CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The earliest evidence[1] that we possess indicates that from the very beginning baptism and the Eucharist played an important role in the lives of the first followers of Jesus.[2] In one way or another, many Christians in an Eurocentric world today still participate in these rites, but it is a moot point whether Westerners religiously experience these two sacraments of the contemporary institutionalized church in a similarly meaningful way as two thousand years ago.

The purpose of this study is to examine how the earliest followers of Jesus experienced baptism and the Eucharist. What was their reason for participating in these rites? What kind of value did these rites add to their lives? What was the meaning attached to them? In the end this approach might assist us to gain a deeper understanding of these two "early Christian" rites, which in turn could help us to comprehend what kind of value baptism and the Eucharist could add to our lives today. I am of the opinion that this investigation could be especially fruitful, because institutionalized churches today are entering a phase of deinstitutionalization,[3] and these rites came into being before formative Christianity became an institution. Where some postmodern believers might want to disperse of everything that reminds them of the *institutionalized* church (cf Schutte 2004), this study could assist them to realize once again what the value of baptism and the Eucharist could be, without the tag of "formalism" being attached to these rites.

In the first-century Mediterranean world religion did not function as an isolated phenomenon in culture. The social world and the symbolic universe as a "sacred canopy" mutually influenced each other (see Berger 1967:3-51). In this holistic symbolic and social world baptism and the Eucharist were symbolic events which gave meaning to people. Baptism and the Eucharist can be described as rites.

Rites consist of rituals and ceremonies. The earliest followers of Jesus separated themselves from their "parent body", the House of Israel, to find their own identity (see Collins 1989:38-39). To symbolize their entrance into their new group, a legitimate crossing of a boundary, baptism served as the ritual of initiation and transformation of status in the context of the earliest Jesus-groups (cf Turner 1987:380-383, 386). Members of this "new" community practiced a new lifestyle. This was symbolized by their participation in the Eucharist, which can be termed an all-inclusive ceremony of integration (Theißen 1999:121). These two rites represented a value system which has its historical foundation in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus crossed taboo boundaries and advocated open meals (Crossan 1998:444; Theißen 1999:132-138).

We also know that the earliest followers of Jesus were part of a cultural world that was characterized by two major institutions, namely the Roman Empire and the House of Israel (cf e.g., Sanders 1980; Sanders, Baumgarten & Mendelson 1981; Meyer & Sanders 1982; Elliott 1995:81, 84; Meier 1997:253; Smith 2003:8). Baptism and the Eucharist were syncretistic rites, because among the followers of Jesus they were influenced by elements of the Greco-Roman mystery religions (cf e.g., Reitzenstein 1978; Meyer 1987) as well as embedded in the context of the Israelite temple tradition (cf e.g., Elliott 1995; Theißen 1999). The mystery religions entailed ritual participation in deity and had two characteristics, initiation and participation, that are clearly reflected in the earliest Jesus-followers' experiences of baptism and the Eucharist. In the context of the Israelite tradition, baptism among Jesus-groups was influenced by "proselyte baptism", which implied a crossing over from one terrain to another. The Eucharist, on the other hand, was influenced by the Passover, a meal that celebrated redemption from foreign bondage.

Extensive research has already been carried out on the origins of baptism and the Eucharist. However, it has not indicated whether this ritual of initiation and ceremony of participation could be newly explained if one takes the

contemporary knowledge of alternate states of consciousness[4] into consideration. Alternate states of consciousness can be described as qualitative and quantitative alterations in the overall pattern of mental functioning relative to some state of consciousness chosen as a baseline, in order that a person will experience his or her consciousness as different (often radically so) from the way it functions in the baseline state (Erickson & Rossi 1981:242, 248; Tart 2000:257; Pilch 2004:2). Erika Bourguignon (1979:236) defines alternate states of consciousness as "conditions in which sensations, perceptions, cognition and emotions are altered. They are characterized by changes in sensing, perceiving, thinking and feeling. They modify the relation of the individual to self, body, sense of identity, and the environment of time, space or other people" (cf Ludwig 1966:225; 1972:11; Krippner 1972:1).

Another important factor that one should keep in mind is that whatever is experienced as the baseline state of consciousness in any given cultural setting is a construct and not a given – in other words, it is the product of a variety of factors. Our levels of consciousness change constantly throughout the day. Cultural forces select and prescribe from the broad spectrum of human potentialities those elements which are to be described as "normal/ordinary" (Craffert 2002:66; Tart [1980] 1982:245). Craffert (2002:67) explains: "Depending on which states of consciousness are taken as baseline, all other states will turn out to be alternative. Thus, what is *altered* from one point of view (cultural system) is *ordinary* from another." Culture also provides the content of experiences of consciousness, because they are grounded in a cultural environment (Craffert 2002:67; see Lewis 1989:5).

This anthropological phenomenon termed alternate states of consciousness has recently been applied to biblical studies, pioneered[5] by John J Pilch (1981-2004). However, research into alternate states of consciousness creates a theoretical problem because, even though these states can be experienced simultaneously by more than one person in a group, experiences of alternate states of

consciousness represent individual, mental, psychological states (cf Richeport 1984). Each experience is unique and in the first instance a personal experience (Lewis 1989:5). In other words, without empirical evidence of what an individual has really experienced during an alternate state of consciousness, research is jeopardized, because of the impossibility of ascertaining the religious meaning and value attributed to a specific alternate state of consciousness experience. Yet, we do have texts as well as archeological and paleontological findings which show that there is a correlation between alternate states of consciousness and a participation in the "dying and rising" of deities, symbolized by "blood" ceremonies such as enactments of sacrificial atonement.

In the light of social-scientifically oriented studies, we know on account of cross-cultural anthropological investigations that only ten percent of people all over the world today do not experience common alternate states of consciousness, while the rest of humanity do (Bourguignon 1974:229-232). Pilch (2002c:33-34) puts this as follows:

> Das kulturell plausible Szenario der mediterranen Welt zum Verständnis der Visionen in den synoptischen Evangelien und an anderen Stellen der Bibel ist eine panhumane Erfahrung, die als veränderter Bewusstseins-zustand (*altered state of consciousness,* abgekürzt: ASC) bekannt ist. Neunzig Prozent der heutigen Bevölkerung auf diesem Planeten haben normalerweise und natürlicherweise solche Erfahrungen. Auf der Basis von ethnographischen Belegen...schätzen Sozialwissenschaftler, dass 80% der Menschen in den mediterranen Gessellschaften schon solche Erfahrungen hatten....Sozialwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen erhärten die Universalität des veränderten Bewusstseinszustandes als Ursprung für religiöse Erfahrung und als Grundlage für die Manifestation manchen religiösen Verhaltens....

Research, therefore, demonstrates that the premodern mythical world of the biblical period stands in continuity with this finding – people who lived in the first-century Mediterranean world experienced alternate states of consciousness as

an ordinary part of life (see Bourguignon 1974:232; Bourguignon 1979:236; Pilch 1996a:133). Only in the Eurocentric world have we – the ten percent exception to the rule – started to interpret baptism and the Eucharist as cognitive dogmatic constructs (cf Kleinman 1988:50-51). We have, thus, lost sight of the syncretistic nature exhibited by the earliest baptism and Eucharist.

In our contemporary context we can perform empirical research into the experience of individuals. But it is not possible to determine what individuals experienced two thousand years ago when the earliest followers of Jesus developed their baptismal and Eucharistic rites. We also do not posses empirical evidence indicating whether they even understood their initiation and participation in a group as expressions of alternate states of consciousness.

My hypothesis[6] is that the initiation and participation, ritually expressed by the two "sacraments", can be "better" explained[7] against the background of alternate states of consciousness. However, a model is necessary to verify or falsify the legitimacy of this hypothesis (see Van Staden 1991:152-183). The model I wish to employ is that of "anti-language", the language that is used by an anti-society, which in turn can be described as a conscious alternative to another society (Halliday 1976:570-584; [1978] 1986:164-182). The earliest Jesus-followers formed an anti-society, into which they were initiated by means of baptism and in which they participated by means of the Eucharist.

The method I shall follow is firstly to offer a comprehensive analysis and provide an explanation of the phenomenon of alternate states of consciousness. Then I shall enquire whether alternate states of consciousness are expressed by means of language patterns that are characteristic of rituals and ceremonies when they are collectively experienced by individuals in a group.

In using baptism and the Eucharist as case studies, my point of entry is that of current research that indicates that baptism and the Eucharist can be seen as

symbolic rites. As with other symbols, the earliest[8] baptism and Eucharist carried *meaning* because they were performed for a *reason* and they added *value* to people's lives (cf Beattie [1964] 1968:69-70).

Subsequently, my purpose is to indicate that the earliest baptism and Eucharist as a ritual initiation and ceremonial participation – seen from a sociological perspective as expressions of the religious experience of an individual in a collective group – legitimized the crossing of boundaries in a symbolic manner. This process led to a new identity with new rights and responsibilities (cf Van Staden 1991:194-195). Especially "new" for followers of Jesus within this new value system were the crossing of taboo boundaries and the transformation of existing insider-outsider relationships (cf Esler 2003:26; see Theißen 1999:63-64, 287; Malina 2002:609). In other words, this ritual crossing of social boundaries is, sociologically viewed, a phenomenon that leads to an anti-society. This was the case because of the experience of alternate states of consciousness. An individual's experience of an alternate state of consciousness is a momentous event, but perceived collectively, was verbalized in anti-language by the earliest Jesus-followers – an experience that was repeated ceremoniously. The Eucharist as the institutionalizing of a ceremony of open table fellowship symbolized an alternative lifestyle within "baseline consciousness". It bore meaning for one's social life in the here and now experiences of the earliest Jesus-groups.

I intend to argue that the ritual initiation and ceremonial participation of the earliest Jesus-followers were the result of alternate states of consciousness as expressed in anti-language. I aim at redirecting extant research concerning the origins of the "Christian" baptism and the Eucharist by means of a multidisciplinary methodological approach. The importance and relevance of this research are found in the enhancement of social inclusivity as an ideal in the present day.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study encompass:

- indicating what anti-language is;
- explaining what alternate states of consciousness are;
- approaching religion as a cultural symbol system;
- arguing from a cultural anthropological methodological perspective that the earliest baptism should be seen as a cultural ritual symbol and the earliest Eucharist as a cultural ceremonial symbol;
- establishing the historical foundation, the value system and existential meaning (see Beattie 1968:69-70) of baptism and the Eucharist in the earliest post-Easter Jesus-groups;
- showing that alternate states of consciousness were verbalized in anti-language and re-enacted in the rites of the earliest Jesus-followers;
- enhancing social inclusivity as an ecclesiastical ideal (Van Aarde 2004b:716, 723; Hancock 2005:265-275);
- redirecting extant research concerning the origins of the "Christian" baptism and the Eucharist from dogmatism to ethnography by means of a multidisciplinary methodological approach.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the last twenty years a wide variety of new and interdisciplinary research methods have been introduced in biblical studies (Horrell 1999b:3). Craffert (2002:53) indicates the importance of interdisciplinary study in pointing out that "different perspectives not only enrich each other, but often challenge conclusions reached in any individual field of research." The social sciences in particular are useful for interpreting the New Testament. The intention of social-scientific interpretation, together with the use of cross-cultural models, is to enable a "fuller" and "better" appreciation of biblical texts and communities within their historical, social, and cultural settings. This method of research complements the conventional exegetical operations such as text criticism, literary criticism, historical criticism, source criticism, form criticism, tradition

criticism, and redaction criticism, and is not an alternative to them (cf Elliott [1993] 1999:341). Elliott (1999:340) defines contemporary social-scientific criticism of the Bible as a specific phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the cultural and social dimensions of a text by making use of the social sciences. He remarks that as a component of the historical-critical method of exegesis, social-scientific criticism investigates biblical texts as meaningful configurations of language displaying the intention to communicate (cf Pilch 1995c:63; Horrell 1999b:3-4).[9]

The nature of the present study requires interdisciplinary research. Biblical studies, social sciences, historical studies, anthropology, psychology and neurology are some of the disciplines that could help to illuminate the issues to be addressed[10] (cf Davies 1995:204; Pilch 1995c:50; Rollins 1999:v-vi; Winkelman 2000:1; Craffert 2002:53-54; Pilch 2002a:104-105; Pilch 2002d:690-692). One important factor in this regard is that one should remember that some of these disciplines are embedded in Western culture and cannot be applied directly to the situation of the first-century Mediterranean world[11] (Pilch 1997b:112; 2002a:104-105; Berger 2003:1).

An example of a cross-disciplinary method for studying the Bible and its world is the use of social-scientific models. Elliott (1986:5-6) observes:

> In the social sciences models are used to analyze and interpret the properties of social behavior, social structures and social processes. From observation and then generalization about the regularities perceived in human behavior, concepts and theories are formed to account for such regularities and patterns of interrelated properties. All human beings, on the basis of their personal experience and diverse sources of knowledge, have certain perceptions of, and general theories concerning, the nature, structure and meaning of social reality. The purpose of models in the social sciences is to explicitly express these theories and test their validity.

Elliott (1986:6; see Horrell 1999b:7) indicates that although this procedure may be commonplace in other sciences, for a long time theology and exegesis have often failed to follow suit.

Although there are many different definitions of what a "model" is, Elliott (1986:3-9) states that models can be described as "cognitive maps", employed consciously or unconsciously to categorize, compare, generalize and synthesize the amount of data we have selectively admitted through our cognitive filter. He adds that models are the media by which we establish the meaning of what we allow ourselves to see. According to Esler (1994:12-13), one of the benefits of using models is that they bring the interpreter's values and perspectives out in the open. He also comments that this allows the interpreter to judge whether such values and perspectives are appropriate to the data. He describes a model as a heuristic tool, allowing comparisons to be made with the texts for the purpose of posing new questions to them – the text, not the model, supplies the answers. Therefore, he contends, it is inappropriate to debate whether a model is true or false, valid or invalid – the only thing that matters is whether the model is useful.

The implication of using a social-scientific model is that the present study is not deductive in nature, since employing a model implies an inductive method of research. However, there is the possibility that an inductive study could be positivistic in nature (see Van der Merwe 1996:278-282; Kritzinger 2001:15-316). If it should turn out to be positivistic, my model will determine my investigation. Instead, I should like to describe my method of research as abductive. This means that I shall remain open to the possibility that my hypothesis could be falsified[12] (cf McGrath 2001:231-237). The nineteenth century scholar, Charles S Peirce (1932:53-54), discovered a way to avoid the empirical one-sidedness of both the deductive and inductive approaches in positivistic epistemology. His non-positivistic approach is known as abduction (cf Fann 1970:5-10; Reilly

1970:30-38; Ochs 1998:114-115; Brawley 2003:605-608). Brawley (2003:608) describes abduction as follows:

> Challenging constructs of reality through the imaginative association elements heretofore unrelated is tropological. Abduction functions like a fresh metaphor, which also associates something novel with something conventional in order to transform conventional perspectives. Thus, abductive argument begins with shock, a challenge, disorientation. The shock breaks the frames of conventional thinking and confronts readers with a new way to construe reality.

For constructing typical situations from the past, Van Aarde (2001a:29-30) recommends the "historiographical" theory of the German sociologist Max Weber. In this manner a researcher can avoid being too positivistic about the possibility of "naïve-realistically" (see Van Huyssteen 1987:20) reconstructing the past. Hengel (1991:34) rightly avers that historical reality is always more complex than that which meets our eyes. I shall thus use a model in the sense that Weber (1949:90) describes the use of an "ideal-type". This means that I am not attempting to devise a record of concrete historical situations based on empirical data. According to Weber (1949:89-112), an "ideal-type" (in this case "model") is a theoretical construct into which possible occurrences are brought into a meaningful relationship with one another, so that a coherent image may be formed by using data from the past. In other words, as a theoretical construct, a model is a conceptualization that will not necessarily correspond with empirical data. As a construct displaying a coherent image, the model does not influence the conditions of investigations into what could have happened historically, in that the purpose of establishing such a model is to account for the interrelationships between discrete historical events in an intelligible manner. Such a coherent construct is not formed by or based upon a selection from what is regarded as universally valid – in other words, that which is common to all relevant cases of similar concrete situations of what could in reality have happened (cf Van Aarde 2001a:46). It is therefore not a logical-positivistic choice based on either inductive

or deductive reasoning. Weber (1949:92; emphasis by Weber) explains this point as follows:

> The construction of ideal-types recommends itself not as an end but as a *means.* Every conscientious examination of the conceptual elements of historical exposition shows however that the historian as soon as he attempts to go beyond the bare establishment of concrete relationships and to determine the *cultural* significance of even the simplest individual event in order to "characterize" it, *must* use concepts which are precisely and unambiguously definable only in the form of ideal types.

1.4 FRAME OF REFERENCE

1.4.1 Introduction

A certain amount of background information is important to support the reader's comprehension of the hypothesis discussed in this study. The intention is not to provide a comprehensive description of each of the following themes, but only to highlight some factors of the frame of reference in this study.

1.4.2 Our world

I regard myself as a postmodern person who lives in an Eurocentric world, although on African soil. I consider that it is important to mention this, because the time frame in which a person lives influences everything that one does, thinks and says (cf Du Toit 2000:13-14). Scholars generally divide the history of humankind into three periods, namely the premodern, modern, and postmodern paradigms[13] (cf Kuhn [1962] 1966; Küng 1988; Van Aarde 1995a:20-24; Du Toit 2000:13-61).

The premodern paradigm can also be termed the pre-scientific era. During this period people evinced a pre-scientific mythical understanding of the world. The modern – or scientific – era started in 1514 with Copernicus' discovery that the sun and not the earth constituted the centre of the planetary orbits (Allen

1985:158-162; cf Van Aarde 1990:295; Malina 1995b:3). After two world wars, the previous optimism regarding humankind as well as technological progress began to decline. This gave rise to the postmodern paradigm in which we find ourselves today.[14] The postmodern paradigm represents a period during which some people argue that there is no such thing as pure, objective knowledge (cf Burridge & Gould 2004:199).[15]

A postmodern frame of reference is important for the research I plan to do in this study. Where only "instrumental rationality" was regarded as important in modern times in the Western world, every aspect of humanity, including the spiritual and aesthetic, has once again become relevant today (Du Toit 2000:56; see Küng 1988:197-200; Van Aarde 1990:297-301). It is exactly this spiritual dimension of humanity that is important for this study, since it played a major role in the way people understood themselves in the first-century Mediterranean world. Without giving attention to the spiritual dimension as such, we shall not be able to understand the behavior of people who lived in biblical times, and in the end this can also limit our perception of ourselves as Christians today.

1.4.3 The first-century Mediterranean world

When we as Westerners read the Bible today, we encounter quite a few descriptions of events that do not constitute a taken-for-granted part of our lives. One example is the seemingly easy way in which first-century Mediterranean people experienced contact with the spirit world. In general, Westerners regard reports like these as unscientific and uncritical (cf Borg [1987] 1993:26-34). Crossan (2003:30-31) rightly asks:

> How do we get post-Enlightenment ears and eyes, hearts, minds and imaginations back into a pre-Enlightenment time and place? How do we return to a world where, since the miraculous was culturally a permanent possibility, its assertion needed not just evidence but, more importantly, relevance?

In a pre-Enlightenment world it was generally accepted that “events” such as virginal conceptions, divine births, miraculous powers, resurrections and ascensions could and did happen. These were neither unique, nor impossible. While the question today is whether it is really possible that situations like these could occur, in antiquity the debate would have been whether such things had happened to this or that individual. In contrast to today, the non-believer would not raise the impossibility option; neither would the believer raise the uniqueness option (Crossan 2003:31).

Since Westerners today practice a totally different worldview, speak different languages and have different cultures than the people who lived in the first-century Mediterranean world, it is necessary to understand the worldview of such people before we shall be able to understand anything regarding their way of life (see Malina 1986:1-12; Pilch 1995c:49, 58; 2000c:3-12; 2002a:103-104).[16] Other cultures or times cannot be fully comprehended from the perspective of one’s own world. This will lead to ethnocentrism and anachronism[17] (see Malina 1991:3-8; 1993a:9-11; Pilch 1995c:50; 2000c:3-12).

Beattie (1968:14-15) assents that a proper way in which we can understand people of other cultures, is to understand them within the context of their own cultures. He remarks that we do injustice to the subtle, allusive and evocative power of language if we require all meaningful verbal expression to conform to the rules of syllogism and inductive inference. He argues that “[c]oherent thinking can be symbolic as well as scientific, and if we are sensible we do not subject the language of poetry to the same kind of examination that we apply to a scientific hypothesis” (Beattie 1968:69). Because of this, Beattie (1968:69) regards the work of social anthropologists as important. When they study other cultures they are interested in symbols and symbolic thinking. In this regard, Beattie (1968:69) points out: “The study of these is difficult, partly because in Western culture very much less importance is attached to this kind of thinking than to logical,

'scientific' thought." Although we do not always realize it, even the thinking of "enlightened" Westerners is filled with symbolism, often implicit and unanalyzed.

Esler (1994:2-5) concurs, considering that the New Testament writings manifest a complex interpretation of society and gospel, of context and *kerygma,* and that we cannot hope to understand either without an appropriate methodology for dealing with the social aspect. As indicated earlier, in addition to the literary and historical techniques which have long been employed by New Testament critics, it is thus necessary to make use of the social sciences, for example sociology, anthropology and social psychology, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content of the New Testament. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:2; emphasis by Malina & Rohrbaugh) also comment on this point:

> We must...recognize, as indeed recent social-scientific studies of the New Testament have begun to do, that the distance between ourselves and the Bible is as much *social* as it is temporal and conceptual. Such social distance includes radical differences in social structures, social roles, values, and general cultural features. It involves being socialized into a different understanding of the self, of others, of nature and time and space, and perhaps even of God. In fact, it may be that such social distance is the most fundamental distance of all.

Berger (1967) developed a model to explain how phenomena in the empirical social world are impacted on by a "sacred canopy" that constitutes the "symbolical world" (Van Aarde 2005b:683-708). The importance of Berger's model is that it demonstrates that New Testament documents were written for particular early Jesus-groups who lived in communities with specific social worlds (see Segal 1989:123-125; Esler 1994:6). The various theologies presented in these social worlds can be interpreted as the "symbolic provinces of meaning" that were attributed to them by the authors of the various texts, or by transmitters of the traditions before them. They have meaning because they legitimize the early gatherings of "Christians" (not even bearing that name yet). This is a

process that pertains to socialization, legitimization and normalization. Seen from this perspective, "socialization" within the context of a religious community such as an early Jesus-group comes down to "theologization". New Testament theologies became sacred canopies for the social worlds of Jesus-followers who tried to discover a place and identity while they experienced opposition from outsiders and dissension from insiders (Esler 1994:7-12). At the social level, the texts of the New Testament may be interpreted as vehicles for the construction of institutional and symbolic worlds within which the communities for which they were written found meaning in a hostile world. Everything the earliest Jesus-followers experienced occurred within communities, where there were strong links between social reality and theological affirmation (Esler 1994:18).

Craffert (1999a:12) comments that worldviews are cultural matrixes which provide an understanding of what is real, possible, plausible and desirable in a specific setting. He points out that worldviews provide the mental maps by means of which people experience reality and live their lives. The worldview of the people who lived in the first-century Mediterranean world can be characterized as follows (Craffert 1999a:12-14):

- *A first-century view of the universe:* Most people in the first-century world believed in a three-storied universe in which a flat earth is vaulted by a dome (heaven) where the sun, moon, stars and gods can be found. Underneath the earth was an area called the underworld[18] (cf Malina 1995b:3). They believed that heaven could be reached by climbing a high mountain or tower. Sky and land constituted a single environmental unit. The inhabitants of the sky influenced what happened on land.

- *The inhabitants of the first-century universe:* The whole universe was populated by gods, demons, spirits of the dead and angels. Most of these agents could influence human affairs in some way (cf Malina et al 1996:14). They were responsible for the well-being and misfortune of

human beings. Sickness and negative weather patterns were caused by them. Most of these beings could be manipulated, bribed, persuaded or controlled; and people who could intervene and/or mediate were in great demand (cf Berger 2003:27-28). Access to stronger and more effective power was what was needed in this regard.

- *The dynamics of a first-century worldview:* The most important principle operative in the first-century world can be described as the "great chain of being". Everything was linked to everything else, both above and below. Nothing happened by chance – it happened because some power was involved or responsible.[19] Not only the extraterrestrial beings (divine agents) but most substances (such as minerals) could influence the elements or agents higher in the chain. The essential element was access to power which could control this chain. Power was an important feature of this world: without a proper balance of power, the universe would lose its distinctive character; and without access to power or proper protection against malignant forces, a person was vulnerable. People with power were thus in great demand. Not only human beings but also agents (gods, demons and angels) and "natural" elements (such as crops and the weather) could be affected. In the chain of demand a variety of things played an important role, namely words, natural elements (lead, copper, wood), substances (spittle, goat milk, blood), actions (rituals), and agents (magicians or holy people).

Life made heavy demands on human beings in the first-century world. It was only the strong and fortunate who survived and lived a long and rewarding life. This makes it understandable that people who could intervene in the chain of events were in demand (Craffert 1999a:14). In contrast to this, people who are socialized in the modern world possess the unconscious worldview that reality is constituted by matter and energy interacting to form the visible world, which is regarded as the only world (Borg 1993:27, 32-33). Within the modern framework,

experiences of another reality mark a person as clinically psychotic. But the reality of the other world deserves to be taken seriously. The primary intellectual objection to it flows from a rigid application of the modern worldview's definition of reality. Borg (1993:34) observes:

> Yet the modern view is but one of a large number of humanly constructed maps of reality. It is historically the most recent and impressive because of the degree of control it has given us; but it is no more an absolute map of reality than any of the previous maps. All are relative, products of particular histories and cultures; and the modern one, like its predecessors, will be superceded.

It is not only their worldview, but also the way in which the first-century Mediterranean people lived their daily lives, that differs considerably from those of the Western world today. In the remainder of this section, I shall offer a short description of some aspects which constituted first-century Mediterranean day to day living, in order to indicate why we do not always readily understand what they said, did and experienced. If this background information is taken into account, one may understand why they, in contrast to us, experienced alternate states of consciousness as a common phenomenon.

The culture of first-century Mediterranean people could be described as "high-context". They produced sketchy and impressionistic texts and left much to the reader's or hearer's imagination, which means that in their literature far more was left unsaid than in a contemporary Eurocentric context. In contrast to this, Western society is "low context". Low-context societies produce detailed texts, spell out as much as possible and leave little to the imagination (Malina 1991:19-20; cf Kehoe 2000:78, 92; see Pilch 1995c:50).

Another difference between people who live in an Eurocentric world today and those in the first-century Mediterranean world, is that the societies of the New Testament period consisted of only two clearly differentiated social institutions,

namely politics and kinship (see Malina 1986:139-140). All other aspects of life, including religion, were imbedded within these two institutions, whereas in contemporary Western society all the different aspects of life are neatly categorized and treated separately.

First-century Mediterranean people, like Middle Easterners today,[20] also exibit collectivistic (group-centered, socio-centric, or dyadic) personalities. Contemporary Western society on the other hand regards individualism as being of great importance (cf Malina, Joubert & Van der Watt 1996:12; Berger 2003:28-29). Individualism in general describes the preference for individual autonomy; it, therefore, creates a very loosely knit social network. In contrast, collectivism denotes a preference for embeddedness in a tightly knit social network. Collectivistic individuals are socialized to be deeply, emotionally integrated into groups, like the extended family, clan, or in-group, which will protect them and care for them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (see Malina 1994:109-113). Malina (1993b:172) states that groups are marked off from each other by imaginary lines, so to speak. The people within the lines form the in-group. People in an in-group were required to support the other members of their group at all times, even at their own expense, while they had to treat out-group members with indifference[21] (cf Saldarini 1991:45-46; see Sumner 1959:12-13).

Describing social groups, Mary Douglas ([1973] 1996:54-68) distinguishes between the concepts of the group and the grid. She describes the “group” as the experience of a bounded social unit, and the “grid” as comprising rules that relate one person to others on an ego-centered basis. On account of this distinction, Malina (1986:38) terms the first-century Mediterranean world a strong group/low grid society. He remarks that in societies of this kind, initiation rituals which introduce people into the group are of major interest and concern (e.g., circumcision for Israelites, baptism for Christians, initiation procedures at Qumran, etc). There is a steadfast concern to ferret out persons who do not belong within the boundaries (cf Weber 1968:58), with rituals for expelling them

beyond group lines (e.g., expulsion, shunning, excommunication, etc) (Malina 1986:38; cf Pilch 1981:108-109; Douglas 1996:8, 13). In a strong group/low grid society, the kin group (family) plays an important role. People who belonged to groups such as the earliest Jesus-movement were like “brothers” and “sisters”, with God as Father, forming fictive kinship groups (cf Malina 1986:39, 159; Elliott 1991:390; Theißen & Merz 1996:206; Esler 2003:20-26; see Malina 1993b:47-101; Malina et al 1996:12-57).

Key values in the first century Mediterranean world were honor and shame. Malina (1993b:171) describes these as follows: “Honor refers to an individual or collective claim to worth along with the social acknowledgement of that worth. To have shame is to be concerned about one’s honor; to be shamed is to lose honor” (see Malina et al 1996:8-9). In the Eurocentric world of today materialism fulfills these roles.

The socio-economic aspect of the first-century Mediterranean world can be perceived as an example of what anthropologists call a classic peasant society, since it was composed predominantly of agricultural or fishing villages, socially tied to preindustrial cities. There were only two social classes, the workers and the elite, whose relationship was that of patron-client. The elite comprised only a very small group, while the “clients” viewed their existence as determined and limited, by the natural as well as the social resources available to them. This led to the perception that all the goods available to a person were limited. One’s social position could thus only be improved at the expense of others (Malina 1993a:90-96; see Van Aarde 1994b:96-99). Less than ten percent of the population could read and write, and wealth was restricted to a small group of elite in the cities. Poor hygienic conditions, inadequate medical services, and excessive crime rates led to a high death rate.

People in the first-century Mediterranean world understood time in a different manner from the way in which we do today. It is anachronistic and ethnocentric

to interpret the concept of time that people used in a pre-industrial, advanced agrarian Mediterranean society from a contemporary Eurocentric perspective. We could term our Western concept of time "clock time". It is linear and divisible, consisting of past, present and future, where one thing is done at a time and progression can occur (Hall 1976:14-18; see Sheehan 1986:66). In contrast with this, Mediterranean people exhibited a concept of "social time". Lauer (1981:21) explains this term as follows: "…by social time, I refer to the patterns and orientations that relate to social processes and to the conceptualization of the ordering of social life." Social time was grounded in social relations and was influenced by history, feelings, beliefs and values, that is by issues that were more important to first-century people than scheduled time (see Hall 1976:14; Lauer 1981:21-46; Malina 1996:197-198).

Social time comprised two dimensions, namely "cyclical time" and "procedure time". Cyclical time denotes human behavior that repeatedly takes place in the same manner, like the planting and gathering of a harvest. Procedure time is rooted in the processes of biological organisms. According to this concept time is not understood as a cycle but as a process. The procedure is important, not the time taken to complete it. Therefore, all the time that it took to finalize the procedure was perceived as the "present" (Malina 1996:199-202).

Procedure time can be further categorized as "experienced time" and "imagined time". For us, the future holds a possible resolution for events that take place in the present, while the reality of first-century Mediterranean people only consisted of experienced time in the experienced world (Malina 1996:188). Malina (1996:188) points out: "Experienced time is the perception of duration solely within the perceived horizon of the world of actual experience." This "present" includes the horizon of the past and the future, which means that the present can sometimes cover a very long period, depending on the process that is taking place at the moment. Imaginary time existed outside of experienced time and imaginary time included everything that did not exist in the present – it was

understood as the domain of God, in which anything was possible (Malina 1996:192).

A comprehension of the way in which first-century Mediterranean people understood time is necessary in order to understand the apocalyptic frame of mind which constituted their worldview (see Käsemann 1969:92, 102, 107). Apocalypticism is a complex phenomenon. It can be described as a kind of eschatology[22] (see Crossan 1998:258; Van Aarde 2000:7-8). The word eschatology stems from the Greek word `e1sxaton`, which denotes "end". Miller (2001:5) points out that in a general sense eschatology comprises a set of beliefs about the end of the world. In biblical studies it refers to a way of thinking that is centered on the end of "heaven" and "earth" as the creation of God. It has to do with the belief that the immanent is going to be replaced by the transcendent world of God. In a certain sense the world of God comprises a "perfect world" which is in contrast to the corrupt human world (see Van Aarde 2000:9). Miller (2001:5) elaborates:

> For Jews and Christians this end is understood to be a culmination, not a cessation: the end of history is the fulfillment of God's plan for humanity. Both Judaism and Christianity exhibit a variety of eschatologies....[but] all biblical eschatologies are united by the fundamental conviction that God will prevail in the end.

The term "apocalyptic" derives from the Greek word `a)poka&luyiv,` which means "revelation". This term was deduced from the first word of the last book in the New Testament, namely the *Revelation of John* (see Murphy 1994:147; Van Aarde 1994b:79; Sim 1996:23; Van Henten & Mellink 1998:12-13). It is difficult to define "apocalyptic". Sim (1996:23, 26) expresses the opinion that we face a terminological problem in this regard, since this one word is used to express two different ideas. On the one hand it refers to a specific genre of Israelite and "Christian" texts which focuses on the revelation of heavenly secrets. On the other hand it describes a specific eschatological worldview. There is not

necessarily any relation between the genre "apocalyptic" and the religious perspective "apocalyptic eschatology" (cf Barr 1998:154-159; Van Aarde 2000:6).

The *Apocalypse Group of the Society of Biblical Literature Genres Project* proposed the following definition for "apocalypse" (Collins 1979:9):

> "Apocalypse" is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.

Later this Group added the following definition of the function of apocalyse (Collins 1986:7): "…intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority" (cf Van Henten & Mellink 1998:12-12, 30; Burridge & Gould 2004:15).

With Miller (2001:6), I understand apocalypticism as "a kind of eschatology that envisions the end of history coming soon and brought about by an overpowering divine intervention. This occurrence will be evident to all people and will be preceded by cataclysmic events."

From the period when one major world power after another reigned over Israel, the latter wondered when God would fulfill his promises of grace and prosperity. Apocalypticism gave answers to the "why?" and "where to?" questions (Van Aarde 1994b:79-80; Schwarz 2000:323). The Israelites believed that on the "day of judgment", all their circumstances would change; that all the righteous Israelites would reign, together with Yahweh, from the new Jerusalem. This would be a righteous world, lacking hardships (Cohn 1957:1-6).

The earliest Jesus-followers made use of these ideas that had been developed by the Israelites (see Van Aarde 1994b:83-85). By about 70 CE, the Jesus-followers were becoming more and more isolated in their surroundings. On the one hand their relations with the house of Israel, symbolized by the Synagogue, had worsened (see Katz 1984:43-76), while on the other hand their relationship with the Roman Empire had also weakened, because they did not wish to participate in the Greco-Roman cultic activities (see Koester 1992:3-15; Van Aarde 2000:10). They experienced themselves as marginalized, which led to their adopting apocalyptic thinking (see Cohn 1957:7; Rist 1989:381).

Van Aarde (1998:18; cf Hanson 1979:11-12; Saldarini 1991:44-48) ascribes apocalyptic eschatology to a "sectarian mentality", like that of the group of early Jesus-followers (see chapter 3). He shows that in a crisis, a minority group becomes marginalized, and consequently its members tend to display a dualistic orientation – they are only aware of two sides of a matter, the right and the wrong, the divine and the satanic, a world "here and now" and a world "beyond". Their world is marked by pessimism and determinism on the one hand, and by hope on the other hand, because they regard the present dispensation as miserable and the transcendent dispensation as joyful. Their pessimism and determinism can be relativized by the conviction that the course of history can be changed by means of the prayers and martyrdom of the "righteous" (see Malina 1996:192-193). In this vein, Van Aarde (1998:18) writes:

> The crisis in the cultural world of Israel and the church, which gives rise to this, revolves around the pressure that heathen powers placed on the cult and the being of the church. The crisis is magnified because the presumed relation between deed and retribution is not realized. The godless are not punished, and the righteous are not visibly the victors.

Experienced time, as a result of this despair and embarrassment, was projected into an *imaginary time* in which God exercises control. To Van Aarde (1998:19) "[w]hat is 'imagined' is expressed in symbolic language. 'Imaginary time' is, by

analogy with experience, expressed in 'procedure time,' for example in dry and rainy seasons." An apocalyptic worldview, therefore, creates a new and meaningful symbolic universe (Sim 1996:54, 69; Van Aarde 2000:8). "Apocalyptic imagery" thus expresses these experiences of "imaginary time", which are in turn related to "alternate states of consciousness" (Van Aarde 1998:18). Hence, a comprehension of this concept is necessary for the present study.

If one keeps the worldview of the first-century Mediterranean people in mind, it will thus be much easier to comprehend:

- why they formed a distinctive group;
- how a person could become a member of this group;
- what responsibilities members of the group had to fulfill;
- and what kind of value and meaning was added to their lives by participation in this group (cf Esler 2003:197-221).

1.5 IDENTIFYING A RESEARCH GAP

1.5.1 Easter

In New Testament times people placed more emphasis on the spiritual dimension of humans than Westerners usually do today (see Borg 1993:25; Davies 1995:20; Pilch 2002a:108-109; Dreyer 2004:938). Historically speaking, we can refer to Jesus as a Spirit-filled person in the charismatic stream of formative Judaism (cf Weber 1968:60; Theißen & Merz 1996:178-182, 217; Den Heyer 1997:84-88; see Holmberg 1978:136-150). Everything that Jesus taught and did ensued from his own intimate experience of the "world of Spirit" (Borg 1993:25, 42-51; cf Meier 1997:265). This can be seen in the words with which, according to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus began his public ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovering of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Lk 4:18-21, quoting Is 61:1-2).[23] The notion of "another world", a "world

of Spirit", understood as *actual* even though nonmaterial, is alien to our contemporary way of thinking.

As I mentioned earlier, since the beginning of the modern period, Westerners have tended to see reality as possessing only one dimension, the visible and material realm. The "world of Spirit" is not part of our taken-for-granted understanding of reality: for the most part we even feel skeptical about it. In contrast to this the notion of another reality was (and still is) the common property of many other cultures. The cultural tradition in which Jesus lived, for example, took this primordial tradition for granted. Its members believed that there are at least two worlds, and that the "other world" can be known (see Borg 1993:26-27). The world of Spirit and the world of ordinary experience are not perceived as completely separate, but as intersecting at a number of points.

This experience of God as present in his life (cf Malina 2001:136), afforded Jesus an alternative outlook on the world, which can be summarized as follows:[24]

- Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God[25] was *different* from the present age (cf Sanders 1985:123-158, Crossan [1991] 1992:227-353; Blackburn 1994:385).
- This kingdom was already *present*[26] (cf Den Heyer 1997:155-158; Crossan 2003:50; contra Sanders 1985:152-156).
- People could *share* in this kingdom, which was made possible through Jesus' healings and exorcisms (Crossan 1992:xii; 332; cf Blackburn 1994:386-392; cf Funk & The Jesus Seminar 1998:531-532; Burridge & Gould 2004: 42; contra Sanders 1985:133-140, 148-157, 340).
- Jesus lived and promoted an *inclusive* lifestyle[27] (Elliott 2002:75-91; 2003:173-210; cf Crossan 1992:xii, 261-264, 361; 1994:71-74; Blackburn 1994:389-390).

Jesus' alternative lifestyle led the earliest Jesus-followers to form an alternative society after Easter – they did not live in the same way which they had been

used to. However, Jesus did not leave behind any writings of his own. Everything that we know about Jesus is known from the way in which he was proclaimed (see Den Heyer 1997:22-23). We can distinguish between the proclaiming Jesus (the pre-Easter Jesus), the proclaimed Jesus (the post-Easter Jesus) and the proclaiming "church"[28] (see Den Heyer 1997:70-72). In referring to Jesus, *proclaiming* refers to Jesus himself acting and speaking, while *proclaimed* refers to the interpreted Jesus whose words and deeds are retold by others[29] (see Van Aarde 2001a:8-9). Van Aarde (2001a:9) queries why scholars draw this distinction between the pre-Easter Jesus and the post-Easter Jesus. According to him, the answer lies in the fact that historical-critical exegesis of the New Testament brought forth the insight that Jesus did not regard himself as the Christ. Nor was he recognized as the Christ by the people around him. But the New Testament,[30] the church fathers, and the drafters of the fourth-century creeds proclaimed and confessed him in these terms (cf West 2001:50, 53).

Easter, thus, played the major role in leading the followers of Jesus to understand what his mission was and to describe him in the most glorious terms known in his culture (see Den Heyer 1997:5-6). But the "seeds of the church's proclamation lie in the experience of the historical Jesus, even if the full-grown plant needed the experience of Easter to allow it to burst forth" (Borg 1993:50; cf Davies 1995:21; Den Heyer 1997:57, 65-66, 68-69; Meier 1997:265).

To live immediately in the presence of God, as Jesus did, was something that the earliest Jesus-followers proclaimed. For them it was important to realize that the temple and sacrifices were not necessary (cf Malina 1986:39; Crossan 1992:324; Theißen 1999:139-142). They lived by grace alone. Burridge and Gould (2004:107) express this in the following way: "In accepting the poor, the weak, the women, Gentiles, lepers and other people considered unimportant by the religious authorities, Jesus was accepting people back into the culture of the people of God without requiring them to go to the temple and make sacrifices."

It is especially in the experience of individuals that the "other world" is known (Borg 1993:26-27). Borg (1993:27) explains this as follows:

> In every culture known to us, there are men and women who experience union or communion with the world of Spirit, either "entering" it or experiencing it coming upon them. Those who experience it frequently and vividly often become mediators between the two worlds in a variety of cultural forms: as healers, prophets, law-givers, shamans, mystics. Such men and women are charismatics in the proper sense of the word: people who know the world of Spirit firsthand.

Jesus fits this description very well. The Israelite tradition, from which Jesus comes, allows for God's direct communication to persons – the prophets (West 2001:58-59, 65; cf Horsley 1985, 1986). From the perspective of sociology, Weber ([1963] 1964:46) describes a prophet as an "individual bearer of charisma, who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment." A prophet is someone who received a personal revelation and possesses charisma (cf Malina 2001:130-131). Weber (1964:47) adds that prophets very often practiced divination as well as healing and counseling. Jesus can thus be understood as one of many prophets who felt themselves addressed by God, not only indirectly through the community and its traditions, but directly (cf Sanders 1985:237-240; Theißen & Merz 1996:141-142; Burridge & Gould 2004:38, 41). By means of the picture that the gospel writers paint about Jesus, we can clearly see that his contemporaries understood his life in this manner – especially after Easter. They tell stories about Jesus, using imagery rich with associations in that time, which affirm that the living Christ of the early church's experience was (and for Christians, still is) one who, sharing in the power of God, "delivered them from peril and evil, nourished them in the wilderness, and brought life out of death" (Borg 1993:70).

The first followers of Jesus interpreted the meaning of what he said and did from a spiritual perspective. This spiritual dimension became important on account of

the resurrection experiences of the disciples. Davies (1995:182-185) points out that the reports by some of Jesus' followers that they had seen him after his death took on great significance in the formative "Christian" movement. This is the case because the *importance* of Jesus' death and subsequent appearances derived from the *experience* of later "Christians" that they too had died and subsequently arisen to new lives as persons possessed by the Spirit of God.

The experience of spirit-possession is thus cognate with an experience of death and resurrection. According to Pilch (1998a:57; 2002a:112), these "resurrection experiences" of the disciples were alternate state of consciousness experiences and are therefore not just a literary or redactional form, but real. The disciples saw Jesus in alternate reality. The interpretation that they gave to these experiences was that God had raised Jesus from the dead.[31]

As a Spirit-filled person, the historical Jesus exhibited the characteristics of a healer (Funk & the Jesus Seminar 1998:527, 531). As mentioned earlier, one of the methods by which he healed people was by means of exorcism (see Brown 1984:4-5; Blackburn 1994:354-361; Davies 1995:44; Craffert 1999a:88-92; Funk & the Jesus Seminar 1998:530-531). To understand this, we must once again keep the worldview of Jesus and his contemporaries in mind. Jesus' exorcisms took place in a culture that maintained a strong dichotomous picture of the spiritual world: evil spirits or demons were in constant battle with the power of God. The world of human beings was invaded by forces that were responsible for various misfortunes, including illnesses. In this battlefield between humans and demons, Jesus acted as a healer to alleviate the illnesses of many (Craffert 1999a:108; see Saler 1977:38-51; Davies 1995:113; Malina & Pilch 2000:5; Pilch 2002a:108-109).

These features in the Jesus tradition point towards a possible fit between Jesus as an historical figure and the role that the shaman plays as a "religious specialist" in many cultures (see Craffert 1999b:329-340). A shaman is someone

who interacts with the spirit world on behalf of the community, mainly by making use of alternate states of consciousness[32] (cf Balzer 2003:310; MacLellan, 2003:366).

If we understand Jesus as a shaman-like figure, it is much easier to comprehend how he, as a Spirit-filled person, experienced the presence of God directly in his life[33] (see Den Heyer 1997:29). Alternate states of consciousness can help us to understand the phenomenon that a person can experience the presence of God in such a manner. Jesus did not use a specific rite that was part of his healing processes, as shamans usually do (see Choi 2003:170-171), but the earliest Jesus-groups created rites grounded on what Jesus did, as in his baptism and open meals. During Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist he experienced an alternate state of consciousness (DeMaris 2002:137-138; Pilch 2002a:108), and this baptism was transformed into a ritual by the early Jesus-groups. Jesus' meals with others and his last meal with his disciples were meals without preconditions, which were transformed into a ceremony by the early Jesus-groups (Smith 2003:221-223). Why did they do this? Most probably to keep on experiencing the presence of God directly in their lives; and an easy way in which this could be achieved, was by means of employing alternate states of consciousness. Although an alternate state of consciousness is a personal affair, it can be institutionalized (see Bourguignon 1979:239; Pilch 1993:237), and this is what I suggest occurred in the earliest baptism and Eucharist.

The baptism and Eucharist of the earliest Jesus-followers can thus be understood as rites that re-enacted alternate states of consciousness. Although an alternate state of consciousness is an individual psychological affair, it can be transformed into words by understanding it as a symbol. In other words, that which was witnessed to by the earliest followers of Jesus, the *kerygma,* was cast into words. A psychological state was transformed into a real state. It became a symbol in words.

The distinction between enactment and recounting can be termed "showing" and "telling" (Funk & the Jesus Seminar 1998:27-28). The story of Jesus' baptism in Mark 1:9-11 illustrates the difference:

> [9]During that same period Jesus came from Nazareth, Galilee, and was baptized in the Jordan by John. [10]And just as he got up out of the water, he saw the skies torn open and the spirit coming down toward him like a dove. [11]There was also a voice from the skies: "You are my favored son – I fully approve of you."[34]

Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998:28) aver that in verse 9 the baptism of Jesus is reported or recounted. The storyteller does not depict the actual baptism. In verse 10 the story alters from reporting to showing. We learn that Jesus was in the water and that as he came out of it, he saw the skies split open and the spirit descended toward him or into him "like a dove". This sentence transports the reader or listener to the scene at the Jordan and allows him or her to witness what happened, namely that Jesus "sees" the spirit descending. The showing technique continues in verse 11. In addition to something seen, there is also something heard – a voice from the skies which announces: "This is my son. I fully approve of him." The hearing is not limited to Jesus; everyone who witnessed Jesus' baptism could hear the voice. The voice is reproduced: the readers get to hear the actual words. According to the Jesus Seminar, verse 9 is "historical", since Jesus' baptism by John was retold in more than one independent form in the gospels. Because of this multiple independent attestation Jesus' baptism was probably based on historical reminiscence. Verses 10-11 are, however, probably not historical. In these verses we see how the storyteller "imagined" what happened at the baptism of Jesus. The storyteller could not have known what Jesus saw, and the witnesses could not have heard exactly those Greek words, since they spoke Aramaic. We also need to keep in mind that this story was written down many years after the event.

The implication is that the historical Jesus "showed" and the first gospel writers "told". "Show" and "tell" constitute the dialectics between Jesus and the gospel writers. Afterwards the early Jesus-groups "re-enacted" the telling. A ritual is a symbolical re-enactment of something which was "showed" dynamically. This process started at Easter – Jesus died, but after Easter he lived again. Easter brought the change. Jesus' death and resurrection made that people started "telling" (see West 2001:66).

We know that Jesus experienced the presence of God directly in his life. This happened in alternate states of consciousness. An experience in an alternate state of consciousness is not the same as an experience in the real world. It represents an interruption in reality, a momentary alternative to the ordinary. How is it then possible to repeat this spirit-filledness in real life?[35] One may do so by making use of symbols (see Cassirer 1944:31-32; Turner 1967:19; Douglas 1996:37). Thus, in order to retell and experience that which Jesus "showed", the authors of the gospels wrote it down in symbolic form. The "telling" of the "showing" of an alternate state of consciousness thus required symbolic language. And when this symbolic language is "re-enacted", it becomes a rite.

However, ordinary language is not adequate to express an alternate state of consciousness. To speak about this we need another kind of language – anti-language. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:1-16) developed a social scientific model regarding anti-language. By applying this model to "telling" as anti-language, we might be able to gain insight in the early Jesus-movement's formation of rites from alternate states of consciousness.

1.5.2 The model: Anti-language

According to sociolinguists, language is the way in which people interact (Halliday 1986:10). Therefore, we cannot study language without taking its social context into consideration. Something else that needs to be taken into account is the complementary and inseparable standpoints of the inter-organism as well as

the intra-organism. The concept of the "inter-organism" can be described as "language as behavior", and has to do with the fact that humans can speak and understand language because there are other people around. There can be no language without society, and no society without language. The concept of the "intra-organism" can be described as "language as knowledge", because it has to do with the internal make-up of the organism – the brain structure, and the cerebral processes involved in speaking and understanding, as well as in learning to speak and understand. One important factor about speaking and understanding language is that it always takes place in a context (Halliday 1986:10-13). Halliday (1986:14) remarks that when we take a look at the human being as a biological specimen, we shall observe that like the individual in many other species, an individual is destined to become part of a group. But unlike other species, humans achieve this mainly by means of language. By this means the "human being" thus becomes part of a group of "people". But "people", in turn, consist of "persons", which means that by virtue of participating in a group, an individual is no longer simply a biological specimen of humanity – he or she is a person. Halliday (1986:14-15) then takes this dialectic one step further: The individual as a "person" is a potential "member" – he or she possesses the capacity to function within society, and once more it is through language that this status is achieved. Being a member of society means occupying a social role, and yet again it is by means of language that a "person" becomes the potential occupant of a social role or roles. Halliday (1986:19) argues that "[l]anguage is what it is because of what it has to do."

The relation of language to the social system is not simply one of expression, but one of a more complex natural dialectic in which language actively symbolizes this system – language creates the social system, while at the same time language is created by the same system. Because of this, Halliday (1986:183) describes language as being a "social semiotic". He adds that the meanings that construct the social system are exchanged through a variety of modes or channels, of which language is one, but not the only one[36] (Halliday 1986:189).

We can say that wording is the linguistic way in which humans express meaning (Halliday 1986:21). But the meaning that languages express is not on the wording level: it derives from a social system (Halliday 1986:23-31; see Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:3). Languages entail three linguistic modes of meaning: the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual. The ideational refers to what is being said or described; the interpersonal looks to the personal qualities of the communicating partners; and the textual pertains to the abilities of language to form units of meaning at a level higher than the sentence, for example, by means of cohesion of paragraphs into some whole. Thus, *what* one says is ideational, *with whom* one speaks is interpersonal, and *how* one speaks is textual (Halliday 1986:69, 123, 125-126, 142-145).

Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:7) demonstrate that if we study the language of the earliest Jesus-groups, we shall perceive similarities with what Halliday (1976:570-584; 1986:164-182) has labeled “anti-language”. “Anti-language” is the language of an “anti-society”. Halliday (1986:164) describes an anti-society as “a society that is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it. It is a mode of resistance, resistance which may take the form either of passive symbiosis or of active hostility and even destruction.”

Halliday (1986:164-182) studied different situations in which he detected anti-language, including the language of individuals put into prison or reform school in Poland, of members of the underworld in India, and of vagabonds in Elizabethan England. All these individuals formed groups that were in fact anti-societies set up within a larger, broader society, and in this setting their language came to express their social experience. This point brings Giblett (1991:1) to the following conclusion: “Antilanguage and antisociety go together; one is not possible without the other. There can be no society without language and no antisociety without antilanguage.”

Halliday (1986:165) indicates that the simplest form taken by an anti-language is that of substituting new words for old – in other words, it is a language relexicalized. This relexicalization is partial, not all words in the language possess equivalents in the anti-language. Usually a different vocabulary is central to the activities of the subculture, which distinguishes it sharply from the established society. Elizabethan vagabonds, for example, called a horse thief a "prigger of prancers" and they referred to stealing packages as "lifting law". But anti-language is not merely *re*lexicalized, it is also *over*lexicalized. In the Calcutta underworld language, there is not just one word for "bomb", but twenty-one, as well as forty-one words for "police".[37]

If we examine the language of the earliest Jesus-followers, Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:4-5) indicate that these two linguistic phenomena, namely relexicalization and overlexicalization, can be easily recognized. If we keep the theme of this study in mind, an example of relexicalization can for example be seen in the terminology associated with the Eucharist. To call bread "the body of Christ" or wine the "blood of Christ" is to employ instances of relexicalization. Relexicalization usually points to items and objects affecting areas of central concern to the group. Overlexicalization can for instance be seen in the "I am..." statements of Jesus, for example "bread" (Jn 6:35) and "door" (Jn 10:9). These words have the same denotation in the context in which they are employed; they refer to real objects. However, when identified with Jesus in an "I am..." proposition, each takes on an interpersonal dimension. Jesus is not bread, but he is like bread for those who stay attached to him; he is not a door, but he is like a door to God for those who believe in him (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:5-6).

Berger and Luckmann ([1966] 1976:172-173) argue that the most important vehicle for reality-maintenance is conversation. An individual's subjective reality is created and maintained through interaction with others, and this interaction is largely verbal. If anti-language is considered in this regard, we have to keep in mind that subjective reality can be transformed (Halliday 1986:169-170; cf Berger

& Luckmann 1976:176). Berger and Luckmann (1976:176) comment that for an individual to *be* in society already entails an ongoing process of modification of subjective reality. Transformation involves different degrees of modification. Since subjective reality is never totally socialized, it cannot be totally transformed by social processes. These authors remark that "[a]t the very least the transformed individual will have the same body and live in the same physical universe" (Berger & Luckmann 1976:176). Nevertheless, there are instances of transformation that appear to be total when compared to lesser modifications, and these transformations can be termed alterations. Alteration requires processes of *re*socialization (Berger & Luckmann 1976:176). Halliday (1986:170) asserts that anti-language is the vehicle for such resocialization: "It creates an alternative reality: the process is one not of construction but of reconstruction."

If we apply this concept to the earliest Jesus-followers, it means that through baptism, they became "new people", although in actual fact they still looked the same as before and lived in the same world as before. They did not become angels, for instance; they stayed human. But they possessed new rights and responsibilities and a totally new frame of reference. In contrast to the world around them, in their alternative community, life made sense.

This process of resocialization makes special demands on language, because it must enable the individual to establish affective identification with others. Halliday (1986:170-171) points out that:

> Conversation in this context is likely to rely heavily on the foregrounding of interpersonal meanings, especially where...the cornerstone of the new reality is a new social structure – although, by the same token, the interpersonal elements in the exchange of meanings are likely to be fairly highly ritualized.

The anti-language arises when the alternative reality is a *counter*-reality, set up in opposition to an established norm. It is, thus, not the *distance* between the two realities that are significant, but the *tension* between them.

Halliday (1986:171-172) adds that there is continuity between language and anti-language, just as there is continuity between society and anti-society. But he also remarks that there is tension between them, reflecting the fact that they are variants of the same underlying semiotic. So although they express different social structures, they are "part and parcel of the same social system." In this regard, Halliday (1986:172) writes:

> An antilanguage is a means of realization of a subjective reality: not merely expressing it, but actively creating and maintaining it. In this respect, it is just another language. But the reality is a counter-reality, and this has certain special implications. It implies the foregrounding of the social structure and social hierarchy. It implies a preoccupation with the definition and defense of identity through the ritual functioning of the social hierarchy. It implies a special conception of information and of knowledge.

Weber (1968:xliv-xlv) concurs in commenting that as a rule anti-societies bear a negative relation to the traditional conventions of society. They are not outside society, but in opposition to the established norms within society (cf Giblett 1991:2-3).

There are many different reasons why people adopt a conscious alternative to the society in which they are embedded. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:9) mention prison inmates, members of street gangs, the drug culture, new religious cults, and underground political groups. They write that some of these people might have been treated with hostility by members of the larger society, or they might have been labeled deviant, or they could have experienced a total lack of social concern, "resulting in their living in the greater society in a state of passive

social symbiosis" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:9). As deviants, people like these often undergo public disconfirmation of their ability to act as adult persons. Their choices and movements are restricted, and they are denied the status of significant human actions. Since what they say and do is defined as mere behavior, as going through meaningless motions, they presumably are without capacities to act in human fashion (Harris 1989:606).

Anti-language and the alternate society which generates it derive from individuals who have experienced such "socially sanctioned depersonalization" (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:10). In other words, an anti-language is a language deriving from and generated by an anti-societal group. And an anti-societal group is a social collectivity that is set up within a larger society as a conscious alternative to it (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:9-11). Anti-language exists exclusively in a social context of resocialization. Like any other language, it is a means of realizing meanings stemming from the social system of the specific society. It is a means of expressing perceptions of reality as interpreted by persons socialized in that social system. Socially, the use of language actively creates and maintains the existing interpretations of reality. But unlike ordinary language, anti-language creates and expresses an interpretation of reality that is inherently an alternative reality, a reality that emerges in order to function as an alternative to society at large. To be able to understand an anti-society, it is thus important to also understand the larger society to which it is opposed. Anti-society makes no sense without the society over against which it stands. Like language itself, anti-language is the bearer of social reality, but of an alternative social reality that runs counter to the social reality of society at large. Thus, anti-language serves to maintain inner solidarity in the face of pressure from the wider society (from which group members stem, and in which they are to a large extent still embedded). Furthermore, for individuals to maintain solidarity with their fellow anti-societal members and not fall back into the margins of the groups they left or from which they were ejected, an alternative ideology and emotional anchorage in the new collectivity is necessary. This necessity is best served by

demonstrations of mutual care and concern on the part of those in the anti-societal group.

As I remarked at the beginning of this chapter, the larger society in which the earliest Jesus followers were embedded, comprised the Roman Empire, where the Greco-Roman mystery religions played an important role, as well as the House of Israel, with its hierarchical temple structure.

If we keep in mind that metaphorical modes of expression are the norm in an anti-language (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:13-14; Halliday 1986:175-177), it will be possible to relocate alternate states of consciousness in texts regarding baptism and the Eucharist, because something totally different from what is said is enacted. In the ritual of baptism a person is baptized with water, by which that person indicated that he or she died and rose with Christ and is thus initiated into a new community (see Theißen 1999:122-136). In the ceremony of the Eucharist, which is called a meal, a person eats bread and drinks wine and in so doing maintains that he or she has a part in the death and resurrection of Jesus (see Theißen 1999:126-138). Baptismal and Eucharistic “language” is an example of anti-language.

The above information suggests that the early Jesus-movement can be explained as an anti-society, with anti-language as its mode of expression. The earliest followers of Jesus wished to say something about Jesus’ alternative lifestyle, which they re-enacted. The lifestyle he advocated differed in many ways from the norms and the customs of the day. Jesus proclaimed that to be a part of the kingdom of God was the opposite of being a part of the kingdom of Caesar (see Van Aarde 2000:10; cf Koester 1992:10-13; Malina 2001:1; Elliott 2002:86). Because the earliest Jesus-followers were marginalized by the Israelite parent body (with its hierarchical temple structure and sacrifice tradition), as well as by the Roman Empire (where recognition was to be given to Caesar, who was perceived as a deity, in every activity, and where refusal was interpreted as

treason) (see Barr 1998:127, 164-179), they formed an alternative community with an apocalyptic worldview.[38] Since apocalypticism has to do with the revelation of God's alternative world in the real world, it can be seen as an alternate state of consciousness phenomenon. The earliest followers of Jesus projected a better future promised by God – a promise that functioned in their present circumstances as a kind of coping mechanism.

Because of the "institutionalization" of the alternate states of consciousness of the earliest Jesus-followers, an alternative community was formed. Although it is difficult to study *alternate* states of consciousness because of their psychological individuality, the result of experiencing them – the formation of an *alternative* community – can be studied much more easily because of its empirical appearance and externally witnessed evidence.

1.6 RELEVANCE AND METHODOLOGY

Extensive research has already been performed on the origin of the earliest baptism and Eucharist. My contribution will be to link this existing research with a study of alternate states of consciousness. In this way, I believe that not only will we, as Westernized people who live in the twenty-first century, understand the baptism and Eucharist of the earliest Jesus-followers more fully, but that this study will also enrich the meaning of experiencing the Christian baptism and Eucharist today. Because of the influence of the modern paradigm, we have to a great extent lost the spiritual dimension that played such an important role in the earliest baptism and Eucharist. By means of this study, I hope to aid Westerners to discover this spiritual dimension once again.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to investigate the possibility that alternate states of consciousness exhibit a tendency to become institutionalized in rites. We know that an alternate state of consciousness is not a cognitive affair; it is "irrational" and mentally experienced by an individual (see Davies 1995:136;

Lewis 1989:5; Malina & Pilch 2000:5). But group dynamics accord certain characteristics to the experience of persons (see Davies 1995:170-171; Winkelman 2000:97). Group experience makes it possible for a researcher to look back and see how a non-rational experience in a group became institutionalized in a rite and how people reflected on it in a rational way. We can discover more about group experiences like these by means of text study, archeology, and paleontology. We do not possess any evidence of exactly how and why baptism and the Eucharist as rites originated. If we know so little about the first phases of the earliest baptism and Eucharist, how will we be able to draw a line connecting a psychological state (an alternate state of consciousness) to concretized rites? In other words, how will it be possible to indicate that the texts that we do have regarding baptism and the Eucharist can show that these rites were the concretizing of alternate states of consciousness, since we do not possess sufficient information regarding the earliest forms of "Christianity"? The method I wish to apply is to show that by means of anti-language, an alternate state of consciousness was verbalized and afterwards re-enacted in the symbolic rites of baptism and the Eucharist.

Baptism and the Eucharist are the symbolic "re-enactment" of that which Jesus "showed". Each is the re-experiencing of an alternative state. By participating in baptism and the Eucharist, the "ordinary" world is interrupted by something non-ordinary. That which Jesus experienced in his alternate state of consciousness, can also be experienced in these rites, namely that the kingdom of God is immanent, that it differs from the ordinary world, and that people can share in it in an inclusive way. This was the case in Jesus' time, and it can still be the case today, if we once again attach a similar meaning to baptism and the Eucharist as the earliest Jesus-followers did.

Summary:

Historical Jesus	Earliest Jesus-followers	Early Jesus-groups
"show" →	"tell" →	"re-enact"
alternate states of consciousness	anti-language	rites

1.7 RESEARCH PLAN

Since I have described my theory, model and method in chapter 1, the remainder of this study will consist of explaining and illustrating this in detail.

In chapter 2, I shall describe the phenomenon of alternate states of consciousness, as well as related themes such as myth and shamanism. Chapter 3 will be devoted to explaining group formation, institutionalization, symbols and rites. In chapter 4, I shall discuss baptism as the initiation ritual of the early Jesus-movement and in chapter 5, I shall consider the Eucharist as the early Jesus-movement's ceremony of integration. In chapter 6, I shall link all these concepts and show that baptism and the Eucharist can still possess value and meaning for Christians today, especially because institutionalized churches are entering a phase of deinstitutionalization at present.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 1

[1] Here I refer to the documents included in the New Testament and other early apocryphal documents that are related to this theme, as well as the writings of the church fathers. Specific references to these works will be made throughout the study.

[2] With regard to the way in which I describe the people we read about in the Bible, the reader should note the following: Throughout this study I use the terms "Israelites" or "Israelite", instead of "Jews" or "Jewish", because the latter is an anachronism. The term "Judean" (not "Jew"), a translation of 0Ioudai=oj, is a regional designation for an inhabitant of Judea (0Ioudai/a), in distinction from, for example, an inhabitant of Galilee (Galilai=oj) (see Pilch 1997a:119-125). I refer to the temple-centered religion of both Judeans and Galileans as the religion of post-exilic "Israelites". "Insiders", who supported the ideology of the Second Temple, referred to themselves as the "people of God" or the "house of Israel" (e.g., Mt 10:6) (see Elliott 1995:76). Geographically perceived, Galilee and Idumea, which were situated concentrically around Judea, were regarded as regions with a lesser claim to purity than Judea. There were two reasons for this: they were further away from Jerusalem and the temple, and they were populated by people from "mixed" marriages (marriages between Israelites and non-Israelites), who were regarded as "outsiders". But Idumea and Galilee were still part of the "house of Israel". From the perspective of Israel, outsiders were often stereotyped as "non-Israel". They were referred to as e1qnoi, which is usually translated as "Gentiles". The term xristianoi/ ("Christians") is a similar example of stereotyping used by Judeans and Romans to refer to Jesus-followers in, for example, Syria (see Ac 11:26). Therefore, from an "in-group" perspective, the term "Christians" is not a suitable description for the very first followers of Jesus. (Therefore, I employ inverted commas if I do need to use these terms in this study.)

[3] See Yolanda Dreyer's (2004:920, 929-932) analysis of the deinstitutionalization theory of the sociologist Max Weber and her analysis of the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu.

[4] I choose to use the term "alternate" states of consciousness, because, as Zinberg (1977:1 note 1) comments, it is a "plural, all-inclusive term" (see chapter 2).

[5] Stevan L Davies (1995) was probably the first scholar to apply alternate states of consciousness to biblical studies, but he does not apply it in the same general manner as Pilch does. His focus is more on spirit-possession (one specific manifestation of alternate states of consciousness) and his main aim is to describe the historical Jesus as spirit-possessed healer.

[6] A hypothesis is a suggested solution to a problem (see Van der Merwe 1996:289-290).

[7] Van Huyssteen (1988:88) remarks that explanatory progress in theology points to an increase in intelligibility. This is the reason why, epistemologically, I explain "progress" in science in terms of the words "explanation" and "better". Van Huyssteen (1988:88) says: "Explanatory progress, as a form of inference from the best available explanation in terms of either hermeneutical, theological or philosophical criteria, can therefore indeed be established retrospectively by indicating how a later interpretation improves on its predecessors – and because of the reality depiction of theological statements this need not be an instrumentalist or pragmatist notion of progress."

[8] Whenever I employ the terms "earliest" baptism or "earliest" Eucharist throughout this study, I refer to the baptism and Eucharist of the earliest followers of Jesus.

[9] For a concise overview of the scholarly development of social-scientific criticism, as well as a commentary on and critique of the different methods (especially model-based methods), see Horrell (1999b:4-27).

[10] Here I give a short description of all these disciplines, to make it clear why so many different fields need to be taken into consideration for this study:

- biblical studies: the study of the content of the Bible (in its original languages);
- social sciences: the study of persons in society (Harris 1989:599);
- historical studies: the study of the history of a group or public institution *(Collins Essential English Dictionary* 2003:357);
- anthropology: the science most appropriate for comparing societies and cultures (Harris 1989:599; Pilch 1995b:23);
- psychology: the study of individuals' inner selves (cf Harris 1989:599);
- neurology: the scientific study of the nervous system (*Collins Essential English Dictionary* 2003:513; cf Bulkeley 2003:123).

[11] Theißen (1987:269) argues that the results of modern social-scientific research cannot provide support for historical theses, but says that these findings can serve as a heuristic starting point and as an illustration. He adds that hypotheses can be constructed by observing contemporary phenomena, but then they must be verified exclusively on the basis of the historical sources. Esler (1994:44) states that we should be open to the prospect that we may be able to conclude as a matter of probability (and historical research is always a matter of probabilities) that certain phenomena sociologists describe (e.g., specific kinds of alternate states of consciousness) could have occurred in the first-century Mediterranean world.

Pilch (1997b:112), therefore, argues that when using psychological and psychoanalytical approaches to interpret early texts such as the Bible, we should be critical and should recognize the diversity of perspectives available in each discipline. He states this because modern Eurocentric psychology and psychoanalysis are distinctly monocultural disciplines. While most of the major contemporary psychological concepts arose in Europe and North America in the time between Charles Darwin and World War II, they have been extensively developed in the United States. According to Pilch, many Eurocentric trained psychologists analyze and judge non-Eurocentric populations by models and insights developed among a small and non-representative, elite segment of Eurocentric populations. Psychology and psychiatry focus on individuals in industrial urban societies. Since these disciplines developed in such a context, they will remain Eurocentric, ethnocentric, and "incomplete" sciences with regard to an analysis of the first-century Mediterranean world.

[12] To make sure that I do not use my model in a positivistic manner, I shall ask myself the following questions in a self-critical manner throughout my investigation:

- Is this an appropriate model to approach the question at stake? (Because it is possible that the data that I find could show that the model is not appropriate.)
- Can the objection of John J Pilch (personal interviews: Georgetown University, Washington DC, Fall 2003; Christian University of St Petersburg, July 2005) that my investigation lacks legitimacy because there is too little empirical evidence (regarding the way in which the earliest Jesus-groups experienced baptism and Eucharist), be adequately addressed by my applied model?

[13] There is a difference between the concepts "postmodern/postmodernity" and "postmodernism". I use the term "postmodern", because, in contrast to any word that ends in "-ism", it contains positive and useful values (cf Van Aarde 1990:294, 300-301).

[14] This does not mean that every single person today thinks in a postmodern way. There are still people who find themselves in the modern paradigm, while there are also people in Africa, Asia, the Far East and South America who still live according to a premodern worldview today (see Du Toit 2000:41-42).

[15] This cursory explanation only serves as a background to the phenomenon that people understand themselves and the world they live in according to a certain worldview. For a detailed discussion of the complicated process of developing and shifting paradigms, see Kuhn (1966) and Küng (1988).

[16] For a better understanding of this phenomenon, see Douglas (1996:54-68). She developed a comprehensive model for comparative, cross-cultural understanding and interpretation, a useful tool in the process of trying to understand foreigners and interpret the meanings shared by alien groups (cf Malina 1986:12).

[17] William Graham Sumner ([1906] 1959:13) coined the word "ethnocentrism" as "the technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it" (cf Van Eck 1995:9; Pilch 1997b:115). In the same vein, Malina (1993a:9-11) defines ethnocentric anachronism as imposing the cultural artifacts, meanings, and behavior of your own period on people of the past (see Pilch 2000c:3-12).

[18] Malina (1995b:3-10) considers that this perception of the world (e.g., as described in Genesis), started to change in the Hellenistic period (c 333 BCE). Scott (1991:55) indicates that during this time, in the philosophical schoolrooms, the consensus on the nature of the cosmos was that the earth is a sphere, remaining motionless at the centre of the universe, and that all the other heavenly bodies were also spheres. Seven planets, including the sun and moon, surrounded the earth, each moving in its own sphere, and all of these were enclosed by an eighth sphere containing the fixed stars. He says that this general picture of the cosmos was very common. Different ethnic groups who lived in the Hellenistic age "read" the sky to gain information from the stars, each in terms of their traditional ethnic story.

[19] First-century Mediterranean people, thus, exhibited the tendency to see the world in terms of a dualism, in the sense that there are warring forces of good and evil, with the evil outside and penetrating the good inside. The terminology "this world" served as an antithesis to some other world. "This world" of hostile groups and conspiracies that ruin good human intentions had to be evil; those in "our group" were good, no longer part of "this world". This explains why the Roman occupying forces in Palestine were regarded as unjust (Malina 1986:40).

[20] According to Hofstede (1991:17) approximately eighty percent of the contemporary world population is collectivistic in nature.

[21] Pilch (1997b:113-114) illustrates the difference between individualistic and group-centered societies by saying that in a Eurocentric context, the answer to a question like: "Am I my brother's keeper?", would be: "Maybe yes, maybe no…", while in a Middle Eastern context the answer would be: "Absolutely! And the keeper of everybody else in this network!".

[22] We need to keep in mind that the term "eschatology" only originated in the nineteenth century, and can, therefore, too easily be used anachronistically when referring to first-century Mediterranean people (Malina 1996:210-211; Van Aarde 2000:7-8).

[23] Scripture quotations taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission.

[24] Scholars who study the historical Jesus disagree on various factors regarding his life (see e.g., Miller 2001). It is not my intention to participate in the debate about *who* the historical Jesus was. These four characteristics of the historical Jesus as I understand him are relevant for my study. However, my theory does not stand or fall by these four characteristics of the historical Jesus. If research should indicate that the historical Jesus could be better understood in a different manner, my arguments regarding the baptism and Eucharist of the earliest Jesus-followers could still be valuable.

[25] Davies (1995:112-117) has an interesting way of explaining the "kingdom of God". He says that if Jesus believed himself to be able to free people from demonic rule (by means of exorcism), it would follow that he sought to enable people to experience divine rule. Thus, the kingdom of God is a mode of being alternative to the rule of Satan. Davies sees the kingdom of God as a form of experience – an alternate state of consciousness directly related to Jesus' career as healer. It is not a social condition or way of life. This alternate state of consciousness was induced by Jesus' parables and other elements of his recorded discourse. Davies calls this kind of alternate state of consciousness religious trance, which he defines as an alteration in perception. In the case of Jesus and his followers, it can be understood to be a radically revised mode of perception of this world.

[26] Scholars remain sharply divided on the question of the nature of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God. Meier (1997:258) asks: "Did Jesus proclaim that the kingdom was already present in his ministry, or did he see it as a reality soon to come – or both?" Sanders (1985:140) contends that "[i]t is possible – no more – that Jesus saw the kingdom as 'breaking in' with his own words and deeds." On the other hand Crossan (1992:422; 2003:50) remarks that Jesus spoke of a kingdom that was present in his ministry and not of a kingdom still to come on some final day of Israel's history. Meier (1997:258), and Theißen and Merz (1996:250), find themselves caught between the two positions. Meier (1997:258) writes that on the one hand there is too much authentic material in various streams of Gospel tradition to deny that Jesus spoke of "...some future coming of God in his kingly rule" (e.g., Mt 6:10; Mk 14;25; Mt 8:11-12; Mt 5:3-12). But on the other hand, "...certain authentic sayings of Jesus suggest that he saw his ministry of teaching and healing as somehow mediating and actualizing God's kingdom in the present moment" (e.g., Jesus' exorcisms – Lk 11:20; Mk 3:27; Lk 17:21; Lk 10:23-24; Mk 2:18-20) (Meier 1997:258-259). Meier (1997:267-268) presents the following sketch of the historical Jesus: "Baptized by John the Baptist around the year 28 C.E., Jesus of Nazareth soon set out his own ministry to Israel. He presented himself to his people as an eschatological prophet proclaiming the imminent coming of God's definitive rule over Israel, a rule that Jesus had already made palpably present by performing startling deeds of healing reminiscent of the miracles performed by Elijah the prophet. Perhaps equally startling to stringently observant Jews was Jesus' outreach to the religiously and socially marginalized, event to the point of eating with them as a sign that they, too, would be included in the final banquet in the kingdom. Jesus the prophet proclaimed and actualized the kingdom's coming in word as well as deed, most notably in his enigmatic parables, which often challenged the presumed orderly religious world of his hearers and thus opened them to the new world he was heralding....[S]ome of his followers began to identify him with the hoped-for Davidic Messiah. The kingdom of God was to have a visible king. Jesus brought such hopes to a high point on his last visit to Jerusalem with his two symbolic prophetic actions, namely, the triumphant entry and the 'cleansing' of the temple. Sensing that his clashes with the Jerusalem authorities were reaching a deadly climax and that he might suffer the martyrdom attributed in Jewish thought to a number of the Old Testament prophets, he arranged a final solemn meal with his disciples...probably in the year 30 C.E. During this last supper – indeed, the last in a whole series of suppers symbolizing the coming salvation of the kingdom – he used bread and wine as prophetic symbols of his imminent death, a death he accepted as part of God's inscrutable plan to establish his kingdom, a kingdom Jesus still hoped to share....[Jesus was] crucified on Friday, the 14th of Nisan. He died before sundown...."

[27] The term Crossan (1992:xii, 261-264, 361; 1994:71-74) uses to describe Jesus' lifestyle is "egalitarian", but Elliott (2002:75-91; 2003:173-210) illustrates that egalitarianism is an anachronistic term. Jesus did not promote an egalitarian lifestyle, but an inclusive one, a life in which everybody was welcome, although they still occupied different social roles, economic statuses, etc (see chapter 4). Elliott (2003:183) argues that the words "equal" and "egalité" only began to resound in eighteenth century Philadelphia and Paris.

[28] The rise of historical-critical exegesis and its effect on the Christian faith is well summarized by Theißen and Merz (1996:21-33). One of the first scholars who made a long lasting contribution in

this regard, was Albert Schweitzer ([1906] 1966). To create a theological reconstruction of the identity of Jesus, he believes that we must go beyond historical reason while staying consistent with it.

[29] The concepts *historic-kerygmatic* and *proclaimer-proclaimed* first appeared in the title of a book by Martin Kähler, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus* ([1896] 1956; see Van Aarde 2001a:9). According to him the Christian faith could not be dependent on historical investigation. The Gospels could not serve as the basis for a reliable, scientific biography of Jesus, since the authors of the Gospels did not write historical documents – the purpose of the Gospels was to bring people to faith or to strengthen people's faith in Jesus Christ (see Den Heyer 1997:50-51).

[30] Gerhardsson (2001:26) contends that in the four Gospels we see how the evangelists and their sources look back to an era which lies in the past and is separated from the present not only chronologically, but also spatially and factually: "It is admittedly true that this perspective has been broken through and toned down in various places – the splendor of the resurrection has colored the traditions...." But still the intent of the evangelists was to describe the ministry of Jesus in Israel. Burridge (1998:124) concurs: "The Gospels are neither a clear glass window onto the historical Jesus or the early communities, nor a polished mirror in whose reflection we can see anything we happen to place before them. They are more like a piece of stained glass *through which* we can catch the occasional glimpse of what is behind them and *in which* we sometimes mistake our own reflection from in front of them, but *upon which* the main picture has been assembled using all the different colors of literary skill – and it is the portrait of a person. The historical, literary, and biographical methods combine to show us that the Gospels are nothing less than Christology in narrative form, the story of Jesus."

[31] Pilch (2003b:257-258) describes the overall significance of the resurrection experiences as follows: In his lifetime, Jesus was commended by God with the mighty deeds, wonders, and signs that God worked through him. Some accepted Jesus, others rejected him. But Jesus' shameful death on the cross, a punishment reserved for criminals, caused his followers to wonder whether they had been deceived. If God was truly with Jesus, how could God allow this to happen? But shortly after Jesus' death, Jesus' friends began to experience him transformed and alive in alternate states of consciousness. Since only God can raise a person from the dead, this had to mean that God was pleased with Jesus. God rewarded Jesus with resurrection – which in the Israelite tradition was recognized as the reward for the righteous. To experience Jesus in an alternate state of consciousness after his death was not surprising, but reassuring. It helped his contemporaries to better understand his life and teaching, his present location in God's ordered creation, and it also lessened their grief and disappointment (Pilch 1998a:59; 2002a:113). Davies (1995:184) understands it in the following manner: "The profound importance for the Christian movement of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ arose from the retrojection of the psychologically understandable death/resurrection experience of formative Christians. Those who had 'died and risen' conceived themselves to have died and risen with Christ, the mythic paradigm of the spirit by whom they were newly possessed. The significance of Christians' experience of death/resurrection was retrojected biographically back to the mythic occasion of Jesus' death/resurrection giving personal and mythic significance to reports that some of Jesus' followers had seen him after he died."

[32] Shamanism will be discussed in detail in chapter 2.

[33] According to Crossan (1992:422), Jesus not only experienced the presence of God directly in his life, he also proclaimed a "brokerless" kingdom of God: "Miracle and parable, healing and eating were calculated to force individuals into unmediated physical and spiritual contact with God and unmediated physical and spiritual contact with one another."

[34] This quotation is from Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998:27).

[35] Elliott (1995:83, 88) argues that the first Jesus-followers understood themselves as illuminated and endowed with the Spirit (they had a personal experience of the Spirit) and that they participated in the death and resurrection of the Lord (there are numerous texts in this regard in the New Testament, see e.g., Luke-Acts, where a community led and infused by the Spirit is described; Gl 5:25).

[36] In chapter 3, I shall discuss other channels through which meanings are constructed, namely, symbols and rites.

[37] We also encounter relexicalization and overlexicalization in contemporary drug cultures, prison populations (e.g., where "7-up" means that a correctional officer is approaching), the underworld, and street gangs (e.g., where "blotters" means "dealers"), etc. For more examples, see e.g., *Dictionary of slang* [s a]:www.kindafunkyradio.com/extras/ dictionary.htm; *A prisoner's dictionary* 1995-2003:www.prisonwall.org/words.htm.

[38] As described earlier in this chapter, apocalyptic thinking comes to the fore when religious people feel that they cannot alter their unbearable circumstances by themselves. Then they reach out to God for help. They believe that God will soon bring an end to this wicked world and call a righteous world into existence (cf Rist 1989:157; Van Aarde 1994b:79-80).