumcised, so infants of Christian

parents falling under the tenets of the evangelical covenant, should also be baptised (Wesley's Treatise on Baptism 18th C: 195) for the accomplishment of the "circumcision of the heart". The goal of physical circumcision, as implied in the Old Testament, and of water baptism in Colossians 2:12, is for the "circumcision of the heart". While Old Testament circumcision is a reference to the physical aspect of a person, water baptism refers to the aspect of inner new birth. Wesley is thus adamant that infants should be baptised, and claims that on the basis of all these references, the New Testament sanctions, and even gives evidence for, the baptism of infants.

In addition, he believes that infant baptism is necessary, because even babies are guilty of original sin (Augustinian Doctrine), and because the rite of baptism signifies cleansing (Williams 1960:52–53) washes away all vestiges of original guilt (Wesley's Treatise on Baptism 18th C:193). The Apostles thus baptised both responding believers, and their infants, and these infants come to Christ by no other way than through their baptism (Wesley's Treatise on Baptism 18th C: 195–197). Wesley argues that, since the Church is the means by which people receive Christ, there is no other way of coming to Christ, and then of entering heaven but through the open doorway of baptism (Wesley's Treatise on Baptism 18th C: 192). In the prominent use of the bible in the construction of his theology of water baptism Wesley demonstrates an adherence to a *sola scriptura* evangelical pre-supposition for inclusive Christian practice (Kretzmann 2011:62) which the MCSA has also ratified and adopted into its own Doctrine and Policy Statement (MCSA 2000:7).

Wesley's definition of Biblical sacramental baptism possesses the triple-problem however, of how it can be Biblically certain that infant guilt is washed away by baptism; that baptism is a means for the achievement of grace; and that repeat baptism is indeed acceptable. Because water baptism can however be understood as an adiaphoric matter, which means that, while baptism is neutral within itself in how it may be understood, it is thus open to the possibility of a number of differing interpretations (*Adiaphora* 2009:1-4), and this also applies with regard to Wesley's theology regarding baptism in relation to the standpoint of his Anglican background.

It has been observed that the key Biblical text in Wesleyan baptismal theology is John 3:5, which forms part of the account of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus: "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he [*sic*] is born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). It would therefore be fair to claim that what Wesley is saying in broad terms about this bible text, is that all who wish to become Christian need to be born both of water and of the Spirit.

The issue under debate, though, is how baptism as a message, and its need for water and the Spirit, relates to the question of redemption, which Wesley claimed is needed by all, and is why he sometimes performed repeat baptism on some already-baptised individuals (Bridges & Phypers 1977:140–142). In contrast to Wesley who allowed for repeat baptism (Bridges & Phypers 1977:140–142), it needs to be mentioned that the MCSA has declared baptism to be unrepeatable (MCSA 1989:61).

Wesley's reliance on John 3:5 in the construction of his baptismal theology is therefore open to critique at this point, simply because he seems to saying that new birth is achieved primarily by the cleansing away of original guilt, but then is later again needed by means of being born of the Holy Spirit. The expression, "being born again" was not first used by Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus. This terminology was already in common usage among the Jews much before Jesus came. It referred to the intake of adult Heathen [men] who were converted according to Jewish custom and sought entry into the Jewish faith.

The custom procedure was baptism first and then circumcision and when a person was baptized, he [*sic*] was said to have been born again (Wesley's *Treatise on Baptism; Journals and Sermons* in Reist 1998). John 3:5 thus was for Wesley, a neat way of accommodating both infant and adult baptism. Even though water in this text could also refer to the water found in the womb of a mother, and of its breaking during the act of child birth. Yet it seems reasonable to view the water aspect of John 3:5, as also being an example of water baptism in relation to the baptism of needing to be born of the Spirit and is probably how Wesley understood this statement.

If infant baptism and its message is described by means of being born of water, then believer's baptism also conducted with the use of water is likely to be a reference to the indispensable need for spiritual new birth. In this scenario however the two baptisms are currently practiced in dual and unrelated rites within the MCSA, and also by most of paedobaptistic denominations.

Did Wesley however, retain his Anglican belief in baptism as regeneration, as some assessors of Wesley's theology maintain he did? Baptism for Wesley, always seems to have been a justifying and regenerating sacrament, but then in what sense? An alternative view is that, after his conversion by means of new birth, Wesley completely set aside his old life-view, which he then opposed in favour of a purely evangelistic and therefore baptistic appreciation of baptism.

This dilemma around knowing what Wesley actually believed concerning new birth in relation to water baptism has been discussed in Chongnaham, who also recognises that different scholars offer different interpretations regarding this matter (Chongnaham 1993–2005).

For example, one argument presented is that Wesley did not adhere to the traditional position on baptismal regeneration. Following on from his evangelical new birth experiences in 1738, he “tended to turn from a high view of baptism to a low view, that is, to a denial of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration”, and further that, “in his administration of baptism he [Wesley had stopped telling] the sinner that he had received the new birth, and had been regenerated, made a member of Christ when the baptismal waters from the sacred hand of the priest...had touched his brow”, but rather emphasised that, “baptized or unbaptized, you must be born again” (Chongnaham 1993–2005).

In taking up an extreme either/or position, as interpreted by some, did Wesley then utterly reject baptismal regeneration? Chongnaham thinks not, because in the case of adult baptism, Wesley yet maintained that regeneration did not always simultaneously occur with baptism, as it does in infant baptism, because he believed that “they do not constantly go together”. Wesley states that, “whatever be the case with infants, it is sure [that] all of riper years who are baptized are not at the same time born again...A man may possibly be ‘born of the water’, and yet not be ‘born of the spirit’” (Chongnaham 1993–2005).

In his tract entitled *A Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Wesley stated that while infants are justified in baptism even though “they cannot then either believe or repent”, but as far as adults are concerned, “they must because of their baptism, repent and believe if the new birth is to be given to them” (Chongnaham 1993–2005).

Chongnaham concludes that in Wesley baptism needs to be understood as being a holding of the two views of sacrament and evangelicalism together but also seen as separate. There is therefore one baptism for infants, and one for adults, infant baptism is thus seen by him as a “justifying and regenerating sacrament. Yet not all adults who are baptized are regenerated. If the new birth is [however] to be given, they [adults] must repent and believe” (Chongnaham 1993–2005).

Chongnaham further states that it is not necessarily fair to say that Wesley opposed baptismal regeneration outright, in stating that: “Perhaps then, it may be said that Wesley held both a Catholic element (baptismal regeneration in infants) and an evangelical apprehension

(emphasis on ‘living faith’) for evangelical conversion in [the case of] adults” (Chongnaham 1993–2005).

Did Wesley witness the large-scale secular of abuse of life, and therefore of baptism, in his day, and thus find it necessary to resort to so-called rebaptism after proclaiming the life-changing Gospel of Jesus, and seeing a change for the better in the lives of reckless sinners? Would it not thus also be valid to claim that for sacrament to become salvifically visible in a person’s life, repeat baptism could then therefore be considered validly necessary as a reinforcing message for the evangelisation of infant-baptised people?

It may well be that this was the basis for Wesley’s justification of the practice of repeat baptism, or so-called “rebaptism”. It is noteworthy though, that he appears to say nothing about the non-repeatability of baptism. The unrepeatability of baptism will however be discussed in Chapter 6 of this study.

3.14 Theories of Sacramental Baptism since Karl Barth

It has been seen that sacrament has been given as many nuances in terms of its meaning as there are scholars in paedobaptism. Sacrament is first and foremost about the preaching of the Gospel for repentance and faith. Amongst scholars who uphold this view are paedobaptists, Karl Barth (1948:14–15), his son Markus Barth (1959:33) and also David Bandey (1976:50). In a Barthian paedobaptism understanding, sacrament is strongly-intended to feature evangelicalism, which needs to result in personal redemption, and serve as the fulfilment of baptism’s evangelical purpose.

Sacrament secondly, is believed to consist of the origination and implementation of God’s redemptive plan, through belief in, and acceptance of, Jesus Christ. Sacrament is thus located in the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, Jesus’ baptism with the Holy Spirit, and His Life of redemptive suffering, which culminated in death, and then His resurrection. Cullmann (1950:18; 57; 70) and Robinson (1962:159–160) are both exponents of this nuance of sacramental understanding.

Sacrament is thirdly, understood as God’s promise of redemption for the elect, in which all members of the Trinity co-operate for the achievement of personal individual redemption. Bromley (1979:37–65) champions this nuance of sacramental meaning.

The fourth nuance of sacrament is located in the voluntary free, non-autonomous and God-directed working of the Holy Spirit, as per the assertions of Lampe (1951:306), Dunn (1970:1–7), Witherington III (2007:35 f.), and Fischer (2010:8).

The fifth category of nuance in relation to sacramental meaning is Biblical covenant, and consists of God’s plan of salvation for all of humanity. Marcel (1953:198) is the chief exponent of this nuance, while Jeremias (1962:77) confirms the Biblical credibility of baptism as covenant through the strong appeal of the *oikos* household method as a means of evangelising men, woman and children. In Strawbridge (2003:6–8), covenant is not of itself salvific, but provides a readymade sacramental household opportunity to call initiates to the God-ordained response of repentance and faith. Strawbridge with his co-contributors, gives comprehensive coverage of how evangelistically effective and practically efficient covenantal sacrament can be.

What is significant about the assertions found in Strawbridge’s book, is that contributions from erstwhile Baptists also form part of the case for the pro-infant baptism argument, as seen from a covenantal angle, and this has enabled them to understand baptism from both sides of the baptismal impasse, and further, shows how a convergence model of baptism could be made possible within the context of covenant.

This survey of some of the Biblical perspectives on the sacramental nature of the message of baptism, as seen from a complementary vantage point, brings home the point that the two baptisms should not continue to be practiced unilaterally. According to Stamm, the “the task of making disciples through baptism is essentially one process” (Stamm 2001:39). Further to this, the United Methodist Church of the USA, of which Stamm is a theologian and Minister, is moving beyond what he calls “the confusing practice of endorsing one service for the baptism of infants and one for adults. Since there is one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), one rite could express the various ways it can be understood and the grace that is given, but it would have to be based on the missional process of making disciples” (Stamm 2001:39).

3.15 Theological Position of MCSA Baptism

The theology and policy of MCSA baptism has undergone some change since the MCSA originally became an independent body from its British forbear in 1932 (MCSA 2000:10–13).

Because this denomination requires that baptism be understood and practiced as being both a sacramental and evangelical rite (MCSA 2000:2; 7), covenant should be the medium by which

the “New Birth of Christ” is personally appropriated (MCSA 1954:52–53). The Minute of the MCSA’s 1989 Conference however speaks of the appropriation of redemption by coming to faith which seemingly excludes repentance which it used to emphasise decades before (1989:59–63), but also makes it clear, that while its tradition is that of infant baptism, yet both infant baptism and believer’s baptism should be catered for as practices authorised by its policy and practice (MCSA 1989:52)

The MCSA’s doctrinal position is squarely based on covenantal baptism, as defined by Marcel (1953) and Jeremias (1962) (Kretzmann 2011:124–128) and since 1982 has been aligned with the uniting intent of the WCC Lima Text on Baptism (1982). The MCSA seems however to have departed slightly from its inherited Wesleyan theological base around baptism and redemption. Wesley had practiced the sacrament of baptism primarily for evangelistic purposes, which would sometimes necessitate repeating baptism on already-baptised individuals specifically through a message of faith and repentance, while the MCSA seems to rely more on the covenantal and sacramental standing factor of the baptised infant for the attainment of the redemption of Christ.

3.16 Conclusion

Sacramental baptism has evolved over a long period of time. The literature in this chapter reveals a number of trends around the doctrine of baptism and its practice. Barth’s critiquing of his own tradition, and his developing of a fresh outlook on baptism in the light of a careful scrutiny of bible material has had a widespread and ongoing positive effect on the discussion around the issues of baptism.

The trend towards the need for reformation of baptismal thinking is identified not only with regard to the critiquing of ‘one’s own tradition’, but also should focus on the constructive scrutinising of other positions and doing so respectfully, in the interest of true Christian witness and for the improvement of Church unity.

The review conducted of perspectives from scholars on both sides of the baptismal impasse reveals that both baptisms broadly enjoy biblically-founded legitimacy. What is even more pleasing is that paedobaptist scholars are now also found to be heeding Beasley-Murray’s call to seriously consider a move to a more uniting balance to be given to both infant and believer’s baptism. As with Karl Barth, a general trend seems thus to be gaining traction in terms of a move towards prioritising believer’s baptism in a scenario in which the practice of infant baptism also importantly features.

The only exception to these claims, for the purpose of this study, is Waymeyer (2008), who unlike Barth (1948) ultimately turned his back on infant baptism outright. Baptists, Thomas Schreiner and Shaun Wright (2006) may criticise infant baptism for its proclivity to foment Christian nominalism, nevertheless now appear, to believe in the biblical veracity of infant baptism or at least in the important place of children and the evangelistic opportunity that children afford in regard to Christian initiation.

It is also encouraging that paedo-baptist theologians are beginning to perceive the need for believer's baptism to become ascendant over infant baptism in Church practice. This development may also both ultimately and positively, impact the MCSA's current stance on rebaptism by way of bringing about a reconsideration of its theology.

Chapter 4

Implications of the Debates and Paradigms of Practice on the Sacrament of Baptism in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed various perspectives by a number of scholars concerning the sacrament of baptism. This chapter seeks to discover whether the convergence notion could be found to be viable and valid, by drawing on multilateral conference debates and paradigms of practice.

Arising out of all the debate is a willingness to discuss baptism with proponents that espouse other views, when not long ago, this was only ever considered as a remote possibility. Progress also is seen in a gradually-emerging willingness on the part of all concerned in such debate to be less overly-sensitive about the issues surrounding baptism. This new spirit has seen the emergence of more public debate forums, such as the ones dealing with the “four views of baptism”, the Lima WCC Baptismal Convention (1982), and the focus of the UNISA debate on baptism (1983). These will be studied and discussed in the next chapter.

In a stage beyond this, paedobaptist and Baptist communities are beginning to feel more comfortable about entering into an arrangement of co-existence, based on the mutual acceptance of baptismal understanding, and undertake to refrain from voicing outright rejection of other positions and desisting from the practice of rebaptism (Lazareth 1982). Progress is thus being made in attempting to find a form of baptismal consensus, although this may perhaps continue to be a lengthy and painstaking process, before a universally acceptable biblical and theological baptismal plan of consensus is discovered and agreed upon.

Since there are important implications for MCSA sacramental baptism, from the multilateral debates on baptism, and from practical paradigms of consensus, a paradigm will be identified to become a possible model for convergence baptism to be tested for validity and application in MCSA doctrine and practice.

This chapter is thus made up of several parts. The first part is the introduction, followed by sections which consist of dialogue and critique between the proponents of the four post-reformed understandings of baptism. This is followed by a discussion of the WCC Lima debate on baptism in 1982 and the UNISA debate of 1983.

The UNISA congress on infant baptism, staged on the heels of the World Council of Churches' Lima Conference, produced several practical paradigms of baptismal consensus, which are used in various parts of the world as expressions of convergence baptism. These include for study: the formation of the Uniting Church of North India, in which both baptisms are practiced; the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, which administers baptismal affirmation through a rite of confirmation by immersion; the Roman Catholic Church's Doctor Francis MacNutt, who believes that it is theologically kosher to celebrate the re-affirmation of previous baptism by immersion; an anonymous ecumenical proposal that is designed to unite all players (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:149) and the validity of the repetition of baptism as described in Wesleyan theology and practice.

4.2 Multilateral Conference Debates on Baptism

4.2.1 Multilateral Conference Dialogue: WWC Lima Conference on Baptism (1982)

The WCC Lima convention carries historical and global significance for baptismal unity, in that it was made up of representatives from virtually all major Church traditions, including: Eastern Orthodox; Oriental Orthodox; Roman Catholic; Old Catholics; Lutheran; Anglican; Reformed; Methodist; United Churches; Disciples Churches, Baptist Churches, and also Adventist and Pentecostal denominations. Contributions had been received from over one hundred and fifty-nine denominations, which were obtained from almost every theological persuasion from across the world.

The Lima Text on Baptism was proposed, debated and unanimously passed by all participating denominations, with the official acceptance ultimately of the Biblical legitimacy of the baptism for both infants and believers. This unanimous acceptance of these was a door which has since been opened for some sort of theological consensus on baptism to materialise, and to be passed on to local Churches (Lazareth 1982: Cover Page). The fact that theologians from such wide Church constituencies could be unanimous on a matter which has defied total resolution for many centuries is reckoned as being unprecedented in the modern ecumenical movement.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the Commission also included theologians of the Roman Catholic and other Churches, which were not at that stage *bone fide* members of the World Council of Churches. The agreed-to texts had purposely concentrated on aspects of the theme that were either directly or indirectly related to the problems of mutual sacramental recognition, or envisaged to lead to ecumenical unity (Lazareth 1982:9). This gathering thus signalled the turning point in the quest for baptismal unity (Lazareth 1982:10).

It is important to know some of the content of the dialogue in order to ascertain whether the conversation around consensus could logically lead further to the possibility of a converging of the two baptisms in a double-practice and to be tested for sanctioning by MCSA baptismal policy requirements. The areas of consensus over which there seem to have been total agreement relate to: the institution of baptism; the meaning of baptism; participation in Christ's death and resurrection; conversion, pardoning and cleansing; the gift of the Spirit; incorporation into the body of Christ and baptism as the Sign of the Kingdom of God (Lazareth 1982:2–7). For the sake of relevance to this inquiry, only the topic of sacrament and faith are discussed here.

4.2.1.1 Baptism and Faith

The sacramental prevenient act of God demonstrated by baptism is somehow also linked with the act of faith, which is all that humanity can do in order to be saved by Grace through the Holy Spirit's Work:

Baptism is both [therefore] God's gift and our human response to that gift (Ephesians 4:13). The necessity of faith for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism was acknowledged by all churches. Personal commitment is necessary for responsible membership in the body of Christ. Baptism is thus not related only to a momentary experience, but to life-long growth in Christ. The context of this common witness is the church and the world (Lazareth 1982:4).

This quotation has also been incorporated into MCSA baptismal policy (MCSA 1989:60), and this indicates the MCSA's agreement with the baptismal position contained in the WCC Lima Text.

4.2.1.2 Mutual Recognition of Believer's and Infant Baptism

The Conference text of agreement states that:

While the possibility that infant baptism was also practiced in the apostolic age cannot be excluded, baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents. In the course of history, the practice of baptism developed in a variety of forms. Some churches baptize infants brought up by parents or guardians who are ready, and with the church promising to bring up the children in the Christian faith. Other churches practice exclusively the baptism of believers who are able to make a personal profession of faith. Some of these churches encourage infants or children to be presented and blessed in a service which usually involves thanksgiving for the gift of the child, and also for the commitment of the mother and father to Christian parenthood (Lazareth 1982:4).

The commentary further states that there is nevertheless an inability on the part of the Churches to mutually recognise their various practices as sharing in the one baptism, in spite of their mutual recognition of the importance of baptism (Lazareth 1982:2–3). Seen holistically all understandings are related, because each position represents an indispensable aspect of the one baptism.

It was also acknowledged and accepted that:

The differences between infant and believers' baptism become less sharp when it is recognized that both forms of baptism embody God's own initiative in Christ and express a response of faith made within the believing community. The practice of infant baptism emphasizes the corporate faith and the faith which the child has through its parents. The personal faith of the recipient of baptism and faithful participation in the life of the church are essential for the full fruit of baptism to materialize. The practice of believers' baptism on the other hand emphasizes the explicit confession of the person who responds to the grace of God in and through the community of faith. In some churches which unite both infant -baptist and believer-baptist traditions, it has been possible to regard both as equivalent in a pattern whereby baptism in infancy is followed by later profession of faith, and an alternative pattern whereby believers' baptism follows a rite of a presentation and blessing in infancy (Lazareth 1982:5).

While Churches have come to a fuller mutual understanding and acceptance of one another, and have entered into closer relationships regarding both witness and service, they have undertaken to refrain from any practice which may call into question the sacramental integrity of other Churches, or which might diminish support for the unrepeatability ruling of the sacrament of baptism. It is also now recognised that baptism in some denominations needs to be constantly reaffirmed by means of special rites of affirmation with the use of water (Lazareth 1982:5).

4.2.1.3 Mutual Recognition of Baptism

The movement of Churches towards further compromise is indicated by an increasing tendency to recognise one another's baptisms as being part of the nature of the one baptism of Christ. In order to overcome their differences more fully, believer baptists and paedo-baptists were asked to reconsider certain aspects of their practices: "The first may seek to express more visibly the fact that children are placed under the protection of God's grace. The latter must guard against the practice of apparent indiscriminate baptism [a major problem in paedo-baptism] and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptised children to mature commitment to Christ" (Lazareth 1982:6).

It is noteworthy however that a study of the purpose of baptism remained lacking, and the unity of baptism was considered primarily from baptism's meaning, and not logically first from baptism's origin and purpose. It seems normal and logical therefore that as first things must come first the purpose of baptism should be first to feature from the question of why Jesus came to earth. This, in turn, could provide a defining answer for why water baptism is uniquely a Christian rite and be taken further for unity and more effective mission. Scholars who emphasise this point include father Karl, and son Markus Barth, Cullmann, Dunn, Wright and Witherington III, to name a few.

This means that baptism is not being practiced simply as a redemptive rite, but primarily as an evangelistic method for the achievement of personal redemption. The mandate of the Lima Text does however offer a strong mandate for a combined search for baptismal unity. The converging of the two baptisms, based on baptism as sacramental evangelism, is one such possibility. It must be noted, however, that the WCC's recommendation for consensus baptism is already in place in MCSA double-practice, yet there is still conflict between members and the MCSA over the need for infant-baptised people to receive a believer's baptism after their conversion.

As participants of the WCC conference included members of both reformed and evangelical groups, the task was in this sense to unite the emphases of both Luther and Calvin, which while not totally impossible is a difficult task to perform. This necessarily means that the sacramental and evangelical components of baptism's message will need to be brought together more significantly, and be integrated into the essence of baptism by means of a uniting theology.

While rebaptism is also outlawed by the Lima Text because, as it falls into the "more than one baptism category", the document contains information which reveals that some denominations administer more than one baptism on an individual, albeit in the form of affirmation baptism. These traditions seem to use water baptism more for the intake of new members, which is considered by them to be the Biblical way of entry into the body of Christ, than from a motive of rebaptism.

This circumstance raises the question of why baptism in the paedobaptist tradition is not allowed to be repeated, and yet a repetition of baptism is permitted in a rite of affirmation which thus appears to be contradictory theology and practice. The affirmation of a previous baptism by means of a further application of water may nevertheless be theologically healthy if further legitimate compromise is found. This perhaps could materialize by means of a convergence model.

In a report by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches Monsieur John A. Radano of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity states that, the Lima Text is the product of more than 50 years of faith and order study. After 1982, the document has become the most widely-circulated ecumenical text amongst member Churches, inclusive of the Roman Catholic Church. He further writes that there are about 200 official positive responses to the Text, mainly from member Churches, but also from other denominations, and which again includes the Catholic Church.

All this indicates that the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM) document has become, “an ecumenical reference point used widely for helping separated Christian communions to understand each other better, and even to assist some Churches improve their relationships ” (Radano 2015).

Pope John Paul II had also mentioned BEM on a number of occasions. In the *Ut unum sint* chapter of his book, in which he reflects on the results of dialogue, the Pope states that, “the fundamental role of Baptism in building up the Church has been clearly brought out, thanks to multilateral dialogues” (Lazareth 2002:2).

While considerable effort concerning the formulation of true Biblical baptism continues to be made, it nevertheless needs to be asked how members of the various denominations have reacted to the mandate of the Lima Text on Baptism. Has the incidence of rebaptism been reduced because of the Lima directive? Have Christians become less legalistic about their views on baptism, and less nomadic in their movement between Church denominations on account of baptism? What impact has all the dialogue had in with regard to membership matters and of Church growth, as these relate to the purpose and practice of baptism?

These questions will receive their replies from the unfolding of further post-Lima dialogue and effort with regard to the creation of various models of consensus baptism. The Lima Text has undoubtedly opened the door for an extended search for baptismal consensus, and increases the possibility for acceptance of both infant and believer’s baptism as equivalent alternatives of the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5 (Lazareth 1982:5).

4.2.2 Quadrilateral Dialogue of Understanding for Four Sacramental Protestant Positions

The debate between scholars representing the four major views of baptism was based on the principle of critiquing one’s own tradition, without excluding cross-traditional critique. The

four major views which were assessed and analysed include those of Covenant Baptizing Denominations, Lutheran Churches, Christian Churches and Churches in Christ, and also Believer Baptism Traditions (Armstrong 2007:20–22).

4.2.2.1 Purpose of Baptism in Relation to Meaning

Karl Barth had observed that the baptisms of John and Jesus, and also those administered by the Apostles, were all primarily associated with evangelism and discipleship (Barth 1948:48). Baptism as discipleship evangelism thus seems to be the same ultimate objective of the dialogue around the four views of baptism. The design for this approach is based more on comparison and assessment rather than on debate, and is perhaps the place from which to start before a no-holds-barred approach of critique on baptism can be engaged in.

4.2.2.2 Relationship of Baptism and Sacramental Redemption

A fundamental question is about how baptism as sacrament relates to salvation, and also whether the two baptisms are thus sacramentally compatible. This question forms part of the purpose of this study in the search for an answer as to whether convergence baptism is possible or not. The answer to this question should become clearer when these four major Protestant views on baptism are defined and discussed.

4.2.2.3 Reformed Covenant View

As baptism signifies covenant, and covenant signifies God seeking to enter into a relationship with people, baptism thus also signifies God's prevenient action of His saving Grace conveyed to individuals within the context of a believing covenantal community. MCSA baptism is an expression of this view. Baptism is thus a sign of God's action going before salvation, and is also a message that the individual is to be "saved by grace through faith alone" (Ephesians 2:8). Baptism is not a sacramental work of salvation, but is primarily a covenantal sacramental sign of God's prevenient saving action.

If there is an *ex opere operato* factor present in this understanding, depends on how covenant is understood, and whether baptism is viewed as a sacramental means of Grace. Sacrament in this sense is contained in the covenant factor of baptism. The issue of how and whether salvation will happen during the baptism remains a mystery and a possibility. There is variation however in the way that this view is understood; some reformed theologians place the emphasis on sacrament rather than evangelism, while others emphasise both, and a third group believes only in the evangelical component of sacrament. Broadly, salvation in a covenantal context is

by reason of entering the Christian life through divine covenant in the covenant community where sacramental grace movement, evangelical repentance and faith responses are exchanged for personal salvation to be granted either momentarily, or later.

The tendency relative to this view is for people to opt for a belief that considers salvation to be commensurate with their baptism, and in some instances that the salvific transaction happens because of it. While both infants and adults are baptised, these practices are not in a sacramental relationship in this system. There is normally no relationship between the two baptisms because they are kept apart both by theological construction and a ruling which declares that baptism is non-repeatable (Armstrong 2007:70–72). In this understanding of covenant is the view that the sacramental aspect of the rite can be an alternative for the Gospel of repentance and of faith for personal redemption, and thus seems to be covenantal baptism's weakness. The strength of this position is however of the opportunity for household baptism to be an evangelistic tool

4.2.2.4 Lutheran View

The Lutheran view of the relationship between baptism and salvation is that salvation happens when the baptismal water, as used according to God's command, connects with God's Word. Jesus grants eternal salvation to all who believe, and are baptized as per the Word of God. The message of the promise of salvation and the water administered combine to be the medium of regeneration. Regeneration is specifically located in the Word of God, rather than in any miraculous power which the water is believed to possess, or the authority that the church may exercise (Lutheran Church Catechism Undated: 348; 349).

Personal response is still however needed from each baptised individual (Armstrong 2007:91–92). Lutherans baptise both infants and adults but, as in Roman Catholicism, these baptisms have no relationship because in the case of infants, baptism is for new birth, while for adults this rite is conducted as a witness of new birth having been received (Armstrong 2007:104–105). This view seems to combine both sacrament and evangelical components with sacrament seemingly enjoying the ascendancy. Evangelism seems to function through the act of baptism without baptism being *ex opere operato* redemption.

4.2.2.5 Baptist View

In the Baptist view, the initiate is required to be saved before baptism is administered. Baptism does not in any way convey salvation, but is rather a sign of sacramental salvation already received. This happens in accordance with the command of Christ in Matthew 28:19. Salvation

is, by reason of the work of new birth, performed by the Holy Spirit in response to personal faith. It is in this sense that baptism in the Baptist view is called “believer’s baptism”. The baptism of a believer is used as an opportunity for witnessing to the new life received through personal new birth. There is no baptismal relationship with infants in this view, because infants are dedicated rather than baptised (Armstrong 2007:25).

The difficulty with this view is that sacrament is not emphasised by it. This could be the reason why baptismal scholars are resorting more and more to covenant as the fundamental basis for Biblical baptism which would then necessitate a review of how to initiate babies into the life of the Church.

4.2.2.6 Christian Churches and Churches in Christ’s View

Regeneration in this understanding coincides with baptism after a formal kind of liturgical personal confession of repentance and a believing response is made at a baptismal service in the presence of the Church congregation. This approach appears to include an adult *ex opere operato* component in that conversion is believed to be co-incidental with the act of baptism, but only after all the requirements of a formal liturgical baptismal response process, as determined by the Church, has been followed.

A formal liturgical question and answer session which is conducted for the confession of sin, repentance and a believing response is made, followed by the immersion method of water application. Adults handled in this way are thereafter formally declared to be forgiven, cleansed and from thence are regarded as being genuinely Christian. Like their Baptist counterparts, children do not feature in baptism, and there is thus no possibility of infant baptism having any relationship with believer’s baptism in this understanding (Armstrong 2007: 135). This method of baptism must surely promote nominal Christianity because no emphasis is placed on personal decision and the searching of new birth of Christ and very little of the Holy Spirit’s role is featured.

4.2.2.7 Assessment

Concerning the four understandings, two contributors believe that infants should be baptised, and two reject infant baptism. Two believe “immersion only” constitutes the true mode of baptism, while two do not. All four have a different explanation for what actually happens in baptism. In spite of these differences, adult baptism is in measure a common factor because provision has been made for this rite in the systems of all four understandings of baptism. All

four consider confession of faith in Jesus Christ, and probably as well as Gospel repentance, to be essential. Biblical associations commonly used by all four are Titus 3:5 and I John 5:16, which refer to the cleansing factor. Bromiley made a broad but pertinent statement in this regard by stating that

we can show how we agree while we hold to our real differences when it is recognized that baptismal grace is brought into proper relationship to the work of God when we gain a better understanding of the rite and our common agreements. Behind every external action is the true baptism, Jesus and His shed blood (Armstrong 2007:16).

Jesus and His saving Work is thus the fundamental premise from which each viewpoint interrogated seems to work from, in theory.

What this debate thus reveals is that there are four different Biblically-credible interpretations that exist all deriving from Matthew 28:18–20. It can thus be concluded that all sides of baptism can provide an aspect of what sacrament means because all start from the same Biblical imperative, but thereafter take different salvific routes. The issue that divides the views however, concerns whether initiates end up being truly redeemed, or do the initiates only remain at a level of pseudo-salvation by means of mental assent. The testing question that begs, is still whether or not the practice of baptism turns people into practicing Christians from changed lives and become worshipping churchgoers (Lane in Wright 2005:7).

Though differences exist between the views, the fundamental common ground between them is located in the One to whom baptism points, and this is to be found specifically in the evangelistic reason for Jesus' coming to earth (Armstrong 2007:163–165). While there is no indication from all understandings, that some form of organic and functional unity between the two baptisms is possible, yet it seems that taken further, convergence baptism could be a viable possibility particularly if the legitimacy of both groupings of baptismal practice could recognize the biblical veracity that is inherent in all four understandings. Because the Lutheran and Covenant traditions emphasise infant baptism on the one hand, and the Baptist and Churches of Christ positions emphasise personal response and decision on the other, both of which are in fact different sides of the one baptism it seems that some kind of marriage can be forged between the two groupings.

There were several other discoveries made from this Quadrilateral of dialogue. It was found that even without a defence of own tradition, some variation with regard to mode was noted. Within the Reformed tradition, there is a growing willingness to allow baptism by immersion

when previously this was not the case. Within some Baptist traditions, there is similarly now more of a readiness to accept those not immersed as baptised believers than there would have been in the past. This trend of flexibility around the usage of mode is confirmed by Armstrong, who finds current relevant literature on baptism revealing, because the issue of mode and context are seen as being in some state of flux: he finds that dialogue amongst these various traditions has allowed people to hear other points of view, and thus provides the opportunity to alter what were once understood to be “hard and fast” conclusions, while, “mobility within the culture of our time, [has forced] churches to listen to people from other backgrounds in ways that would not have been possible years ago” (Armstrong 2007:162).

The growing flexibility perceived around who the recipients of baptism should be, and of the mode of administration, are inextricably tied and related, so that the purpose and the manner of baptism are the avenues of debate which could enable opposing proponents to make progress towards some more significant form of consensus around baptism, as asked for by the WCC (2007:163).

Insofar as the convergence possibility is concerned, it seems that the two broad views on infant baptism discussed in this work could be accommodated in the two of the understandings that emphasise sacrament, while the two believer-baptist positions could combine to provide the evangelical component of covenant baptism, and these could thence become conjoined as a next step.

4.3 African Baptismal Dialogue: UNISA Debate (1983)

The Southern Africa congress on infant baptism staged by (UNISA) in 1983 was another significant event in that it was very likely the first event of its kind in the history of African Christianity. It was also the first officially-sanctioned opportunity for direct critique of infant baptism from all sides of baptismal loyalty since Karl Barth had critiqued his own tradition about forty years earlier.

The subject title of this congress, *Infant Baptism: the arguments for and against*, afforded proponents the liberty to debate the merits and demerits of infant baptism. This critical consultation was organised by theologians from the University of South Africa (UNISA), and seems to have been a direct outcome of the WCC Lima Conference baptismal directive, which urged just such a search for baptismal consensus. It is stated that the conference purpose was “not [about] a coming together of Churches but of Christians in order to achieve the highest

purpose of life, the victory of Jesus Christ as pertaining to ecumenical dialogue around the practice of baptism” (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:2).

The procedure for this debate was also most pertinent and instructive because the presentation was made up of six papers made up of Dutch Reformed, Baptist, Anglican, Full Gospel, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic theologians. Of the six papers presented, three were in support of infant baptism and two were of the opposing view. Papers supporting infant baptism focussed on three topics which were: “Aspects of Baptism in the New Testament”; “The High Church Doctrine of Infant Baptism”, and “Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace”.

Formal critique of paedobaptist theology was delivered in two of the papers, the first by a Baptist theologian entitled, “Infant Baptism? Some considerations”, and the second by a Pentecostal scholar entitled, “Objections to Infant Baptism”. Final presentations were of several paradigms of consensus praxis, the purpose of which was to provide insight into a number of models from around the world that had been recommended for greater baptismal unity. Debate procedure also enabled delegates to give prepared and/or spontaneous responses from the floor.

Armed with the weapon of Christian frankness, in excess of 900 clerical and lay members of some twenty Churches (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983) the debate embarked on the hard road of needing to find an answer for whether infant baptism is right or wrong in the light of Christian Biblical practice. If established as Biblically legitimate the question raised was how the two baptisms could relate in sacramental evangelical ministry (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:1–6).

The proceedings were conducted with the aim of being objective and constructive in the search for baptismal unity, with the goal of finding a mutually acceptable definition of what true Biblical baptism and its practice constitutes (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:3). A question set for reaching unity as a general objective was: “Can we together, find new light on our problem; might a fresh study of scripture and history make it possible for us to accept one another after all, and move together to fresh positions?” (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:6)

A further more specific challenge was how: “churches that practice infant baptism and churches that oppose it could consider a new common alternative, or are [they] faced with an inescapable dilemma: that infant baptism is either right or wrong? Is it more biblical to believe that infant baptism is not biblical than that it is biblical” (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:5).

As a point of departure, the congress was asked to “seriously consider the possibility that neither of the present views represent the whole truth; that the aim should not therefore simply be to win the other side over, but for all to listen to Scripture. This was to discover whether a new position might emerge – a position that might be acceptable to both groups” (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:5–6), even though such a position may at first be considered unacceptable.

Professor Konig further stated that stumbling blocks to unity were largely about disagreements around the practice of rebaptism because of the variety of presuppositions attached to this practice, for example:

Churches that practice infant baptism consider it re-baptism when someone who was baptized as a child is baptized again, and most churches in this tradition reject rebaptism on grounds that baptism is an unrepeatable sacrament. Churches that reject infant baptism are in a different position. Since they do not recognise infant baptism, they regard a person baptised in their infancy as not baptised at all, and when such a person is baptized, on becoming a believer, they regard it not as a rebaptism but as that person’s first valid baptism (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:4).

The Congress was also the occasion for testing whether a number of paradigms of practice, in which the two baptisms combined could be viable options for overcoming the problem of rebaptism, but more positively in order to enable the practice of infant baptism to be more evangelistically efficient. The more salient aspects of the presentations and telling criticisms of sacramental baptism were listed and discussed, and from these, concluding remarks were subsequently made.

4.3.1 Focus of Debate

The debate was centred mainly on the Biblical legitimacy of infant baptism as it relates to covenant. It has been claimed by Baptists that the problems of baptism are generally caused by a belief in the non-Biblical sacramental status of infant baptism (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:31).

And yet, as simple as the initiation of adult believers may be, the purely baptistic position also carries biblical difficulty. For example, a question is how infants and children would be sacramentally accommodated in the Church if the example of Jesus’ own initiation is followed in detail and to the letter (Luke 2:21–24) (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:41–42).

4.3.2 New Testament Baptism and Unity

In the search for the Biblical legitimacy of covenantal baptism, Professor Lategan argued for unity around several indispensable ingredients that go together to form Biblical covenant for both infant and believer's baptism. These are that: "no clear-cut definition of baptism in the New Testament exists because statements about baptism are unqualified and there is no fully detailed and developed conception of baptism" (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:7–8).

Nevertheless, baptism and unity are perceived as being clearly linked within the New Testament (Romans 6:4–5; 1 Corinthians 1:13–15; 1 Corinthians 4 12–13; 1 Corinthians 12:12–13; Galatians 3:26–29; Ephesians 4:4–6; Colossians 2:12, etc.).

These bible references show that baptism took place in a collective context right from the start. This does not mean that the believer as an individual is overlooked on the one hand or that salvation is also a group event on the other. The believer is indeed united with an individual, namely Christ: but at the same time he [*sic*] is incorporated into Christ's body as a collective concept (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:10).

Unity is generally agreed to be one of the most important aspects of baptism, but is eternally elusive because all understandings believe that their position represents the truest and most accurate version of the biblical rite.

4.3.3 Deictic Function of Baptism

The deictic function of baptism is another area of dispute which has all to do with the purpose of baptism. Baptism is not only a reference to unity, but also has a deictic or centrifugal function which gives baptism a place of relative importance in the New Testament message of Christ. Baptism is not something that is autonomous, but presupposes a certain redemptive event, and also provides a context of faith in which a sacramental redemptive act can be appropriated and thus does not draw attention to itself.

A Biblical example of this feature is seen in Mark 16:16 which states that "he [*sic*] who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he [*sic*] who does not believe will be condemned" (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:11). The second part of this statement makes it clear that believing is the factor which determines salvation; the reference to baptism is not however repeated. The centrifugal function of baptism is thus to be considered as another way of stating that baptism is sacramentally evangelistic in purpose, because it points to Christ as the One by whom people are born anew, admitted into the Church, and shows forth His death till He comes back to earth again (1 Corinthians 11:26). Baptism thus has a deictic function because, "it deflects attention

from itself to Christ, and is thus an important datum in the enquiry” (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:11).

4.3.4 Faith and Baptism

In discussing how baptism can be linked with faith in the case of infants and not only adults, Lategan argues that baptism can only exist in a context of faith. There are two schools of thought in this connection, the ‘individual’ and the ‘collective’:

Each is rooted in an aspect of baptism, and yet ‘believer’s baptism’ on its own or the ‘baptism of repentance’ necessarily rules out infant baptism as a matter of course. The collective approach however does not deny the need for a personal bond with Christ, but by virtue of the corporative idea, the covenant approach places a strong emphasis on the community of faith in which baptism is to take place (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:13).

The functions of faith and baptism also exist in close proximity, and Lategan quotes Ridderbos in this regard: “Baptism presents in a sacramental way what faith is allowed to appropriate” (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:11).

The two baptismal rites are however, different in that infant baptism possesses a sacramental introductory connotation, while believer’s baptism carries more of an evangelistic appeal for the finalization of the salvific transaction. The problem with infant baptism is however that by overemphasising the sacramental aspect of its nature, personal redemption based on Gospel requirements tends to be underplayed.

4.3.5 Divine Initiative and Baptism

The New Testament in general sees baptism primarily as the result of Divine sacramental initiative which establishes a new mode of life for the person baptised. Regarding this initiative, the action of the baptised person is always secondary, and at most is a response to and acceptance of what is assigned in the act of baptism (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:17).

Another problem with infant baptism in relation to the community factor is the obligation to secure personal responsibility for what was promised on the infant’s behalf, particularly as people are usually initially averse to any suggestion of their need for conversion.

4.3.6 Rebaptism Requests

The trend in which Christians seek to experience their baptism by means of a second baptism is regarded in paedobaptist theology as deeply problematic. Difficulties arise when this re-experience takes the form of a rebaptism. According to the New Testament, baptism is

unrepeatable. “The *ephapax* of baptism corresponds to the uniqueness of Jesus’ death and resurrection” (Romans 6:10; Hebrews 6:4).

Any suggestion of rebaptism is therefore alien to the New Testament. However, this does not solve the problem in those cases where believer’s baptism is not seen as a rebaptism, but as a first baptism. Lategan contends that the need for a confirmation of baptism could be met in a much more meaningful way by a celebration or commemoration of baptism without repeating the baptism as a rebaptism as such (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:19–20).

4.3.7 Critique

Maimela, a paedobaptist, critiqued Lategan’s paper by claiming that in the past in Africa the community baptised the infant. Yet with the intrusion of Western influence, the focus of baptism has shifted to believer’s baptism, in which the individual becomes the dominant focus over the community:

The efficacy of infant baptism is however of concern on the one hand, but on the other, the debate opens the door for an emphasis on believer’s baptism despite it being excessively individualistic. Whichever solution is found for the problem of rebaptism would not however guarantee avoiding the twin problems of pseudo-redemption in a community approach of [paedobaptism] and an anthropocentric approach in a ‘me’ religion of [believer’s baptism] (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:25).

4.3.8 Infant Baptism High Doctrine

Dwane presented a paper at the UNISA debate entitled, “The High Church Doctrine of Infant Baptism”, which reveals why infant baptism is held in high sacramental regard by some sections of the paedobaptist population. This high doctrine of baptism places great emphasis on Divine origin and initiative, which seems to totally obviate the necessity of personal response. To grasp the meaning of this position, it is important to know the place and definition of this High Church baptismal doctrine

In arguing for this doctrine, the Bishop alludes to John Chrysostom, who in the fourth century AD wrote that, “God’s gifts are not such as to be the result of any virtue of the priest’s; they are wholly the work of grace” (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:52). Dwane thus argues that it is not the priest who baptises but God who is the celebrant, and who also gives a person the ability to make the appropriate response of faith. It is belief in the loyalty of God to what He promises which makes it imperative for the Church to emphasise the objective character of God’s approach to humanity in the sacraments (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:52).

Sacraments also signify that when the material entities are used, and are accompanied by appropriate evangelical words, a golden thread materialises that links the sacraments with the incarnation of Jesus on the one side, and with the final consummation of salvation in responding people on the other. Baptism in this view is thus sublimated by reason of its sacramental status and is accordingly endowed with God's initiative, together with the response that God looks for from baptised people.

Additionally, sacraments contain an important social dimension. Both the officiant and the recipient have the support of the whole body of Christ in the quest for the redemption of the baptizee. Baptism understood in this way is believed to be an expression of God in Christ loving the world, and reconciling it to Himself. Dwane quotes Romans 6:1–7 in justification of this high view of baptism (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:52–53).

Dwane also argues from John 3:5, interpreting it as another example of the High Doctrine of sacrament. He argues that because baptism is entry into new life, and is expressed in terms of a birth, redemption is affected by water and the Spirit from above. New birth through water baptism by the Holy Spirit is a kind of “Virgin Birth”, and in this interpretation baptism is a primary conduit for the Spirit to enter a person's life which also allows the Holy Spirit to place the person into the new birth of the Death and Resurrection of Christ (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:54).

4.3.8.1 Infant Baptismal High Doctrine and Church Community

Dwane further explains that in the High Church doctrine of baptism, “the accent is less on the penitent and believing individual and more on the church as the body corporate which nurtures the faith of all its members, and is for that reason qualified to confess the universal faith on behalf of all its members who are not yet able to do this on their own” (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:56).

4.3.8.2 Critique of Infant Baptismal High Doctrine

Both Professor Len Hulley and Pastor John Bond disagreed with the High Church view of baptism because it merges baptism with faith and God's action, and thus excludes the need for a faith response by giving all the responsibility of response for salvation to God, and accordingly reduces baptism to being a mere channel of Divine Grace. Baptism should never be seen as an end in itself, and Hulley argues that even though, “the faith confessed is the faith

of the Church, the confession of that faith [should be] done by the candidate for baptism where that was possible” (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:60–62).

God does not respond to the faith of the Church by saving the infant vicariously, but only saves on the basis of the Gospel call to repentance and faith in line with Jesus’ identification with all sinners. Pastor Bond in turn argued that,

the sacrament itself becomes a channel of divine grace, the matter of divine sovereignty comes into question. The initiative in administering sacraments is clearly then in human hands, even if those hands represent the church. “Any teaching which places God in the hands of human beings in such a way that compels God to act in response to certain formulae, belongs to the sphere of magic rather than faith” (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:63).

In the high theory of infant baptism, no baptised person would feel the need for new birth and be saved from their sin. This view seems to give higher credence to baptism than is due to it in the Biblical narrative.

The ironic factor of this high doctrine of baptism is the strong emphasis is given to God and God’s action as the sacramental factor, and yet baptism itself is viewed as possessing all the attributes and merit that only belong to God. Convergence baptism would thus not be possible in the context of the high view of infant baptism and would be unnecessary anyway, since God is believed to do both the initiating and the giving of human response.

Wright’s historical study of infant baptism (Wright 2005:7–8) reveals that the propagation of this kind of doctrine is likely to be responsible for the practice of indiscriminate baptism and is thus redemptively problematic. Such a view can easily translate into a belief in automatic baptismal regeneration (Wright 2005:101–102). Dwane’s argument for the high doctrine of sacrament may seem theologically plausible, yet does not enjoy full biblical support.

4.3.8.3 Infant Baptism Baptist and Pentecostal Critique

An opening comment in the form of a question posed from a Baptist point of view at the congress was why the doctrine of infant baptism has proved to be a never-ending problem, even though its New Testament validity has never been settled to the satisfaction of all theological persuasions. If infant baptism is not legitimate biblically, it seems farcical to try and unite what is illegitimate with what is legitimate. Moreover, the impression is left that the theological considerations for infant baptism are of greater importance than the biblical, historical and exegetical factors, yet no such difficulty exists in the biblical and theological basis of believer’s baptism. Admitting people into the Church on profession of faith by means of a believer’s

baptism is hence a simpler and clearer Biblical alternative for obeying the ordinance of Christ in Matthew 28:19–20 (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:31; 39; 40–42).

Dr Moller of the Pentecostal persuasion further stated that the “bone of contention with regards to baptism is not the issue of baptising adults as opposed to children. The issue is believers’ baptism, i.e. a baptism directly related to conversion and the confession of faith over against someone who is not converted and does not have faith” (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:69). The objection to infant baptism is thus mainly found to arise from Biblical reasons.

Moller further claimed that infant baptism is contrary to the institution of baptism and its practice in the early Church. Believer’s baptism was the exclusive practice at that time and people were baptised because they had repented of their sin and were born of the Holy Spirit (Romans 3:9–23) (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:71). Infant baptism therefore arose not on the basis of statements in the bible but out of a superstitious, magical notion about the power of baptismal water, which Moller expresses by the following passage:

When Christianity became the official religion with the conversion of Constantine in 337 AD, membership of the state and church became virtually interchangeable. Infant baptism fitted conveniently into this system and any objection to it was met with the state authority. Baptism was made compulsory by Emperor Constantine for every citizen in order to become Christian. Unfortunately the Gospel requirements of repentance and faith for personal new birth conversion were set aside. Infant baptism was thus unknown in the immediate post-apostolic period of church history (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:74).

This explanation by Moller carries some truth, but does not prove that infant baptism was not practiced during the Apostolic Era. A further concern for Moller is that infant baptism does not distinguish between the covenant of grace and the covenant of circumcision, which he believes are totally separate aspects of biblical covenant. Moller states that, “what we are saying, is that the doctrine of infant baptism is in conflict with Christ’s work of atonement, which put an end to the covenant of circumcision and of the law – the old covenant” (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:78–79). The practice of infant baptism is thus understood in terms of Abraham rather than of Christ: “Not Abraham or any other person, but Christ [alone] must be at the heart of our thinking. Not only must we accept Him as Lord and Saviour: we must also give childlike obedience to His words and those of His apostles” (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:80).

Additionally, the problem of infant baptism is that it makes the infant’s election and salvation dependant on the faith of the child’s parents (1983:80), which means that if the child never comes to faith for conversion and dies unregenerate, he/she is damned even if the grace of the

covenant is ascribed to the person as an infant. When the person comes to faith and conversion however, is the time for baptism to be administered (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:81).

Moller concludes that infant baptism sets an un-biblical and illogical separation between the act of baptism and what the baptised person affirms by baptism:

After all the years that have elapsed since the baptism as a baby, the person must testify: 'By my baptism, of which I know nothing and in which I had no responsible part, but of the administration of which I have been told, I testify that I have thereby identified myself with Christ'. The Bible does not however teach that one should be informed that one has been baptized (else one would not know anything about it) or persuaded to accept a baptism in which one has had no conscious or responsible part to play 1983:82).

4.3.8.4 Defence of Infant Baptism

In his critique, Floor (in Konig, Lederle & Möller 1983:83–86) contended that reference to a few incidental texts that refer to baptism will not suffice alone in a study of infant baptism and that the great question of the unity of God's action in both the Old and New Covenants needs also to be studied and accepted. In the search for whether infant baptism is biblical or not, Floor further asks whether the appeal to the bible should only be based on the contrast between the Biblical covenants and why then not on the upholding of the unity of revelation in Holy Scripture (in Konig, Lederle & Möller 1983:83).

4.3.8.4.1 Structure of the Gospel

Floor (in Konig, Lederle & Möller 1983:83–86) further contends that the structure of the Gospel is designed in such a way that the promise of salvation in the Old Testament is fulfilled in Jesus first, and then in the lives of recipients, but that this does not exclude children. Children have always been part of the covenant in both Testaments of the Bible. Floor (in Konig, Lederle & Möller 1983:83–86) thus argues that, "the speaker's line of reasoning leaves no option but to regard God's promise as an unconditional promise of grace to the elect and to relinquish the biblical distinction between promise and the appropriation of grace" (1983:85).

If covenant is only unconditionally for adult believers, this would have negative consequences for evangelism with regard to its call to repent and believe for those who are yet to be saved.

4.3.8.4.2 Bible-Only Baptism

Related to the contention by believer-baptists that baptism must be practiced only as biblical baptism, the baptismal debate is essentially about whether something is biblical only when

there is text-and-verse evidence, or whether something is also biblical when it is clearly inferred from the Bible:

If infant baptism is rejected [because it is not text-and-verse information] it is thus in some way a devaluation of the Old Testament [in relation to] the old covenant and circumcision. And this in turn leads on to viewing the Old Testament as inferior to the New Testament (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:86–87).

This then undermines the Christian faith, whose roots are in the Old Testament, its fulfilment in the Gospel of Christ of the New Testament, and in the implementing work of the Holy Spirit as written in the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles and the Book of Revelation. All these are systematically and coherently interrelated, based on the interlinking and paradoxical nature of the Biblical covenant of the Old and New Testaments.

4.3.8.4.3 Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace

Konig similarly argues that while infant baptism may not enjoy text-and-verse support in the bible, this practice is implied in covenant. Covenant forms the basis of the Gospel of Christ which is for the benefit of all nations, and is what legitimises this practice. Children qualify because their need is also for saving, regardless of their age; being included in covenant is a preparation of this: “In this discussion [therefore] the issue [was] not primarily about the historical question of whether infant baptism was only a possible practice in [the] New Testament, but is rather whether infant baptism is an acceptable form of baptism in the light of the Gospel [as the sacramental factor]” (1983:93).

Believer-baptists place a wedge between the Old and New Biblical Covenants, mainly because of the failure of the Old Covenant to produce people who know God personally, but at best produces people who had the form of religion without its saving essence. This has caused doubt over the wisdom and the legitimacy of infant baptism, and is a powerful factor in the baptistic polemic against infant baptism.

If Old Covenant influence dominates infant baptism in the New Covenant era, the outcome in Baptist reckoning can only be to produce a nominal form of Christianity, in which individuals possess religious knowledge without the conscious reality of God in their lives. Konig’s argument nevertheless finds resonance with paedo-baptist researcher, David Wright (2005), whose historical study regarding the influence of paedo-baptism on baptism verifies that infant baptism generates nominal Christianity. Wright had argued that, “The enquiry at the end of

Christendom forcefully points to the failure of infant baptism to ‘deliver the goods’ in today’s world, whatever may have been its effectiveness in the past” (Wright 2005:7).

Konig however asks how children, despite the abuse hurled towards infant baptism, could possibly be excluded from the covenant. The baptism of infants of believing parents does not in any way signify that the infant automatically becomes Christian, but by water baptism enters the context of Church life that consists of covenanting Christians. A constant call of the Gospel to come to Christ by repentance and faith and to receive Him is thereby made (John 3:5).

The goal of baptism as the call of the Gospel is not therefore about baptism *per se*, or even primarily about redemption, but is first and foremost about the evangelical call of Christ to repent, have faith and to be born of the Holy Spirit (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:96).

Konig further states that both Reformed and Evangelical theologians seem to make statements which show little difference in terms of the relationship between the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of circumcision. The Covenant of Grace came about before the Covenant of circumcision, and of the Law, but in essence both are made up of sacramental promise. In the arrangement of the New Covenant, circumcision falls away and is replaced by baptism.

A process of continuity thus exists in this transaction. While there is both similarity and dissimilarity between the Old and New Covenants, the central purpose of covenant is the sacramental and evangelical message intended to lead to the non-optional need for redemption. The focus is thus on the people of the nations, and their need for redemption, and not on the importance of baptism and its form (Matthew 28:19). The most compelling biblical example of covenantal practice is Jesus Himself who, as an infant, was circumcised at the age of eight and then presented to God in the Jewish Temple, which is all in accordance with the Law of the Old Covenant (Luke 2:21–24; 3:21–22). Jesus was thereafter baptised by John the Baptist, an Old Testament (covenantal) prophet, who in turn was acclaimed by Jesus as the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets. There is thus biblical continuity between the covenants of faith for grace supplied by Jesus, which, in the Old Testament, takes the form of promise, while in the New Testament, becomes promised grace fulfilled (Matthew 5:17). As this promise was for the benefit of infants in the Old Testament and signed by circumcision, infants are similarly targeted in the New Covenant, and are signed by baptism as a new-covenant replacement for Old Covenant circumcision (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:98–100).

The critical question however is, whether God’s intention is to save all people? If God required children in the Old Testament period to become His children through covenantal circumcision,

why then would God want to change this Old Covenant salvific plan in the new era? Concluding that children should be excluded from the Gospel sacrament of baptism seems unthinkable, given Jesus' strong statements about the special place of children in His Kingdom plan (Mark 10:13–16), and as illustrated in Temple worship (Matthew 21:12–17) (Bridges and Phypers 1977:176–179).

4.3.9 Assessment

The UNISA debate was important for a number of reasons. Not only was the definition of paedo-baptist water baptism clarified, but infant baptism also seems to have become more accepted based its biblical covenant origin. Baptism as evangelism, as being the purpose of covenant, was also convincingly presented by the contributors. Paedo-baptists were undoubtedly compelled to be less defensive about their position, which might also indicate that they have come to understand that their position comes from making assumptions which are difficult to square with specific baptismal information in the Bible, and now appreciate how prone infant baptism really is in the promotion of nominal redemption.

It seems that the influences of Karl Barth, the Lima Text on Baptism, and the UNISA debate were instrumental in creating a shift by paedo-baptists from an over emphasis on, and an attendant excessively high estimate of infant baptism, in favour of a more balanced view of the two baptisms.

In his concluding remarks, Floor (in Konig, Lederle and Möller 1983:83–86), lists the differences between Paedo-baptist and Pentecostal believer-baptistic arguments. He reveals that, while both sides of the infant and adult baptism divide take up different positions, these are based on direct and indirect evidence from the bible, and as such, merit exists in both positions. Floor further affirms the purpose and the acceptable style of the consultation by saying:

As the Lima Conference of the WCC was the *kairos* of the ecumenical movement in 1982, so the current UNISA theological congress of dialogue on infant baptism is the *kairos* of baptism in South Africa; whereas we talked about each other in the past, now we are speaking to each other (in Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:83).

In closing, Konig remarked that “a centrally sobering experience was for people to realize that their favourite proof texts were not as convincing as they had thought. It began to be seen that baptismal texts on their own did not carry as much weight as was thought and while this was

unnerving the concept of the celebration of baptism had opened horizons for the future” (Konig, Lederle and Moller 1983:154).

At the end of the conference, participants of the various views seemed to have come closer to one another, and were more accepting that covenant is a credible basis for baptism which means that infant baptism is a valid biblical and sacramental rite for Gospel propagation and member initiation.

As regards the convergence possibility of the two baptisms, the UNISA debate reveals that both dissimilarity and similarity are essential aspects of the two baptisms, but are indispensable ingredients in the paradoxical nature of baptism’s function and purpose. If baptism is to be an efficient sacramental and evangelical proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it should thus not be separated into two isolated ministries, with each remaining sacramentally incomplete.

The concept of paradox as it affects the unity between the two baptisms will be studied with regard to paradigms of consensus later in this chapter, and chapter six will debate the theological viability of paradox and dialectic relative to the convergence possibility.

4.4 MCSA Kyara Baptism Conference (1983)

In 1983, about a hundred Methodist Ministers met at Kyara, in the Magaliesberg of Gauteng, for a seminar on baptism where, probably for the first time, MCSA clergy and some laypeople were able to engage in dialogue with each other on an issue that had become extremely divisive. The theme for the conference was “The many facets of baptism”. In the opening address, the principal of Methodist John Wesley College, Dr Simon Gqubule, emphasised that baptism signifies the entrance into the community of Christ and leads to the responsibility and privileges of membership in the community of God’s people.

The same sentiment was expressed by Professor Len Hulley of UNISA in his introduction of the Lima Text, by affirming that baptism is not only incorporation into the body of the church, but also incorporation into Christ. He underlined the importance of the doctrine of prevenient grace, and the manner in which the Holy Spirit works in the lives of people before, in and after baptism.

Baptism however, is both for the infants of believers and of believing adults, and has always been regarded as the most fundamental part of the evangelical pastoral ministry in the MCSA. Because this ministry is rooted in the Church community, private baptism is ruled out. The Reverend Derek Crumpton, a former Methodist Minister, felt that white people may have lost

the meaning of community which infant baptism emphasises, but also questioned whether the Bible establishes any norm for infant baptism.

Reverend Howard Kirkby, chairman (Bishop) of the Grahamstown district, stated that, “the baptism issue in his district was only a white concern and that a number of white people [were] using rebaptism to sidestep confrontation with the fact that apartheid is a sin”. Reverend Viv Harris, chairman [Bishop] of the South Eastern Transvaal and Swaziland district, called for serious commitment to bible scripture, with the need for strong loyalty to the Methodist Church, while Reverend Andile Mbete in his paper on baptism in the context of African culture, underlined that infant baptism was not an issue in the black tradition as much as it was for the white section of the Methodist Church; this was because of the deep sense of community which exists within black Methodist society and the high emphasis of faith in infant baptism.

Reverend Mbete further stated that the Biblical basis and authority of the Methodist Church still provided black Methodists with the norm that sees infant baptism as initiation into the family of God. In the white section of the Methodist Church however, there is generally a different experience and perspective in regard to infant baptism (MCSA Newspaper Dimension October 1983:10).

The Reverend, Doctor Rex Mathee, principal of the Rosebank (Baptist) Theological Seminary, spoke from a believer’s baptism point of view. He emphasised that the primary issue for the Church is not baptism, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He stated that “The kingdom of God is bigger than a swimming pool” (MCSA Newspaper Dimension October 1983:10).

For many speakers and delegates, it was felt that in spite of the differences in their Biblical and theological understanding of baptism, what was of paramount importance was the necessity of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ based on His Gospel call (MCSA Dimension October 1983:10).

At the end of the consultation, a review of baptism in the MCSA was called for by delegates. The Conference accordingly asked the Methodist Church to consider whether it should move from the position of baptising infants to one which allows a Minister of the Church to administer either infant baptism or believer’s baptism, or both (MCSA Dimension October 1983:1). In assessing the worth of this conference, the MCSA Dimension newspaper editor Theo Coggin wrote that,

one of the most encouraging aspects of the seminar was the genuine attempt to listen and understand one another on the issue of baptism. A crucial concern however, was about the unity of the church. On the one hand it was stated by numerous participants with believer's baptism leanings that unless the issue was resolved members and ministers would leave the Church. On the other hand it needs to be acknowledged that the Methodist church consists of many who are convinced of the theological basis for infant baptism (MCSA *Dimension* October 1983:14).

4.4.1 The Church Stands Firm on Baptism

Even though the much-debated WCC Lima Text on Baptism (1982) had by then been accepted by the Methodist Church and incorporated into its understanding of the sacrament, the 1983 MCSA Annual Conference appeared not to make a concession of substance to the school of thought which has called into question the Methodist Church's stance on baptism.

The Conference agreed that there could be no question of rebaptism and was not prepared to countenance the dedication of infants. However, the Conference did agree that a separate form of service be prepared for the dedication of parents to Christian parenthood for use on pastoral grounds (MCSA *Dimension* December 1983:2).

In the debate which followed from the Kyara Conference, the Reverend Trevor De Bruyn suggested, "that in order to be faithful to God and our Methodist heritage we must have the faith and the courage to question even our most dearly-held traditions. I want to say that I have sympathy with those who have come to believe that they need to be rebaptized as a matter of obedience which I have come across in some of the congregations I serve".

De Bruyn further commented that, "in regard to the question of baptism coming only from the white sector of [the Methodist] church, the reason for that is partly because in the black section members go off quietly for rebaptism outside of the Methodist Church with the MCSA turning a blind eye to it" (MCSA *Dimension* August 1984:16).

H. M. K. Greenwood, a prominent Methodist layman and theologian stated that,

one aspect of the practice of infant baptism which [was greatly perturbing] was that so many parents are strangers to the Church, except at perhaps Christmas time and these are hardly seen again until the next child is born. If it is accepted that the Paedo-baptist policy teaches that a child is admitted into the fellowship of the Church visible to share in the blessings of the new covenant its very foundation theologically is that parents must be true believers, if this is not the case, the rite is meaningless (MCSA *Dimension* August 1984:16).

Greenwood further lamented over the fact that Ministers are reputedly unable or unwilling to refuse this solemn sacrament in such circumstances, and wonders if they are being true to their calling in such cases (MCSA *Dimension* August 1984:16).

4.4.2 Members Choice

A “concerned” member wrote that Ministers have resigned and many people, especially the younger ones, are leaving Methodist Churches because they believe in adult believer’s baptism by immersion. All these persons are earnest Christians and are a great loss to the Methodist Church. Calling these people “fringers” should be desisted, because these are in fact amongst the most trusted and tried members of the Church. The member further stated that it made him sad when members, some of long standing, go elsewhere. This had included members from his family:

In the past many folk who were convicted that they should be baptised by immersion when they were old enough to know their own minds, went to Baptist or Pentecostal churches to have this ‘done’, and then returned to the Methodist church, but this [was] not the case anymore. They are transferring their membership to one or other of the churches who practice this form of baptism. I would like to suggest that our church members could be given the choice – infant baptism and later on confirmation, or dedication when this can be followed later on by baptism with immersion; both forms of baptismal initiation should [thus] be allowed (MCSA *Dimension* October 1983:14).

The subsequent MCSA Annual Conferences of 1984 did not adequately deal with the deeper theological issues surrounding the problem of baptism as mechanical regeneration, but rather again defended its *status quo* position. Responses from protagonists on both sides of the unresolved debate thereafter became more negatively critical with further polarising dogmatic utterances.

The re-baptisers unbendingly claimed that their need was for a Biblical and spiritual answer regarding water baptism, which they felt was valid, while the Church was seen as unwilling to find a viable sacramental evangelical resolution. The MCSA on the other hand, tended to view the re-baptisers as being rebellious and disobedient. The debates which ranged around the central issues of baptism eventually reached a stalemate, and the MCSA accordingly only took a tentative step along the lines of the introduction of a Thanksgiving Service for the birth of infants as an alternative for infant baptism seemingly intended as a uniting gesture.

It seemed furthermore that the MCSA had not heard the voice of real sacramental evangelical outcry from its members, and the question of whether the re-baptisers had a genuine need has

never subsequently been adequately dealt with for resolution. It was felt by some however, that a Biblical example of a way of coping with the Anabaptist need could be found in Jesus' parable in Mark 2:23–28, where the disciples of Jesus had broken the Sabbath law by picking grains of corn because they were hungry when this was not allowed by Jewish custom. Jesus' response to the critics (Mark 2:28) was that the Sabbath (and its laws) was made for people and not people for Sabbath laws. The response of Jesus to the Sabbath incident was surely an appropriate message with reformational possibility for the Church but seemingly was not heeded (MCSA *Dimension* August 1984:15).

MCSA Conferences however held subsequently seemed to have become more accommodating and inclusive by taking the matter up for further investigation. The MCSA expressed that its intention was, “to expound the theological meaning and pastoral implications of baptism in the MCSA and to deal with the issue of so-called rebaptism” (MCSA Minutes 1988:53).

The MCSA again affirmed its acceptance of the Lima Text, by stating that it, “recognises and accepts the validity of the theology and practice of churches which baptize infants and those which baptize only believers” (MCSA Minutes 1989:68). An additional directive with a more progressive tone was that, “while the tradition of the MCSA is that of infant baptism, the Methodist Church ought to assist those of its members who, in conscience, lean towards the tradition of believers' baptism” (MCSA Minutes 1988:53). The Church nevertheless issued a strong proviso, which required that any openness to believer's baptism should necessitate a clear acceptance of infant baptism as a legitimate sacrament, and must specifically exclude the practice of rebaptism. This compromise should not be interpreted as a sign of the Church's reduced commitment to its acceptance and practice of infant baptism. Infant baptism should be maintained and adult baptism should, according to the Church, “not be encouraged to the detriment of infant baptism” (MCSA Minutes 1988:63–65).

A follow-up directive, specifically intended for those who opt for believer's baptism, stated that, “when, for reasons of conscience, parents choose to defer the baptism of their children until they are able to make a personal confession of faith, provision should be made for such parents to dedicate themselves to Christian parenthood and to promise to nurture their children in the Christian faith” (MCSA Minutes 1988:54).

The hope of the MCSA seemed to be that these concessions would do away with requests for rebaptism and thus break the baptism impasse (MCSA Minutes 1988:60–61). For this objective to materialise, the MCSA laid out further broad criteria as guidelines to ensure that the core

meaning of its understanding of baptism would be upheld in the event of alternative rites being used. These were that, “the sacrament of baptism was given to the church by Jesus Christ; that it is an outward sign of the new life that God offers to all people through the work of Christ and marks the entry of the person baptized into God’s family, the church” (MCSA Minutes 1988:60).

As regards the formulation of alternative rites, the MCSA instructed that the following possibilities be considered: “an appropriate form of words in the context of a Communion Service, possibly accompanied by the laying on of hands; an adapted form of the Covenant Service as an opportunity for public witness in a service of worship or a special liturgy designed for this purpose” (MCSA Minutes 1988:60–61). The intention behind these four possibilities was clearly conciliatory for the resolution of the problem of rebaptism. And yet the MCSA seemed to have contradicted this inclusive move by requiring that, “if members insist on going through a baptism or a rebaptism in spite of attempts to show that the previous baptism is valid and the new rite is inappropriate, then (members are) to be advised to leave the MCSA and join a church of [their] views” (MCSA Minutes 1988:61).

It must be stated however that any attempt to nullify a previous baptism by means of rebaptism is as unacceptable as it is impossible and yet this ruling against rebaptism has generally been ignored by Anabaptist-leaning members. The ruling of the prohibition of repeat baptism was retained, but does not square with the MCSA’s inclusive ethos, or do much for the resolution of the baptismal impasse. On the positive side however, the debate between the hierarchy of the Church and its Ministers had led to greater openness for further compromise, as demonstrated by the suggested formulation of viable alternative rites for the affirmation of a previous baptism (MCSA Minutes 1988:60–61).

4.5 Convergence Baptism Possibility in Conference Debates

The theologies of scholars and conference dialogue all seem to have had a refining effect on the purpose of covenantal infant baptism as being a Biblically-credible rite for Christian evangelism and increased Church intake. That this rite has also become more generally acceptable also within the Baptist constituency is indicated by the crossing-over of a number of Baptist scholars to covenantal paedo-baptist denominations.

Even strict Baptist scholars, such as Thomas Schreiner and Shawn Wright (2006), who while critiquing infant baptism for its lack of specific Biblical support, and its propensity to promote Christian nominalism, do not seem to reject an inferred Biblical-validity possibility for the

practice of infant baptism. There is thus a general growing voice for a model of consensus-baptism which needs to be more uniting.

Some of the practical outcomes arising from the theological multilateral search for unity are demonstrated in the movement of members between Church denominations, often seemingly inspired by the considerations of baptism (*Fact Checker* 17 March 2015:1–5), and also from the new-paradigmatic experiments being embarked upon in different parts of the world (Wright 2015:100–101).

As the present age is one in which Church denominational boundaries are collapsing, Church loyalties count for little, and the global population in large part is seen to be in migration. It therefore seems to be prudent to take note of how baptism is being influenced by these shifts in all aspects of the global population, both secular and ecclesiastical, and then make use of baptism in these circumstances as an opportunity for evangelistic mission.

New paradigms of baptismal consensus with an evangelistic orientation could thus become a trend together with emerging theological trends that are increasingly focusing on the Holy Spirit and mission (Keum 2013:5).

4.6 Consensus Practice Paradigms

4.6.1 Organic Unity Global Paradigms of the Two Baptisms

The growth of dual baptismal practice between baptistic and paedo-baptistic Churches has now become fashionable, even though most paedo-baptistic denominations have for a long time practiced baptism that uses this approach. In calling for baptismal reformation through dialogue, Baptist Beasley-Murray counsels that,

differing views should not be felt as alienation especially as many churches have for so long practiced both baptisms in their communities such as the Waldenses and the Reformed Church in certain cantons of Switzerland and the Swedish Missions *forbundet*. There are also experiments of this as in the church of Christ in the Congo and the Church of Christ in China. In England not an inconsiderable number of churches are composed of Baptist and Congregational Members in Union churches (Beasley–Murray 1962:393–394).

Does this movement of compromise mean that Baptists have to accept infant baptism? Beasley-Murray says that he could not do that, but steps should be taken to establish closer relations with Churches which practice baptism differently. He asks however, that the rebaptizing of members of other Churches except in exceptional circumstances should be stopped (Beasley–Murray 1962:393–394).

4.6.2 United Church of North India Two-Font Unity Paradigm

A model of baptismal unity is also demonstrated in the Uniting Church of North India, in which a font for the baptism of infants and a baptistery for adult believers have been installed, and where the urgency of mission is prioritised (Bridges & Phypers 1977:199–200).

The Church of North India came into existence in 1970, and is made up of former Anglicans, Baptists, Brethren, Disciples, Methodists (British and Australasian), Presbyterians and Congregationalists. In this denomination, space is made for the practice of either infant or believer's baptism within the same Church. The constitution of this Church states that,

inasmuch as the Church of North India will have within its membership both persons who practice infant baptism in the sincere belief that this is in harmony with the mind of the Lord and those whose conviction it is that the sacrament can only properly administered to a believer, both infant and believer's baptism shall be accepted as alternative practices in the Church of North India (Sebastian 2008:7).

This denomination is an example of how it could be possible both theologically and practically, to uphold the validity of both forms of baptism and to practice this approach within the wider framework of the Church's unity.

While the principal of "regenerate membership" has been adopted and accepted as a basic requirement, yet Baptists, Disciples and Brethren are allowed to continue to practice the baptism of believers by immersion alone. But if a request is made by an infant baptised member for a believer's baptism, then,

for conscience sake, the minister may call in another minister who is willing and qualified to perform the baptism. Membership of this church is granted to those who are baptized and give evidence of repentance, faith and love towards Jesus Christ. This means that an individual may become a member either through infant baptism plus a public confession of faith based on a Paedo-baptist norm in which the person affirms his [*sic*] acceptance of the baptism administered in infancy by way of confirmation, or through an infant dedication plus a believer's baptism. Baptism is once and for all and is therefore unrepeatable. Rebaptism is [therefore] ruled out and if there is persistence for believer's baptism by an infant baptized person the matter will be referred to the Bishop of the diocese for handling (Thorwald 1980:257–258).

As both a font and a baptistery have been installed in the Churches of North India, members with backgrounds from various Church affiliations still have the freedom to choose which of the two baptisms they would like to follow (Bridges & Phypers 1977:200–201).

It has always been difficult however, to hold the two views of baptism together in one congregation; i.e. the baptism of infants and that of believers. A summary of the problems being experienced from this uniting denominational model for example, thus relate to a number of issues; requests for a believer's baptism by infant-baptised adults; the need to build both a font and a baptistery in each chapel of uniting Churches, and the deeper theological problem of how people with theological differences can live together in their opposite viewpoints and yet find it possible to part company when another view of baptism is administered (Bridges & Phypers 1977: 200–201).

The two baptisms kept separate in their so-called togetherness thus always seems to foment division. Proponents of the two views somehow find it extremely difficult to accept one another's viewpoint, even though this need not be impossible. From a paedobaptist vantage point, in the words of Karl Barth, infant baptism on its own is only a half baptism; a sacrament without the Gospel message of repentance and faith. The same would conversely apply to believer's baptism which consists of the Gospel message of repentance and faith but with little or no sacramental emphasis, wherein the call made to be redeemed by faith can instead become decisional salvation.

4.6.3 Rosebank Uniting Church of Johannesburg

The Rosebank Uniting Church (RUC) in Johannesburg is a South African example of the North India model of baptismal unity, with the fundamental difference that no infants have ever been baptised in this Church. In answer to the question of how the RUC combines infant and believer's baptism in policy and practice, Senior Pastor Leigh Robinson replied that although RUC is an interdenominational Church which has been in existence for 107 years, the eight senior pastors over that period have all been Baptist.

This was required in the constitution of the Church until around 2001, when that clause was changed; they nevertheless called on him (another Baptist) to fulfil that role. Robinson writes, "This has undoubtedly resulted in the church having more of a Baptist flavour, even though we are not a 'Baptist' church. Hence the two views of baptism have definitely not been given equal 'air-time', but I am always at pains to speak respectfully of the infant baptism position, even though I don't hold it myself" (Robinson 2013).

As to how infant and believer's baptism can co-exist in RUC policy and practice, Robinson states that the Church only practices the dedication of infants and the baptism of believers in

their services. If a believing couple requests the baptism of their infant, a private service would then be arranged in the chapel.

This however, has not happened in the nine years of Reverend Robinson's tenure at RUC, probably, by Robinson's own admission, because infant baptism is never advertised: "The church did once own and use a baptismal font but in a move to the new Church building the font 'got lost' and the current crop of ministers are not keen to find it or source another" (Robinson 2013).

In the case of the Church of North India, members are divided into their respective denominational affiliations because they have been allowed to maintain their old traditions. RUC is an example of how the "either/or" approach in theology has taken over from a uniting "both/and" approach, which thus sets the stage for the ongoing polarisation of Christians over water baptism. Infant baptism in the RUC has thus been totally eliminated by the dominance of believer's baptism, which does not auger well ecumenically.

Division over water baptism is hence even to be found in Churches which unite paedo-baptist, Baptist and Pentecostal members, as is the case in the Uniting Church of North India. Despite their co-existence, the two baptisms practiced separately are able to maintain their polarisation seemingly because the various traditions are never reformed, but instead passed on and perpetuated by the system in place.

Despite the intention behind this form of baptismal union – for members to learn to accept each other even though their beliefs about baptism are different – is that not all Christians are able to live with their differences and still be charitably united, especially when the two baptisms functioning in unilateral parallel are allowed to perpetuate the division.

4.6.4 Presbyterian Church of New Zealand Dual-Purpose Model of Consensus Baptism

Another paradigm of baptismal unity is that of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, which seems to have been a model of success. This denomination had sanctioned the appropriation of a baptism by immersion rite by means of a confirmation service adopted as official practice. The method of this rite is sometimes described as dual-purpose initiation of the one baptism (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:125–127), and is an alternative response to requests for rebaptism in that denomination. In this service, infant-baptised members are permitted to go through a confirmation service by immersion as a follow-up to their infant baptism.

After experimentation, testing and modification, this two-stage service rite was eventually accepted by this Church's General Assembly and was permitted to be used on special occasions. Their statement in this regard reads:

this service marked a desire by members of this congregation to give witness to a renewed awareness of their calling to be Christian disciples. It is not possible to undergo another Baptism or to re-enact Confirmation. Yet, for some, the Holy Spirit of God is again at work in their lives so much so that they feel led to make a visible and outward acknowledgement of their experience of their newfound experience (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:127).

The dialogue which followed in response to this service at the UNISA debate (1983) was generally in the form of honest and yet favourable critique. It was stated in the debate that the question which had to be faced by the members of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church was how infant baptised people can legitimately receive a believer's baptism after coming to first-time redemption. This issue was settled when it was acknowledged that as water baptism consists of grace and faith, these can logically "be combined for more effective and progressive baptismal practice" (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:149).

In further support of practicing baptism as a single entity in paedobaptist theology, Lederle stated that this "third way", as distinct from traditional ways, was trailblazing in the context of the debate and has the potential to bridge two of the major rifts in Christian Doctrine worldwide regarding the controversies surrounding Spirit Baptism and water baptism (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:139):

Through the charismatic renewal movement millions of baptized people discovered faith in Christ...and the church has been challenged to call its members to a personal faith and a commitment as disciples of the Lord Jesus under His reign. The proposal of dual baptism approach by the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand fully honours infant baptism as incorporation into Gods covenant, with a meaningful celebration of this by an act of immersion at a later time when the individual wishes to express his [*sic*] personal appropriation of the Christian faith (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:141-142).

Lederle also pointed out that similar proposals are being considered by the Reformed Church of America, the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, Christian denominations in France and Britain, as well as amongst Roman Catholics in the United States (1983:142).

Lederle also contended that while Pentecostals and Charismatics would be satisfied with a ceremony which includes full immersion in water accompanied by a personal testimony of faith, some evangelical and conservative Baptists may however not be happy without the

repudiation of infant baptism. But with time, this state of affairs could change probably through the healing of baptismal rifts (1983:142).

In a summing up of the debate around the dual-approach possibility in baptismal practice, Pastor Justice Du Plessis of the Apostolic Faith Mission claimed that Karl Barth had advocated this method of dual approach because the two legs of baptism consisting of Grace and Faith need to function together in progressive baptismal practice (1983:149). As to how convergence differs from McCay's model of celebrating renewal and the appropriation of baptism by immersion is described by Roman Catholic Church priest, Doctor Francis MacNutt, will be discussed in the next section.

4.6.5 Roman Catholic Model for Celebrating Personal Renewal

MacNutt's ecumenical paradigm which he proposes as a practical solution for requests for rebaptism is called a "Celebration of Renewal by Immersion". Having been regularly approached by previously-baptised people for a believer's baptism by immersion at conventions and conferences, MacNutt came to the conclusion that, "something was missing in infant baptism", not only in terms of spirituality but in terms of the need for "conscious[evangelical] decision".

He thus felt divinely led to formulate a service of renewal for a previous baptism by immersion in which the person could still be true to their Catholic faith, and yet also meet the needs of infant-baptised people who require a service which would celebrate their "experience of being washed clean from sin and of receiving new life" (MacNutt in Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:162).

It was from this kind of experience that MacNutt made the conclusion that the proponents of both adult baptism and infant baptism were not wrong in what they believed and asked for, but would however make it plain that honouring requests for a believer's baptism was not an act of rebaptism. This measure was rather to, "uphold and affirm the legitimacy of a previous baptism: to fulfil the desire to re-enact the conversion received by these Christians, and to assist them to experience what they had missed in their infant baptism" (MacNutt in Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:161).

He would conduct these concomitant services by immersing the candidates after naming the person and proclaiming, "I renew your baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (1983:161). MacNutt believed that there was no real theological difficulty with

this kind of service as a solution for rebaptism, because “it combines a belief in the validity of infant baptism with the recognition of the values proposed by the adherents of believer’s baptism” (1983:161).

4.6.6 Paradigm of an African Independent Church in Southern Africa

M. L. Daneel, who represented the Black Independent Churches’ perspective at the UNISA debate of 1983, gives what he calls, “a gut-response rather than a systematic reflection of his experience of baptism”, as he had observed it on numerous occasions in the Shona Prophetic Churches of Zimbabwe (Daneel in Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:144).

People who had been reared in Baptist, Zionist, or paedo-baptist Churches and who were either blessed, or baptised as infants, or as adults after their conversion, would request to receive another baptism, this time by immersion in a river in Zimbabwe called the Jordan River, seemingly a local replication of the Jordan River in Israel. Those who come to the river are usually guided through a process of deliverance. A great commotion is created during this occasion and is believed to be caused by God in the overcoming of evil spirits in the lives of the initiates which is then followed by their immersion in water.

What seems to matter most for these people is not so much whether more than one baptism is right or wrong, or whether they are being affirmed in their baptism or even rebaptized, but rather that the Holy Spirit is considered to be powerfully at work in the life of “Baptizee’s” at the baptismal occasion (Daneel in Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:144). When these Baptizee’s were previously blessed in their infancy, the blessing with water was not considered a baptism because the decision to be baptised was not their own, or coming from personal conversion. But now, the acceptance in the Jordan of these is deliberate and the decision and belief is their own, after their parents had paved the way. The Jordan rituals are thus considered to be the most effective way of giving prophetic treatment and inspiration for new hope by the use of water baptism.

Did the family members and those baptised fully understand what they were doing? Some were already baptised in missions and Ethiopian Churches. Others are people of the world with no previous baptism. Who would judge their motives? These people at least respected their father’s wish, which in the Bible says: “you must honour your father and your mother”. Believer’s baptism is thus seen as a way of doing this, and thus in kinship they shared the crossing of the great divide, from old to new (Daneel in Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:144–148), by means of an immersion baptism.

The bigger issue of baptism in the Shona culture is however salvation, and doing the will of God as they understand it after having being taught these things from the Bible. Did they commit a sin by receiving two applications of water, and will they be judged for being “rebaptized” by transgressing the rules of theology? Theologically, all that these people were doing is going from a ritual of blessing or of baptism, which they had received in their infancy, to the reception of a believer’s baptism that provided the opportunity to give witness to their personal triumph of God’s saving Grace.

The process of response to God by means of a blessing, either by infant baptism or infant dedication which has led to baptism by immersion in the Jordan River was a confirmation of the reception of the message from the first application of water had been fulfilment through their personal redemption (Daneel in Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:144–148). This response by these people seems feasible theologically, especially as the second application of water is not intended to be a sign of the rejection of the first baptism, but indicates more importantly that something deep and positive had happened since their original baptism or ritual blessing and to all intents and purposes as a result of it.

4.6.7 Anonymous Uniting Paradigm

An anonymous uniting model of baptism, also shared at the UNISA debate on infant baptism in 1983, was designed to cater for the need to accept other viewpoints, and could additionally be a helpful method when transferees move from Reformed to Evangelical or Pentecostal Churches and *vice versa*, and might also serve as an alternative for rebaptism. The rationale behind this possibility is that each group views the ceremonies enacted by the other group according to their own convictions and tradition, and not as the enacting group sees them. This suggestion is thus detailed hereunder:

when someone baptized as an infant has himself [*sic*] immersed at a Pentecostal church, members of a Reformed church will not consider that as a rebaptism, but as a celebration of [their first] baptism, and consequently not consider placing the person under church discipline. When a child is reared, e.g. in a Protestant home, with sprinkling (not baptised) in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and decides as an adult to become a member of a Reformed Evangelical Church, the person will not be baptized as a public confession of faith, since his [*sic*] sprinkling in the name of the Triune God is seen as his [*sic*] baptism. When someone baptized as an infant and immersed after his [*sic*] conversion in a Reformed Church as celebration of his [*sic*] infant baptism, later decides to become a member of a Pentecostal Church, the Pentecostal Church will not baptize him [*sic*] again, but see his [*sic*] celebration of baptism as his [*sic*] baptism. When a Reformed family with infants that have received infant baptism decide to join a Pentecostal church, those infants

will not be rededicated, but their infant baptism in their previous church will be seen as their dedication (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:150–151).

While this model is worthy of consideration, it does not address the convergence concern which is specifically about the need for unity, between the two baptisms, the restoration of the baptismal efficiency of paedobaptism, and for a redressing of the balance between both baptisms by means of the ministry of sacramental evangelism.

4.7 John Wesley's Paradigm of Repeat Baptism for Evangelistic Purpose

It appears that Wesley had no qualms about administering repeat baptism for individuals under certain circumstances. He never rebaptized people, and also did not do repeat baptism on people already baptised in their infancy by the Church of England. He did however, reject baptism as practiced by nonconformists, and those baptised as infants of dissenting chapels. In Wesley's view, being a schismatic and receiving baptism thereafter was considered sufficient reason for the disqualification of the previous baptism (Bridges & Phypers 1977:141).

In connecting being born again with baptism, Wesley's use of repeat baptism is not talked about in the MCSA. If Wesley regularly rebaptized Christians, this would be very different from the position generally held by paedobaptists today (MCSA Minutes 1989:65). Given the MCSA viewpoint about the unrepeatable nature of baptism, it still needs to be asked how Wesley justified repeat baptism, and yet the MCSA would demur in such a matter, even though the MCSA is Wesley's progeny.

It has already been seen that new birth language features extensively in Wesley's theology of baptism, particularly as John 3:3 and John 3:5 describe his own experience both before conversion and afterwards. Wesley was baptised in infancy and yet did not seem to spiritually understand or experience the real significance of Christianity, despite being highly qualified academically at an early age as an Anglican priest.

Through new birth after his ordination into full priesthood Wesley received new insight, and his theology changed accordingly especially in relation to water baptism. He thus saw everything in a revivalist and evangelical light and is why he emphasised that all who are born of water by baptism need even more to be born of the Spirit (Pratney 1983:73–74). He was thus willing to administer more than one baptism for evangelistic and spiritual purposes on baptized individuals. In Wesley's rules for his helpers he states, "you have nothing to do but to save as many souls as you can, to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance and with all your power build these up in the holiness of the Lord" (MCSA 2000:228). It seems that Wesley

was not as concerned about the effects of re-baptism as those in the modern and post-modern eras of the Christian church are because he was more concerned about the absolutely indispensable need for new birth of all people and is why he performed repeat baptisms in special circumstances. In his motto, Wesley had stated that all people need to be saved, can be saved and know that they are saved.

4.8 Conclusion

The multilateral conference debates studied in this chapter all articulate a double concern – abhorrence for the longstanding lack of unity on the issues surrounding baptism on the one hand, and a real attempt through dialogue to find a uniting theology based on a practical model which would be commensurate with the need for baptismal unity, on the other. All of these debates seem to reveal a move in the direction of convergence baptism. The convergence baptism possibility could also be supported from the fact that both baptisms now appear to be more widely accepted as being truly biblical.

The debates furthermore reveal that a convergence of the two baptisms not only possesses potential, but also seems to be a feasible option. The movement from non-evangelical sacramental orientations to evangelical forms of faith by members is a confirmation of this insight. When infant-baptised members of sacramentally-orientated Churches are evangelised, they seek neither rebaptism, nor a rite of confirmation, but rather a believer's baptism which for them is a sign of having found true redemption.

Practical paradigms of consensus baptism show that in the convergence of the two baptisms there is greater possibility for progress towards the unity in the one baptism than through the unilateral *status quo* approach. Even though the double practice is intended to be uniting, this has not been the experience generally. The history of baptismal practice clearly reveals that as long as the two baptisms are not linked by means of a common evangelistic objective, they will function as competitors and theological power struggles will continue to happen (MCSA Minutes 1989:59). Either infant baptism is dominant, as in the case of the MCSA's dual practice, or when believer's baptism becomes totally dominant, as exemplified in the RUC's Southern Africa paradigm, infant baptism will in turn suffer.

The MCSA for example, still experiences ongoing division, and this seems to materialise even though the various schools of baptismal belief are accommodated 'under one roof', but are practiced separately. It seems logical therefore to assume that a sharing of the sacramental evangelical message that Jesus saves can be applied and communicated more feasibly and

effectively in a convergence scenario, in which the two baptisms are combined with equal status and for the same mission.

Chapter Four thus brought together the results of the assessed information gleaned from conference dialogue and debate, and from paradigms of consensus-baptism all of which seems to reveal that convergence baptism possesses sufficient potential to be considered as a valid option.

An examination of the theological and practical foundations of the MCSA's understanding of paedobaptism is carried out in the next chapter so as to ascertain whether the potential for convergence does also exist in MCSA policy and practice.

Chapter 5

Theological Foundations and Practices of the Sacrament of Baptism in the MCSA

5.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter sought to discover whether the convergence notion of baptism can be read out of multilateral conference debates and new paradigms of consensus baptism as a valid and viable possibility. This chapter discusses sub-question three and its objective, which sets out to determine what the prevailing theological foundations and practices regarding baptism is in the MCSA. The chapter also discusses the differences and similarities between infant and believer's baptisms in the MCSA. It further determines why as sacrament, they are practiced separately, and to ascertain whether MCSA doctrine and theology possess the potential to form a coalition of convergence, despite the apparent separation of the two baptisms in its praxis.

5.2 MCSA Theological Foundations for Baptismal Doctrine

The MCSA is sacramentally and evangelically paedobaptist, because it has inherited this stance from Wesley, its founder. Wesley was an Anglican Minister in the Reformed Tradition but also was an evangelical revivalist, because of the Moravian's missionary influence which contributed to his new birth experience (*MCSA Know & Grow* 2010:62–64). As a progeny of Wesley, the MCSA thus combines both orthodox reformed and evangelical revivalist theological components in its baptismal doctrine and practice (MCSA 2000:2).

5.2.1 Current MCSA Sacramental View

This section forms the basis of the argument for why the MCSA practices water baptism according to a covenantal approach within the reformed and revivalist tradition of paedobaptism (MCSA Minutes 1989:61), and to ascertain where the problems of division could be located. Biblical covenant is believed to constitute the fundamental essence of water baptism. A question however is how covenant can be justified as the basis for Biblical baptism, particularly since there is no specific record in the Bible of a direct link between covenant and baptism.

In 1954, the MCSA issued what it called its “simple statement on baptism”, which reads,

the Old Covenant Children of Abraham were heirs by birth of the promises of God and members of His Chosen People, and their membership was sealed by circumcision (Luke 3:8; Philippians.3:5). Under the new covenant, we are born anew by the Spirit; we become by repentance and faith members of the new Israel, the church (Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The

infant however, though he [*sic*] is received into the covenant community, the church, and shares in its blessings, does not reap the full benefits until in due course he [*sic*] appropriates [these] for himself [*sic*] (MCSA Minutes 1954:52–53).

Whilst infant baptism does not enjoy specific text and verse support in the Bible, the MCSA like Wesley, practices baptism because Christ commanded His followers to preach, make disciples, baptise and teach, as stated in Matthew 28:19ff. This reference is one of several in the Bible from which infant baptism is implied and deduced in MCSA theology.

The inferred inclusivity which gives rise to baptism's double practice in the MCSA is also derived from various other references to baptism in the Bible, and these go together to form the basis of MCSA baptismal position. The MCSA thus believes that baptism was practiced immediately after the Church's spiritual birth. Both evangelised adults and their infants were accordingly baptised.

In Acts 2:37ff, a call is issued for these listeners to “repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Christ”. Believer's baptism was thus considered primary since the circumstance was seen as a missionary one. In this context, the Gospel of Christ is directed at adult males and females primarily (Acts 2:44). The practice is also associated with the promise of the Holy Spirit, which indicates a salvific intention for both adults and their children (Acts 2:38; 39). Household baptism is practiced following the conversion of the father, mother, or family head (Acts 16:11–34). Baptism is also practiced because of Christ's Death and Resurrection, as stated in Romans 6:3–4, and is seen as replacing circumcision, as in Colossians 2:11–12. Acts 2:37ff, moreover, states that “you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is to you and your children and to all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God may call”, and is another Bible passage that is seen as legitimising the baptism of men women and their children. Baptism is also believed to be a message which stresses the need for Holy Spirit baptism being indispensably necessary for Christian rebirth (John 3:5) (MCSA 1976:69).

All these portions of Biblical narrative are viewed as being linked to the concept of covenant, and together form a definition of MCSA baptismal belief and its practice. The MCSA broadly believes that Biblical covenant is God's plan of reaching unbelievers for their salvation, nurturing and growth in the Christian life. This belief includes the Church's role in the execution of God's salvific plan for all of humanity. Baptism is not however, a cold mechanical form of salvation, but is distinctly rational and relational in both its intent and orientation.

Stress is laid upon God's covenantal plan for redemption in terms of relationship - they, "shall be my people and I will be their God. They shall all know me from the least to the greatest", is what the covenant promises after its implementation. Covenant is thus considered a personal and spiritual change of heart attitude, and because it is relational it is also a family matter (Jeremiah 31:31). Nothing is said however, about who should be baptised in the text on baptism found in Matthew 28:19. Christ has left this for the Church to decide upon (Hallesby 1964:19).

The MCSA would thus concur with Warfield's reason for the inclusion of infants in baptismal practice based on biblical revelation "God established His Church in the days of Adam and put children into it. They must remain there until He puts them out. They are still then members of the Church and as such entitled to its ordinances" (Strawbridge 2003:201-202). Ultimately, adopting a covenantal relational approach is ideal for baptism, because evangelism can be achieved through the family. The family unit biblically is the collective method that God uses to reach sinful people for their salvation, their discipling, and for others such as children, friends and neighbours to enter into a redemptive relationship with God.

There are a number of aspects which cannot be left out of any definition of sacramental covenant, because these contribute to its great potential to be an effective instrument in the execution of God's salvific plan. The MCSA thus believes that the command to disciple to all nations is the basis of the protocol for outreach, which is to be inclusive of both infants and adults (Matthew 28:19). While it is taken for granted that, on clear covenantal grounds, adult believers are to be baptised, yet infants should not be excluded even though there are no specific examples of infant baptism to be found in the New Testament.

The strong evangelistic appeal that a covenantal approach is designed to carry arises from the value which Jesus places on children when He says that children are to be brought unto Him (Chongnaham, 1993:6). Fundamental to all of God's dealings with sinful people is however their need for salvation and covenant exists for this purpose (Methodist Service Book 1975:D1-D11).

5.2.2 Baptism Defined According to God's Covenantal Purpose

Covenant is the essence of the Christian message for the redemption of people. Wesley's directive to his helpers, read by MCSA leaders at least once a year at MCSA synods and conferences, is that they must be busy with the redeeming work of Christ. "It is not your business to preach so many times and to take care of this or that Society but to save as many souls as you can, to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance and with all your

power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord” (MCSA Laws&Discipline 2000:228).

As the core of the purpose of Christ’s coming is the redemption of all people, yet salvation can only occur because of the prior action of the Grace of God. Grace is of the essence of covenant, and God’s covenantal plan has always held salvation as its goal. It therefore follows that sacramental baptism needs to carry the same objective which indeed is the case in MCSA baptismal policy (MCSA Minutes 1989:59–62).

5.2.3 Evangelistic Purpose of Covenant Based on Sacrament

Covenant as the key in MCSA baptismal practice possesses two parts: God’s initiative for inclusive salvation (sacramental) and a call for a response (evangelical) for people to “come to personal faith” (MCSA Minutes 1989:61). Baptism, seen as proclamation which needs to come through the twin requirements of sacrament and evangelicalism because this enables it to preclude focusing on itself but on the evangelistic sharing of the good news of the Gospel of Christ as initiated by God.

Covenantal baptism is furthermore primarily evangelistic rather than redemptive. And yet the question is how both baptisms can meet these sacramental and evangelistic requirements unitedly given the differences between the two baptisms in MCSA practice and the challenges which these differences present.

5.2.4 Similarities and Differences between Infant and Adult Believers Baptism

5.2.4.1 Biblical Evidence Factor

Infant and believer’s baptism are directly kindred in that they both derive from the same source, and are the outcome of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist (Cullmann 1950:70). This evidence for the practice of infant baptism in the Bible is only inferred. For believer-baptists, however, such evidence is considered both specific and abundant. Tensions arise at this point, for inasmuch as this difference is not always taken into account in debates of baptism,’ That is to say, because the meaning of believer’s baptism tends to be superimposed on infant baptism which is not accepted by all Methodist evangelicals thus becomes an enduring source of division.

Because this basic difference between the two baptisms is not sufficiently clarified and dealt with, and also because the absence of information about how the two baptisms are to relate in

MCSA doctrine and practice, seems to be the major cause of a contentious form of thinking which then leads to requests for rebaptism.

5.2.4.2 Preventive Grace and God's Initiative

Both baptisms are preceded by what Methodism calls preventive grace, which is also known as the sacramental aspect of baptism. Sacrament in its deeper definition describes the salvific purpose of Jesus' Life, Death and Resurrection which God planned beforehand in order to give out the message that through Jesus God has taken the initiative to save people from their sin. Because Jesus' message is penetrative it moves people to humbly search for God (MCSA Minutes 1989:59; 62–63).

The message of preventive grace in the Christian era began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh, as stated in Acts: 2:17. This statement in the Acts of the Apostles is a quote from the Old Testament which confirms the prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:20). While still requiring to consciously receive the Holy Spirit, preventive grace in this sense makes it possible for a person to meet Christ after the Holy Spirit convicts of sin and assists people to become aware of their need for salvation (John 16:8–11) (MCSA Minutes 1976:339).

Baptism thus communicates that God seeks to save the individual before the individual even thinks of searching for God or knows about God's redeeming gift (MCSA Minutes 1989:61, 63). Sacrament in this sense is the same for both infants and adults, because God's Grace possesses the initiative for "all to be redeemed" which initiative commences from physical birth. God's preventive initiative is to be understood as the objective work of Grace by the Holy Spirit, before any subjective human response can be given, but is imparted so as to prompt the response.

Conflict enters however, when re-born infant-baptised adults who seek a first-time believer's baptism, are offered a Confirmation Service instead, which they consider is neither directly sanctioned in the Bible, nor sacramentally driven.

Preventive grace as God's initiative is believed by the MCSA to be given because the Gospel's message of good news is that, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son that whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). MCSA baptismal belief signals the redeeming love of God and by reason of this, individuals will seek for Christ and His gift of salvation for themselves. The MCSA thus sees no reason why both baptisms cannot carry this same purpose in their respective messages – that God sent Christ as (His)

means of providing salvation as a gift for all men, woman and children (MCSA Minutes 1989:62–63) – even though infants are not able to respond, given their paediatric limitations. This aspect however presents yet another point at which conflict occurs for infant-baptised members.

Since baptism is considered something that infants are not able to experience for themselves, yet when a believer's baptism is requested for those baptised as infants following on from their new birth experience, this is refused by the Church on theological and doctrinal grounds (MCSA Minutes 1989:65–66), yet for these this refusal does not make Biblical sense. Doctor Moller's rationale is perhaps a most apt description of this scenario, when he states that,

after all the years that have elapsed since the baptism as a baby, the person must testify: 'By my baptism, of which I know nothing and in which I had no responsible part, but of the administration of which I have been told, I testify that I have thereby identified myself with Christ'. The Bible does not however teach that one should be informed that one has been baptized (else one would not know anything about it) or persuaded to accept a baptism in which one has had no conscious or responsible part to play (Konig, Lederle & Moller 1983:82).

Infant-baptised people on account of their infant baptism are thus faced with the dilemma of never being allowed an officially-sanctioned believer's baptism as an expression and experience of what they know is true new birth in Christ, as it was experienced in the Apostolic Era of Christianity. so clearly stipulated in the New Testament (Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; 15:1, 25; John 7:7; 19:18–19; Romans 6:1–7; Colossians 2:9–15).

God's prevenient Grace is indeed nevertheless made prominent by the message of infant baptism, yet a personal experience of saving grace needs also to be indispensably required by means of water baptism because these elements are in any case required by the doctrinal requirements of the MCSA (MCSA Laws & Discipline 2000:2; 7).

5.2.4.3 Entry into the Church as the Body of Christ

Both baptisms are designed for entry into the family of God's people – the Church – which is seen as the environment where the presence of God is constantly active and known, and where Christian evangelistic nurture for redemptive outcomes is aptly provided (MCSA Minutes 1989:60; MCSA Minutes 1954:54).

The MCSA thus believes that the Church as a gathering of Christians wherein Christ is present (MCSA 2000:1) needs to be considered as critical for the discipling of baptised people and also for those yet to be baptised. The Church however is often in a state of division, because it is

diluted by Christian nominalism. The need for the evangelisation of baptised members is neglected, which results in membership reduction, and the general weakening of Christian influence.

Practicing baptism for the sake of baptism, without the preaching of the Gospel of repentance, faith and salvation is normally a sign of spiritual poverty, and is thus a powerful catalyst for dissatisfaction, which ultimately reflects in the non-attendance of services by members. This therefore is where the real battle-line of conflict exists. All the promises associated with baptism and made by both parents and fellow members at every baptismal service seem to make little difference in the need for a faithful commitment to Church and absenteeism seems to have become a growing phenomenon in paedo-baptist churches.

Some in the Church seem to be satisfied with a Church where the true “presence of Christ is palpably absent”, and appear to be happy with a dying church. And yet there are those baptized who are conspicuously different, because they really do know the Lord, and try to seek for Him with all their heart. Does this circumstance not thus have reference to the struggles of division within the Church; between a faithful Church and a broader one; of Anabaptist reformed evangelicals pitted against reformed paedo-baptists, or as in Martin Luther’s time with the church functioning as *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, literally meaning “little churches within the church” (Bridges & Phypers 1977:108–109) which is to say that a faithful core of Christians exists within the context of a larger non-committed group.

Adult baptism was originally emphasised by the radical proponents of the Lutheran reformation because it was considered by them to be “an eloquent way of rejecting Christian sacralism and all [that sacralism] stood for. Sacralism can be defined as the confluence of Church and State through which one is called upon to alter the other. Adult baptism therefore became principally a matter of separation, so as to bring attention to the need for spiritual reform to follow on from doctrinal reform (Bridges & Phypers 1977:106–107). The issue of rebaptism usually then becomes a sign of the need for spiritual reform in this scenario. This was the scenario that Wesley found himself in his time and which led to his search for Christ and the need for revival (Pratney 1983:70–77). Since baptism tended to play a negative role ecclesiastically during Wesley’s time, it also ironically began to play a positive role as reflected in the demand for believer’s baptism and seems to be the same cycle that baptistic doctrinal practice appears currently to be going through in the MCSA.

5.2.4.4 Instruction and Baptism

Coming from the same source and possessing the same covenant purpose of promoting evangelism for conscious personal redemption through personal repentance and faith from within the context of a community of living faith is indispensable for being a part of a biblical church made up of devoted Christians. This description is thus a shared purpose of both baptisms as detailed in MCSA policy and practice (MCSA 2000:16). The preparations for the baptism of infants and of the baptism of adults are thus fundamentally the same and are critical. The Methodist preparational guide states that the obligation of Ministers is to ensure that adequate instruction is given to parents or sponsors who bring infants to baptism, and also for any adults earnestly seeking this form of Church devotion (MCSA Minutes 1989:63–65).

The core ingredients for the instructions given in the preparation for baptism include: a clear statement that baptism affirms the truth that God seeks us before we seek Him; instruction concerning the origins of baptism and its significance as a sign of new life in Christ and entry into the Christian Church; reasons for the prominence of believer's baptism as due to the missionary global situation in the New Testament period; a justification of infant baptism on the basis of the Biblical witness that children do have a place in covenantal community, with an emphasis on the primacy of God's Grace over any act or response given; the need for baptised persons to personally appropriate by faith the salvation being proclaimed by the message of baptism; instruction around the important role of the Church in the nurture and pastoral care of all who are baptised is to be given; the need for parents and sponsors to have personal faith and to lead Christian exemplary lives in order to fulfil the obligations of baptismal promise, and meet the accompanying challenge levied on parents and sponsors to consider their own relationship to Christ in the life of the Church for such a fresh commitment (MCSA Minutes 1989: 63–65).

Yet the need to lead infant baptised people to Christ is something that seems to be lacking in this instruction list, and is in David Wright's view the reason for the failure of the Church "to deliver the goods" in terms of its evangelistic and discipling mandate of Matthew 28:17–20 (Wright 2005:7). While this instructional list is fully in line with the overall tenets of paedobaptist covenantal belief, yet its required implementation is not always carried out as per the Gospel of Christ through repentance and faith, even though all of these requirements are promised by parents and the congregation to be adhered to at every baptismal service.

Formal catechumenate provision with an emphasis on evangelism seems thus to have regressed. Additionally, parents either do not know how to lead their children to a life of being Christian, or they lack in their instruction to their offspring enough of an emphasis on the need for both repentance and faith. When baptism itself in paedobaptising Churches is allowed to become an ineffectual institutionalised ritual rather than a dynamic sacramental event based on evangelical instruction, then the purpose of this rite is being thoroughly corrupted. Ministers of paedobaptising denominations often have difficulty in dealing with parents who wish to be regarded as Christian but are themselves seemingly not redeemed by faith alone and this is thus the reason for the lack of motivation to do as they have promised. This can therefore be seen as the primary reason for the recession of numbers in paedobaptistic Churches and is confirmingly demonstrated by the sociological surveys such as those published by the Pew Foundation (Hermeneutics 2016:1-10) The follow-up of pastoral care and spiritual nurturing of both parents and their baptised infants is obligatory for Methodist ministers, (MCSA Minutes 1989:65), and is wholly consistent with the theology of covenantal baptism in MCSA teaching and yet this requirement is barely observed by sections of the Church unless parents themselves are qualified enough to take on the responsibility (Wright 2005:7).

All these factors are considerable drawbacks, but when water baptized Church members actually become conscious of their spiritual needs as unredeemed sinners, and when their real awakening comes they often decide take the so-dubbed “live according to the bible teaching churches” route in seeking for spiritual guidance and new birth by the Holy Spirit. Could this scenario be the main reason for declining numbers within paedobaptist Churches as shown by the sociological surveys that feature in this study (Keum 2013:5). Because baptism is a foundational ministry, it should rather play an indispensably vital part in the spiritual and congregational growth, as is seen in the Acts of the Apostles during the Apostolic era, and afterwards in various sections and stages of the Church during its history (Keum 2013:4-5).

5.2.4.5 Baptismal Separateness and Sacramental Integration

An interchangeable use of purpose and meaning between the two baptisms seems also to be where differences between the baptisms become evident. This is apparent in regard to the MCSA’s theological statement on baptism issued from the 1989 minutes of its Annual Conference under the rubric of the MCSA’s theological Statement on Baptism, which states, that as:

God is the creator of everything that is good, he is also the creator of people, and thus all who are born of earthly parents need to be born again in order to see the Kingdom of God (MCSA Minutes 1989:60).

The statement further reads in saying that:

The Gospel of the sacrament of baptism was instituted by Christ Himself and enjoined by Him upon the church. It is administered by water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ and unites the baptized with Christ and with His people. Therefore, it normally takes place in the presence of the congregation (MCSA Minutes 1989:60).

It seems to be more Biblically correct however to state that baptism is the sign of the new life that is being offered by Christ, and when new life is Divinely-given this gift does not always necessarily intersect or coincide entirely with the act of baptism *per se*.

The minute further states that the unfolding of the meaning of baptism is taken from the bible narrative which, according to the MCSA view signifies the provision of a number of benefits. These include: participation in the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, so that the baptised is identified with Christ in their death, buried with Him, rises to newness of life in Him, and by Him is made an inheritor of the Kingdom of God; a cleansing of the heart from sin; a commitment to a new way of life and an incorporation into the invisible body of Christ, and the visible Church through renewal by the Holy Spirit who initiates God's Work of Grace, and brings that Work to completion in a person's life (MCSA Minutes 1989:60). All of these aspects of baptisms meaning are believed to derive from biblical baptismal narrative as contained in Romans 6:1–7; Colossians 2:9–14; Titus 3:4–7; Acts 2:40–41; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:25–27. And yet these biblical statements can in reality only apply to responding adults and not to passive children (Schreiner and Wright 2006:92–96). Therefore, when the meaning of sacrament claimed to be Biblically provided which is clearly connected to adults, it is taken too far when these are applied to infants without some sort of Gospel qualification stipulated as an overriding requirement.

5.2.4.6 Over-Emphasis on Profession of Faith for Baptism as Repentance

The MCSA minute further states that baptism involves the imparting of God's Gift, and the responses of the baptised to that Gift. It can thence be assumed that the person baptised needs to make a personal decision to come to Christ for salvation based on repentance and faith, as required by the Gospel of Christ yet the Church rather speaks about the need for an infant baptized person to grow into the stature of Christ (Ephesians 4:13), and that the personal

experience of faith in God is not only an initial act but also a lifelong process. The specific wording in this in this regard is that the baptised person is required to:

make a profession of faith at a later stage, and Christian nurture is directed to eliciting growth after the profession. In both cases [of the baptism of infants and of adults], the act of baptism signifies God's redeeming act in Jesus Christ which does not depend upon human merit or achievement but witnesses to the truth that God first gives His grace to His people before they can respond to it. In the case of infants, the sign precedes the personal profession, and in the case of the believer, the initial profession precedes the sign (MCSA Minutes 1989:61).

This instruction broadly may be in line with the requirements of the Gospel message of Christ, but what is missing is an emphasis on the need for repentance and a specific acceptance of Christ into one's life for new birth. Before a human being can grow physically the human being must first be born, is the core logic of this argument.

The emphasis however is on believing in the profession of faith no stress on the need for repentance and faith as a Gospel requirement. Covenant baptism in this theology also signifies that the "once and for all" act of Christ is not only what makes the baptised a member of the covenantal community but also serves as the basis of the ruling that baptism is unrepeatable. Humility and the confession of personal sin which is what every biblically baptised individual is called upon to do, and is how Jesus Himself as prime example responded, even though He was completely without sin, but this is not mentioned (Isaiah 53; Matthew 10:38, 16:24; Mark 8:34, 15:1,25; John 7:7; 19:18–19; Romans 6:1–7; Colossians 2:9–15).

If all this is missing from MCSA current baptismal belief, especially as concerns the baptism of infants, then perhaps more than one baptism in a convergence scenario of uniting infant and believer's baptism could more definitely incentivise people to come to Christ through the Gospel call of Christ? This could be of greater benefit than limiting baptism to a single application.

Witherington III (2007) had also argued in favour of baptism as being a call for repentance that precedes personal faith for new birth by the Holy Spirit based on Biblical examples as in Acts 2:37ff., the experiences of Paul in Acts 18, and in the case of the Ephesians in Acts 19:1–7 (Witherington III 2007:15; 35; 58; 70–77).

5.2.4.7 Infant Baptism and Covenant Standing Problem

The MCSA baptises the children of Christian parents who are in the care of guardians or sponsors with the official approval of the Church. The Church believes that such children have

a place within the covenant community, and emphasises the primacy of God's Grace over any human effort of response. Furthermore, the responsibility lies with the Church to provide special nurture and care for such children and their parents.

The Church is required by its own policy statements to undertake in the spiritual support and nourishment of all of its baptized members, to enable them to grow in God's Grace and become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ (MCSA Minutes 1989:61–62). All this is assumed to comprise what it takes to be truly Christian. While both baptisms come from the same source, and exist for the same purpose, yet the meaning of baptism in the Bible for infants cannot be considered to be the same biblically as it is expected to be for responding adults.

In believer's baptism, the purpose of baptism is clearly evangelistic, but in infant baptism, the information is more about its covenantal meaning in terms of the need to uphold God's prevenient grace. Infant baptism therefore is rather a message that God is at work towards the salvation for this to materialise in adult life. Yet infant baptism is presented in a way as though it were a baptism for believers – of salvation already received because of its covenantal foundation (Wright 2005:60–62).

During certain periods in the history of Christianity infant baptism has been a popular religious rite because it was generally considered to possess salvific power. This would appeal to the unredeemed because the need for an acceptance of Christ through a dying to self, and then rising to new life in Him by means of the Gospel that necessitates repentance is something that people are not naturally immediately willing to do. Over-emphasising covenantal standing by means of a rite of water baptism, necessary as it is does not go far enough, could thus be diversionary from the Christ requirement of personal repentance commensurate with a receptive faith. While in an objective sense John 3:5; Romans 6:1–7; Galatians 3:26–29; Titus 3:4–7; and 1 Peter 3:20–21 are texts which carry universal application in what they express through baptism, yet exegetically and subjectively these cannot apply to infants because it is obvious that infants do not possess the capacity for salvific response and faithful obligation (Barth 1959:34–35).

The wording of the MCSA Order of Service at face value is similarly mostly a description of what can only be applied to adults. The 1975 Order of Service for Baptism, for example, reads as follows: "Thus the children of Christian parents are brought to be baptized with water as a sign of new life in Christ and to be made members of God's family the Church" (Methodist Service Book 1975:A7).

The wording in this service rite insinuates that the child already possesses new life in Christ because of baptism; and the prayer, “we pray that this child will die to sin and be raised to the new life in Christ” (Methodist Service Book 1975:A8) is a reference that implies baptismal regeneration. The pledge asked of the congregation: “will you maintain the common life of worship and grace that all children among you grow in grace and in the knowledge and the love of God?” (Methodist Service Book 1975:A9) may presuppose new birth, but no message is given that the infant still needs to be encouraged and instructed around the necessity of new birth by the Holy Spirit before new life can be accepted and is thus the true basis of the message of the purpose of covenant baptism.

The reception of the infant so baptised is finally declared by these words: “by baptism we receive this child into the congregation of Christ’s flock, and pray that he/she may not be ashamed to hold fast the faith of Christ crucified” (Methodist Service Book 1975:A11). Again, nothing is stated about the child’s need for repentance and faith and the need to be sure of personal salvation by means of the Holy Spirit. In this scenario, the infant is assumed to be truly Christian by means of covenantal water baptism and not by the working of the Holy Spirit through a response of repentance and faith.

Because of conflicting views concerning the true nature of sacrament, this aspect of paedobaptism needs redefining in terms of what sacrament actually means in the Bible, and of what is clearly being asked for in terms of the biblical evangelical requirement of God’s redeeming work (MCSA Laws & Discipline 2000:2).

5.2.4.8 *Status Quo* Baptismal Consequences in the MCSA

Data collected from a questionnaire to MCSA Ministers in 2009 provides a fairly recent accurate idea of what Ministers in the MCSA still hold as true regarding both the baptismal prohibitions and other issues concerning rebaptism in the MCSA. These are discussed in this chapter.

There is an overall sense that baptism in the MCSA carries with it serious issues which can lead to unacceptable consequences. One Minister had had requests from members who wished to renew their commitment to Christ and His Church by rebaptism and had to decline. In another response, it was reported that two very committed members left the MCSA and went to a charismatic Church instead, which was only too delighted to accept them. This was felt to be a great loss; because the members thus lost were very committed in their role as Methodist Church leaders.

These leaders felt the need to express their recommitment to Christ and His Church through rebaptism. Their argument was that the MCSA had denied their right to respond to God's enduring Grace in not allowing them to submit to Christ as committed believers. The argument that rebaptism would lead to the denial of the veracity of their first baptism was felt to be remarkably lacking in substance. Marriage vows (a sacrament in the Catholic Church) can be renewed, and many couples do so as an expression of their ongoing love for one other, but this most certainly does not invalidate those vows made by marriage couples on their wedding day.

There is also a view expressed that both Ministers and members seem to be preoccupied with doing as they see fit concerning the matter of baptism, and that a rebaptism would simply be reported as a matter of course, if at all. A statement is also made that many confirmands not baptised as infants receive a second baptism, and shortly thereafter go through the rite of confirmation which appears to be an unnecessary duplication in terms of the purpose of these dedications. In one Church, a Porta-Pool was installed, and adults were baptised in place of confirmation, which all seemed to be acceptable to the Minister concerned.

Another Minister reported that when he performed what may be referred to as rebaptism, especially of those who did not want to reject their infant baptism, he used the words: "Having been baptized I now confess to you all the promises that are yours within the context of the new covenant as you come forward, declaring your faith in Christ and desire to go through the waters of baptism even as He did" (Kretzmann 2011:168–171).

It was also reported that some MCSA Ministers invite Ministers from believer-baptising Churches to perform rebaptisms – either in the Methodist Church, or in the Churches of other Minister. A Bishop immersed people with the words: "Remembering your baptism I now immerse you in this water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Yet another Minister reported that he took a stand at a Methodist synod in the year 2000 and quite emphatically answered, "No!" to the question: "Do you believe and teach the MCSA doctrine?" (This response was with reference specifically to baptism.)

The Minister in question believes that belief around MCSA's Baptism and Holy Communion remains problematic. The resolution which he had tabled was unanimously accepted and referred to what he described as "the theological *cul-de-sac* of the Doctrines Commission and has not been heard of since" (Kretzmann 2011:170–171). Some Ministers also feel that baptism is a problematic issue because a rite and practice which is ultimately a means to achieving God's Grace has instead been simply turned into a law by the Church.

Ministers have been “kicked out” of the Church, and large numbers of members have left and gone elsewhere. A question which begs an answer therefore is if “the MCSA understanding of baptism is not regeneration (i.e. fundamental to salvation or a form of salvation by works) but simply the sign of having entered the life of Christ, then where is the harm [done] of repeating that sign but not as a rebaptism” (Kretzmann 2011:70–171).

These responses generally confirm the contention that while issues concerning water baptism in the MCSA may appear to be non-existent, still a simply-put questionnaire has yielded replies which paint an entirely different picture. That there seems to have been a substantial decline of membership in Methodist congregations generally over the past three decades was confirmed by the MCSA CEO (Letter of The MCSA’s Chief Executive Officer Charmaine Morgan, October 20116) and recorded in the first chapter of this study. The black constituency of Church membership seems to be particularly negatively affected by the baptismal impasse in the MCSA (MCSA Anderson Doctrines Committee 2015).

What weight of significance does this discussion and debate carry for the possibility of baptismal convergence? What the surveys and debates presented earlier in this study reveal is confirmation of what is also happening in the MCSA: that there is a trend developing ever more in momentum away from mainline and Protestant Churches by evangelised infant baptised members to denominations such as Non-Denominational, Baptist and Pentecostal Churches which practice believer’s baptism. This confirms the contention that there is a significant link between evangelicalism for new birth and believer’s baptism which and makes it increasingly clear that convergence baptism would be a good option to pursue.

5.3 Conclusion

In some theologies of baptism, particularly those with ‘high view’ leanings, sacrament is defined as God’s sovereign initiative with little emphasis on the need for a serious personal search for God and His gift of redemption. In the other view, sacrament and evangelistic response are completely separated as in MCSA baptism.

Even though sacrament is viewed as totally God’s sovereign act, the need is still for human decision, and personal response to Jesus therefore cannot be neglected as it is the Gospel way to find God and to become the disciples of Jesus. The “coming to faith” or “intellectual recognition” of the validity of one’s past baptism are terminologies which are repeatedly used in Methodism, whilst the need for new birth by personal repentance and a receptive faith seems to be under emphasised. People are seemingly thus allowed to believe that they are Christian

before they are truly newly born by the Holy Spirit. This experience around baptism and conversion is demonstrated in the life of John Wesley and of what he had discovered as a paedobaptized person. Even though he was a fully ordained Anglican Minister yet he only obtained real redemption after his ordination. Wesley had thus emphasised that because infant baptized people sin away the benefits of their baptism, they needed to be re-born by God's Spirit (John 3:5 & 7) based on repentance and a trusting faith (Matthew 4:17).

While MCSA covenant baptism doctrine and theology rightly stress the importance of viewing baptism as a message which embraces both God's Initiative of prevenient grace and the human response of faith and is broadly in line with what is believed about covenant in general paedobaptist understanding, yet the MCSA still firmly favours the tradition of infant baptism over against the baptism of believers. The coming to faith by infant-baptised people and the nurturing attendant thereon seems to give more credence to covenantal standing than on calling people to an evangelistic response of repentance and faith in MCSA theology (MCSA Minutes 1989:59). A one-sided emphasis placed on Divine initiative action is however made at the cost of a "repentance orientated decisional response", by which the initiate is to "take up the cross" and come to Christ through personal repentance for salvation. A one-sided emphasis of sacramental meaning which tends to foment nominal redemption need not happen if the two baptisms were to be merged.

Since the two baptisms are practiced in parallel in paedobaptism this one-sided sacramental approach has likely created most of the problems for the witness and unity of the church. According to Karl Barth, infant baptism only constitutes half a baptism and as such is incomplete. Nominal Christianity which by and large is fomented by an incomplete baptism also itself constitutes only "half" of the way towards what it means to be completely new-born by the Holy Spirit. Because MCSA doctrine is required to be both sacramental and evangelical, and in the light of all the theological issues that accrue from this, the conclusion reached is that the two baptisms as hitherto described could be reconfigured to coalesce in unity.

The next Chapter will consist of a discussion of whether convergence baptism could be pushed further theologically by support from Wesley's dialectical theology and Quadrilateral deduction.

Chapter 6

Convergence as Possible New Knowledge Based on Wesleyan Dialectical Theology

6.1 Introduction

Chapter five discussed the theological foundations of baptism in the MCSA, its practices and some of the problems which may be causative of rebaptism. Whether these two baptisms could be conjoined in a theologically acceptable way is the fundamental focus of this study in this next chapter.

Because paedo-baptism appears to be a dialectical matter, due to it embracing both sacrament and evangelicalism, the testing of a convergence notion of the two baptisms is thus an issue which seems to require a dialectical method of theology. This method underpins the task of this chapter and thereby seeks to answer the study's fourth question, whether convergence baptism would be theologically valid and viable as an alternative for rebaptism to meet the need for baptism to become more effectual as an act of repentance evangelism. John Wesley's theology on redemption and baptism is relevant because of its dialectical nature.

Having begun with the introduction this chapter goes on to discuss whether Wesleyan dialectical theology¹⁴ can provide a sacramental and evangelical alternative for rebaptism and incorporates a discussion around the validity of dialectical theology itself. The final section deals with the possibility of redefining both MCSA policy and practice based on a modified version of the convergence model as used by the United Church of North India.

6.2 Wesleyan Dialectic on the Possibility of Convergence

After his Aldersgate experience of conversion, Wesley understood that the evangelisation of all people was paramount. Evangelism for him formed part of the fundamental purpose of Christianity, and also therefore of baptism. This belief is reflected in Wesley's evangelistic motto: that all people need a Saviour: all can be saved, all can know that they are saved, all can

¹⁴ Dialectical theology is a term used to refer to the early views of Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) which emphasised the tensions, paradoxes, and [seeming] contradictions in the relationship between God and humanity and the absolute gulf fixed between the human and the Divine (McGrath, 4th Edition 1993:489). It is not only an investigation of these tensions but also consists of a search for their solution (Coulson *et al.* 1984:232). Baptism as one entity in two parts is designed to play a role in this Divine human salvific interplay (Mc Grath 4th edition 1993:489).

be saved to the uttermost and all can give witness to their salvation (Lewis 1954:115–123). This ideal is also articulated in the instruction that Wesley gave his followers and is called the twelve rules of a helper: “You have nothing to do but to save souls and with all your power to build them up in the holiness of the Lord” (MCSA 2000:227).

As Wesley worked from this simple motto of new birth, this ideal also serves as the basis of his profound appreciation of the evangelical aspect of covenantal baptism. In expounding on John 3:5 as the Biblical basis for an understanding of baptism, Wesley stated that “new birth is not the same thing as baptism, so it does not always accompany baptism: they do not constantly go together; a man [*sic*] may possibly be born of water, and yet not be born of the Spirit” (Wesley 1958:523). He goes on to speak about infants in relation to new birth, and states that, “it is certain that our Church [the Anglican Church] supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again; and it is allowed that the whole Office for the baptism of infants proceeds upon this supposition” (Wesley 1958:523).

Wesley further contends that because the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills, he has no idea whether or how infants, and even if adults are born of the Spirit but insists that, “whatever the case with infants, it is sure all of riper years who are baptised are not at the same time born of the Spirit”, and then quotes Jesus’ words, “the tree is known by its fruits” (Wesley 1958:523).

While Wesley believed in the legitimacy of all forms of baptism administered in the name of the Trinity, Mohn (2006:3–4) nevertheless contends that Wesley advised the baptised person – whether wicked or moral – not born of the Spirit, to deny their prior baptism, so that by implication, the person could be re-baptised. But Mohn seemingly misrepresents Wesley. Wesley did not ask baptised people to deny their infant baptism because he believed that infant baptism was Biblically illegitimate. Wesley believed rather that baptised people were required to recognise their own need to receive Holy Spirit new birth. His emphasis was thus more on the need for people to be saved from their sin, rather than on the administration of baptism. When, therefore, Wesley said to his listeners that they should, “lean no more on the staff of the broken reed that ye were born again in baptism”, his emphasis was on the word “were”. He did not mean that their baptism was ineffectual at that time: he meant that people had, “rendered it ineffectual since” (Bridges & Phypers 1977:141). Their first baptism was legitimate, but its real redemptive benefit had been nullified by the sins they were deliberately committing. It was for this reason seemingly that Wesley did repeat baptism on any baptised person who repented, came back to Christ and demonstrated the Fruit of the Holy Spirit in their living. Wesley’s use

of baptism was thus clearly evangelistic, and this emerges from the way he utilised John 3:5 (Bridges & Phypers 1977:141).

The emphasis in baptism was thus not only on the sacramental nature of baptism, but also equally on its evangelistic appeal, which called for a changed life through repentance and faith. In Wesley, therefore, baptism carried more of a deictic evangelistic focus (Konig, Lederle & Möller 1983:11), than a sacramental one.

The writings of Wesley (Wesley 1958:524–525) also indicate that the emphasis on the need to be born of the Spirit was resisted, probably because this subject was not much addressed at that time and never has been popular, even though it is the Good News of God Himself (Matthew 1:20–23). Wesley therefore did not preach baptism, but proclaimed rather that baptised people should recognise their need to receive Holy Spirit new birth. In his rhetoric against baptism as new birth, Wesley stated that:

it appears too plain to be denied, that those who were children of the devil before they were baptized continue the same after baptism, for the works of their father they do: they continue as servants of sin, without any pretence either to inward or outward holiness You have already denied your baptism a thousand and a thousand times; day by day. Whenever, therefore, you give place to him again, whenever you do any of the works of the devil, then you deny your baptism...be you baptized or unbaptized, 'you must be born again'; otherwise it is not possible that you should be inwardly holy: and without inward as well as outward holiness, you cannot be happy, much less in the world to come (Wesley 1958:524–525).

That infant baptism is not Holy Spirit new birth, but regarded by Wesley as a step which leads to new birth, was a constant refrain in Wesley's message. For Wesley, baptism was clearly not a means to grace in the sense of being baptismal regeneration, but rather was an evangelistic opportunity (Bridges & Phypers 1977:141) that leads to true and real redemption.

If the message of a second baptism was a message which assisted to bring on reception of new birth for a changed and better life, this for Wesley was what true Biblical baptism was meant for, even if it meant administering the water aspect of the ritual more than once. Neither did Wesley call baptised people to recognise the legitimacy of their covenantal standing based on their baptism, but rather always pointed baptised people to Christ and His saving work.

The MCSA in line with Wesley also believes in the necessity of new birth as constituting the purpose of the baptismal message. The Minutes of its 1976 Conference make this clear:

Baptism is a sacrament not of our decision but of God's saving grace...It is God who is active before we are; He begins his work of salvation without waiting for us [people] to understand what He is doing. Our response is necessary but God's action comes first. This is not to say that a person so baptized has less need for repentance, faith and personal commitment to Jesus Christ. These which usually precede baptism in an adult, are essential components of the Christian life and must in due time follow the baptism of an infant (MCSA 1976:340).

We have seen thus far that sacramental evangelicalism, rather than sacramental redemption was Wesley's motivating message for the practice of baptism. In taking the debate surrounding the nature of Wesleyan theology on baptism further, Brian Brewer seeks to ascertain whether Wesley's use of a dialectical method, and by implication whether also Wesley's practice of repeat baptism, could, "withstand systematic examination" (Brewer 2011:109).

Brewer's relevance in this study is thus that if the dialectical method can "withstand systematic examination", this would be a more certain step in the direction of the acceptance of a baptismal convergence option.

6.2.1 Wesleyan Dialectical Theology Context

To correctly understand Wesley's dialectical method, Brewer (Brewer 2011:108) importantly refers to Wesley's upbringing and training for the Anglican Ministry. Brewer states that Anglican doctrine was intersected by Wesley's Aldersgate experience of conversion. His conversion came from an influence outside of the Anglican Church, yet he remained an Anglican Minister all his life (MCSA *Know & Grow* 2010:71).

Brewer argues that, "Wesley's zeal to spread Scriptural holiness, and his infatuation with Anglican Tradition and doctrine do appear to manifest paradoxical theological articulation and is no more evident than in [his] doctrine of baptism" (Brewer 2011:108). Generally, in Christian tradition, baptism is presented "either [as] solely a high sacrament representing the objective divine action of God, or the other extreme of baptism being exclusively a human response to God's calling with an offer of salvation. Wesley appears to have emphasised both sides, leading one to believe that he is either theologically schizophrenic...or attempted to take the middle ground" (Brewer 2011:109).

Wesley never gave up the influence of his High Church Anglican background, even though his theology became more Arminian in emphasis after his new birth experience.¹⁵ He insisted that, “God’s sovereign grace was compatible with human freedom and that a person’s ultimate destiny depended upon the way in which he or she used that God-given freedom” (Brewer 2011:111). It was the factor of human need which provided the space necessary for such an evangelistic emphasis to be formed in Wesley’s thinking. Hence, if God plans to save all people, baptism needs to fulfil the same purpose.

6.2.2 Infant Baptism

That Wesley un-retractably believed in the practice of infant baptism is confirmed by Brewer’s (Brewer 2011:125) observation of Wesleyan practice. Wesley required all baptised children to be evangelised because, in their innocence, they might begin to sin away their baptismal cleansing and blessing. “Those who were made Children of God by baptism therefore become in effect the children of the devil” (Wesley in Brewer 2011). Those who rely on their previous baptism for salvation make baptism an end instead of a means. Wesley taught that sin in whatever form cannot be trifled with by speculation, but rather that a baptised individual must be determined to go through an entire change of heart, and that people must know that if a baptised individual dies without new birth, that “baptism will be so far from profiting you, [but] that it will greatly increase your damnation” (Brewer 2011:125).

It thus seems that Wesley believed that everyone baptised as an infant would likely fall away from the washing away of original sin, and it is thus this which bruises the reed of their (legitimate) infant baptism (Bridges & Phipps 1977:141) and makes repeat baptism possible.

6.2.3 Adult Baptism and Effects

Wesley seems thus to have provided a two-tier system of baptism for adults. In the first of these, forgiveness of sin may be conferred on adults through the baptismal rite. The second-tier benefit is constituted in the regenerative effect of the Holy Spirit, which is seen as not merely a spiritually-legalistic pardon, but also represents an initiation for the overall spiritual

¹⁵ Wesley would have changed his beliefs on the mode of baptism because of his new birth experience in 1738, which thus also resulted in a changed theology. Scholars in the first part of the twentieth century argue that Wesley’s “evangelical conversion” coerced him to reject his strong notion of baptismal regeneration and hold fast to infant baptism because of his loyalty to Anglicanism, while others argue for a middle ground in that there exists a creative tension between evangelicalism and baptismal regeneration. Most scholars today believe that Wesley’s dialectical statements simply represent his own unresolved spiritual ambiguity on the matter (Brewer 2011:114–115).

transformation of the baptised person (Brewer 2011:127). There seems thus to have been a cleavage between what Wesley believed about baptism for infants and how he viewed baptism for adults, and this seems to indicate that there is no sacramental benefit in this practice, for adults. Wesley did however say, “whatever the case with infants, it is sure that all of riper years who are baptized are not at the same time born again; a man [*sic*] may possibly be born of water but not be born of the Spirit” (Wesley in Brewer 2011:127).

Brewer says that Wesley did not argue that the *res* (or thing signified) would follow its *signum* (or sign) automatically. New birth is not the same as baptism, and they do not constantly go together. There may sometimes be the outward sign where there is not the inward grace (Brewer 2011:127).

6.2.4 Objective Grace Moves to Subjective Grace

How then is this grace received? Brewer (2011:127) further observes that there is a distinct move from objective grace to subjective grace in Wesley. This move in his thinking was brought on by his conversion experience in the Moravian Bible Study meeting. Wesley had often complained that the objective grace of infant baptism did not become a rebirth for infant baptised adults in real life, and that this included himself (Wesley in Brewer 2011:128).

This lack of piety in the lives of the baptised is hence seen as a sign that infant-baptised adults require new birth. Wesley therefore viewed baptism without new birth as a mark of nominal Christianity. He consequently lamented the state of the national Church, and became frustrated at the levels of iniquity to which so many congregations fell; and this is seen in his writing,

one can deny that the people of England in general are called Christians. The name however does not make a person a Christian. Say not then in your heart, ‘I was once baptized; therefore I am now a child of God’...How many are gluttons and drunkards, baptized liars, and common swearers, baptized railers and evil-speakers...etc., what think you? Are you now children of God, and warned, ‘Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed that ye were born again in baptism’ (Wesley in Brewer 2011:128).

By declaring this, Wesley underscored the need for a real change of heart in those baptised. It is therefore believed by some (Wesley in Brewer 2011:121):

that Wesley moved from infant baptism as a sacramental means of achieving God’s Grace to believer’s baptism. This seems to be indicated by his revision of the prayer books in use at the time. He removed all references to godparents and vicarious confessions from the instructional narrative. (Brewer 2011:128).

Brewer however, suggests that Wesley's apparent purpose for the alterations was not, "to reject the possibility of regeneration, but to avoid the impression of its inevitability – apart from personal responsibility" (Brewer 2011:129).

And yet, we need to trust Wesley's own account of what he experienced before and after Aldersgate Street with regard to conversion, as this relates to his view of baptism. After landing in Georgia, America, to conduct missionary work amongst the locals, Wesley became troubled about his own spiritual condition, and asked a Moravian Pastor by the name of Spangenberg for advice about his need (Pratney 1983:73–74). The Pastor answered by asking, "Do you know Christ?" Wesley replied that he knew that Jesus was the Saviour of the world, and that he had hoped that Jesus had died to save him. The Pastor however pushed him further on this question: "Do you know [this] yourself?" At first Wesley said, "I do", but on reflection admitted that, "I fear they were vain words" (Pratney 1983:73–74).

Thus, after being in Georgia for two and a half years, what he learned about himself was what he had least suspected, and in his own words stated, "I who went to the Americas to convert others was never myself converted to God! I am not mad, though I thus speak, but I speak the words of truth and soberness" (1983:73–74) Thus began a pilgrimage of seeking for Christ which ended three months later in the Aldersgate prayer meeting on 24 May 1738. He thence wrote that, "an assurance was given to me that He had taken my sins away, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death" (Wesley 1958:475–476).

It has accordingly been seen that Wesley's views after his conversion changed and were different from those preceding it. Before his conversion, he believed in baptism as a means to grace in line with his Anglican heritage, but then altered this view by including an evangelistic emphasis following on from his conversion. He appears never thereafter to have mentioned that baptism is means of Christian grace but nevertheless did not move away from the belief that infant baptism is Biblically valid and that it contains a sacramental message.

6.2.5 Wesleyan Possibility of Baptismal Convergence

The challenge of paradox is apparent in paedobaptism and is of how the sacramental and evangelical components of baptism can coincide and intersect with regard to the Gospel message that must be conveyed. To make sense of this dialectical form of understanding Christianity Brewer suggests that Wesley held two notions of regeneration in his soteriology (Brewer 2011:130).

With regard to the baptism of infants, Wesley (Wesley in Brewer 2011:130–131) considered that there was a preliminary regeneration, as is in accordance with Anglican tradition – the Holy Spirit at work through the sacrament of prevenient Grace in which the infant is passive; whereby the guilt of original sin is cancelled; the individual is placed in covenant and is initiated into the Church and is infused with the principle of grace. All this applies only to young children and the mentally-challenged, but does not simply end there.

Full regeneration on the other hand is for adults, and is related to personal rebirth and faith. This paradigm requires a change of heart and personal dependence on the Holy Spirit. The new birth may then coincide with the baptism of adults but is not to be considered as a rite for children. Brewer thus contends that Wesley's doctrine of baptism, in which there are two baptisms and two types of regeneration is, "ironically a microscopic aspect of the great historical struggle within ecumenical dialogue" (Brewer 2011:131) in the search for baptismal unity. It is a struggle which goes on in general Christian experience, in the sense that there is not only the need to depend wholly on God's Sovereign Grace for salvation and ongoing salvation, but also is that of giving a personal response which is not to be viewed as a human work for earning salvation.

Contrarily, God can and sometimes does act salvifically without human aid, despite a human response based on God's sovereign terms remaining indispensable – this scenario indicates the true dialectical nature of Christian faith. Baptism is thus for Wesley more than a one-time event, because the two baptisms are paradoxically interrelated elements of Divine and human response which are in constant interplay. Emphasising both the objective Anglican emphasis on baptism and the subjective Methodist distinctive holds both aspects of baptism in vital sacramental dialectical tension for the successful creation of theological truth. In this, each serves as a check for the other (Brewer 2011:131), and also makes for their complementary functioning and impact.

It therefore seems that in Wesley, the two baptisms in paedobaptism could function dialectically as one baptism administered in two stages – one in infancy surrounded by faith and the other in adulthood from faith or from a seeking faith that is sincere. What is lacking in the one half of the baptismal message, using Barth's terminology, can symbolically therefore be completed by the other half at a later stage (Barth 1948:47).

These two sides of water baptism could hence be theologically dialectically united, so that in their interplay of function both, when combined, can communicate a more holistic sacramental

and evangelical message for true Christian redemption. It seems therefore, that the dialectical factor could exist in the practice of paedo-baptism, particularly because this dialectical factor ultimately derives from the Christian message of God's Grace.

6.3 Divine Origin of Sacramental Dialectic

Firstly however, it needs to be established whether Christianity itself can legitimately be viewed as dialectic before this idea can be pursued with regard to MCSA faith and practice. Wesley seems to have believed that dialectic was an acceptable way of formulating theology. Karl Barth (McGrath 2017:73) also considered a dialectical theologian in that he believes that dialectic is of the essence of God's Being and of God's dealings with sinful humanity. Barth states that this theology derives from, "the presence of tensions, paradoxes, and the existence of [seeming] contradictions between God and humanity caused by the absolute gulf fixed between the human and the divine" (McGrath 1993:489) and from the need by people everywhere for personal redemption and reconciliation with God.

6.3.1 Dialectical Nature of Grace in Wesleyan Theology

The dialectical nature of the message of baptism for new birth in Wesley thus arises from God's merciful dealings with people, which emanates from His grace for salvation. It is in this dialectical sense that an individual is saved by God's Grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8).

6.3.1.1 Preventive Grace is Divine Initiative

Olivier (2011) explains that grace, according to Wesley, is called preventive insofar as it is a salvific act which indicates that saving action is available, and has already begun to initiate personal response to Christ in the earliest stages of human life. It describes the truth contained in the notion that God seeks people long before they seek Him. Whatever moves people make towards God, God can already made the first move towards His people (cf. Romans 5:8).

While Olivier (2011:1–11) states that grace is a single entity, it involves various stages of impact in its functioning, with these relating to both Divine initiative and human response. The first stage is that of preventive grace, in that what follows is a justifying grace. As preventive grace plays an initiatory preparatory role in the quest for salvation, this process thus takes place between two points. On the one hand is the Divine initiative: God first loved us. This refers to the objectivity of God; long before God is thought of, He(sic) already loves every person and through Him(sic) is accomplished everything required for human salvation. The Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus are together the guarantee that nothing more needs

to be done in order for humanity and the world to be saved. Before people actually turn to God, all have already been justified, pardoned, forgiven and reconciled with God (Olivier 2011:1–11).

Thus far it would seem that God takes full responsibility for saving humankind and there is nothing that anyone can do in terms of response which either fully accepts His prevenient grace or rejects it. Wesley, by contrast to John Calvin, never believed in a theory of predestination in which it is believed that God has elected some to eternal life and others to eternal damnation. Wesley's salvific motto thus makes it clear that he did not agree with Calvin's doctrine of election because all have sinned and fell short of achieving the Glory of God; hence, all need a Saviour and can thus be saved, can know that they are saved, can be saved to the uttermost, and are able to give witness to their salvation (Lewis 1954:66–67).

While God has allowed sin to operate yet He (sic) is not its author. God is therefore not the cause of the unredeemed perishing of people. God's responsibility is only for loving all and doing all that is possible to achieve redemption for all people (Olivier 2011:1–11). There is thus a need for a response from people in answer to what God has done for them.

6.3.1.2 Justifying Grace through Dialectical Response of Faith for Personal Salvation

While God provides full salvation without the aid of humans, yet when response is needed, the granting of God's grace is not altogether one-sided. Salvation becomes operable and effective in lives only when and as there is a response to God's grace. Possessing free will means that God's people have the capability to either accept by faith or reject God's offer made to all of us. Olivier (2011:1–11) further stated that there is a popular and common tendency in Christian circles to reduce faith to mere belief of a humanistic kind. To have belief is however, not the same as true believing. Belief means certain things are believed about something or somebody, while believing means believing in something or somebody, which are vastly different forms of this phenomenon. The best word to describe the nature of Christian faith is therefore trust.

Wesley had explained that believing, "is a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins; that He loves me and gave Himself for me" (Wesley in Oliver 2011:4–8). Wesley thus also placed great emphasis on the fact that a truly saved person would know that they are saved, and thus confidently give testimony to that reality (Olivier 2011:4–8). It is in this sense that God's grace is dialectical because of the paradoxical nature of the process for its attainment; God and humans thereby are brought together inwardly also for lasting relationship outwardly.

Sacramental baptism similarly possesses two segments of response: God's prior salvific movement to humanity and humanity's inspired movement by repentance of personal sin in response to God. In God's movement, there is grace which goes before salvation, and yet that grace is the same as that which completes the personal achievement of redemption. Baptism as response cannot thus achieve God's grace.

The message of baptism could thus carry these two components in its message so that an individual can unmistakably know what is needed in terms of the full salvation in Christ. Since current baptismal practice in paedobaptism is both infant and believer's baptism, but when conjoined infant baptism with its message of prevenient grace would precede a believer's baptism and believer's baptism with its message of new birth received, would serve as a message that prevenient grace has been completed by saving grace in the initiate.

Wesley thus viewed baptism as a message of grace, made up of two parts: the born-of-water aspect and the new birth by the Spirit factor, as stated in John 3:5. If God's Grace is dialectically both prevenient and saving, then baptism needs to convey this self-same message. If this is considered as being correct, then the two baptisms currently practiced separately in paedobaptism could be dialectically combined to convey the complete message of the Gospel of Christ.

Grace as a dialectical matter described in Wesleyan theology is another aspect of the case that can be made in the case for the convergence of baptism. This does not however mean the end of biblical support from other possibilities based on the covenantal nature of Christianity

6.3.1.3 Covenant as Biblical Dialectic Expression

While the Old Testament is a record of the initiation of God's Covenant with its attendant terms and conditions, the New Testament is all about the fulfilment of Old Testament Covenant through Christ (Matthew 5:17). These dispensations of covenant arise from the same Divine background, and carry a common intention – God's seeking to redeem men, women and children to become His very own, and their reciprocal need for a personal response to Him. That the New Covenant is not a total abrogation of the Old Covenant is clearly articulated by paedobaptist contributors found in the book, *The Case for Covenant Infant Baptism* (Strawbridge 2003).

Fringe features of the Old Covenant such as the outside rituals of the slaughtering of animals and physical cleansing have been omitted from the New, with Jesus however featuring dialectically in the Old Testament as pre-figurement, and in the New Testament as fulfilment.

The implementation of the New Covenant, as stated in Jeremiah 31:31ff does not signify a rejection by God of His (sic) original plan as found in the operations of the Old Testament, but rather refers to the advancement of the original covenant salvific plan by means of a new way in the person of Christ Himself.

Even if the five examples of household baptism in the New Testament do not provide specific and clear cut evidence that infants did not participate in those specific instances, as Baptists generally claim, these examples reveal that household baptism might have been dialectically applied through a process of sacramental evangelism. The initial recipients of baptism were the adult heads of those households who believed, and then the children of these houses who had yet to become Christian believers, likely would have been baptised as a message of their need for redemption.

The same intention behind the Old Testament household covenant of including infants in the God's Covenantal plan is thus duplicated in the New Covenant, but with more impact on the inner side of life (Witherington III 2007:132). The logic behind household covenant can also therefore be viewed as an expression of a dialectical theology, because the two Covenants combine to proclaim the Good News of God, and by extension, of Jesus with the one declaring that Christ will come, and the other that Christ has come and is thus always salvifically active.

6.3.1.4 Acts 19:1–7 as a Specific Example of Dialectical Action Repeat Baptism

Acts 19:1–7 as specific example of dialectical action may be just one of many other instances not recorded in the Bible, wherein more than one application of water was administered for evangelistic reasons on the infants of Christianized Jewish households even though it is the only information in the New Testament of a so-called rebaptism. Paul did not hesitate to baptise the Ephesians in the name of Christ, even after they had been baptised with the baptism of John the Baptist.

After their baptism in the name of Jesus, they proceeded “to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, prophesied and spoke in tongues” (Acts 19:5–6). The Ephesians had required an evangelistic remedy for a redemptive need and the way for this to materialize was paved through the baptism of John and that of Christ. The salvific process hence started with the baptism of John, and was accompanied and confirmed by the message of the Gospel spoken by Paul, who then “rebaptized” these people with water and thereafter led them into the reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6).

Could this event not thus be regarded as a true example of Christian Gospel dialectically at work in the task of Christian evangelism and of having a positive outcome rather than being an example of rebaptism defined in paedobaptism as being problematic? Fortson states that rebaptism, “in essence declares that the person who was either baptized as an infant or baptized in another communion did not receive true Christian baptism” (2014:1).

Fortson’s view is correct, and in a slight way applies to the baptismal handling of the Ephesians by Paul, and yet is an episode that is not the same as the kind of rebaptism that is intended to replace a prior legitimate baptism. Paul did not first try to destroy John’s baptism because he believed it to be erroneous, and then set about substituting it with Jesus’ baptism. The record reveals that Paul rather augmented John’s baptism with Jesus’ baptism, which then led to the Ephesians’ new birth by the Spirit.

John’s baptism of repentance was thus incomplete without the baptism of Jesus based in this Ephesian example, and can be more positively understood as an expression of dialectical theology. The first baptism prepares the way for the next baptism, and the second one dialectically completes what has been preparatory. Acts 19 is thus also another example of how the Biblical Gospel dialectic could validly work when the two baptisms are conjoined.

Matthew Henry (Henry *et al* 1983:821) concludes that Paul “rebaptized” the twelve Ephesian men, because there was no agreement between John’s baptism and those baptised in the name of Jesus. Those baptised in the name of Jesus had never previously been baptised as Christians. There may have been a preparatory connection, but it was surely not by way of rebaptism, since the second baptism was technically administered only once in the name of the Lord (Henry *et al* 1983:821).

This God-human Jesus enters into a God-human relationship with those being redeemed by the working of the Holy Spirit, and this dialectical redemptive action is demonstrated and executed by means of two materially separate applications of water. Acts 19:1–7 is thus a clear example of the evangelistic purpose of baptism in dialectical action.

Dialectic is also present in the Apostle Paul’s writings in which he seeks to describe who Jesus is and why He came to earth. One such example which describes the human-Divine nature of Christ is Philippians 2:6–8: “Who [Christ], being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and being found in the appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death upon a cross”.

Christian creeds also demonstrate the dialectical nature of God in their understanding of His Triune disposition. The Nicene Creed for example details how the three members of the Divine Trinity exist and function in a dialectical arrangement for human redemption and, as a statement of faith reveals what Christians have come to believe about the God-human aspect of Christianity:

I believe in one God...and of all things visible and invisible: and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His father before all worlds, God of God, light of Light very God of very God...Being of one substance with the Father...Who for us men [*sic*] and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man (The Methodist Hymn and Book of Offices 1954:30)

The Trinitarian expression of God is generally accepted by most Christians and the validity of this is constantly affirmed during services of worship. Barth argues “that the act of God which is Jesus Christ underlies theology in its totality” (McGrath 1993:298). God’s Action towards humanity for redemption is through the mediation of Christ between a transcendent God, and of humanity being fallen from His (*sic*) grace: “This idea of ‘presence as mediation’ takes two quite distinct, yet ultimately complementary forms: mediation of revelation on the one hand and on the other, personal redemption” (McGrath 1993:298).

While the dialectical principle constitutes the very essence of Christianity, yet both the baptism of infants and of believer’s on their own are sacramentally and evangelistically incomplete. If kept separate, the resultant message will continue to proclaim baptism as sacrament without evangelism and conversely baptism as evangelism without sacrament. The separateness of the two baptisms would continue to perpetuate indiscriminate baptism which foments baptismal regeneration in respect of infant baptism and decisional regeneration in regard to the practice of believer’s baptism. Both baptisms working together however in a relationship of convergence in the sacramental service of the Gospel of Christ could logically be more productive redemptively with a reduction of the aforementioned problems that emanate from unilateral baptismal practice.

The dialectical factor of the Christian faith constitutes the sacramental and evangelical warp and woof of Biblical covenantal, and therefore of baptism itself. Jesus is both God and man; covenant is both Old and New; the Holy Spirit includes both conviction of sin and conversion; the Christian faith is both of the head and of the heart; Biblical grace is both prevenient and saving; baptism is therefore both sacramental and evangelical; is both preparation and fulfilment, and based on all these factors convergence baptism could thus be accepted as God’s

dialectical action that unfailingly prompts subjective human response for the reception of objective personal redemption.

6.3.1.5 Theological Dialectic and Complete Baptism

Barth's argument following Schleiermacher is that the practice of paedobaptism on its own is biblically incomplete (Barth 1948:47), in that infant baptism for those who subscribe to it, it as he states is only one of the two components required by the message of water baptism for personal redemption to be completed for a true redemptive end result. Barth's logic remains correct insofar as it also applies to infant baptism as currently practiced within the MCSA (MCSA 1989:59:63). Infant baptism as a separate practice in the MCSA has until now been the dominant practice in MCSA theology and policy but as it has been shown all through this study foments a nominal brand of Christianity- hence the problem of rebaptism. Contrarily, believer's baptism also administered on its own similarly makes it possible for an over-emphasis to be placed on the purely humanistic aspect of decision making in the need for a faith response, which also results in a fictitious form of salvation. It is thus in this sense that the two baptisms in separate practice are only half baptisms. If sacramental infant baptism does not enjoy evangelical support for the completion of its message, that is, does not have a proper ending, it could also be argued that believer's baptism is similarly incomplete because it does not possess a proper sacramental beginning (Bandey 1976:50).

Convergence baptism thus seems to be a possibility that naturally flows out of Divinity as the dialectical origin of biblical covenantal baptism and which in turn derives from the dialectical message of baptism for new birth which itself arises from the nature of Christ, who is dialectically both God and human, and whose grace of salvation is a dialectical operation that carries dialectical impact. These realities are all dialectically interlinked, and all confirm that on the basis of God's Saving Work, God can salvifically dwell within His / Her people and them with Him / Her in a dialectically interactive relationship.

6.3.1.6 Baptism's Relative Importance

The conjoining of the two baptisms in the service of the Gospel of Christ could also be considered from the angle of baptism's relative overall importance. Baptism is not generally considered to be in the same order of importance as the sacramental proclamation of the Gospel, and by implication should thus not be accorded a status which is either on a par with, or that is higher than that of the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. Baptism as a servant of Christ always needs to point to the His salvation because of its deictic nature, in that "[it deflects] attention

from itself to Christ” (Konig, Lederle & Möller 1983:11). If this is correct, to claim that baptism is the re-enactment of the Death and Resurrection of Christ weakens the case for the high value accorded to baptism by some paedobaptist theologies, but could also make it legitimate for the non-repeatable status given to baptism by the MCSA to be repealed.

Markus Barth (Barth 1959:34; 35) argues that the Church has become side-tracked with regard to the meaning and purpose of infant baptism, because infant baptism has become a doctrine with more of an emphasis on sacrament, and has thus assumed a celebrity status. In some circles baptism is based on the belief that it possesses a mysterious and miraculous power so much so that it is believed to be on a par with the unrepeatable nature of Christ and His saving work on the cross as a “once and for all” act (Barth 1959:34; 35). Barth thus claims that when this occurs, the

Church is busy with herself when she teaches and administers baptism, and many Christians as well as non-Christians have reasons to understand that baptism is like a magical act or like an initiation ritual (*rite de passage*) or like a sort of *kabbala*. All these expressions of baptismal teaching and practice show how far baptism has become separated from evangelism (Barth 1959:35).

Barth further contends that a one-sided emphasis on the mystery of incarnational sacramentalism, which he calls a “principle of incarnation”, is “so great in paedobaptism, that it sometimes displaces the preaching of Christ” (Barth 1959:33). Christ is thus bypassed by the very baptism that He has instituted through the sacrifice of His life, and ironically becomes a counter-productive instrument that flouts the commission of Christ as articulated in Matthew 28:18–20 instead of promoting it.

Barth therefore also argues that baptism needs to move out of itself and be used as an opportunity for evangelism not only outside of the Church, but especially within the Church context with child evangelism as a priority (Barth 1959:33). David Wright similarly argues that without an emphasis on evangelism in paedobaptism, the Church will largely accommodate only members who remain at a level of nominal Christianity (Wright 2005:7–9).

6.3.1.7 Rebaptism Today

While Karl Barth claims that infant baptism as sacrament is only half a baptism and Markus Barth laments that infant baptism has taken baptism away from its evangelistic emphasis, David Wright believes that as long as infant baptism is allowed to function without “delivering the goods” for true redemption there will be doubt about its worth. Wright thus wonders whether

in double-practice baptism Churches the pastoral pressure for rebaptism will ever cease. Given that some who have been baptised as babies will have been exposed to the practice of believer's baptism as it forms one of the Church's two practices. Given this scenario it would be understandable that requests for rebaptism may instead grow in number (Wright 1988:21). Wright's prediction seems to have come true based on his research around this matter, and which has been discussed in his book, *What Has Infant Baptism Done to Baptism* (Wright 2005). In this work, he contends that infant baptism is a telling cause of the large-scale decline in general paedo-baptist Church membership.

6.3.1.8 Varieties of Rebaptism

Wright (1988:20) further states that since there are a whole variety of reasons for practicing rebaptism as found in the history of the Church, and while these may differ, they have been rejected by the majority of the Christian world. He contends that there is nevertheless a kind of demand for rebaptism currently which lacks "any kind of historical precedent" (Wright 1988:20). These requests are sincere, because they are based on a deep regard for the importance of baptism for Christian initiation, which in Wright's view is what makes them unprecedented.

When someone ceases to believe that infant baptism is the "genuine article", this is nothing new, because it was what the Anabaptists aimed at achieving in the sixteenth century. But, "unprecedented is the desire for rebaptism on the part of those who, while not rejecting infant baptism in principle, have come to the position of being unable to accept that their own baptism satisfies the requirement of true Christian baptism" (Wright 1988:20). This applies not only to infant-baptised people, but also to those baptised in the believer's baptism way. These individuals may believe that they had been genuinely converted as infants, but then discover that their conversion is purely decisional, rather than being of a conscious enactment of true spiritual new birth.

6.3.1.9 Incomplete Baptism

Wright thus sides with Karl Barth's view that infant baptism on its own is an incomplete baptism by declaring that,

if BEM [of the WCC] is correct in saying that 'baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that that gift, does baptism exist if there is no human response? Or is the human response constituted merely by the (passive) receiving of baptism? To put it another way, in the language of initiation, is a beginning which has no continuation and leads nowhere, a real beginning at all?

Do we not gravely devalue Christian baptism if we insist that every baptismal rite, however perfunctorily and unfruitful and unbelievably received, must bear the full weight of the great New Testament theology of baptismal incorporation in Christ (Wright 1988:20–22).

Wright's logic inevitably leads to the conclusion that a blanket ban cannot summarily be placed on all requests for rebaptism for the reason that many infant-baptised people carry a genuine desire for the completion of the grace of God by means of a believer's baptism.

6.4 Conclusion

A dialectical maxim relative to Christian monogamous marriage may be a most apt way of arguing in favour of the possible convergence of the two baptisms. Marriage is said to consist of a man and a woman who are incomplete until they are married, and then by means of their marriage, "are finished". It has been shown that infant baptism and believer's baptism are thus similarly incomplete in their separate tasks, and yet in a combined tandem of relationship may just prove to be that dialectically-finished product required for genuine sacramental and evangelical redemptive reproduction, to materialize. If the two baptisms continue to exist together but in unilateral double practice with all the problems of this level of union would it not make better sense for them to move beyond their separate existences, to function in dialectical togetherness for sacramental and evangelistic redemptive ends, instead?

Whilst it is not considered correct to rebaptize a person already baptised in the name of the Christian Trinity, yet it may also not be wrong to use baptism, not as constituting an act of redemption, but as a witness to personal salvation received or of personal salvation being sought, even if this means that baptism and its message are to function repetitiously, as exemplified in the account of the conversion of the twelve Ephesians in Acts 19:1–7, and of John Wesley.

It thus seems that because the core essence of the bible is made up of a combination of divine sacramental and evangelical dialectical factors, both the baptisms, of infants of believers, and of adult believers, could thus function more effectively in a dialectically merged relationship of ministry for the redemption of the people, than is currently the case in their separate existences.

Chapter 7

General Conclusion and Quadrilateral Test Finding

7.1 General Conclusion

By what authority then can it be determined whether convergence as an alternative for rebaptism is divinely sanctioned? Answers to this introductory question are harvested from the application of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral consisting of four of theological authorities and used in the Wesleyan way because it is an instrument that is designed to facilitate Divine objectivity.

7.1.1 Chapter 1

In this chapter it was revealed that there is disunity over the current policy and practice of water baptism in the MCSA, and in it were identified some of the causes which have seemingly arisen from: ongoing requests for rebaptism; the ruling that water baptism is non-repeatable and the absence of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral as an officially-sanctioned framework of authority as an instrument for theological decision making (MCSA 2000:2). This absence seems odd, especially as Methodism is meant to be fundamentally Wesleyan both in origin and character. Hence, this study is squarely based on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral of Authorities and is supported by a methodology made up of so-called qualitative questions that ask: “what”, “why”, and “how”, and the answers given to these questions will serve as a collective guide and test for authenticity.

The genius of God is demonstrated in the manner that this quadrilateral instrument is used, and was designed by Wesley to ensure that the Bible as *sola scriptura*, (the Word of God) would have the ultimate say. The final say from this study of convergence baptism should thus give answer to the questions of validity and viability, and this depends on whether the deductions made from each chapter, are consistent with each other, and arise from the sacramental and evangelical core of Christianity which constitutes the very essence of the bibles’ Christian message.

7.1.1.1 Deduction One

The Quadrilateral of four Authorities, as understood and utilised by Wesley was chosen because it fits the study requirements for this thesis, and provides the objective hope that through its use, as applied in the Wesleyan way, all viewpoints in the MCSA could be placed on the “same framework authority page”, and be united in the common search for an “objective” and universally acceptable model of what the WCC currently refers to as consensus baptism.

It seems that a converging of the two baptisms, despite a close resemblance with the practice of rebaptism, could be a significant alternative possibility especially since this notion appears not to have been tried before and also because it seems to carry more evangelistically orientated and forward-looking characteristics than other options attempted thus far.

7.1.2 Chapter Two

This chapter reveals that in its development since the earliest stages of Christianity, baptismal understanding has gone through change from being one baptism in doctrine and practice to being double-pronged in application; from being a rite of incorporation into the Church; to becoming a sacrament of cleansing; from cleansing understood as a Divine Act, to the total separation of the two baptisms during the Lutheran Reformation; from the prohibition of rebaptism to the ongoing polarisation and splits within local Church membership over differences in respect of views over the policy and practice of baptism; and finally to a willingness for a collaborative search for unity. The beginning of significant change in how baptism is understood seems however to have first begun during the twentieth century through Karl Barth (1948) and was occasioned by his decision to critique his own position. The development of sacrament within Christianity from earliest times till the present, as per David Wright's study (2005), shows that, because infant baptism has been and still is in practical ascendancy over believer's baptism mostly in reformed paedobaptising denominations, is the apparent cause of infant baptism failing to turn people into faithful practicing Christians (Wright 2005:vii–viii).

The surveys studied, albeit only dealing with a section of global church membership, even though reports indicate that Pentecostal Christianity is growing at a phenomenal rate and should now be viewed as forming a considerable segment of global protestant Christianity reveal a trend away from the baptism of infants to that of believer's baptism. Wright's research also corroborates with the survey findings of the more recent combined work of Ross, Keum, Avtzi and Hewitt (2016). These reveal that because the landscape of global society is in radical change, this has impacted on Church demographics in terms of membership movement, while the epicentre of Christianity seems to be moving from a Western and European orientation to an African and South Eastern Global-region emphasis, as Christianity increases in those regions. (Ross *et al.* 2016:477–487). These phenomena have brought about some wide-scale social changes not always positive, but also some needed changes in the practices of Christianity.

A trend of Church growth is however especially apparent in believer-baptist evangelically-orientated denominations where intentional evangelism is practiced. If sacramental baptism is understood as an evangelistic message event which leads to redemption, rather than by and of itself being redemptive, this could heighten the general effectiveness of this rite overall. Where this message is missing, even in believer-baptist practice, there is usually a decrease in denominational membership, likely because people are not being thoroughly evangelised.

A slump in the life of the Church, and a reduction in the number of baptisms performed, is associated as a general rule with the lack of evangelism. David Wright (2005) thus finds that there is a general reduction of Christian numbers mainly in paedobaptist denominations occasioned by the indiscriminate intake of infants which impacts negatively on the quality of biblical Christianity. This finding also corroborates with results of religious surveys conducted in America; in other Western countries (Carter 2016; Mohler 2012; *The National Catholic Reporter* 2016) and Africa (Galgalo 2015).

Michael Green (1987) had earlier argued that to overcome the problems of rebaptism and for the baptismal message to become more sacramentally and evangelically effectual and uniting, a combination of the three major traditions of Christianity (Catholicism, Protestantism and Pentecostalism) should be found.

7.1.2.1 Deduction Two

Reasons for the failure of infant baptism to convey the message of the Gospel for personal redemption and transformation seem to be linked to non-Biblical views on sacrament, where baptism is considered, variously: magical; automatic *ex opere operato* salvation; an instantaneous means of attaining God's Grace and of viewing God as an automaton in the salvific task for the benefit of humanity. All these views are associations by which infant baptism existing as an independent rite has somehow inherited, and which have corrupted the sacramental and evangelical purpose of baptism and therefore has brought on the need for resolution and change.

How infant baptism could become more evangelistically-orientated is the real question? Green (1987) has faced this question and comes close to offering an all-inclusive definition of consensus baptism consisting of a combination of Roman Catholic; Reformed and Pentecostal emphases. Material taken from surveys of Church tradition lend weight to the argument that the evangelistic aspect of sacrament needs to feature more prominently in paedobaptist Churches but with a retention of the sacramental emphasis as of primary importance. Green's

proposal may not completely solve the problem for newly-born paedo-baptists in the MCSA but is a significant and progressive idea.

7.1.3 Chapter Three

This chapter reviewed the sacramental perspectives of scholars which reveal a number of trends in baptismal thinking. Karl Barth's critiquing of his own tradition and his reconsideration of baptism in the light of bible material has had a widespread and ongoing positive effect in bringing about progressive change. The trend towards the reformation of baptismal thinking however is not only about critiquing "one's own tradition", but also of the incorporation of a respectful scrutiny of other positions. In doing so, such interests for enhancing Christian witness and the improvement of baptismal unity are also served and justified.

Seen in a logical order of complementarity, sacrament as studied from the scholars was found to possess a whole range of sacramental significance:

- From this practice being located in the Word of God, which consists in a record of the preaching of the Gospel as found in Karl Barth (1948:14–15) and his son, Markus Barth (1959:33);
- To an emphasis on Christ as God, whose Life of suffering may be regarded as being one protracted act of baptism as in Cullmann (1950:18; 57; 70);
- To incorporation by the one Spirit into the one Body of Christ, as in Robinson (1962:159–160);
- To baptism's origin in the Trinitarian promise of salvation, as in Bromiley (1979: 37–65);
- To being the expression of the free-flowing and necessarily un-automated working of the Holy Spirit independent of all rites of initiation, as in Lampe (1951:306);
- To the indispensable place of the Holy Spirit working in the complex process of conversion initiation, as in Dunn (1970:1–7);
- To being the Gospel call of repentance by the Holy Spirit, as per Witherington III (2007:35f.);
- To a non-negotiable encounter with the Holy Spirit, as in Fischer (2011);
- From there on, to the Divine salvific covenant plan which consists of the very essence of the Biblical record, as is found in Marcel (1953:198);

- To household covenantal evangelism, as described in Jeremias (1962:77); and on to a demonstration of the covenantal salvific plan in logical, practical detail and process, as in Strawbridge (2003:6–8); and then:
- Finally, to Wesley (1958) for whom the value of sacrament is a salvific outcome from practicing baptism with a balanced approach that combines sacrament and evangelicalism, and which sometimes requires a second application of water for achieving baptism's sacramental evangelistic objectives.

These nuances of sacrament in their combined comprehensiveness can further be narrowed into two distinct halves: A Divine origin and initiative on the one hand, and a personal faith response from supplicants on the other. Scholars, who emphasise the primacy of God's Divine Grace in the sacrament of baptism amongst others, include: O. Cullmann, J. Robinson, G. Bromiley, P. Marcel, J. Jeremias, and G. Strawbridge.

Scholars who tend to place the emphasis on the indispensable necessity of sacrament as response inspired by the preaching of the Gospel and the moving of the Holy Spirit are: Karl Barth, G. Lampe, J. Dunn and B. Witherington III, R. Fischer, and also J. Wesley. None of the perspectives mentioned here can be said to be biblically wrong or of being any more biblically correct than others, because all make a positive contribution by means of critique to the total spectrum of the meaning and purpose that exists in the sacrament of water baptism.

Paedo-baptist scholars up to and beyond the WCC Lima Conference on baptism (1982) opposed rebaptism in the belief that more than one application of water should not be permissible because of negative motives. A theology of the non-repeatability of baptism has accordingly been linked to, and based upon, the once-and-for-all historical salvific Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:5 and Hebrews 10:14 speak of baptism into the one body of Christ, the Church as a uniquely occurring event. This theological stance on baptism however has made it almost impossible for baptism to be explored as a repeatable possibility.

Paedo-baptist scholars who do not specifically state what they believe about the non-repeatability of baptism would likely support this ruling on the grounds of a need to defend the paedo-baptist tradition. A change of thinking however become evident following on from the WCC Lima Conference on baptism in 1982, and is revealed in the resulting WCC's mandate which encourages an ongoing search for baptismal consensus. Whilst urged to uphold the non-

repeatability ruling, the affirmation of a previous baptism is nonetheless encouraged, which indicates some progress in the direction of consensus baptism thinking.

It is furthermore noteworthy that the WCC Lima Conference seems to have marked the beginning of a differentiation between the objective and subjective aspects in sacramental baptismal understanding, and this thinking has gained momentum because it seems to allow room for the entry of repeating baptism as a possibility.

This manner of defining baptism is evident in the theologies of Bandey, Hollenweger, Green, Wright, Stamm, and Witherington III. It can even be deduced in Karl Barth, who insists that infant baptism as sacrament is in reality only half a baptism which by implication only reflects one side of the two-sided sacramental message of the Gospel of Christ. While the objective aspect of baptism cannot in reality be annulled or redone (Bandey 1976:89), and for which reason rebaptism is justifiably rejected, repeat baptism by contrast seems to be possible on grounds of the inclusion of the subjective evangelical requirement of sacramental baptism.

The perspectives of scholars on both sides of the baptismal impasse thus reveal that, broadly and covenantally, both baptisms are biblically legitimate and because of this development convergence baptism may carry much further promise than other options as an alternative solution. Infant baptism would provide a message of emphasis for the prevenient aspect of sacramental grace, while believer's baptism could be a word that emphasises the saving grace component of baptismal requirement.

What is even more significant is that paedobaptist scholars are also beginning to heed Beasley-Murray's call to seriously consider a move to an emphasis on believer's baptism, and to see this rite as the senior partner of infant baptism in a conjoint relationship for sacramental and evangelical ministry. Like Karl Barth therefore, a noticeable trend that is gaining traction is the prioritising of believer's baptism in a scenario which does not reject infant baptism, but recognises the great value already inherent in infant baptism. The only exception with consideration for this possibility is Waymeyer (2008), who unlike Barth (1948), has totally turned his back on infant baptism. And yet, contrarily, Baptists T. Schreiner and S. Wright (2006), while critiquing infant baptism for its proclivity to foment Christian nominalism, nevertheless seem to accommodate belief in the biblical credibility of infant baptism.

7.1.3.1 Deduction Three

Signs of the convergence possibility occur from as far back as Karl Barth's Reformed (1948) Beasley-Murray's Baptist (1962), David Bandey's Methodist (1976), Michael Green's Anglican (1987), and more recently David Wright's likewise Reformed (2005) discussions of the subject. These scholars have all called for baptism to become more holistic and inclusive in both its theological make-up and praxis.

It would make sense therefore to reverse the mistakes and losses of past history, especially as we now have an objective framework of guidance and testing to assist with the reformulation of this rite for it to become more in keeping biblically, and also to bring about a much-needed redress in balance for the relationship which already latently exists between the two baptisms in MCSA practice. It seems therefore that convergence baptism as an alternative for rebaptism possesses all the ingredients and attributes to meet this stated objective.

The survey of the Biblical perspectives on the sacramental nature of the message of baptism brings home the point that the two baptisms perhaps need not continue to be practiced in unilateral parallel. Stamm argues for this change in direction by stating that the "the task of making disciples through baptism is essentially one process" (Stamm 2001:39). Further, the United Church of the USA, of which Stamm is a theologian and Minister, is moving beyond what he calls "the confusing practice of endorsing one service for the baptism of infants and one for adults. Since there is one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), one rite could express the various ways baptism can be understood with the grace that is [prevenient], but it would have to be based on the missional process of making disciples" (2001:39).

Repeating baptism as part of the convergence of the two baptisms as a sacramental evangelistic measure, as opposed to rebaptism, therefore seems to be a distinct possibility which can be read out of most of the perspectives of the scholars examined for this work. Fitting these theologies into two categories appears very much like accepting as valid both sides of the same argument for the one baptism which would be relevant for the proposed practice of convergence baptism.

It likewise seems that the two baptisms in a marriage of convergence could well preserve this relationship between the two baptisms more adequately than is currently possible. The plea made particularly from as far back as Karl Barth (1948), and also by Methodist theologian David Bandey (1976), for baptism to become more holistic and complete in substance and practice could thus safely be expedited based on the combined perspectives of the scholars studied.

7.1.4 Chapter Four

This chapter consisted of discussion concerning conference dialogues and debate, and a study of some paradigms of consensus baptism, all of which arise from a double concern: an abhorrence of the longstanding lack of unity; and, more positively, the need for further serious dialogue between Paedo-baptists and Baptists to find an acceptable biblical basis in which infant baptism can find general legitimizing, as well as provide a strong theological link of unity between the two baptisms based on baptisms sacramental and evangelical ethos.

The *status quo* of MCSA baptismal practice indicates that, for as long as the two baptisms are not linked, they will continue to function as competitors and thus foment disunity between their proponents. Either infant baptism is dominant, with a diminished role given to believer's baptism, or believer's baptism dominates to the extent that there is ultimately no need for infant baptism at all, as exemplified in the Rosebank Uniting Church Southern Africa paradigm.

David Wright, in his study entitled, "What has Infant Baptism done to Baptism?" confirms that believer's baptism should become the biblical norm, but not without infant baptism as a necessary and equal adjunct. The survey materials both globally and from Africa seem also to corroborate Wright's contention that an over-emphasis on infant baptism in an exclusively sacramental approach, and a lack of intentional evangelistic activity has likely been the most important reason for the decline of memberships in paedo-baptist denominations. Repentance as a preparation for baptism would however make it possible for all thinking to lead on to the acceptance of believer's baptism. This would also restore the evangelical purpose and appeal of both forms of baptism, and by means of the proposed convergence possibility could save infant baptism from decline.

7.1.4.1 Deduction Four

In the light of the paradigmatic examples given in which the two baptisms are combined in the ministry of the Gospel and of their effectiveness and potential in this direction, reveals that convergence baptism would be neither theologically problematic nor impossible to implement in MCSA praxis.

A modern-day practical example of dual baptism is to be found in that of the Uniting Church of North India, in which both a font for the baptism of infants and a baptistery for the immersion of believers are used. The two baptisms are, however, available in this model as options only at this stage, because an "either/or" theological application of dual-baptism in which the two

baptisms are kept apart is used. The maintaining of these unilateral practices has resulted in the perpetuation of division within this uniting denomination's membership.

Perhaps for the sake of improving Christian witness and unity, and for greater evangelistic impact, the font and the baptistery could alternatively be combined and practiced in that denomination through the adoption of a more complementing theology. In this alternative scenario, the font would signal Divine beginning and the baptistery new birth fulfilment after repentance and faith and which all initiates could be encouraged to go through. After the infant (font) baptised person has been born of water, that person could then qualify to move through the (baptistery) stage and by means of a believer's baptism give witness to personal new birth, or to be a sign of an intention to do an honest searchy for Christ and His gift of new life redemption.

If the rite of confirmation could likewise be revised into becoming a believer's baptism rite of confirmation, as in the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, this might also serve as a panacea for the ills afflicting baptism in the MCSA. From an African perspective, the paradigm of baptismal practice by the Shona people of Zimbabwe in its dual approach could also be a model that satisfies both the need for community cohesion as provided for by the culturally-rich significance of infant baptism, and meet the requirements of sacrament for personal new birth by the Holy Spirit through repentance and faith. These three models could be combined in a closely-interlinked uniting process because by coming together organically they would possess all the convergence possibility, sacramental and evangelical elements needed for a more effective redemptive impact.

7.1.5 Chapter Five

This chapter discussed the imbalance of emphasis between the two baptisms in which infant baptism enjoys the ascendancy in MCSA theology and practice. In some theologies, sacrament is defined as God's sovereign initiative, which is also believed to provide the required inspired response. Whether sacrament exists within or outside of God's sovereignty, the need for personal decision and response as in believer's baptistic belief is generally underplayed in paedobaptistic denominations, and this applies especially in Churches that practice the high doctrine of infant baptism. The need for infant baptised people to come to faith, or to an intellectual recognition of the validity of their baptism, is terminology constantly used in MCSA theology, but the need for new birth by repentance and receptive faith nomenclature is

not emphatically specified, even though as a progeny of Wesley the MCSA practices a sacramental and evangelical ethos of ministry (MCSA 2000:1–3; 7).

That infant baptism enjoys the ascendancy over believer's baptism in MCSA theology is maintained at the cost of "decisional response", and also of the need for initiates to take up the cross and come to Christ for personal salvation and for discipling by Him (Mark 8:34–37). Infant-baptised members born of the Spirit confirm this claim of being 'decisionally deprived', because they feel that the right for personal decision-making, abused though it maybe, is still the biblical requirement of following Christ. They thus feel robbed of going through the deeply humbling and blessed experience of believer's baptism as a powerfully significant response to their conversion. A lack of balance between sacrament and evangelicalism in MCSA baptismal doctrine seems therefore to be at the root of the churches baptismal problems but could be solved through the adoption of a convergence model of baptismal practice.

7.1.5.1 Deduction Five

Sacrament without evangelicalism equals nominal redemption, and is thus incomplete; while evangelicalism without a sacramental causal beginning equals decisional redemption, and is thus also incomplete. The two elements of Christianity functioning in a partnership of tandem complementarity and balance however, would pave the way for the precipitation of new birth by the Holy Spirit for those searching Christ and desiring such baptismal experience.

Sacrament exists for an evangelistic outcome and an evangelistic outcome can only materialise from sacrament. Because Jesus has come so that all may be saved, by the same token sacrament has been provided so that evangelicalism can be effective for salvation. The two baptisms operating in a partnership, the one as being more sacramental in orientation and the other more evangelistic, seems to be a valid reason for convergence baptism especially because when conjoined both these baptisms would convey the message of Christ as the complete expression of the Gospel of repentance and faith for true personal redemption. This would mean that a culturally-orientated African community faith approach epitomized by infant baptism, augmented by the Western concentration on individual decision involving repentance and faith for personal redemption, may result from a convergence model. This model could provide a fresh sacramental and evangelistic emphasis in baptismal practice which, it seems, could work most effectively as an answer for the woes of paedobaptism in general (MCSA L & D 2000:2).

7.1.6 Chapter Six

The task set in this chapter was to determine whether a dialectical theology would make it possible for the two baptisms, which are currently incompatible in their respective practices, could return to their original state of compatibility by means of a convergence arrangement and process.

Wesley's dialectical theology is studied in order to ascertain whether this model could be made a valid instrument for the uniting of the two baptisms. It became clear that, not only is grace dialectic but covenant as well. Covenant is dialectical by nature because it originates from the salvific structure of God's saving plan which messages God's prior action and also humanity's resultant need to respond. What God reveals about Himself (sic) and of His (sic) action in the bible record, and which is additionally articulated in the major creeds of Christian faith compiled in the third and fourth centuries show that by God's own initiative He (sic) meets imperfect humanity through His (Sic) incarnate Son, who Himself is also thus an expression of God's own dialectic being who because He is humanities Saviour God, also demonstrates the dialectical action of grace in His saving action.

All these aspects of dialectic are interlinked and consistent with each other. The individual responds to God on God's dialectical terms of repentance and faith, meets with God, and by means of the Holy Spirit is born of God, and thus also salvifically becomes one with God to live in a relationship with God that is dialectically interactive. In this kind of interactive scenario, baptism could accurately be regarded as both sacramental and evangelical in dialectical expression, and in the application of the message of Who God is, of what He (sic) loves to do and of what He (sic) requires from people in terms of repentance and faith response.

7.1.6.1 Deduction Six

A conjoining of the two baptisms thus seems not only to be possible based on a dialectical method of theology, because baptism as a message of prevenient grace should logically result in personal saving grace, which is then mirrored by means of the rite of a believer's baptism.

It therefore also seems not only unwise to keep the baptisms apart, but that the non-repeatability ruling which stands opposed to a second baptism in MCSA theology on any individual should likewise be subjected to scrutiny according to the Quadrilateral Authority testing requirement. The critical question thus concerns which of the two possibilities, the convergence of the two baptisms on the one hand, or the non-repeatability of baptism ruling on the other, is the one

best positioned theologically to advance the cause of the Gospel of Christ and to promote unity in the one baptism as expressed in Ephesians 4:5.

7.2 Quadrilateral Test Deduction and Finding

It has been observed that Wesley utilised the various theological authorities which were in use both before and during his time (McGrath 2017:18), but refashioned them into a quadrilateral arrangement in which the bible is prioritised. He saw that the bible possesses a status that is above all other authorities which enabled him to arrange the four authorities so that quadrilateral process based on qualitative methodology in debate would be able to move from subjective human factors and ideas to Divine objective probabilities. The application of the authorities in this study has therefore been conducted according to Wesleyan usage for the dual purposes of not only guiding the selection of material, but also of serving as a test of the materials which have been quadrilaterally-mined.

The possibility of subjective pressure and outcomes becomes real in quadrilateral usage when for example reason (what debate, logic, creativity, and so forth are saying that God is saying), is prioritised over what the Bible record reveals (what God has said and is saying), over tradition (what Christian scholars have said and the Church is saying God has said and is saying), and also over experience (what God is saying through the practices, trends of movement and people's needs); a collective Christian result from this manner of quadrilateral application would likely not be accurately Christian.

Examples of Quadrilateral misuse in the history of the Church may be seen aplenty, and this is particularly apparent in the medieval period of the Church extending from about 5 AD to 15 AD (Bridges & Phipps 1977:86–94; McGrath 2017:21–23). Within this period of Christianity, tradition was placed ahead of the bible, even though both were held by the Church of that time to be *bona fide* authorities on the same level and with equal status.

The bible does not make a direct pronouncement on either rebaptism or the non-repeatability of baptism, because a true model of consensus baptism has always been near-impossible to find, except perhaps for Acts 19:1–7. Acts 19:1-7 may come close to being a prototype of a biblical example of how a combining of the two baptisms could function for sacramental evangelism as opposed to rebaptism. It could be said that the twelve Ephesians in Acts 19:1–7 had received three baptisms – two water baptisms which led up to their third one, the baptism of Spirit for new birth. The baptism of John was a repentance baptism, but was not considered by Paul enough of a justification for complete new birth. The baptism of Christ was therefore

duly received by the Ephesians at the hands of Paul the Apostle. The granting of their believer's baptism was followed by the gift or baptism of the Holy Spirit. In this scenario of Acts 19:1–7 of repeat baptism moreover, Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross and the coming of the Holy Spirit cannot be seen as a re-invention of the Death of Jesus on the Cross. While the objective side of baptism is once and for all, and nothing can alter this historical reality, the need for the personalising of the Gospel of Christ for redemption could justify a repetition of baptism as a sacramental and evangelistic requirement.

What can be read from the six chapters of this thesis based on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral framework is therefore that the materials examined, do not only withstand the *sola scriptura* sacramental and evangelical hermeneutical test for validity and viability, but also clearly to point in the direction a conjoining of the two baptisms.

A converging of the two baptisms in MCSA practice may even be more theologically and biblically appropriate and prudent than keeping the baptisms apart; and yet paedobaptist practice continues to be governed and maintained by a non-repeatable ruling which is the only factor standing in the way of a converging of the two baptisms and does not make theological sense. The MCSA could therefore do a critical rethink its theology and practice of baptism generally and in particular in relation to the need for the possible removal of the non-repeatability of baptism ruling. To this end it would be wise to recognise that while the objective aspect of the message of Christ's baptism represented by baptism cannot be re-invented yet the subjective human response factor as an act of obedience to the Gospel message does however need repeating. This move would cohere with the verbal way of preaching of the Gospel and the need for human response which are repeated *ad infinitum*, without having ever been delegitimized by criticism of the church.

The challenge of practicing baptism within, 'the majority African Community' does have cultural implications because in this context, baptism is more than a ritual but is also a phenomenon that affects the community very deeply and is something that thus should be taken into account in the debate on the possibility of convergence baptism becoming a *bona fide Christian* practice. The importance of communal aspect of baptism was stressed at the UNISA debate on infant baptism held in 1983. Both Professor Maimela (Konig *et al.* 1983:25) and Dr Dwane (1983:52–55) in their respective concluding arguments favoured the high value of infant baptism because they believed that a community approach would cater for family cohesion.

Similarly, in a paper on baptism in the context of African culture at the MCSA Kyara Consultation on baptism in 1983, the Reverend Andile Mbetse had also warned that because of the deep sense of community in black society, and because the authority of the Methodist Church still provide black Methodists with a norm which sees infant baptism as an initiation into the family of God (MCSA 1983:10), great care should be taken against moving to an over-emphasis on individual faith baptism as practiced by white Western Christians.

Additionally, Professor Galgalo's research on Christian denominational membership numbers and the quality of Church life in Kenya has revealed that, while there is phenomenal growth of Christianity in Kenya, yet this trend seems to have undermined the value of community and distracted from an emphasis on paedobaptism and its value within Christianity as practised in Africa. With the rise of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement a great mix of traditions has been the result and has become typical of any new church that is introduced in Kenya. The phenomenal growth of both indigenous and imported Pentecostalism has consequently deeply impacted older denominations and noticeably influenced Charismatic renewal movements. Mainline churches have had to modify the forms and practice of their formal liturgical worship to contain the loss of members to the newer churches (Galgalo 2015:6–10).

There are thus two fundamental cultural forces at play within African Christianity, and also concomitantly within the MCSA. On the one hand, there is a deep sense of community as sacrament which is expressed by infant baptism which derives from Biblical Covenant, and on the other, the Western Evangelistic requirement, as demanded by believer's baptism that emanates mainly from a literal text-and-verse reading of bible narrative. If an "either/or" method of theology continues to be used in the quest for greater unity and more effective baptism, the problems of baptism in the MCSA will probably be exacerbated and perpetuate. If however, a "both/and" dialectic, as in the case of Wesleyan theology is used in a rethink of baptismal policy, this could make it possible to practice convergence baptism or any other possibility, not as replacement baptism as is generally the case with rebaptism, but as a complementing model which upholds baptism as both sacrament and evangelicalism which is what the MCSA Laws and Discipline calls for, and which may also be just the answer required for the Church's ongoing baptismal woes.

It therefore seems that the difference between Wesley and the MCSA, even though both require baptism to be sacramental and evangelical, is that Wesley used a "both/and" dialectical theology as a guiding and testing principle, while the MCSA seems to persist with an "either/or" theology and methodology. While Wesley did not reject infant baptism as is sometimes

claimed, he allowed for a second baptism because the benefits of the first baptism had been sinned away by people themselves. The benefit of the Wesleyan type of model, which carries a strong reference to repentance and faith, is something which thus needs to be given serious consideration for possible re-inclusion in MCSA baptismal theology and practice.

7.2.1 Passing the *sola scriptura* Hermeneutical Sacramental and Evangelical Test

Would the convergence of the two baptisms proposal pass the quadrilateral *sola scriptura* hermeneutical test of baptism in the need for this model to be considered both sacramentally and evangelically authentic? The answer is “yes”, because the deductions from all the chapters have been found to be consistent with each other, and do point in the direction of a convergence model as an expression of consensus baptism. To state it in a more colloquial way: Could there now be held a marriage between infant baptism and believer’s baptism?

The Quadrilateral Framework of Authorities provides for this, and thus makes this kind of marriage possible. The history of Church tradition reveals that there has been a divorce of these two aspects of sacramental baptism, which has never been a happy one. Whilst in the early centuries of the Church there was a constant feuding and a striving for dominion between the two baptisms, this began to change with the introduction of baptism as covenant, and also through the 1982 WCC search directive for what has become acceptably termed as a new form of “consensus baptism”.

The non-repeatability of baptism is a ruling that stands in the way of the possibility of introducing any change needed in paedobaptist doctrine and practice. The struggle for domination between the two baptisms over the centuries has shown how damaging these two aspects of baptism are in their separatedness and which also serves as an antidote for complete unity in the one baptism to be found. The MCSA experience and practice also reveals how problematic a co-existence scenario is when the two baptisms continue to function in separation, even though the MCSA regularly calls for unity between its members on the basis of sacrament and evangelicalism.

The paradigms for consensus baptism also provide examples of how convergence can both be theologically and practically expedited acceptably. Wesley himself is the key for the MCSA in this matter of water baptism in that he provides a theology which reveals how the two baptisms can exist in a dialectical relationship for unity and Christian propagation, and are backed up with and confirmed by well-documented widespread Christian evangelistic outcomes in which Wesley’s quadrilateral style of baptismal theology played a deeply significant part. While the

two baptisms in the MCSA baptismal system have seemed to be incompatible for so long yet it has now been shown from the bible, through widespread theological study and by deduction, that convergence baptism would be both sacramentally and evangelically possible, valid, and viable.

Bibliography

- Aland, K. (1962). *The Problem of the New Testament Canon* London: AR Mowbray.
- Anderson, Bishop J. (2015). *Letter to O. Kretzmann*
- Armstrong, J. H & Engle, P. E. (Ed.) (2007) *Understanding Four Views of Baptism*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Press.
- Bandey, D. W. (1976). *Baptism Reconsidered*. Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House.
- Barth, K. (1948). *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* (A. E Payne, Trans) London: SCM Press.
- Barth, M (1959) *Baptism and Evangelism*, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 12, 32–40.
- Beach, J. M. (2001). Original sin, infant salvation, and the baptism of infants: a critique of some contemporary Baptist authors. *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, 12, 47–79.
- Beasley-Murray, G. R. (1962). *Baptism in the New Testament* London: MacMillan Press.
- Beeke, J. R. & Lanning, R. B (2003) *Unto You, and to Your Children* in Strawbridge, G (Ed.) *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 49–69.
- Booth, R. (2003). *Covenant Transition*. In Strawbridge, G (Ed.) *the Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 175-200.
- Brewer, B. C. (2011). John Wesley's Dialectical Theology of Baptism. *Evangelical Anglicanism*, 107-132.
- Bricki, N & Green, J (2006) *A Guide Towards Using Qualitative Research Methodology* London: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Research Centre
- Bridges, D. & Phypers, D. (1977) *The Waters that Divide* Leister, England: Inter-Varsity Press
- Bromiley, G. W. (1979). *Children of Promise – The Case for Baptizing Infants* Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd.
- Caneday, A. B. (2006). *Baptism in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement* In T. R Schreiner, & Wright, S. D. (Eds.) *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*. Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic.

Chapell, B. (Ed). (2003), *A Pastoral Overview of Infant Baptism* in G. Strawbridge (Ed.) *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 9–29.

Cross, A. R. (2008) *The Evangelical Sacrament: baptisma semper reformandum*. *Evangelical Quarterly of Oxford University*, EQ 80.3, 195–217 [http5://biblicalstudies.org.uk](http://biblicalstudies.org.uk)

Cullmann, O. (1950). *Studies in Biblical Theology – Baptism in the New Testament* (J. K. S Reid, Trans) London: SCM Press Ltd.

Davies J. C (Ed.) (1986) *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, London: SCM Press

Dixon, N. (1979) *Troubled Waters*, United Kingdom: Epworth Press.

Dorani, D. M (2003) *Matthew 28:18–20 and the Institution of Baptism* in G. Strawbridge (Ed.). *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 30–48.

Dunn, J. D. G. (1970). *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, Pennsylvania USA: The Westminster Press Philadelphia.

Fischer, R. (2011). *Water Baptism and the Boundary of the Church*, Submitted to Dr Geoffrey Wainwright in partial fulfilment of Christian Theology 32, Duke Divinity School, USA.

Floor, L (1983), First Response to Paper 4 in A. Konig, H. I. Lederle, and F. P Möller (Eds.) *Infant Baptism: The Arguments for and Against* (With Addendum: McCay (New Zealand Presbyterian Church, & MacNutt (Roman Catholic Church of USA). (1983). *The Re-affirmation of Baptismal Vows*). Roodepoort: CUM Books, 83–86.

George, T (2006) Forward. In T. R. Schreiner, S. D. Wright, & E. R. Clendenin (Eds.). *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*. Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic.

Global Forum for the Future of World Christianity: Korean Institute for Future Ecumenism (2013). *International Theological Colloquium for Transformative Ecumenism*, 17 July 2013, 15–17.

Green, M. (1987). *Baptism: Its Purpose, Practice and Power*. United Kingdom: Hodder and Stoughton.

Grudem, W (1994) *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. United Kingdom: Inter-Varsity Press.

- Hallesby, O. (1964). *Infant Baptism and Adult Conversion* (C. J Clarence, Trans) Minneapolis, USA: Augsburg.
- Henry, M Jamieson, R Fausset, A Brown, D & Clarke, A (1983) *The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the New Testament* (Condensed Edition) Minneapolis, USA: Bethany House Publishers.
- Hollenweger, W. J. (1972). *The Pentecostals*, Minnesota, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.
- Jeremias, J. (1976) *The Origins of Infant Baptism*, Eugene, Oregon, USA: Wipf & Stock.
- Keum, J. (2013). *Together Towards Life, Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscape* Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches.
- Konig, A Lederle, H. I & Möller, F. P (1983) *Infant Baptism: The arguments for and against*, (With Article Addendum: Rev McCay, New Zealand Presbyterian Church, & F. McNutt, Roman Catholic Church of USA), *The Re-affirmation of Baptismal Vows*). Roodepoort: CUM Books.
- Kretzmann, O. G. (2011). *Baptism and Rebaptism in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa* Unpublished MTh. Dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
- Lampe, G. W. H. (1951). *The Seal of the Spirit*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock.
- Lanning, R. B & Beeke, J. R (2003) *Unto You, and to Your Children* in G Strawbridge (Ed) *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, 49–69. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing.
- Lazareth, W (1982) *World Council of Churches: Faith and Order Paper 111: Growing Together in Baptism*. Switzerland: Eucharist and Ministry.
- Leithart, P. J. (2003). *Infant Baptism in History: An Unfinished Tragicomedy* In G. Strawbridge (Ed.) *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 246–262.
- Lewis, G. (1954). *An Approach to Christian Doctrine* London: Epworth Press.
- Macquarie, J. (1966). *The Principles of Christian Theology* London and WCI: SCM Press Ltd.
- Maddox, R. L. (1994). *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville, Tennessee: Kingwood Books, an Imprint of Abington Press.

Marcel, P. (1953). *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism* London: James Clarke and Co. Ltd.

Marcel, P (1959) *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism*, (Edgecombe, P Trans.) London: James, Clark & Co.

McKinion, S. A. (2006). *Baptism in the Patristic Writings*, In Schreiner, T. R. & Wright, S. D (Eds.) (2006) *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic.

McGrath, A. E. (1993). *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 4th Edition. Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishing.

McGrath, A. E. (2017). *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th Edition. Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (1954) *Minutes of the Annual Conference*, Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (1976) *Minutes of the Annual Conference*, Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (1988) *Minutes of the Annual Conference*, Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (1989) *Minutes of the Annual Conference*, Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (October 1983). *Dimension* Rhodes University, Grahamstown R.S.A Copies from Cory Library Archives.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (December 1983). *Dimension* Rhodes University, Grahamstown R.S.A Copies from Cory Library Archives.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (August 1984). *Dimension* Rhodes University, Grahamstown R.S.A Copies from Cory Library Archives.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (1976–1985). *Dimension* Rhodes University, Grahamstown R.S.A Copies from Cory Library Archives.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa. 10th Edition (2000) *Laws and Discipline* Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (2010) *Know and Grow*, Revised Edition (First Ed. 1991). Cape Town: The Methodist Publishing House, Salty Print.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (2015) Letter from Doctrines Committee Chairperson, Bishop J. Anderson, 12 October 2015.

Methodist Hymn and Book of Offices 1975: Herefordshire SG61JS, The Garden City press.

Morgan, C. (2016). Email letter re: membership and baptism statistics, 4 October 2016.

National Catholic Reporter: Keeping an eye on the falling baptismal rate (<https://www.ncronline.org>

Neill, J. D. (2003). *The Newness of the New Covenant*, In G. Strawbridge (Ed.) *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 127–155.

Olivier, R. (2011). *Why We Must be Wesleyan if We Are to be Truly Methodist*, Pietermaritzburg, SA: Seth Mokotimi Seminary Library.

Outler, A. C. (Ed.) (1964) *John Wesley*, New York, Oxford University Press.

Petrie, C. S. (1965). *Observations on Baptism*, *The Reformed Theological Review*, 24, 33–40.

Pratney, W (1983). *Revival* Springdale, USA: Whitaker House.

Pratt, Jr., R. L. (2003). *Infant Baptism in the New Covenant* in G Strawbridge (Ed.) *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 156–174.

Robinson, J. A. T. (1962). *Twelve New Testament Studies*, London: SCM Press.

Ross, K. R Keum, J Avtzi, K & Hewitt, R (2016) *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission*, Oxford, UK and Geneva: World Council of Churches/Regnum Books.

Schreiner, T. R. & Wright, S. D (Eds.). (2006). *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic.

Sproul, Jr., R. C. (2003). In Jesus' Name, Amen, in G. Strawbridge (Ed.) *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 303–310.

Stamm, M (2001) *Sacraments and Discipleship* Nashville, Tennessee: Discipleship Resources.

Strawbridge, G. (Ed.). (2003). *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing.

Thorwald, L. (1980). *Baptists and Ecumenicity with special reference to Baptism*, Prof of systematic theology at the Baptist Theological Seminary, Ruschlikon, Switzerland: No date: No address: No publication details or website.

United Methodist Church of the United States of America (1976) *A Service of Baptism, Confirmation and Renewal* (Alternate Text) Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Parthenon Press

Venema, C. P. (2003). *Covenant Theology in Baptism* in G. Strawbridge (Ed.) *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 201–229.

Watt, J. M. (2003). The *Oikos Formula*, in G. Strawbridge (Ed.) *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 70–84

Waymeyer, M (2008) *A Biblical Critique of Infant Baptism* Texas USA: Kress Christian Publications.

Wellum, S. J. (2006). *Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants* In T. R. Schreiner, S. D. Wright, & E. R. Clendenin (Eds.). *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*. Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic.

Wesley, J. (1958). *Sermons on Several Occasions*, London: The Epworth Press. London: The Epworth Press.

Williams, C. W. (1960). *John Wesley's Theology Today*. London: The Epworth Press.

Wilson, D. (2003). Baptism and Children: Their Place in the Old and New Testaments. In G. Strawbridge (Ed.) *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing.

Witherington III, B. (2007). *Troubled Waters: Rethinking the Theology of Baptism*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press.

Wright, D. F (2005) *What has Infant Baptism done to Baptism: An enquiry at the end of Christendom*. Colorado Springs, USA: Paternoster.

Internet Sources

Characterising the Significance of Baptism, No Author (Infant Baptism Main Page: Introduction to Infant Baptism). Dialogos Studies Homepage: Adapted material appearing in the Christian Reformed Agenda to Synod 2000, 27–28. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://cc.bingj.com.cache.aspx?q=adiaphora+and+Christian+baptism&d=4556668291>

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006:13-37) *Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology*, University of Auckland and University of the West of England, 77–101. Retrieved July 3, 2015, from www.qual.researchpsych.com

Chongnaham, J. (1993–2005). *John Wesley's View on Baptism*. Northwest Nazarene University: Wesley Centre for Applied Theology Online. Retrieved October 6, 2010, from http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl06-10/07-6.htm

Donatism (Definition). (2011) The Free Dictionary.com. Retrieved December 3, 2011, from <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Donatist>

Carter, J. (2015). Fact Checker: *Are All Christian Denominations in Decline?* Evans, R. H. (Ed.). Editors for Gospel Coalition Retrieved March 17 2015 from <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/factchecker-are-all-christian-denominations-in-decline/>

Fiedler Maureen (2013) National Catholic Reporter *keeping an eye on the falling baptism rate* retrieved July 26, 2016, from <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/keeping-eye-falling-baptism-rate>

Fortson III, D. S. (2014) *One Baptism* That convergence can also be theologically viable seems possible by means of a dialectical method of theology as articulated by John Wesley and in a less evident way also in Karl Barth. Associate Professor of Church History and Practical Theology Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte. Retrieved July 27, 2014, (URL Subsequently Unobtainable).

Galgalo, J. 2015:1-13). *Theology in the Anglican Communion seminar* at Lambeth Palace Vice Chancellor St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya for the Mission Retrieved October 20 2015, from www.missiontheologyanglican.org/4

Hermeneutics (June 2016). *Evangelicals Stay Strong as Christianity Crumbles in America. Trends of Baptism in Christianity Today* Retrieved July 26, 2016, from

<http://www.Christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/may/pew-evangelicals-stay-strong-us-religious-landscape-study.html>

Lusk, R. (2006). Paedo-baptism and Baptismal efficacy: Historical Trends and Current Controversies. *Hermeneutics in Trends of Baptism in Christianity Today* Retrieved July 26, 2016, from <http://trinity-pres.net/essays/lusk-evans-dialogue-on-baptism.pdf>

Luther, M (1529) *Lutheran Large Church Catechism*, 48–49. Retrieved August 15, 2016, from <https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=950>

Mohler A. (2012) *The quadrilateral of scripture, tradition reason and experience* Pew Foundations in Christianity Today. Retrieved April 23 2014 from <http://onedaringjew.wordpress.com/>

Mohn, D. (2006). Large Catechism of the Church of England, Questions 163 and 165. Comments and quotes are extracted from a thesis: Reist, I. (candidate) *John Wesley's View of the Sacraments: A Study in the Historical Development of a Doctrine*. Retrieved June, 03, 2014, from <http://ccshk.org/dm//Wesley.html>

Polanyi, M. A., Henriksen, Jnr., R. C. & Serres, S. A. (2011) *A Matter of Faith: A Qualitative Study with Evangelical Christians*. Retrieved May 14, 2015, from http://counsellingoutfitters.com/vistas/vistas/article_102pdf

Radano, J. (2002) *The Report on the Work of the Faith and Order Commission*. Taken from *L'Ossvevatore Romano Weekly* (Edition in English). Retrieved September 15, 2014, from <http://www.ewtn.com/library/Theology/CATWCC02.HTM>

Reist, I. (1998). *John Wesley's View of the Sacraments: A Study in the Historical Development of a Doctrine*. Wesley Centre for Applied Theology, Online: Light Creations. (Wesley's Treatise on Baptism; Journals; and Sermons, all found in *John Wesley's View of the Sacraments*) Retrieved July 20, 2016, from <http://ccs-hk.org/DM//Wesley.html>

Sebastian J. J. (2008). *Infant versus Believers' Baptism: Search for Ecumenical Understanding*. Retrieved November 17, 2008, from <http://cc.msnsnscache.com/cache.aspx?q=baptism+in+the+Methodist+Church+of+South+India>

Wesleyan Quadrilateral (no date) *Theopedia: An Encyclopaedia of Biblical Christianity*. Retrieved July 15, 2014, from http://www.theopedia.com/Wesleyan_Quadrilateral

Wesley, J. (1872). Sermon 45: *You Must be Born Again*. Retrieved March 31, 2012, from <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/serm-045.stm>

Wesley's 25 Articles of Religion. (2012). Article 17: *The Rite of Baptism*. Retrieved March 31, 2012, from <http://www.imarc.cc/br/br2/wesley25ar17.htm>

Wesley, J. (1754–1756). Wesley's Journals Reist, I (1993–1998) (Ed.) *John Wesley's View of the Sacraments – A Study in the Historical Development of a Doctrine*, Wesley Centre for Applied Theology Online: Light Creations. Retrieved July 20, 2006, (URL Subsequently Unavailable).

Wright, D. F (1988) *One Baptism or Two; Reflections on the History of Christian Baptism*, *Vox Evangelica*, 18: 7–23. Retrieved July 26, 2016, from <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/keeping-eye-falling-baptism-rate>

Appendix A: Certification A

Certification

A Theological Inquiry into the Doctrine of the Sacrament of Baptism and Rebaptism in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa

This is to certify that the abovementioned short dissertation has been language-edited by Dr Karen Buckenham, an approved language editor for the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal,

Date: 17 February 2017

Dr Karen Buckenham

13 Kinnoull Rd,

Pelham,

Pietermaritzburg

kbuckenham@mweb.co.za

Appendix B: Certification A02

28 March 2018

Re: Language editing of the doctoral thesis

This letter confirms that the doctoral thesis **A Theological Inquiry into the Doctrine of the Sacrament of Baptism and Rebaptism in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa** by Rev Oswin G. Kretzmann was copy edited for language, completed in Feb 2017.

Cordially



Dr Karen Buckenham (PhD)

kbuckenham@mweb.co.za

Appendix C: Certification B

Trevor French

Professional Editing, Proofreading
& Copy writing

tregf369@gmail.com

084 326 9251

14 March 2018

LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE


To whom it may concern:

I have language-edited and proofread the article by Oswin Garnet Kretzmann, entitled:

**“A Theological Inquiry into the Doctrine of the Sacrament of Baptism and Rebaptism in
the Methodist Church of Southern Africa”**

To the best of my knowledge, this work is the authors’ own, and is free of spelling, grammatical, structural and stylistic errors, to meet requirements for submission to the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics, in the College of Humanities.

With gratitude



T. G. French (Mr)
