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DISPELLING THE MYTH OF ENGLISH BAPTIST BAPTISMAL SACRAMENTALISM*

INTRODUCTION

To many the juxtaposition of the words 'baptismal sacramentalism' and 'Baptists' is unthinkable. It is widely believed that Baptists are non- or even anti-sacramental. Baptism is understood to be an ordinance — the personal profession of faith of the baptismal candidate, a witness or testimony to the faith in the crucified and risen Christ which they have come to as a response to the gospel — and little more. Some examples will illustrate this point.

In his impressive survey of world Baptists, Albert W. Wardin summarizes Baptist identity as including belief that baptism represents '*symbolically* the rising of the believer from the watery grave to walk a new life with Christ.'¹ Similar views reverberate throughout much Baptist writing on baptism and grass-roots Baptist belief. For example, a recent correspondent in the *Baptist Times* responded with surprise to the opening of a report, beneath the photograph of a baptism in Kathmandu, 'Washing their sins away'. He asked, 'Surely we don't believe that, do we?' He continued expressing his confidence 'that the washing away of the candidate's sin was gloriously granted first by their prior saving faith in Christ, and was a pre-requisite to their witnessing in baptism — not dependent on it.'² Such a symbolic understanding of baptism pervades much Baptist thought, yet in Acts 22.16 Ananias tells Saul to 'Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name', and Titus 3.5's 'He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.'

In England, many Baptists associated with the Baptist Union (f.1813) have perpetuated a non-sacramental interpretation of baptism. Charles Williams, one of the foremost Baptist ministers of his time, denied that baptism was either a condition of salvation or a sacrament. For Baptists, 'baptism is not part of the gospel which Christ has commanded to be preached ..., but an ordinance intended only for those who repent of sin and believe the gospel.' 'They cannot, without doing violence to their own principles, ascribe to baptism any cleansing efficacy or regenerating influence or saving grace': it is 'a profession of discipleship and a test of loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.'³ The Baptist historian, W.T. Whitley, condemned sacerdotalism and sacramentalism as 'twin errors: believe one, and the other must follow; destroy either, and the other must die.'⁴ On Acts 2.38 he commented that 'To suppose that Peter meant baptism was now an extra condition before sins were

* This paper is dedicated to the memory of the Revd Dr W.M.S. West, under whom I studied at Bristol Baptist College, 1982-88, and who guided me to the study of Baptist baptismal theology and practice.

remitted, is to represent him as making salvation harder than [the prophets, John the Baptist or Christ] had done.'⁵ Another historian, A.S. Langley, declared 'The ordinances are not sacraments. They do not convey saving grace. They are symbols observed, and preserved by the churches. They are of value to those who observe them only as their meaning is observed.'⁶ In short, the majority of Baptists have held to a solely symbolic understanding of baptism. For example, F.F. Whitby, in his *Baptist Principles from a layman's point of view*, entitled a whole chapter 'The Ordinance of Baptism Symbolical of our Faith.'⁷ Four ministers who made up the Radlett Fellowship discussed the meaning of the ordinance solely in terms of a proclamation of the gospel, a witness to conversion and an act of discipleship.⁸

Among the Grace/Strict Baptists, who are more explicitly Reformed in their views than the descendants of the Particular Baptists who remain with the Baptist Union, there is unequivocal rejection of anything suggestive of sacramentalism. On Romans 6, Eric Lane declares that 'It is almost always the case in the epistles that "baptism" means Spirit-baptism being used pictorially.' He continues: 'while the direct reference of this passage is to Spirit-baptism, the terms in which it is described make some reference to water-baptism.' He asserts that 'Paul never speaks explicitly about baptism in his epistles', but does not believe that this in any way undervalues baptism. Baptism and the Lord's Supper 'are used as *illustrations* of salvation.'⁹

Similarly, Erroll Hulse maintains that 'For Baptists the ordinance of baptism is not a sacrament in which grace is infused into the believer in any way, but rather ... a testimony of what God has done in regeneration and is a testimony by the believer of repentance and faith. It is a testimony of one who can give a credible testimony of God's grace in bringing him into a union with Christ, a union symbolized in burial and rising again to newness of life, as well as a symbol of discipleship.'¹⁰

According to Jack Hoad, 'the ordinances are acts of obedience which set forth the central truths of the gospel, particularly the death and resurrection of Christ. The ordinances are therefore symbolic declarations of the Gospel and not in themselves channels of special grace to the obedient.' He acknowledges that in this Baptists share Zwingli's view rather than Luther's,¹¹ and states that 'Baptists understand the pentecostal scripture of Acts 2:38 not to imply that baptism procures the forgiveness of sins but that it is *the sign* of that remission, indeed the visual declaration of the means of it, namely, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.'¹²

The Articles of the Gospel Standard Baptists declare that 'Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of Christ' and 'reject as blasphemous the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration; that is, that the person baptized is or can be regenerated in, by, or through baptism ...'¹³ The commentary to these Articles states that 'Believers' Baptism ... possesses no inherent virtue — not in the slightest degree does it contribute to salvation or influence regeneration.'¹⁴

In discussions of Baptist theology one possible classification draws the distinction

between evangelicals and sacramentalists, the view on baptism being the determinative factor.¹⁵ While this is a popular, tenacious and widespread opinion, it is too simplistic a dividing line, for a significant number of Baptists have held a sacramental interpretation of baptism from the earliest times, and many leading Baptist sacramentalists today are evangelicals, like George Beasley-Murray and R.E.O. White. The purpose of this paper is, first, to show that from the beginning of the Baptist movement a significant number of Baptists have held a sacramental understanding of baptism; and second, to make more widely known some recent research on this subject.¹⁶

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BAPTISMAL SACRAMENTALISM¹⁷

In the last two years two North American scholars have studied seventeenth-century English Baptist theology and shown that, contrary to popular, widespread and oft-repeated opinion, a significant number of Baptists maintained a sacramental understanding of baptism.

Stanley K. Fowler, a Canadian Baptist theologian and historian from Heritage Baptist College and Heritage Theological Seminary, Ontario, draws a line of continuity between twentieth-century Baptist sacramentalists and those Baptist forebears who also advocated a sacramental understanding of baptism. He demonstrates that the oft-repeated assumption that Baptists have traditionally held to a Zwinglian interpretation of baptism as an ordinance and that Baptist sacramentalism is a relatively modern innovation is simply in error. He shows clearly that some of the earliest seventeenth-century English Baptists spoke of the efficacy of baptism in sacramental terms.

Philip E. Thompson, a Southern Baptist from Pendleton, North Carolina, and Adjunct Professor at Chowan College, also exposes the 'serious misrepresentation of early Baptists by their modern descendants [referring] to the early Baptists as non- or anti-sacramental.'¹⁸ In a paper to the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion in Wisconsin, June 1999, Thompson dispels the entrenched assumption 'that Baptist theology has remained fairly constant throughout the four centuries of Baptist existence', specifically a 'punctiliar, voluntarist, individualist, conversionist soteriology bequeathed to Baptists by revivalism in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' has often been 'retrojected onto the earliest Baptists.' The work of Fowler and Thompson supports my own conclusion that baptismal theology has developed over the years.¹⁹ Thompson's paper further challenges the individualism which dominates Baptist thought.²⁰

While writing within and to the context of North American Baptists, Fowler's and Thompson's criticism of Baptist misreadings of their past is equally applicable to the English situation. They note that many twentieth-century Baptists reject a sacramental understanding of baptism as unfaithful to their heritage, but show that this is historically indefensible.

Thompson's first paper, 'A New Question in Baptist History: Seeking a Catholic

Spirit Among Early Baptists', shows that early Baptists had a greater sense of being a part of the universal church than is usually acknowledged. For example, Article 29 of the Midland General Baptists' *Orthodox Creed* of 1678 confessed that

There is one holy catholic church, consisting of, or made up of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered, in one body under Christ, the only head thereof ...²¹

He traces this catholicity as it is clearly revealed in the acceptance of the ancient creeds, the episcopacy and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and argues that 'This connection to the church through the ages provided the early Baptists a context within which they could affirm the importance of the church's tradition.'²² In short, they were not predisposed, as so many of their nineteenth- and twentieth-century descendants have been, to reject *a priori* a sacramental understanding of baptism simply because of its prevalence among Paedobaptists.

Fowler begins his work by setting the early Baptists within their historical context at the beginning of the seventeenth century in which 'almost all English Christians were formally committed to the understanding of baptism expressed in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.'²³ Here the 'Sacraments ordained of Christ' are understood to be 'not only badges or tokens' but also 'certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's good will towards us, by the which he does work invisibly in us and does not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him' (Art. 25). Baptism is seen as 'a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin and of our adoption to be the sons of God, by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; and grace is increased by virtue of prayer unto God' (Art. 27).²⁴ Both Anglicans and Puritans agreed that 'the sacraments both commemorate the work of Christ and communicate grace to those who receive them in faith.'²⁵ It was into this situation that the earliest Baptist leaders were born; only later, while in exile in Holland (1608-12), were they exposed to a non-sacramental theology through their contact with the Mennonites, which may have modified their views. 'At the very least, this contact gave them another option to consider as they began to formulate their own baptismal theology.' Fowler adds the following caution: 'However, it would be a mistake to conclude that since Baptists shared the Mennonite rejection of infant baptism, they therefore shared their non-sacramental interpretation of the efficacy of baptism'. He noted, for example, that Baptists rejected the Mennonites' pacifism and they formulated their own distinctive doctrine of baptism. Fowler's conclusion is that

Early Baptist authors consistently argued against any kind of sacramentalism which posits an automatic bestowal of grace through baptism, but they did not deny that baptism has an instrumental function in the application of redemption. It is crucial to note that Baptist refutations of baptismal regeneration were almost always stated in reference to *infant baptism*. The point which they insisted on is that regeneration is always connected to active

faith in the recipient, so that it is meaningless to speak of the regeneration of passive infants by baptism or any other means. Therefore, Baptist protests against baptismal regeneration did not necessarily deny that baptism is instrumental in some way in the experience of spiritual rebirth by confessing believers.

Some early Baptists spoke more strongly than others, but there was among them a recurring affirmation that the reception of the benefits of Christ is in some way mediated through baptism. Their theology of baptism may not have been uniform, but they consistently asserted that God, by his Spirit, bestowed spiritual benefit through baptism. Christian baptism was for them a human response to the gospel, but this human act of obedience did not exhaust the content of the event. This Baptist sacramentalism was somewhat unelaborated, due to the demands of controversy about baptismal subjects and mode, but it was undeniably present.²⁶

Fowler notes the presence of sacramental language in several confessions of faith.²⁷ For example, the 1654 London General Baptist confession, *The True Gospel-Faith Declared*, contended 'That God gives his Spirit to believers dipped [immersed] through the prayer of faith and laying on of hands.'²⁸ While the possible presence of sacramental theology in the Particular Baptist *Second London Confession* of 1677 is usually rejected,²⁹ Fowler hesitates on the basis that 'some of the signatories of the confession had thought about that efficacy of baptism' and as there 'was ... no developed consensus about the right kind of "sacramental" language ... it comes as no surprise that a debate largely absent from the Baptist literature of the time would be absent from this confession', which was intended to be a 'consensus of a large number of churches and pastors.'³⁰ The *Baptist Catechism*, written by Benjamin Keach and William Collins, was prepared to accompany, interpret and apply the *Second London Confession*: 'Q.93. What are the outward Means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of Redemption? A. The outward and ordinary Means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption, are his Ordinances, especially the Word, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Prayer; all which Means are made effectual to the Elect, through faith, for Salvation.'³¹ Similarly, Keach's catechism of 1702 asked, 'What are those Gospel Ordinances called Sacraments, which do confirm us in this Faith?'³² The *Orthodox Creed* spoke of the 'two sacraments' of baptism and the Lord's Supper as 'ordinances of positive, sovereign, and holy institution'. It also stated that 'as [Israel] had the manna to nourish them in the wilderness to Canaan; so have we the sacraments, to nourish us in the church, and in our wilderness-condition, till we come to heaven.'³³

Philip Thompson observes that for Baptists at this time, 'The Church was ... the principal locus of God's freedom for using the things of creation as means of grace', but the church should not presume that it possessed salvation simply by possessing the means — for that was God's prerogative.³⁴ According to the General Baptist, Thomas Grantham, within the church was to be found the 'few solemn Rites by

command from Heaven, to commemorate the Love of God in the Gift of his Son; and for Christians to express their Unity and Communion in the Mystery of the Gospel.³⁵ The early Baptists called these means of grace 'ordinances', by which was meant more than is meant today, for they recognized seven, each found within the church's corporate worship: worship, preaching, private devotional reading, the office of pastor, prayer - both private and corporate, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. 'The early Baptists were careful in their terminology ... they numbered several of their ordinances of ecclesial life by which God works for salvation. Two of these were sacraments.'³⁶

Benjamin Keach, one-time General Baptist who became a Particular Baptist, adopted a clear sacramentalism in his *Catechism*, and in a 1689 work in which, on the basis of Acts 2.38 and Titus 3.5, he referred to 'the Baptism of Repentance for the Remission of Sins' and 'the Washing of Regeneration.' Later he urged,

Consider the great Promises made to those who are obedient to it, amongst other things, Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the World. And again, He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved. If a Prince shall offer a Rebel his Life in doing two things, would he neglect one of them, and say this I will do, but the other is a trivial thing, I'll not do that? Surely no, he would not run the hazard of his Life so foolishly ... And then in Acts 2.38. Repent, and be baptized every one of you for Remission of Sin, and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit: See what great Promises are made to Believers in Baptism.

Keach also discussed the role of baptism as an instrument of the Spirit in the regeneration of believers:

Outward Water cannot convey inward Life. How can Water, an external thing, work upon the Soul in a physical manner: Neither can it be proved, that ever the Spirit of God is ty'd by any Promise, to apply himself to the Soul in a gracious Operation, when Water is applied to the Body ... Baptism is a means of conveying Grace, when the Spirit is pleased to operate with it; but it doth not work a physical Cause upon the Soul as a Purge doth upon the Humours of the Body: for 'tis the Sacrament of Regeneration, as the Lord's Supper is of Nourishment ... Faith only is the Principle of spiritual Life, and the Principle which draws Nourishment from the Means of God's Appointments.³⁷

Grantham believed that only as baptism was 'the sacrament of regeneration' could it be 'the sacrament of initiation'.³⁸ Thompson adds that 'The two aspects could be distinguished, but not separated', because baptism involved, first, mortification, that is dying with Christ and, second, vivification, that is rising to new life in Christ. Grantham explained: 'that first is called burial with Christ, the second a rising with Christ, the sacrament of both of these is Baptism.'³⁹ Elsewhere he developed this:

Baptism in the ordinary way of God's communicating the grace of the Gospel

is antecedent to the reception thereof, & is propounded as a means wherein not only the Remission of our sins shall be granted to us, but as a condition whereupon we shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ... [It] was fore-ordained to signifie and sacramentally to confer the grace of the pardon of sin, and the inward washing of the Conscience by Faith in the Bloud of Jesus Christ.⁴⁰

In one place Grantham speaks of what baptism does, rather than does not do:

... And thus was our Lord himself the chief founder of the Gospel in the Heavenly Doctrine of *Faith, Repentance, and Baptism for the remission of Sins* ... Now the necessity of this Sacred Ordinance to a true church-state, is further evident from the Institution or first delivery of it ...

2. This Baptism is joyned with this Gospel Repentance, that as repentance being now necessary to the admission of Sinners into the Church of Christ, even so Baptism being joyned thereto, by the will of God, is necessary to the same end.⁴¹

For Grantham the water, bread and wine were sanctified by the Word and Spirit and set forth Christ in the church,⁴² the sacraments thereby functioning as seals of the covenant.⁴³ Baptism is the *locus* of the Word's action on the baptized.⁴⁴ Thompson remarks, 'Earlier Baptists did not understand the sacraments in terms of the symbolic minimalism that so characterizes contemporary accounts. Rather, there was definite and saving effect in the rites by the presence of the Lord held forth in each.'⁴⁵ 'Baptism, by the working of the Holy Spirit, holds forth Christ who acts, saving through pardon of sin and granting of eternal life.'⁴⁶

As well as Keach and Grantham, Fowler examines the sacramentalism in the work of the Particular Baptists, Robert Garner, Henry Lawrence and William Mitchell, but enough has been discussed here to show the presence of baptismal sacramentalism in the thought of some of the earliest Baptists.⁴⁷

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BAPTISMAL SACRAMENTALISM

Fowler⁴⁸ notes that at this time Baptists were 'in many cases preoccupied with concerns other than baptismal theology, concerns which were often much more foundational than any baptismal issues.' Many General Baptists had gone over to unitarianism, and the remaining trinitarians formed the New Connexion of General Baptists. Little General Baptist material from this period deals with baptism. Meanwhile the Particular Baptists were dominated by High Calvinism,⁴⁹ and focused on the defence of believer's immersion, though the efficacy of baptism was sometimes addressed.⁵⁰

Leading Particular Baptists, such as John Gill and Abraham Booth, were non- or even anti-sacramental, but there are traces of sacramentalism in the work of the pamphleteer, Anne Dutton, and later, in a subdued and ambivalent form, in Andrew Fuller and John Ryland jun.

In one pamphlet Anne Dutton identified the threefold purpose of baptism as: to

represent, to seal or assure, and to initiate.⁵¹ Reflecting her Calvinist background, Dutton's understanding of baptism as a seal indicated the way in which God works in baptism. In the same way that immersion is a pictorial representation of the facts of redemption, so 'the finish'd Work of Redemption, and the Whole of our Salvation thereby, is seal'd up, and *made sure* to Believers in their Baptism.'⁵² As baptism is performed in the name of the Trinity, so the Trinity works in baptism at the subjective but also at the objective level.

All the three Persons in GOD, do, as it were, solemnly engage to make good all the great Things represented therein, to a baptized Believer. They hereby set their Seal ... to all that Salvation represented in Baptism, and give the highest Assurance thereof to baptized Believers. This the Lord always gives to the *Persons* of Believers, in the due Administration of the Ordinance; and very frequently He gives this Assurance to their *Spirits* in their Submission to it. As God the Father honoured his Son, with Testimonies of his infinite Favour, upon his baptism. And as the Eunuch, after he was baptized, went on his Way rejoicing. And as the Jaylor and his House, after their Baptism, believing in God, rejoiced. — But when this is not experienced by Believers upon their Baptism, they are not to think it null and void, because, as we said, the Lord gives them a solemn Assurance in the very Ordinance of all the great Things represented therein, as it is his Appointment, and done by his Authority.⁵³

Baptism is also initiatory 'into a true Gospel Profession of Christ.' On the basis of Galatians 3.27 and the language of putting on Christ, Dutton shows that the subject of baptism becomes a Christian through this ordinance:

He hereby professeth himself to be a lost Sinner, that he believes Christ to be the only Saviour, that he looks to Him as his Saviour, and that all his Hope of Salvation stands alone in the CHRIST of GOD. He likewise hereby professeth to take Christ in all his offices, as his Prophet, Priest and King; and to give up himself to Him, to be His for ever, to follow the LAMB, even whithersoever He goeth.⁵⁴

Dutton's language 'is fundamentally about the *human* act of confessing faith in Christ, but it is the human side of the initial entrance into union with Christ, not (as for Gill) some kind of second-stage entrance into a deeper communion with Christ.'⁵⁵

Andrew Fuller was one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society and the father of the evangelical Calvinism which for many Particular Baptists superseded the High Calvinism associated with John Gill and John Brine. In a Northamptonshire Association circular letter Fuller explored the influence of baptism, concluding its principal purpose to be '*A solemn and practical profession of the Christian religion.*'⁵⁶ In his discussion of Galatians 3.27's imagery of the believer putting on Christ, Fuller spoke of baptism as the believer's oath of allegiance (Latin *sacramentum*), but left unclear the issue of the divine aspect of baptism.⁵⁷ Later,

when examining the relationship of baptism to the remission of sins, he reflected what Fowler calls 'a common Baptist ambivalence' in that he recognized 'that Scripture points to some kind of instrumental function of baptism', yet felt the need to qualify this significantly:⁵⁸

baptism in the name of Christ is said to be *for the remission of sins*. Not that there is any such virtue in the element, whatever be the quantity; nor in the ceremony, though of Divine appointment: but it contains a *sign* of the way in which we must be saved. Sin is washed away in baptism in the same sense as Christ's flesh is eaten, and his blood drank, in the Lord's supper: the sign, when rightly used, leads to the thing signified. Remission of sins is ascribed by Peter not properly to baptism, but to the *name* in which the parties were to be baptized. Thus also Saul was directed to WASH AWAY HIS SINS, *calling on* THE NAME OF THE LORD.⁵⁹

Fowler notes Fuller's language: while the remission of sins are 'properly' ascribed to Christ, they clearly 'in some sense' come through baptism, otherwise there would be nothing to clarify 'properly'. 'Fuller's statements indicate that there is some instrumental value in baptism, some way in which baptism leads to reception of the benefits of Christ, but the evidence is minimal and undeveloped.'⁶⁰ A similar position is evident in the thought of John Ryland jun., President of the Bristol Baptist College.⁶¹ 'The same kind of dialectic which has been seen in other Baptists was present in Ryland, i.e., although the persons admitted to baptism must make a credible confession of repentance and faith, and are thus evidently in a state of grace, the benefits of salvation are being sought via baptism.' This paradox Fowler attributes to the Particular Baptists' Calvinism which affirmed that regeneration is a divine work which, logically but not temporally, precedes and empowers faith; that faith is a means by which salvation which is invisible becomes both visible and experiential; and 'that baptism is the divinely-ordained event in which the initial confession of faith occurs, so that the effects of baptism are the effects of faith.'⁶²

Most significant are Fowler's summary and analysis of the eighteenth-century situation. He offers four characteristics of baptismal theology in this period.⁶³ First, the term 'sacrament' was only used occasionally for baptism, 'ordinance' becoming the norm. Second, baptism was called a 'sign' but only rarely a 'seal', partly due to the term's use by Calvinist Paedobaptists.⁶⁴ Third, Baptists were generally preoccupied with the subjects and mode of baptism, rather than the meaning. The focus was on the human side, but little was said of the divine side of baptism. Fourth, whenever the effects of baptism were discussed, little was said of the divine side, and passages which spoke of the efficacy of baptism (such as Acts 2.38; 22.16; 1 Pet. 3.21; Mk 16.16) were 'interpreted in a modest and defensive way.'

Fowler's analysis of the differences between seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century Baptist thought is of especial value.⁶⁵ He observes that eighteenth-century writers rarely quoted or interacted with their Baptist predecessors, and this makes the reasons for the evident conceptual shift unclear. He suggests two reasons: first,

the common assumption amongst Baptists that each Christian has direct access to God's Word and its meaning without need of mediation; and second, the polemical nature of much Baptist literature to persuade Paedobaptists of the rightness of the Baptist position. To this end, appeal to earlier Baptist work was out of place.

Fowler concludes this section by suggesting five theological factors involved in the development of baptismal thought.⁶⁶ First, undue emphasis on the disuse of the word *sacrament* should be avoided, as *ordinance* and *sacrament* were never mutually exclusive — the former was the broader term, the latter the more focused. The reasons why ordinance became the standard term for Particular Baptists 'are not entirely clear'. Fowler suggests two possible explanations: while ordinance conveyed a command of the Lord, sacrament had more ecclesiastical overtones; and Baptists wanted to avoid constant clarification of the meaning of sacrament due to its various uses amongst other traditions. Eighteenth-century writers did not use the term sacrament, but neither did they reject it.

Second, was the decline of the use of the term *seal*. Third, the retreat from a sacramental understanding was due more to neglect than positive rejection. The focus on the subjects and mode of baptism continued well into the twentieth century. Fowler rightly observes, 'It was increasingly true that Baptists knew more about what did not happen in the sprinkling of infants than they did about what does happen in the immersion of believers.'⁶⁷ Fourth, the influence of High Calvinism had disastrous consequences for the theology of baptism in that it minimized the significance of human acts. Fifth, there were what Fowler describes as unconvincing reasons: Baptists wanted to avoid *ex opere operato* views associated with Catholicism; the more people talked of the necessity of baptism the more they inclined towards paedobaptism and rantism, i.e. baptism by sprinkling; and they minimized the efficacy of baptism in order to refute the charge that they made too much of it.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY BAPTISMAL SACRAMENTALISM⁶⁸

David Thompson notes that 'One of the most striking differences in the life of the British Churches between the last quarter of the eighteenth century ... and the last quarter of the twentieth ... must surely be the changed attitude to the sacraments.' Within the modern period a sacramental revival has taken place in the Church of England, Church of Scotland and in parts of Nonconformity.⁶⁹ The General and Particular Baptists' rejection of infant baptism was 'only one aspect of a more broadly based radical religious position; and the touchstone for developments in sacramental theology in the Reformation was the Lord's Supper.' By the early eighteenth century this radical upsurge had become a spent force; Baptists and Quakers had become more defensive and introspective, with threats to religious orthodoxy coming from within in the form of unitarianism and socinianism, and in deism and scepticism from without. The Evangelical Revival changed this, old issues re-emerged and new ones appeared. Its emphasis on personal religious experience

brought out the tension between individual and social religion, placing the debate between infant and believer's baptism in a new light. The emphasis on the Bible brought a new interest in biblical patterns for church life and a re-examination of the biblical evidence for infant baptism. The contrast drawn between vital and formal religion brought a new questioning of theology. All these issues crystallized around the emphasis on conversion. If conversion was necessary to the Christian life, what was the significance and meaning of baptism? Did baptism, particularly the baptism of infants, effect anything?⁷⁰

Thompson argued that from 1800 to 1830 three sets of issues concerning baptism came to dominate, the Evangelical Revival having affected how they were expressed and discussed. First was the issue of the proper subjects of baptism, which was most keenly debated in Scotland. Second were the terms of communion — whether communion was only for those baptized as believers, or whether baptism was necessary for communion, or, by extension, for membership. Third was the matter of baptismal regeneration, which preoccupied mainly the Church of England.⁷¹

In the first half of the century the baptismal debate focused primarily on the mode of baptism and on the meaning of the Greek verbs *βάπτω/bapto* and *βαπτίζω/baptizo*, leading Jim Perkin to the hyperbolic statement that, 'No other single word had so much written about it in the last century ...'⁷² As the baptismal controversy wore on, more importance was given to the subjects of baptism and the underlying conception of the church.⁷³ The concept of the church made up of believers determined the Baptist attitude to infant baptism. The nineteenth century proved that the 'distinguishing feature of Baptists is not their doctrine of baptism, but their doctrine of the Church.'⁷⁴ Though this was seldom made explicit in the period 1820–1920, the whole baptismal controversy cannot be understood without grasping that this difference in ecclesiology caused the clash.⁷⁵

Perkin contends that the period ending 1864 saw little of the controversy, especially when compared to 1830–40. Questions other than the philological ones had taken on a new importance, and books became shorter and kinder in tone.⁷⁶ By 1870 it had become clear that the question of baptism had entered a new stage, the prelude to the twentieth-century debate. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the virtual passing away of the pamphleteer, the writer of theological doggerel and the preacher of unkindly, eclectic sermons.

Men were trying to use the Bible as a basis and guide for their theology, not a hunting ground for proof-texts; sermons took on a new note of practical application of the gospel and denominational rivalry began to change into toleration. In the womb of the nineteenth century the twentieth was already being formed.⁷⁷

Thompson agrees that baptism receded from the forefront of theological debate from the early 1860s and offers four reasons.⁷⁸ First, the Gorham judgment of 1850 resulted in a stalemate as far as baptismal doctrine in the Anglican communion

was concerned, though it had established the legitimacy of an Evangelical reading of the *Book of Common Prayer*.⁷⁹ Second, controversy over the eucharist became more widespread in the 1850s with the development of the ritualist movement.⁸⁰ Third, the transformation of Calvinist Dissent into an Evangelical theology attached relatively little importance to the sacraments. The 1860 Norwich Chapel Case effectively settled the Baptist communion controversy which had flared up in the second decade of the century around Robert Hall of Leicester and Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich.⁸¹ From this time, the practice of open communion began to spread, to the point that, by the mid-nineteenth century, it had become the norm amongst Baptists.⁸² Fourth, the development of biblical criticism and historical scholarship began to undermine the simpler defences of existing baptismal practice, forcing a reassessment of baptismal theology within the churches.⁸³

'The context for the [baptism] debate soon became that heightened sacramentalism within the established church which mid-Victorian Baptists perceived as the fruit of the Oxford Movement.'⁸⁴ Baptist antipathy to the theory of baptismal regeneration was a major factor in the 'down grading' of baptismal theology. As a result most Baptist literature on the subject was reactionary in tone and content.⁸⁵ 'The vehemence of the rejection of baptismal regeneration, particularly by Baptists, led to the reduction of the rite to a mere sign in many quarters.'⁸⁶ But other factors were also involved. In his detailed study of the Baptist theology of the Lord's Supper, Michael Walker shows that the majority of Baptists were influenced in their eucharistic theology by both Zwinglianism and Calvinism, while others had inherited more from the radical Anabaptists with their separation of spirit and matter and suspicion of anything approximating to ritualism.⁸⁷ These influences equally affected Baptist baptismal theology, as none of these 'controlling' influences predisposed Baptists to think 'sacramentally' about baptism. The Catholic Revival of the 1830s–40s received such a negative reaction from Baptists that anything which could be construed as 'Catholic' was vehemently repudiated. Charles Williams stated, 'Baptists do not regard either baptism or the Lord's Supper as a sacrament in the ecclesiastical sense of the word ... To them the ordinance is neither the cause nor the medium of grace.'⁸⁸

While some Baptists allowed their Zwinglianism to lead them into extreme subjectivism, others were discontented with the memorialist position imposed by the denominational norm.⁸⁹ Contrary to the prevailing closed-communion stance, Robert Hall contended that Paedobaptists should be welcomed to the Lord's Table, rejecting bare memorialism in favour of the Supper as a participation in the sacrifice offered by Christ.⁹⁰ Careful to ensure that his views could not be interpreted as speaking of the presence of Christ in the eucharist, Hall maintained that it was the Holy Spirit's presence in communion which raised believers into Christ's presence where they could feed upon him by sharing in his risen and glorified life. Thus Hall spoke of a 'spiritual participation' in the body and blood of Christ.⁹¹ Walker points out the irony that Hall's belief in the value of the Lord's Supper eventually led

others to value both it and baptism less highly. Hall argued that a rite which had such implications for the Christian life should not be kept from fellow Christians on the grounds of baptismal 'irregularity', believing that admission to the Lord's Table was more important than whether the communicant was a Baptist or Paedobaptist. This eventually led him to relegate baptism to the status of mere 'ceremonial', a view later Baptists also assigned to the Lord's Supper.⁹² In his discussion of the Baptist understanding of faith, baptism and the church, John Briggs comments that 'All too many Baptist apologists were at once too protestant, too rational, too didactic and too individualistic. Sacraments smacked of magic; by contrast, post-Enlightenment Baptists saw believer's baptism as the mental response to the revelation of truth, undertaken with free volition by rational men and women.'⁹³

An impoverished theology of baptism led to discomfort with the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the rite. Perkin observed that Baptists 'did not feel happy about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, whether in conjunction with baptism or not. This constitutes a serious lacuna in the theology of the period.'⁹⁴ He suggests that at this time 'Baptist theology ... was essentially empirical and practical rather than theoretical. Obedience, faith, the church, dying, rising — all these were concrete ideas, readily interpreted and understood. But the gift of the Spirit belongs to a realm of experience and theology only spoken of by the very learned and the very ignorant.'⁹⁵ Briggs notes that this inhibition did not extend to Baptist hymn-writers. For example, Maria Saffery's hymn, 'Tis the great Father we adore' (1818), includes verse 4: 'Blest Spirit! with intense desire,/ Solicitous we bow;/ Baptize us in renewing fire,/ And ratify the vow.'⁹⁶

Both Perkin and Walker stand within that Baptist tradition which is seeking to re-establish the sacramental nature of baptism, and both highlight those nineteenth-century Baptists who recognized in baptism the nature of a sacrament. Perkin comments that, 'A large part of the dearth of sacramental theology among Baptists must be laid at the door of the Victorians. On the other hand, there was throughout the whole period a "minority movement" within the Baptist denomination which stood for a sacramental view over against the *nuda signa* doctrine of its contemporaries.'⁹⁷ For most nineteenth-century Baptists, baptism was a sign that indicated something previously done through faith at conversion. Its necessity lay in the imitation of Jesus' example and in obedience to his command, not because it did anything for the candidate. Even Nonconformist Paedobaptists tended to regard baptism as a sign rather than a sacrament. But for a minority of Baptists, only a sacramental interpretation of baptism could adequately accord with New Testament teaching.

Many of these sacramentalists had become Baptists later in life. Best known was the former Anglican, Baptist Noel, who commented on Acts 2.38: 'Since, then, baptism is thus necessary to remission of sins, and is so closely connected with it ... Repentance and baptism are declared in the text to secure the gift of the Holy Ghost.'⁹⁸ A number of 'life-long' Baptists also used sacramental language of

baptism. The Revd William Hawkins interpreted baptism as a Roman soldier's *sacramentum*, 'a sovereign oath ... to our Sovereign Prince, in which we swear allegiance to him ...', a use followed by the anonymous author of six articles in the *Baptist Magazine* in 1857.⁹⁹

There were, then, three distinct phases of the baptismal debate in the nineteenth century running from approximately 1800 to 1840, 1840 to 1864, and from 1864 to 1900, and four major factors influenced Baptist baptismal theology at this time: individualism; the catholic revival which began in the 1830s,¹⁰⁰ at the centre of which was the doctrine of baptismal generation;¹⁰¹ the impact of increased population mobility which caused Baptists and others to consider carefully with whom they could share fellowship, seen first in the terms of communion controversy, and in the debates over the terms of membership;¹⁰² and the beginnings of movement towards ecumenism. Walker called this 'the age of initiative', when 'Christians were not so much drawn together as thrown together' in missionary endeavour and philanthropic work. 'For Baptists, these changes called for a reappraisal of their doctrinal position', for their ecclesiology 'drew a clear line of demarcation between the church and a world in whose life and welfare they were increasingly engaged. Their doctrine of baptism, especially when accompanied by the corollary of closed communion, separated them from Christians with whom they increasingly worked in common cause.'¹⁰³ John Briggs offers this summary:

The history of Baptists in the nineteenth century is very largely a reactive and responsive one: consciously to the Catholic Revival, which must be held partly responsible for the development of low views of church-manship, ministry and the sacraments; and unconsciously to the many secular pressures which also shaped the pattern of church life ... Baptists particularly faced difficulties as Christians became more tolerant of one another, because their restrictive baptismal practice, that is their distinction in confining baptism to believers only, necessarily challenged any easy accommodation even to other recognizably evangelical groupings; the consequences of that are to be seen in the debates about open communion and open membership, and the long-running dispute with the Bible Society on the legitimacy of translating *baptizo* by words signifying immersion.¹⁰⁴

By the close of the nineteenth century, baptism was, with a few exceptions, described as an ordinance, the subjective, personal testimony of a believer's faith in Christ and not as an objective means of conveying the grace of God and the benefits of redemption through Christ to those who believe. We can agree with Fowler's identification of six factors which effected this shift, though he avoids seeing these as all the factors.¹⁰⁵ First, was the neglect of discussion of the meaning of baptism due to controversy with Paedobaptists and preoccupation with the subjects and mode. Sacramentalism came to be identified with infant baptism and rejected with it. Second, emphasis on the confessional aspect focused Baptists on what precedes baptism. Third, a sacramental understanding was perceived as a threat to the

doctrine of justification by faith alone. Fourth, the influence of High Calvinism on Particular Baptists undermined the human side of faith. Fifth, the Evangelical Revival, which originated within the Church of England, seemed to have demonstrated that God's saving work was not tied to baptism and to confirm the point already made on justification *sola fide*. Sixth, most Baptist works on baptism were attempts to correct the errors of Paedobaptists who seemed to overemphasize the efficacy of baptism to the point of its operation *ex opere operato*, and in the process went to the opposite extreme. Baptists were clearer on what baptism was not, than on what it was. This said, there were still a significant number of Baptists who advocated baptismal sacramentalism.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY BAPTISMAL SACRAMENTALISM¹⁰⁶

The development of baptismal theology in the twentieth century can be divided into three periods: 1900–1937, 1938–1966 and 1967–1999.¹⁰⁷ The theological debate throughout the first period was conducted largely around the mode and subjects, with only the beginnings of the realization that the theology of baptism would provide the most profitable way forward.¹⁰⁸ The beginning of the second period coincides with the seminal work by the Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner, quickly followed by that of Karl Barth; together these set the theological agenda as far as baptism was concerned for the next three decades.¹⁰⁹ Baptists were late to join this debate, which they did predominantly from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. The third period has witnessed unprecedented developments within the domestic ecumenical scene.

While many Baptists have continued to maintain a non- and even anti-sacramental understanding of baptism,¹¹⁰ the number who recognize baptism as a sacrament, a means of conveying God's grace, has grown significantly. The major influence in this has been the ecumenical movement.¹¹¹ The sheer volume of available twentieth-century sources means that selection is essential. Three sets have been chosen: statements endorsed or released by the Baptist Union, the evidence of ministers' manuals, and the most recent work of a number of Baptist scholars.

While twentieth-century Baptists have not produced anything comparable with the confessions of faith of the seventeenth century, the Baptist Union has from time to time published 'official' statements of the Baptist position. These reflect growing acceptance of forms of baptismal sacramentalism; it is significant that all the reports and statements considered here were written in the context of and as responses to ecumenical developments. Under J.H. Shakespeare's guidance (then General Secretary of the Baptist Union),¹¹² Baptists in 1918 accepted the doctrinal basis of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England (f.1919), which recognized the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as 'signs and seals of His Gospel not to be separated therefrom', which 'confirm the promises and gifts of salvation, and, when rightly used by believers with faith and prayer, are, through

the operation of the Holy Spirit, true means of grace.¹¹³ 'Means of grace' is, however, capable of a variety of explanations. Similarly, the 1926 *Reply of the Churches in Membership with the Baptist Union* to the 1920 Lambeth Appeal, accepted baptism as a sacrament in terms of a 'means of grace to all who receive [it] in faith', but criticized the Lambeth Appeal's overemphasis of the sacraments,¹¹⁴ a point taken up by others who criticized its 'manifest sacramentalism' and 'undisguised sympathy with sacerdotalism.'¹¹⁵

The 1934 response to the report of the 1927 Lausanne Faith and Order Conference guardedly accepted the term 'sacrament', but preferred 'ordinance', and emphasized 'again our insistence on faith in the recipient as a condition of the effectiveness of the Sacraments.'¹¹⁶ In 1937, the Baptist Union's Special Committee looking into possible union with Congregationalists and Presbyterians — a committee representing the full breadth of Baptist opinion — rejected baptismal regeneration, but included those who accepted the use of 'sacrament' and saw baptism and the Lord's Supper as 'not merely symbolical, but ... appointed instruments and vehicles of grace for those who come to them with a right disposition ... [A] sacrament ... is primarily the Word and the Act of God, conveying the grace of God to men.' They added, 'We hardly need to point out that such a view does not mean either that the bestowal of grace is limited to the sacraments or that any priestly mediation is necessary ... Upon this view baptism is more than a mere symbol and also more than a mere confession of faith. This view treats baptism as a vehicle for the conveyance of grace, but it does not involve the assertion that baptism is an essential condition of regeneration or of salvation and it implies the necessity of a moral response on the part of the baptized person.'¹¹⁷

It is clear that by mid-century the term 'sacrament' had become accepted within Baptist parlance, though there were and still are many who reject it. At the time of the creation of the World Council of Churches, the Baptist Union produced a statement on 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church', in which the two sacraments are said to be "'means of grace" to those who receive them in faith' and that baptism is 'a means of grace to the believer and to the church.' It acknowledged that in the New Testament there was clear indication of 'a connection of the gift of the Holy Spirit with the experience of baptism', but qualified this: 'without making the rite the necessary or inevitable channel of that gift, yet makes it the appropriate occasion of a new and deeper reception of it.'¹¹⁸

The 1967 report, *Baptists and Unity*, which frequently employed 'sacrament', noted that 'The word sacrament is here understood as a symbol through which the grace of God becomes operative where faith is present.'¹¹⁹ This was made more explicit in the 1996 discussion document, *Believing and Being Baptized*, which affirmed 'that the grace of God as well as a human response in faith is active in believers' baptism', these two elements being inseparable 'since it is the grace of God that enables us to respond to him in faith at all.' It continued:

Candidates for believers' baptism will have first professed repentance towards

God and *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ ... Thus the act of baptism is a powerful witness to the effect of the gospel of Christ and an opportunity for the candidate to testify to his or her faith ... But the act is much more than an occasion for a profession of faith and obedience ... As a person comes in faith to the baptismal pool, the triune God meets him or her with a gracious presence which transforms his or her life. Of course, a relationship between the believer and God has already begun before the moment of baptism, but this is now deepened in a special moment of encounter ... In this particular meeting place ordained by Christ, there is such a rich focus of life-giving that we can, with New Testament writers, apply to it the images of new birth or regeneration (John 3:5, Titus 3:5), forgiveness of sins and cleansing from sin (Acts 2:38, 1 Cor 6:11, Hebrews 10:22), baptism in Spirit (1 Cor 12:13, Acts 2:38, 10:47 cf Mark 1:9-11), deliverance from evil powers (Col 1:13), union with Christ (Gal 3:27), adoption as children of God (Gal 3:26) and membership in the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13, Gal 3:27-28). Baptism is thus administered in the name of the triune God who opens to us the eternal life that is shared among Father, Son and Spirit.¹²⁰

The three most recent and widely used minister's manuals all reflect a strong baptismal sacramentalist understanding of baptism, influenced indirectly by the ecumenical movement and directly by the liturgical movement. Each of these manuals has sought to bring baptism back into the worship-life of the church.¹²¹

In 1960 Ernest Payne, General Secretary of the Baptist Union, and Stephen Winward, minister of Ferme Park, produced their *Orders and Prayers for Church Worship*. They encouraged the pattern of baptism – Lord's Supper (- reception into membership), including the laying on of hands either as part of or following the baptismal service.¹²² The meaning of baptism was explicated in the minister's declarations which followed the reading of scripture verses. The rubric suggested the words: 'Let us now set forth the great benefits which we are to receive from the Lord, according to his word and promise, in this holy sacrament.' These benefits include union with Christ through faith; the washing of the body signifying the cleansing of the soul from sin through the sacrifice of Christ; the gift of the Holy Spirit who 'is given and sealed to us in this sacrament of grace'; and recipients are baptized 'into one body and made members of the holy catholic and apostolic Church.' 'These great benefits are promised and pledged to those who profess repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' The prayer following the questioning of candidates and, preceding the immersion, included the invocation that the baptized may 'receive according to thy promise the forgiveness of their sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.'¹²³

Praise God diverged from previous manuals in adopting the phrase 'Christian Initiation', seeking, like Payne and Winward, to bring together baptism, possibly with laying on of hands, reception into membership and admission to communion.¹²⁴ The 'Statement' prior to the questioning of the candidate opened, 'Let us now recall what we understand concerning the benefits promised by our

Lord to those who receive believers' baptism and become members of his church. In baptism we become one with Christ through faith, sharing with him in his death and resurrection ...¹²⁵ The most recent manual, *Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship*, offers two patterns of service: one of baptism, reception into membership and the Lord's Supper, and another of baptism alone, which includes laying on of hands.¹²⁶ Here too baptism is seen as part of 'initiation into the Body of Christ.'¹²⁷ One of the suggested introductory statements states that the candidate's 'baptism marks an ending and a beginning in life: they are washed free of sin to begin a new life in the power and joy of the Spirit.' This is followed by a prayer which includes 'Send your Holy Spirit that this baptism may be for your servants a union with Christ in his death and resurrection that, as Christ was raised from death through the glory of the Father, *they* also might live new *lives*.' An alternative prayer contains the request that 'this important step on *their lives' journeys* wash away the fears and sins of the past.'¹²⁸

Some of the most influential Baptists who have written on baptism, including J.H. Rushbrooke, H. Wheeler Robinson, Ernest A. Payne, Neville Clark, Morris West and George Beasley-Murray, have been involved in the ecumenical movement in its various forms: the Free Church movement, the British Council of Churches and its successor, Churches Together in England, the Faith and Order Movement and the World Council of Churches.¹²⁹ While the ecumenical context has been the most significant influence on the development of baptismal sacramentalism, the work of biblical scholars has also been important.¹³⁰ Wheeler Robinson was one of the leading British Old Testament scholars of his time, and both George Beasley-Murray and R.E.O. White have made important contributions in New Testament studies.¹³¹

It is appropriate to conclude this survey of baptismal sacramentalism by briefly sketching two of the contributions to *Reflections on the Water* (1996). Christopher Ellis believes that, while in part a reaction against Tractarianism, Baptist antipathy to the term 'sacrament' is predominantly a response to the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches' institutional commitment to a comprehensive state church.¹³² To counter this, he seeks 'to give meaning to a Baptist use of the word "sacrament" with regard to baptism',¹³³ suggesting 'the power of symbols to link us to the depths of reality', and 'the use by God of material means to mediate His saving action.'¹³⁴ On the relationship between grace and faith, Ellis believes that 'The issue for Baptists is not whether grace has priority, but the kind of action of grace within baptism itself.'¹³⁵ Baptists are free of this precisely because they understand baptism to be a divine-human encounter.¹³⁶ The faith essential to the rite 'is the recognition that faith involves trust and reliance upon the grace of God. Therefore, if faith becomes the key pivot of divine activity, that very faith looks to God's graciousness and offers not an anthropocentric but theocentric understanding of what happens in baptism.' Ellis adds, 'Christians must acknowledge that faith itself is a gift and the human response is a part of the divine action.'¹³⁷ As believers' baptism assumes the prior faith of the one being baptized, there can be no distinction

between saving faith and any other kind of faith. The prior reality of faith encourages the view of salvation as a process in which baptism plays a significant part.¹³⁸ Ellis counters those Baptists who reject the sacramental dimension of baptism as threatening the sovereign freedom of God, by recounting the variations of conversion experience in the book of Acts and various historical texts, concluding

A constant theme is that God is not restricted by the sacraments as the only means whereby He may graciously work in the lives of men and women. Any theology that is developed concerning baptism as a means of grace must make room for this inconvenient, yet gloriously inspired, belief in the freedom of God.¹³⁹

Building on Ellis's idea of sacraments, Paul Fiddes identifies and explores five biblical motifs connected with water: birth, cleansing, conflict, refreshment and journey. For him,

the event of believers' baptism opens up an expansion of meaning about salvation as it evokes experiences connected with these motifs in everyday life. Thus the baptism of believers does not merely *picture* these central experiences of being in the world; it actually *enables* participation in the creative-redemptive activity of God that is taking place in both the natural world and human community.¹⁴⁰

Sacraments are pieces of matter which God takes and uses as places of encounter with himself, grace transforming nature, grace being nothing less than God's gracious coming to his people and his world. Generally Baptists have shied away from the 'stuff' of creation, despite the inherent potential of total immersion and the involvement of the person and the community at every level of this 'multimedia drama'.¹⁴¹

When the drama of baptism is properly arranged, Fiddes suggests that 'the contact with the element of water should arouse a range of experiences in the person baptized and in the community that shares in the act', evoking a sense of descent into the womb, washing away what is unclean, encounter with a hostile force, passing through a boundary marker, and reinvigoration. Water becomes a place in the material world that can be a rendezvous with the crucified and risen Christ. Anticipating the accusation that such a kaleidoscope of natural motifs would suggest that baptism means anything and everything and therefore nothing in particular, Fiddes emphasizes that the controlling event is the death and resurrection of Jesus.¹⁴² The symbolism of water resonates on both the levels of creation and redemption, concerning both natural phenomena and human history.¹⁴³ When the baptismal candidate, or the witnessing community, encounters God anew through this water, 'they will be the more aware of the presence of God in other situations where water is involved in birth, conflict, cleansing, journey, or refreshment.'¹⁴⁴

Grace is not a supernatural substance but the gracious coming of God as supremely personal into relationship with his creatures. If salvation is understood not

as a momentary event but a journey of growth, then baptism provides a point within the process when 'God draws near to transform persons in a special way. Salvation cannot be isolated within the act of baptism ... but it can be "focused" there in the moment when the Christian believer is made a part of the covenant community of Christ's disciples. Using an element of His creation, water, God offers an opportunity in baptism for a gracious encounter which is rich in experience and associations.'¹⁴⁵

Fiddes maintains that too often the church has narrowed the meaning of baptism, different traditions over-emphasizing one motif over the others. Roman Catholics have majored on the imagery of cleansing, infant baptism washing away original sin and original guilt, making possible a theology in which infants are seen as the 'proper' subjects of baptism. Baptists, however, have stressed baptism as a boundary marker for believers, the moment of separation from past life and commitment to new kingdom values. Despite the rich potential of this, they have sometimes narrowed it to 'following Christ through the waters of baptism', a mere phase on a pilgrim journey. Fiddes argues that 'only the baptism of believers at a responsible age can adequately draw upon the whole range of water-symbolism and enable the baptismal pool to be the focus for God's creative-redemptive process.' Baptists should be more alert to the wide range of significance. Reflection on the birth motif, with its strong element of initiation, should lead Baptists more consistently to practise the sequence of baptism followed by eucharist.¹⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

This survey has shown that, contrary to widespread academic and popular belief, there has been a continuous sacramental understanding of baptism in English Baptist thought from the early years of the seventeenth century to the present day. While a great many contemporary Baptists accept the use of sacramental terminology for baptism¹⁴⁷ and have become happier to ascribe it some measure of efficacy (often contenting themselves with biblical language and imagery),¹⁴⁸ this has not been accompanied by a truly Baptist sacramental theology of baptism, though *Reflections on the Water* marks a step in this direction. Moreover, these developments have had little effect on the practice of baptism,¹⁴⁹ which is still largely seen as a person's testimony of their conversion, an evangelistic opportunity, separated both from conversion¹⁵⁰ and from entrance into church membership and communion. Two challenges remain for Baptists: to explore further baptismal sacramentalism and to translate it into baptismal practice.

NOTES

- 1 A.W. Wardin, *Baptists Around the World: A Comprehensive Handbook* (Nashville, TN, 1995), p.2. As a summary and inclusive statement of belief this is certainly representative of the Baptist position.
- 2 See the original photo and brief report, 'Believers baptised in a bath', *Baptist Times* 25 March 1999, p.4, and R. Foster, 'Baptism', *Baptist Times* 15

- April 1999, p.6.
- 3 C. Williams, *The Principles and Practices of the Baptists, to which is added a Baptist Directory* (1903), pp.16-17, 20 and 22 respectively.
 - 4 W.T. Whitley, *Church, Ministry and the Sacraments in the New Testament* (1903), p.244. On p.271 he submitted that sacerdotalists appended the Bible to tradition. See also his epilogue 'Sacerdotalism and Sacramentarianism', pp.276-81.
 - 5 Whitley, *op.cit.*, p.120.
 - 6 A.S. Langley, *The Faith, Heritage and Mission of the Baptists* (1931), p.8. For him baptism represents a death, burial and resurrection, and symbolizes complete cleansing from sin, complete consecration and surrender to Christ. Cf. also L.A. Read, 'The Ordinances', *The Fraternal* 67 (January 1948), pp.8-10.
 - 7 n.d. [1908], pp.58-73. Cf. also W.G. Channon, *Much Water and Believers Only* (1950), *passim*.
 - 8 P.J. Goodland, P.J. Hetherington, J.L. Pretlove and D.J. Warner, *Faith and Life: Practical Lessons In Christian Living* (Radlett 1966), n.p.
 - 9 E. Lane, *I Want to be Baptised* (Grace Publications 1986), pp.93-96, italics added.
 - 10 E. Hulse, 'The 1689 Confession—its history and role today', in P. Clarke (ed.), *Our Baptist Heritage* (Leeds 1993), p.18. For a more detailed account of Hulse's views, see his *The Testimony of Baptism* (Haywards Heath 1982).
 - 11 J. Hoad, *The Baptists: An historical and theological study of the Baptist identity* (Grace Publications, 1986), p.237.
 - 12 Hoad, *Baptists*, pp.249-50, italics added. On pp.244-45 he writes that 'baptism signifies the previous entrance of a believer into communion with his Lord and Saviour ... It declares that regeneration has taken place through union with Christ' and that it is a *symbol* of four things: the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6.3); the purpose of that death, i.e. atonement for sin (Rom. 6.4,11); accomplishment of the work of grace in the baptized (Gal. 3.27); and union with Christ and all believers in Christ (Eph. 4.5; 1 Cor. 12.13), italics added.
 - 13 Being Articles 15 and 18, see J.H. Gosden (editor, *Gospel Standard* magazine), *What Gospel Standard Baptists Believe: A Commentary on the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith* (Chippenham 1993), pp.77-78. Commentary on these Articles, pp.77-95; origins and date of the Articles, pp.v-vii.
 - 14 *ibid.*, p.85.
 - 15 E.g. H.L. McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville, TN, 1987), p.511.
 - 16 A.R. Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists: Theology and Practice in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monographs, Carlisle, 2000), which is a revised version of my 1997 Keele University PhD. S.K. Fowler, 'Baptism as a Sacrament in 20th-Century British Baptist Theology' (Wycliffe College and the University of Toronto DTh thesis, 1998). P.E. Thompson, 'A New Question in Baptist History: Seeking a Catholic Spirit Among Early Baptists', *Pro Ecclesia* 8.1 (Winter, 1999), pp.51-72, and 'Practicing the Freedom of God: Formation in Early Baptist Life' (unpublished, 1999). I am grateful to Drs Fowler and Thompson for supplying copies of their work.
 - 17 In much of this section, I am heavily reliant on Fowler and Thompson, and also on Dr Fowler for the eighteenth century. The work of both is in the process of being published.
 - 18 Thompson, 'A New Question', p.66.
 - 19 Cross, *Baptism*, e.g. pp.456-60.
 - 20 Thompson, 'Practicing ...', p.1.
 - 21 *An Orthodox Creed, or A Protestant Confession of Faith, being an Essay to Unite and Confirm all True Protestants in the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Religion, Against the Errors and Heresies of Rome* (1679), in W.L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, 2nd edn, 1969), p.318. Thompson, 'A New Question', p.63 n.64, notes that the 'General Baptists held to an even stronger institutional catholicity than did their Calvinist cousins ...'
 - 22 Thompson, 'A New Question', pp.58-69, quotation from p.63.
 - 23 This paragraph summarizes Fowler, *op.cit.*, pp.7-8, quote from p.7.
 - 24 'The Thirty-Nine Articles', in M.A. Noll (ed.), *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation* (Leicester 1991), pp.221-22.
 - 25 Fowler, *op.cit.*, p.7, referring to H. Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Cranmer to Baxter and Fox, 1534-1690* (Grand Rapids, combined edn, 1996), I, pp.62-64.
 - 26 Fowler, *op.cit.*, p.32. On p.10, he notes that the 'imprecision regarding what exactly happens in baptism is characteristic of much Baptist literature of the 17th century, because the writers were in most cases concerned primarily about the question of paedobaptism, secondarily about the mode of baptism, and only to a limited degree about the sacramental issue.'
 - 27 Fowler, *op.cit.*, pp.8-19.

- 28 Article 12, citing Acts 8.15; 8.17; 5.32; and Eph. 1.13-14, *The True Gospel-Faith Declared According to the Scriptures, 1654*, in Lumpkin, op.cit., p.193, italics added.
- 29 E.g. by J.M. Ross. 'The Theology of Baptism in Baptist History', *BQ* 15.3 (July, 1953), p.101.
- 30 Fowler, op.cit., pp.16-17.
- 31 B. Keach and W. Collins, *The Baptist Catechism: Commonly Called Keach's Catechism* (Philadelphia, 1851), p.23. Fowler, op.cit., pp.17-18, comments that 'The fact that [baptism] is parallel to the Word and prayer indicates that it somehow leads to the benefits signified by it, rather than simply testifying to a prior possession of those benefits. Furthermore, it was indicated here that it is Christ himself who communicates the benefits of his saving work through the ordinances, which is to say that baptism is a means of grace as well as an act of personal confession.'
- 32 B. Keach, *The Child's Delight: Or Instructions for Children and Youth* (1702), p.38; and W. Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse on the Right to Church Communion* (1681), pp.42-43, cited by Thompson, 'Practicing ...', p.11.
- 33 Articles 27 and 19, *Orthodox Creed*, in Lumpkin, op.cit., pp.317 and 311-12 respectively.
- 34 Thompson, 'Practicing ...', p.6.
- 35 T. Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus: or The Ancient Christian Religion* (1678), I.13, cited by Thompson, 'Practicing ...', p.8. Due to irregularities in pagination, references to *Christianismus Primitivus* are to book/part, chapter and section, except the above mentioned quotation from Book I which is subdivided only into sections (I am grateful to Dr Thompson for this information).
- 36 Thompson, 'Practicing ...', p.11.
- 37 B. Keach, *Gold Refin'd; or Baptism in its Primitive Purity* (1689), pp.82-83 and 173 respectively, cited by Fowler, op.cit., pp.28-29.
- 38 Grantham, *An Apology for the Baptized Believers*, p.15, cited by Thompson, 'A New Question', p.67.
- 39 Thompson, 'A New Question', p.67, and Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, II/2. ii.4.
- 40 T. Grantham, *A Sigh for Peace: or The Cause of the Division Discovered* (1671), pp.87-88, cited by Thompson, 'A New Question', p.67.
- 41 Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, II.i.5, cited by Fowler, op.cit., p.28.
- 42 See Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, II/2.i.8; II/2.vii.6, cited by Thompson, 'A New Question', p.66.
- 43 T. Grantham, *The Loyal Baptist or An Apology for the Baptized Believers* (1684), p.20, cited by Thompson, 'A New Question', p.66. This appears to be two separate works in one volume, the reference being to *An Apology ...*, so Thompson, p.60 n.48.
- 44 So Thompson, 'A New Question', p.67, citing Grantham, *An Apology...*, p.12.
- 45 Thompson, 'A New Question', pp.66-67.
- 46 Thompson, 'A New Question', p.67 and n.97, citing Grantham, 'St. Paul's Catechism' (1687), pp.35-36, 'It is Christ who is held forth in Baptism, which saveth ...', quoting 1 Pet. 3.21. The Holy Spirit was also seen to act redemptively in baptism in Benjamin Beddome's hymn, 'Eternal Spirit, heavenly Dove,/ On these baptismal waters move; That we thro' energy divine,/ May have the substance with the sign', in J. Rippon (ed.), *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors Intended to be an Appendix to Doctor Watts' Psalms and Hymns* (1787), no. 460, cited by Thompson, 'Practicing ...', p.5, who, in n.49 on p.20, also refers to nos. 443, 449, 450, 453 and 468.
- 47 See section on individual Baptist authors for discussion of Robert Garner, *A Treatise of Baptism* (1645), Henry Lawrence, *Of Baptism* (3rd edn. 1659), and William Mitchell, *Jachin and Boaz* (1707), in Fowler, op.cit., pp.19-31.
- 48 See Fowler, op.cit., pp.32-61.
- 49 On these movements, see A.C. Underwood, *A History of English Baptists* (1947), pp.116-200; R. Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (1986); McBeth, *Baptist Heritage*, pp.153-78.
- 50 Fowler, op.cit., p.33.
- 51 A. Dutton, *Brief Hints Concerning Baptism: of the Subject, Mode, and End of this Solemn Ordinance* (1746), p.12. Fowler, op.cit., pp.48-50.
- 52 Dutton, op.cit. p.20, italics added.
- 53 *ibid.*, p.21.
- 54 *ibid.*, p.22.
- 55 Fowler, op.cit., p.50.
- 56 A. Fuller, 'The Practical Uses of Christian Baptism (1802)', in J. Belcher (ed.), *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: with a memoir of his life by Andrew Gunton Fuller* (3 vols., 1845; Harrisonburg, VA: reprint, 1988), III, p.339.
- 57 Fuller, 'Practical Uses', pp.339-40.
- 58 Fowler, op.cit., p.51.
- 59 Fuller, 'Practical Uses', p.341, italics his.
- 60 Fowler, op.cit., p.52.

- 61 J. Ryland jun., *A Candid Statement of the Reasons Which Induce the Baptists to Differ in Opinion and Practice from So Many of Their Christian Brethren* (1814). Fowler, op.cit., pp.53-55, believes that this oft-repeated sermon represents Rylands' theology at the end of the eighteenth century.
- 62 Fowler, op.cit., pp.54-55.
- 63 *ibid.*, pp.55-56.
- 64 *ibid.*, p.53, on the Reformed use of *seal* for infant baptism. Baptists were also influenced by its perceived absence from scripture.
- 65 *ibid.*, p.56.
- 66 *ibid.*, pp.57-60.
- 67 *ibid.*, p.59.
- 68 For more detailed discussion see Cross, *Baptism*, pp.6-17.
- 69 D.M. Thompson, 'Baptism, Church and Society in Britain since 1800' (unpublished Hulsean lectures, 1983-84), p.1; also his 'The Theology of Adult Initiation in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in D.A. Withey (ed.), *Adult Initiation* (Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study 10 [Grove Liturgical Study 58]; Nottingham, 1989), pp.6-23.
- 70 Thompson, 'Baptism', p.3.
- 71 *ibid.*, p.4. He discusses these issues on pp.5-10, 10-12 and 12-17. J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, 1994), p.43, agrees with this classification of the issues, and discusses them on pp.43-44, 44-45 and 45-50. J.R.C. Perkin, 'Baptism in Non-Conformist Theology, 1820-1920, with special reference to the Baptists', (unpublished Oxford DPhil, 1955), p.6, similarly identified this period, especially 1820-30, as marked by an increased interest in baptism. Thompson, 'Baptism', p.4, observes 'that books, pamphlets and tracts are being written on baptism in the early nineteenth century, whereas thirty years before they were not. But publication was a response to the fact that the issues were being debated among Christians; and some indication of this is seen in the growth of the Baptists during the period, and also in the divisions that produced new Baptist congregations.'
- 72 Perkin, 'Baptism', p.25.
- 73 So Perkin, *ibid.*, pp.211, 217-18.
- 74 *ibid.*, pp.10-11. This was true even if Baptist ecclesiology was not all it should have been. See Briggs, 'John Clifford's Diminished Ecclesiology', *English Baptists*, pp.22-27.
- 75 Perkin, 'Baptism', p.11.
- 76 Perkin, 'Baptism', pp.335-36. This changed when, in 1864, C.H. Spurgeon launched his vitriolic attack on evangelical Anglicans through his sermon condemning baptismal regeneration, see M. Nicholls, *C.H. Spurgeon: The Pastor Evangelist* (Didcot, 1992), pp.122-29; Briggs, op.cit., pp.48-50; Fowler, op.cit., pp.83-88.
- 77 Perkin, 'Baptism', p.337.
- 78 Thompson, 'Baptism', p.72. See Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, pp.164-96. Both Spurgeon and Clifford said more on communion than baptism. According to Nicholls, *Spurgeon*, p.158, the 1894 index to the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* lists only four sermons by Spurgeon on baptism.
- 79 On the Gorham case, see Thompson, 'Baptism', pp.30-33; O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church: Part 1: 1829-1859* (London, 3rd edn, 1971), pp.250-71.
- 80 Thompson, 'Baptism', p.72, 'In so far as the baptismal controversy in the first half of the century had been one between catholic and Calvinist sacramental theology, this division received much sharper focus in the second half of the century over Holy Communion. Antipathy to the Mass, transubstantiation, the real presence etc., was more easily mobilised than suspicion of baptismal regeneration.'
- 81 See Walker, op.cit., pp. 32-83, and Briggs, op.cit., pp.61-68, esp. p.65.
- 82 Thompson, 'Baptism', p.68. Most churches which retained closed communion left the Baptist Union to form the Strict and Particular Baptist denomination. However, the Baptist Evangelical Society was formed within the Union to defend strict-communionist principles, see G.R. Breed, *The Baptist Evangelical Society—an early Victorian Episode* (Dunstable, 1987).
- 83 Thompson, 'Baptism', p.72, believes this was the most significant development.
- 84 Briggs, op.cit., p.46. R. Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage* (Didcot, 1990), p.100, overstates the case against Tractarianism.
- 85 Cf. the similar conclusion of Fowler, op.cit., p.93.
- 86 Perkin, 'Baptism', pp.160-61.
- 87 Walker, op.cit., p.3.
- 88 C. Williams, *Principles and Practices* (1879), p.23. Fowler, op.cit., p.61, sees the main context as the controversy over baptism as a means of grace. Perkins pays scant attention to the Oxford Movement, Walker more.
- 89 Walker, op.cit., pp.8-9.
- 90 R. Hall, *On Terms of Communion*, in O. Gregory (ed.), *The Entire Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M., with A brief Memoir of his Life, and a Critical Estimate of his Character and Writings*

- (1831), II, pp.63-64, where Hall referred to holy communion as a 'federal rite'.
- 91 *ibid.*, p.64.
- 92 Walker, *op.cit.*, pp.9-10. Fowler, *op.cit.*, pp.63-67, detects an 'enormous amount of ambivalence in Hall's references to the efficacy of baptism' and finds, pp.70-76, similar tensions in Charles Stovel, *The Baptismal Regeneration Controversy Considered* (1843).
- 93 Briggs, *op.cit.*, p.52.
- 94 Perkin, 'Baptism', pp.13-14.
- 95 *ibid.*, p.261.
- 96 Briggs, *op.cit.*, pp.54-55. See Maria Saffery, in *Psalms and Hymns* (1858), no. 707; cf. B.W. Noel, 'Lord, Thou has promised to baptize' (1853), *Psalms and Hymns*, no. 713.
- 97 Perkin, 'Baptism', p.11. Cf. p.244, 'the majority of Baptists did not regard baptism as a sacrament at all; at best it was a sign of something already accomplished.'
- 98 B.W. Noel, *Essay on Christian Baptism* (1849), p.99. Cf. the former Independent, Isaac Orchard's sermon, *Christian Baptism* (1829), p.11, 'Baptism is an appointed means for obtaining a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit' (Perkin, 'Baptism', p.197). On Noel, see Perkin, 'Baptism', pp.322-34; Briggs, *op.cit.*, pp.46-47, 49-50, 54, and *passim*; and Fowler, *op.cit.*, pp.76-79.
- 99 W. Hawkins, *A Sermon on Baptism* (1827), p.22, cited by Briggs, *op.cit.*, pp.51-52; and, e.g., Anonymous, 'Sacramental Meditations', *Baptist Magazine* 49 (January, 1857), pp.22-23.
- 100 Walker, *op.cit.*, p.131.
- 101 See Thompson, 'Baptism', pp.18-35. Briggs, *op.cit.*, pp.45-53, 223-27, discusses baptismal regeneration and tractarianism as they affected Baptist thought, as does Walker, *op.cit.*, pp.84-120. For broader studies of anti-Catholicism, P. Toon, *Evangelical Theology 1833-1856: A Response to Tractarianism* (1979), and J. Wolfe, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain, 1829-1860* (Oxford, 1991).
- 102 Differences over terms of communion led many churches to separate from the Baptist Union as Strict Baptists, see E.A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (1959), pp.40-41, 86-87. Many of those remaining opened the Lord's Supper to those not baptized as believers and later the membership to those from paedobaptist traditions on profession of faith.
- 103 Walker, *op.cit.*, pp.42-43.
- 104 Briggs, *op.cit.*, pp.11-12.
- 105 Fowler, *op.cit.*, pp.91-93.
- 106 Detailed discussion of this period in Cross, *Baptism*, and Fowler, *op.cit.*, pp.94-170.
- 107 So Cross, *Baptism*, pp.2-4.
- 108 Also Ross, 'Theology of Baptism', pp.100-112.
- 109 E. Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung* (Zürich, 1938), ET *The Divine Human Encounter* (1944); K. Barth, *Die Kirchliche Lehre von der Taufe* (Zürich, 1943), ET *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* (1948).
- 110 See Cross, *Baptism*, e.g. pp.98-108 and 210-43.
- 111 *ibid.*, pp.341-48.
- 112 The most recent study of Shakespeare is P. Shepherd, 'John Howard Shakespeare and the English Baptists, 1898-1924' (Durham University PhD thesis, 1999).
- 113 'Declaratory Statement of Common Faith and Practice, adopted on 26th March 1917 as the Doctrinal basis of the projected Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England ...', in Payne, *op.cit.*, pp.275-78, quotation from Section V, p.276. For a detailed discussion of this and other statements, see Cross, *Baptism, passim*.
- 114 *Reply of the Churches in Membership with the Baptist Union to the 'Appeal to all Christian People ...'*, in Payne, *op.cit.*, pp.279-82, quotation p.280.
- 115 E.g., J.D. Freeman, 'The Lambeth Appeal', *The Fraternal* os 13 (March, 1922), p.8.
- 116 'Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland', in L. Hodgson (ed.), *Convictions: A Selection from the Responses of the Churches to the Report of the World Conference on Faith and Order, held at Lausanne in 1927* (London, 1934), pp.61-64, quotation p.63.
- 117 *Report of the Special Committee appointed by the Council on the Question of Union between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians* (n.d. [1937]), pp.28-29. The *Report* admitted: 'the witness which is given to the Baptist doctrine of baptism is often inadequate and in some instances grievously inadequate', p.35, cf. p.38.
- 118 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church: A Statement approved by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, March 1948', in Payne, *op.cit.*, pp.283-91, quotation p.288-89.
- 119 *Baptists and Unity* (1967), p.43 n. *.
- 120 *Believing and Being Baptized: Baptism, so-called re-baptism, and children in the church* (Didcot 1996), pp.9-10, italics original.
- 121 For an overview, see M.J. Walker, 'Baptist

- Worship in the Twentieth Century', in K.W. Clements (ed.), *Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (1983), pp.21-30.
- 122 E.A. Payne and S.F. Winward, *Orders and Prayers for Church Worship* (1960), pp.127-43.
- 123 *ibid.*, pp.131-33.
- 124 A. Gilmore, E. Smalley and M.J. Walker, *Praise God: A Collection of Resource Material for Christian Worship* (1980), pp.137-40.
- 125 *ibid.*, p.139.
- 126 *Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship: A guidebook for worship leaders* (Oxford, 1991), pp.93-107.
- 127 *Patterns and Prayer*, p.93. For development of baptismal debate and Christian initiation in the twentieth century, see Cross, *Baptism*, pp.320-34.
- 128 *Patterns and Prayers*, pp.98-100. italics original.
- 129 See A.R. Cross, 'Service to the Ecumenical Movement: The Contribution of British Baptists', *BQ* 38.3 (July, 1999), pp.107-22.
- 130 The centrality of scripture in Baptist thought is discussed, e.g., by W.M.S. West, *Baptist Principles* (3rd edn, 1975), pp.5-11; and Hayden, *op.cit.*, pp.65-67.
- 131 e.g., H.W. Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit* (1928), *Baptist Principles* (3rd edn, 1938) and *The Life and Faith of the Baptists* (2nd edn, 1946); R.E.O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (1960) and *Invitation to Baptism: A Manual for Inquirers* (1962); G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962) and *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (1966). A.C. Underwood, *Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian: A Comparative and Psychological Study* (1925) and 'Conversion and Baptism', in J.H. Rushbrooke *et al.*, *The Faith of the Baptists* (n.d. but 1926), pp.21-35. See Cross, *Baptism*, e.g. p.454; and Fowler, *op.cit.*, pp.94-170. who both supplement this list.
- 132 C.J. Ellis, 'Baptism and the Sacramental Freedom of God', in P.S. Fiddes (ed.), *Reflections on the Water: Understanding God and the World through the Baptism of Believers* (Macon, Georgia, & Oxford, 1996), pp.29-30. He maintains that within such state church systems, *ex opere operato* theologies objectify God's activity 'within the institutional processes of liturgical activity, thus enabling church and state to control the dispensing of salvation.' For discussion of the volume, see Cross, *Baptism*, pp.344-48 and 381-84.
- 133 Ellis, 'Baptism', p.24.
- 134 *ibid.*, p.36.
- 135 *ibid.*, p.29.
- 136 *ibid.*, p.38.
- 137 *ibid.*, pp.30 and 38.
- 138 *ibid.*, pp.30-31.
- 139 *ibid.*, pp.24 and 33-35, quotation p.35.
- 140 'Introduction', in Fiddes (ed.), *Reflections*, p.3.
- 141 Fiddes, 'Baptism and Creation', pp.47-48.
- 142 *ibid.*, pp.57-58.
- 143 *ibid.*, p.59.
- 144 *ibid.*, p.59.
- 145 *ibid.*, pp.60-61.
- 146 *ibid.*, pp.61-62. On p.63, Fiddes argues that believers' baptism underlines allegiance to Christ alone which is not worked out as a private individual but within the whole human community: entrance to church membership carries the responsibilities of active discipleship under the Lordship of Christ.
- 147 See Cross, *Baptism*, pp.344-45, especially n.97 for a list of those who, in the last thirty years, have only used 'ordinance'. Of course, most Baptists are not writers — the word is still widely held, but not frequently found in written sources.
- 148 A notable exception are the contributors to *Reflections on the Water*.
- 149 For a detailed discussion, see Cross, *Baptism*, 386-453.
- 150 I have recently argued for a return to the practice of New Testament conversion-initiation, see "'One Baptism" (Ephesians 4.5): A Challenge to the Church', in S.E. Porter and A.R. Cross, *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White* (Sheffield 1999), pp.173-209.

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