

‘The challenge of this thesis ... is essentially simple: we are called and challenged simply to accord the significance to baptism that it is accorded within the New Testament.’

*John E. Cowell, Minister, Budleigh Salterton Baptist Church, UK, and Senior Research Fellow, Spurgeon’s College, London*

‘This is a remarkably detailed, biblically focused, and ecumenically sensitive book on the sacrament of baptism. Like Beasley-Murray in his classic study on baptism, Anthony R. Cross brings new insight to the indispensable role of Christian initiation both in personal faith and the life of the church. Highly recommended!’

*Timothy George, Founding Dean, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama; Chair of the Doctrine and Christian Unity Commission of the Baptist World Alliance*

‘This rich theological work on such a significant subject is a gift to the whole church. It is full of good scholarship, wise in judgment, and practical in its insights. We are given a timely contribution on the meaning of Christian identity, inviting us all to reflect again on the biblical teaching, our doctrinal affirmations, our sacramental understanding, and what amounts to faithful practice in the church of Christ.’

*Brian Haymes, former Principal of Northern and Bristol Baptist Colleges, and President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain*

‘Carefully using an impressive range of biblical, theological, and historical scholarship, Anthony R. Cross argues that baptism lost the importance that it had in the New Testament and pre-Nicene church; but that in post-Christendom baptism’s significance is re-emerging. When it embodies New Testament themes of conversion, faith, community, and ethics, baptism once again emerges as a sacrament of untold potential, enriching discipleship, and empowering mission. This mature fruit of “Baptist sacramentalism” offers gifts to Christians of all traditions. I recommend it enthusiastically.’

*Alan Kreider, Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana*

‘Anthony R. Cross makes a compelling case both for the inseparability of faith and baptism and of water and Spirit baptism. The evangelical insistence on justification by faith alone, he contends, should and must make room for “baptism” as a biblical term encompassing all three: faith, water baptism, and Spirit baptism. Arguably the most important book on baptism since George Beasley-Murray’s *Baptism in the New Testament*, extending and enriching the argument of that seminal work.’

*J. Ramsey Michaels, Missouri State University*



# **Recovering the Evangelical Sacrament**



# Recovering the Evangelical Sacrament

*Baptisma Semper Reformandum*

Anthony R. Cross

Foreword by John E. Colwell

✞PICKWICK *Publications* • Eugene, Oregon

## RECOVERING THE EVANGELICAL SACRAMENT

Baptisma Semper Reformandum

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*To  
Jackie  
with all my love.  
'I thank my God ...  
for your partnership in the gospel'  
(Philippians 1.3-4).*





# Contents

*Foreword by John E. Colwell* *xi*

*Acknowledgements* *xiv*

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction: One Lord, One Faith, One or Possibly an Indefinite Number of Baptisms ... or None at All: The Present State of the Baptismal Debate**

**1**

Introduction	1
Baptism in Ecumenical Discussions	11
Evangelicals and Baptism	24
Some Recent Academic Studies of Baptism	30
‘Evangelical’ and ‘Sacrament’ Defined	35
Concluding Introductory Comments	37

## **Chapter 2**

### **Conversion-Baptism**

**40**

Baptism in the Primitive Gospel	40
Conversion-Baptism/Conversion-Initiation	44
Faith-Baptism	51
Synecdoche	72
Conversion-Baptism and Mission	84

## **Chapter 3**

### **One Baptism**

**96**

Ephesians 4.5	96
Further Challenges to ‘One Baptism’	111
‘Baptisms’ in Hebrews 6.2	116
Some Hermeneutical Issues Relating to Ephesians 4.5’s ‘One Baptism’	123

## **Chapter 4**

### **Spirit- and Water-Baptism in 1 Corinthians 12.13**

**130**

Introduction	130
Water-Baptism as the Locus for the Reception of the Spirit	131
Spirit-Baptism: Conversion and Metaphor Critically Examined	136
From Metaphor to Synecdoche	147
Conclusion	153

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Spirit, Sacraments, and the Material World: Being Open to God’s Sacramental Work**

**155**

The Holy Spirit and Baptism: An Introduction	155
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On the Sacraments and Spirit in Calvin and Barth: A Case Study	158
The Sacramental Nature of Baptism	169
Material Means as Media of God's Grace	180
Concluding Issues	188
 <b>Chapter 6</b>	
<b>Baptismal Regeneration</b>	<b>194</b>
Introduction	194
Baptismal Regeneration in the Early and Reformations' Churches	198
Baptismal Regeneration in the New Testament	205
Conclusion	212
 <b>Chapter 7</b>	
<b>Baptism into the Church</b>	<b>214</b>
God's Own People	214
The Church Local, Universal, and Mystical	216
Baptism and the New Covenant	223
The Community of Disciples	243
 <b>Chapter 8</b>	
<b>Ethical Sacramentalism</b>	<b>247</b>
Introduction	247
Ethical Sacramentalism	250
Justified <i>and</i> Sanctified	253
The Drama of Baptism: God, the Church, and the Disciple	276
The Moral Miracle of Baptism	298
Conclusion	306
 <b>Chapter 9</b>	
<b>The Reform of Baptism</b>	<b>308</b>
The Reform of Baptismal Theology and Practice	308
Conclusion	326
 <i>Bibliography</i>	<i>328</i>
 <i>Scripture Index</i>	<i>371</i>
 <i>General Index</i>	<i>382</i>

## Foreword

What is it that identifies me as a Christian? What is it that identifies the Church as the Church?

Were I to put these two questions (which in essence are but a single question) to a Roman Catholic I would most likely receive a sacramental answer: I am identified as a Christian sacramentally, specifically through baptism, and the Church is defined sacramentally through baptism, through the Eucharist, and through the continuity and connectedness of apostolic ministry. Strictly speaking, of course, a Catholic would want to define an apostolic ministry by a literal physical and spiritual succession and by communion with and submission to the See of Rome. And strictly speaking also a Catholic would qualify baptism theologically by the sacrament of confirmation and, in popular practice, by the rite of first communion. John Calvin observes that one cannot hold to a sacrament of confirmation without detracting from the significance of baptism<sup>1</sup> and, in this respect, maybe even a Roman Catholic or a High Anglican cannot unequivocally claim to be a Christian by virtue of being baptised or that the Church is defined simply as the communion of the baptised. Certainly a 'Christening' service remains a significant rite of passage in any Catholic or High Anglican family, and perhaps remains so more widely in popular culture (though this is far less the case today than it was fifty years ago), but even in Roman and Anglo-Catholic circles the significance of baptism is at least obscured by the subsequent rite of confirmation.

For evangelical Anglicans, largely in reaction to the nineteenth-century Oxford Movement and to the corresponding controversy over baptismal regeneration, the significance of baptism is perhaps more radically compromised not so much by the continuing rite of confirmation as by the lively expectation of a conversion experience, almost entirely without prejudice to baptism and confirmation, and variously marked by the 'sinner's prayer', by the public response of raising a hand or coming to the front of the building at the end of a meeting, by the signing of a 'decision card', or by some form of felt experience. Conversion as an experienced personal response here easily trumps both baptism and confirmation as defining of the true Christian and, thereby, of the true Christian Church.

An outsider may suspect that, in accordance with the denominational label, Baptists would be more likely to accord unequivocal significance to baptism as defining of the Christian and the Church. Historically Baptists are those who define the Church as the gathering of believers, gathered through baptism and through a covenanting together to be the people of God in a certain place. But, with deference to several contemporary Baptist authors, popular practice and experience with respect to that which is defining of the Church and of the Christian differs hardly at all amongst contemporary Baptists from the ethos of evangelical Anglicanism.

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), IV.xix.8.

Certainly in contemporary Baptist circles the rite of baptism generally would be expected to follow a conversion experience rather than to precede it in the early months of infancy (though in a post-Christian society 'believers' baptism' inevitably becomes more common in High Church as well as evangelical practice) but, as in evangelical Anglicanism, that which is defining of the authentic Christian (and hence the authentic Christian Church) is an identifiable experience of conversion rather than any sacramental rite. For most contemporary Baptists, as in fact for most sixteenth-century Anabaptists, baptism is a witness to a conversion that has already occurred or, as Karl Barth concludes in the final fragment of the *Church Dogmatics*, baptism is a prayer for the continuing presence of the Spirit rather than a prayer for the Spirit's initial transforming and converting presence and power; it is an ethical act of human response rather than itself a spiritually transforming event.<sup>2</sup> Baptism is a witness to a preceding conversion rather than the climactic and crucial moment of that conversion. And what is true generally for Baptists is generally the case for other baptistic groups, for Pentecostalism, and for Independent charismatic churches and connections. Some new church groups, following the Strict Baptists, will insist on believer's baptism for admission to church membership if not for admission to Holy Communion. Some may even hold a lively expectation that something spiritual will happen in the process of baptism, but few would hold baptism as central to the process and experience of Christian conversion itself.

All this, as this present volume so authoritatively and comprehensively demonstrates, is far removed from the apparent atmosphere of the New Testament. From Matthew through to Revelation you will find no decision cards, no appeals to come to the front, no programmatic presentation of the gospel with the expectation of some standardised form of felt experience. What you will find instead, from beginning to end, is baptism, whether baptism itself or the imagery arising from baptism.

Many years ago I recall Tom Wright speaking at a Tyndale conference in Cambridge and making the patent point that where the New Testament speaks of baptism it means baptism. That the point needed to be made at all serves to demonstrate the degree to which the contemporary Church, in its various manifestations, has lost sight of the significance of baptism within the New Testament. Every attempt to spiritualise the text, to read references to baptism itself or the metaphors of washing, of water, of death and resurrection, of re-birth, of putting-off and putting-on, as significant of some felt conversion experience and as distinct from the rite of baptism is revealing of the degree to which we have lost sight of the significance of baptism itself. Notwithstanding references to household baptisms, there is no passage in the New Testament that comes close to suggesting that baptism is a hopeful prayer by parents, sponsors, and Church that a person will come to repentance and faith at some point in the future. Notwithstanding the exceptional story of Cornelius, nowhere in the New Testament is baptism reduced as

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<sup>2</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/4. The Christian Life (Fragment)* (eds and trans. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969).

a subsequent witness to a previous conversion experience – even after the drama of the Damascus Road, the receiving of the Spirit by Paul (Saul) through the ministry of Ananias is linked to his baptism (Acts 9.17–18). The only gospel appeal we find within the New Testament is the appeal to believe the gospel, to repent, and to be baptised, this baptism linked to the promise of the Spirit. A man or a woman is ‘in Christ’ by virtue of being baptised into Christ. The Church is the body of Christ by virtue of its members being baptised into Christ. Certainly the Church can be defined by its continuance in the apostles’ doctrine and by its communion of the breaking of bread and prayer (Acts 2.42) but primarily the Church is defined by baptism: it is through baptism that one is added to the Church (Acts 2.41). Baptism is the committing of oneself to Christ in faith. Baptism is the response of repentance. Baptism is the prayer for baptism in the Holy Spirit. I am not baptised in the hope (by others) that I might subsequently be converted. I am not baptised in order to demonstrate to others that I have been converted (whether in the near or distant past). I am baptised as the means of that conversion. This is the sinner’s prayer. This is the promise of the Spirit. This is the washing of new birth (Titus 3.5).

It is now fifty years since the publication of George Beasley-Murray’s magisterial *Baptism in the New Testament*.<sup>3</sup> There have been many notable, perceptive, and challenging contributions to the baptismal debate since then, but the comprehensiveness, critical scholarly care, and uncompromising challenge of this present volume has few rivals. Anthony R. Cross writes as a Baptist but his thesis is at least as challenging to his fellow Baptists as it is to those from paedobaptist traditions. Indeed, some would argue that baptism is no more radically belittled at present than it is amongst credo-baptist churches. And the challenge of this thesis, beneath and beyond the thoroughness and detailed textual attention that follows, is essentially simple: we are called and challenged simply to accord the significance to baptism that it is accorded within the New Testament. It is baptism that is defining of the Christian. It is baptism that is defining of the Church.

John E. Colwell.

*All Saints’ Day, 2012.*

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<sup>3</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1962).

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I have been researching the theology and practice of baptism now for over two decades and have written on the subject many times. Over the years my thoughts have been challenged and developed – always an exciting process – and have sometimes taken unexpected turns. Some of the chapters offered here have undergone several incarnations, but all have been revised, refined, updated, sometimes I have taken issue with previous views, and in other instances material has been moved to different parts of the argument. I am grateful to publishers and editors who have granted me permission to use this work in the preparation of this book. To Paternoster for permission to reuse, adapt, and supplement material that appears in chapters 2, 5, 6, 7, and 9: ‘The Evangelical Sacrament: *Baptisma Semper Reformandum*’, *Evangelical Quarterly* 80.3 (July, 2008), pp. 195–217; ‘Being Open to God’s Sacramental Work: A Study in Baptism’, in Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Semper Reformandum: Studies in Honour of Clark H. Pinnock* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), pp. 355–77; ‘Baptism in the Theology of John Calvin and Karl Barth’, in Neil B. MacDonald and Carl Trueman (eds), *Calvin, Barth, and Reformed Theology* (Paternoster Theological Monographs; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 57–87; ‘Baptismal Regeneration: Rehabilitating a Lost Dimension of New Testament Baptism’, in Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson (eds), *Baptist Sacramentalism 2* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 25; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 149–74; and Brian Haymes, Ruth Gouldbourne and Anthony R. Cross, *On Being the Church: Revisioning Baptist Identity* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 21; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008). Material in chapters 2, 3, and 4 is used by kind permission of Continuum International Publishing Group, originally appearing as “‘One Baptism” (Ephesians 4.5)’, in Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 173–209; and ‘Spirit- and Water- Baptism in 1 Corinthians 12.13’, and ‘The Meaning of “Baptisms” in Hebrews 6.2’, both in Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 234; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 120–48 and pp. 163–86. An early version of chapter 8 was presented as a lecture entitled ‘Baptismal Ethics’, for the Ethics Course, Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, Georgetown, Kentucky, USA, on Thursday 22 September 2011. I am grateful to Dr Mark Medley for allowing me the pleasure of sharing this material and to the class for their interaction. It was great fun.

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To my two daughters, Laura and Katja, who I love so much, and above all to my beloved wife, Jackie, to whom this book is dedicated. Thank you for being you. You are a beautiful wife and a wonderful mother, a great companion and friend, and I love you with all my heart.

Anthony R. Cross  
*November 2012*





## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction:

# One Lord, One Faith, One or Possibly an Indefinite Number of Baptisms ... or None at All: The Present State of the Baptismal Debate

### I. Introduction

Whether it is infant baptism or believers' baptism, there is something very unsatisfactory about the theology and practice of baptism in the contemporary church. This is a bold statement, certainly, but one that, I believe, the study of baptism over the last hundred years warrants.<sup>1</sup>

In the contemporary church – by which I mean the church universal – there are, at first glance, three views of baptism. There is paedobaptism, which is practised, for example, in the Orthodox Churches,<sup>2</sup> the Roman Catholic Church,<sup>3</sup> the Lutheran

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<sup>1</sup> A convenient overview of baptism in the modern church is provided by Peter Hinchcliff, rev. by C. Brock and The Editors, 'The Modern Period', in Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold and Paul Bradshaw (eds), *The Study of Liturgy* (London: SPCK, rev. edn, 1992), pp. 167–83. See also Peter J. Jagger, *Christian Initiation 1552–1969: Rites of Baptism and Confirmation since the Reformation Period* (Alcuin Club Collections, 52; London: SPCK, 1970); Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), pp. 291–391; Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross, 'Introduction: Baptism in Recent Debate', in Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 33–39; and Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross, 'Introduction: Baptism – An Ongoing Debate', in Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 234; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 1–6; David M. Thompson, *Baptism, Church and Society in Modern Britain: From the Evangelical Revival to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Studies in Christian History and Thought; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005); and Bryan D. Spinks, *Reformation and Modern Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From Luther to Contemporary Practices* (Liturgy, Worship and Society; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Boris Bobrinskoy, 'Baptism: Sacrament of the Kingdom' [Eastern Orthodox], Mesrob Tashjian, 'The Sacrament of Holy Baptism in the Armenian Apostolic Church' [Oriental Orthodox], and Jacob Kurien, 'The Baptismal Liturgy of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church' [Oriental Orthodox], all in Thomas F. Best (ed.), *Baptism Today:*

Church,<sup>4</sup> the Anglican/Episcopalian Church,<sup>5</sup> the Reformed Churches (including the Presbyterian and United Reformed Churches),<sup>6</sup> and the Methodist Church,<sup>7</sup> where baptism is administered to babies, followed in teenage years by confirmation.<sup>8</sup> Then there are the Baptist<sup>9</sup> churches who baptize those old enough to be confessing their

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*Understanding, Practice, Ecumenical Implications* (Faith and Order Paper, 207; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), pp. 3–14, pp. 15–21, and pp. 23–27 respectively; and Irenaeus M.C. Steenberg, ‘Baptism in Orthodox Christianity’, in Gordon L. Heath and James D. Dvorak (eds), *Baptism: Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), pp. 1–25 and 226–27.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., James F. Puglisi, ‘Rite[s] of Baptism in the Catholic Church: A Theological-Pastoral Commentary’, in Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*, pp. 29–43; and Gerard Kelly, ‘Baptism in the Roman Catholic Church’, in Heath and Dvorak (eds), *Baptism*, pp. 26–52 and 228–29.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Jeffrey A. Truscott, ‘Lutheran’, in Paul F. Bradshaw (ed.), *The New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (London: SCM Press, 2002), pp. 46–47; Jeffrey A. Truscott, ‘The Rite of Holy Baptism in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*’, in Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*, pp. 45–54; Robert Kolb, ‘The Lutheran Theology of Baptism’, in Heath and Dvorak (eds), *Baptism*, pp. 53–75 and 229–31.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Ruth A. Meyers, ‘Anglican’, in Bradshaw (ed.), *Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, pp. 41–42; Paul F. Bradshaw, ‘Baptism in the Anglican Communion’, in Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*, pp. 55–61; and Alan L. Hayes, ‘Baptism in the Anglican Communion’, in Heath and Dvorak (eds), *Baptism*, pp. 111–35 and 234–36.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set out and Illustrated from the Sources* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950), pp. 590–626; John W. Riggs, *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition: An Historical and Practical Theology* (Columbia Studies in Reformed Theology; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); Richard Cleaves, ‘Congregationalist’, and Daniel J. Meeter, ‘Reformed’, both in Bradshaw (ed.), *Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, pp. 45–46, and pp. 51–52; Martha Moore-Keish, ‘Baptism in the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition’, in Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*, pp. 63–71; and John Vissers, ‘Baptism in the Reformed Tradition’, in Heath and Dvorak (eds), *Baptism*, pp. 76–110 and 231–33.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., John R. Parris, *John Wesley’s Doctrine of the Sacraments* (London: Epworth, 1963); Bernard G. Holland, *Baptism in Early Methodism* (London: Epworth, 1970); Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Definitive Study of John Wesley’s Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1972); Neil Dixon, *Troubled Waters* (London: Epworth Press, 1979); David Ingersoll Naglee, *From Font to Faith: John Wesley on Infant Baptism and the Nurture of Children* (American University Studies, Series 7, Theology and Religion, 24; New York: Peter Lang, 1987); Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, ‘Methodist’, in Bradshaw (ed.), *Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, pp. 47–48; Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, ‘The Initiatory Rites of the United Methodist Church’, in Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*, pp. 99–107; Brian C. Brewer, ‘Evangelical Anglicanism: John Wesley’s Dialectical Theology of Baptism’, *Evangelical Quarterly* 83.2 (April, 2011), pp. 107–32.

<sup>8</sup> See *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper, 111; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), IV.A.12, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> It should further be noted that while ‘Baptist(s)’ is used throughout this book there are many other ‘baptist’ traditions other than those commonly denominated ‘Baptists’, and that what is argued here equally applies to many of these. The practice followed in this book is to use ‘Baptist’ of those who identify themselves explicitly as such, and ‘baptist’ as those other

own personal faith in the waters of baptism.<sup>10</sup> Finally, there are the Society of Friends<sup>11</sup> and The Salvation Army<sup>12</sup> who do not practise water-baptism. However, this is to simplify what turns out, on closer examination, to be an intricate and exceedingly complex picture.

Within the paedobaptist tradition there is no unanimity of theology or practice. In the Roman Catholic Church baptism is seen as necessary for salvation,<sup>13</sup> while in others it is not far removed from a Baptist infant dedication/presentation service.<sup>14</sup>

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baptistic traditions. On the use of 'B/baptist(s)', see James W. McClendon, Jr, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1. Ethics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), pp. 19–20; Jonathan H. Rainbow, "'Confessor Baptism': The Baptismal Doctrine of the Early Anabaptists", in Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (eds), *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* (NAC Studies in Bible & Theology; Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), pp. 189–206 (pp. 203–205); and Parush R. Parushev, 'Baptistic Convictional Hermeneutics', in Helen Dare and Simon Woodman (eds), *The 'Plainly Revealed' Word of God?: Baptist Hermeneutics in Theory and Practice* (Atlanta, GA: Mercer University Press, 2011), pp. 172–90 (p. 172 n. 5). Believers' baptism is also referred to as credobaptism, on which see, e.g., Kevin Roy, *Baptism, Reconciliation and Unity* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997), pp. 11–12.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Anthony R. Cross, 'Baptist', Thomas F. Best, 'Christian Church', and Frank D. Macchia, 'Pentecostal', in Bradshaw (ed.), *Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, pp. 42–44, pp. 44–45, and pp. 50–51 respectively; Paul Fiddes, 'The Baptism of Believers', Rebecca Slough, 'Baptismal Practice among North American Mennonites', Keith Watkins, 'Baptismal Understanding and Practice in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)', and Daniel Albrecht, 'Witness in the Waters: Baptism and Pentecostal Spirituality', all in Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*, pp. 73–80, pp. 89–98, pp. 109–114, and pp. 147–68 respectively; Anthony R. Cross, 'Baptism among Baptists', Curt Niccum, 'Baptism in the Restoration Movement', and Steve Studebaker, 'Baptism among Pentecostals', in Heath and Dvorak (eds), *Baptism*, pp. 136–55 and 236–38; pp. 174–200 and 239–41, and pp. 201–24 and 241–43 respectively.

<sup>11</sup> See Janet Scott, 'Baptism and the Quaker Tradition', in Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*, pp. 81–88; Howard R. Macy, 'Baptism and Quakers', in Heath and Dvorak (eds), *Baptism*, pp. 156–73 and 238–39.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., <[http://www.salvationarmy.org/ind%5Cwww\\_ind.nsf/vw-sublinks/80256E520050A2E280256C140045D031?openDocument](http://www.salvationarmy.org/ind%5Cwww_ind.nsf/vw-sublinks/80256E520050A2E280256C140045D031?openDocument)>; and Earl Robinson, 'A Salvation Army Perspective on Baptism: Theological Understanding and Liturgical Practice', in Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*, pp. 173–80.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (1964), in Walter M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II: With Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), pp. 14–96 (Chapter II.14, p. 32), 'For Christ, made present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique Way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:5) and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for *through baptism* as through a door men enter the Church' (italics added).

<sup>14</sup> E.g., E.J. Price, *Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians* (London: Independent Press, rev. 1945), p. 24, 'While Congregationalists retain the traditional practice of infant Baptism, they interpret it in a way which excludes the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration, and turns the sacrament, for many of them, into little more than a solemn dedication of

In many, christening is to be followed by confirmation for initiation to be completed,<sup>15</sup> while in others it is not, either by default or otherwise.<sup>16</sup> In some

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infants to God on the part of parents and congregation.' For Baptist services of infant dedication/presentation, see, e.g., Ernest A. Payne and Stephen F. Winward, *Orders and Prayers for Church Worship: A Manual for Ministers* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1960), pp. 123–27; and Christopher J. Ellis and Myra Blyth (eds), *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples* (Norwich: Canterbury Press for The Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2005), pp. 50–63. Cf. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, IV.A.11, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> So Emil Brunner, *The Divine–Human Encounter* (London: SCM Press, 1944), p. 130, who notes that 'In confirmation the missing factor of response in the New Testament baptism act was recovered ...: the personal "yes" as man's answer to God's promise of grace. The whole of the New Testament act of baptism was thus divided into two parts: the objective gift of grace in infant baptism and the subjective confession of faith in confirmation. Although by and by confirmation was introduced practically everywhere, this settlement too never particularly pleased the Church. The statements of the New Testament about baptism continued to be connected with infant baptism and yet the bad conscience roused by this identification was soothed by *completing baptism with confirmation*, which certainly does not stem from the Bible' (italics added). Cf. also Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), p. 633, who notes that 'Infant Baptism is a complete Baptism only when the profession of faith which comes after further instruction is regarded as the act which consummates it.' Karl Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* (trans. Ernest A. Payne; London: SCM Press, 1948), p. 47, speaks of the 'necessity of so-called Confirmation', then, p. 47, after quoting Schleiermacher as noted above, adds, p. 48, 'Is it not ... and notoriously half-baptism? And ... what right have we to attribute to confirmation the significance of a half-sacrament?'. This contrasts with the Evangelical Anglican, John R.W. Stott's claim at the opening of his book *Your Confirmation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), p. 7, that 'Confirmation is *the first great milestone* which a baptized and converted Christian passes on his pilgrimage to heaven ... At your confirmation you are signing on for the Christian race' (italics added). Stott in the second sentence attributes to confirmation what the New Testament attributes to baptism. It should be noted that confirmation is also undergone by those 'of riper years' baptized into the Anglican Communion: see, e.g., Stott, *Your Confirmation*, *passim*; and Gordon Kuhrt, *Believing in Baptism: Christian Baptism – its theology and practice* (London: Mowbray, 1987), p. 142. However, this is not always the case, see *The Alternative Service Book 1980: Services authorized for use in the Church of England in conjunction with The Book of Common Prayer* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980), p. 225, Note 1 of the service of 'Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion', 'Adults who are to be baptized should normally be confirmed at the same service, but when they are to be baptized without confirmation ...' then part the confirmation part of the service is omitted.

<sup>16</sup> There is often a difference between the theology of confirmation and what actually happens. This is especially so in modern, secular, western societies in which infants are baptized and confirmation is frequently neglected or forgotten. This situation gives rise to the plea in *BEM*, IV.C.16, p. 6, that those who practise infant baptism 'must guard themselves against the practice of apparently indiscriminate baptism and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptized children to mature Christian commitment'.

paedobaptist churches all babies are eligible for baptism,<sup>17</sup> whereas in others only those are baptized who are from families with one or both parents being committed Christians, or in which the parents and or godparents promise to take seriously their responsibilities in raising the child in the Christian faith.<sup>18</sup> The Roman Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments,<sup>19</sup> while for others there are only two, the

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<sup>17</sup> This practice, known as indiscriminate infant baptism, has been severely criticized by, e.g., *BEM*, Commentary (21) (b), p. 7, 'In many large European and North American majority churches infant baptism is often practised in an apparently indiscriminate way'; and note the earlier indictments of it by Brunner, *Divine-Human Encounter*, p. 132, 'The contemporary practice of infant baptism can hardly be regarded as being anything short of scandalous', later adding the observation, p. 135, that 'The discrepancy between ... the gigantic Church of those baptized and the tiny Church of those assenting to confession, is one of the chief causes of the present difficulties of the Church in all places'; and Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*: IV/4. *The Christian Life (Fragment)* (ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), pp. x-xi, where he says of his change of mind over baptism, 'the reorientation ... of my doctrine of baptism implies, not a weakening, but a confirmation and strengthening of my opposition to the custom, or abuse, of infant baptism'. He continues, 'how can the Church be or become again, as is said to-day on many sides ... an essentially missionary and mature rather than immature Church, so long as it obstinately, against all better judgment and conscience, continues to dispense the water of baptism with the same indiscriminating generosity as it has now done for centuries?' (On Barth's *volte-face*, see Anthony R. Cross, 'Baptism in the Theology of John Calvin and Karl Barth', in Neil B. MacDonald and Carl Trueman [eds], *Calvin, Barth, and Reformed Theology* [Paternoster Theological Monographs; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008], pp. 57–87.) William H. Willimon, *Peculiar Speech: Preaching to the Baptized* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 60, believes that 'it is not so much infant baptism that debilitates the church as indiscriminate baptism' for 'We must not baptize persons, infants or adults, who do not show a willingness (or a potential willingness) to submit to change.' Later, pp. 62–63, he writes, 'One of the worst defences of infant baptism is that which speaks of infant baptism as a sign of God's indiscriminate, utterly gratuitous graciousness. The use of baptism in theological apologetics as a sign of God's complete gratuity in the giving of himself must not serve as the basis for a policy of indiscriminate baptism. Such a policy is simply at odds with the New Testament and the church's traditional doctrine of justification by faith in Christ dead and risen. Baptism always involves discernment and discrimination. This is demanded by a gospel that perceives life in Christ as the result of an individual's having willingly entered fully into his passion and death ... The genesis of the church is conversion, conversion in its most ecclesial rather than purely individualistic dimensions.'

<sup>18</sup> E.g., the Orthodox Church, see Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000 [1974]), p. 69, the Orthodox Church 'does not baptize all children but only those who already *belong* to her either through parents or responsible sponsors, who, in other terms, are presented to Baptism from *within* the community of faith' (italics original).

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), pp. 276–377. This said, it should be noted that John E. Colwell, *Promise and Presence: An Exploration of Sacramental Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), explores the seven sacraments of the Catholic tradition, but he does so as, p. ix, a 'non-conforming Baptist'.

dominical sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, also known as communion and the eucharist.<sup>20</sup>

The variety we have just noted among the paedobaptist churches is also present in the credobaptist traditions. Among the Baptists the majority hold that baptism is the profession of faith of the already converted, and, as such, is a sign of that conversion,<sup>21</sup> and these traditions tend only to use the term ordinance.<sup>22</sup> But then there are the Churches or Disciples of Christ who hold that baptism is necessary for salvation – clearly a more sacramental view.<sup>23</sup> Then there are other believers' baptism traditions: the open Brethren,<sup>24</sup> and various Pentecostal traditions for whom Spirit-baptism<sup>25</sup> is the essential for conversion and water-baptism is a profession of faith,<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> It is worth noting that for a while Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), in Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann, and Joel W. Lundeen (eds), *Luther's Works* (55 vols; St Louis, MO: Concordia/Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1958–86), XXXVI, pp. 11–126 (p. 18, original in italics), 'I must deny that there are seven sacraments, and for the present maintain that there are but three: baptism, penance, and the bread', though by the end of the work he had reduced this to two, see p. 124, where he gives as his reason because 'It seemed proper to restrict the name of sacrament to those promises which have signs attached to them ... Hence there are, strictly speaking, but two sacraments in the church of God – baptism and the bread.'

<sup>21</sup> E.g., Paul Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism for the Initiated', in Porter and Cross (eds), *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church*, pp. 467–76.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., Anthony R. Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists: Theology and Practice in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 3; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), e.g., pp. 98–102; Stanley K. Fowler, *More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 2; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), *passim*; and Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), e.g., pp. 7–8 and *passim*.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., E. Roberts-Thomson, *Baptists and Disciples of Christ* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, n.d. [1951]), pp. 114–23 and 161–69; James Gray (ed.), *Studies on Baptism* (Birmingham: Berean Press, 1959); David M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall: A Short History of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland* (Birmingham: Berean Press, 1980), *passim*; Jack Cottrell, *Baptism: A Biblical Study* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1989); and David W. Fletcher (ed.), *Baptism and the Remission of Sins: An Historical Perspective* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., Harold Rowden, 'The Early Brethren and Baptism', *Vox Evangelica* 11 (1979), pp. 55–64; and Tim Grass, *Gathering to his Name: The Story of the Open Brethren in Britain and Ireland* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), e.g., pp. 174–75, 278–79 and *passim*.

<sup>25</sup> That discussion of Spirit-baptism is not restricted to the Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions is shown in Chad Owen Brand (ed.), *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism: 5 Views* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2004), and the essays there by Ralph Del Colle (Catholic), H. Ray Dunning (Wesleyan), Larry Hart (Charismatic), Stanley M. Horton (Pentecostal), and Walter Kaiser Jr (Reformed), edited and introduced by a Baptist.

<sup>26</sup> J.R. Williams, 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit', H.D. Hunter, 'Ordinances, Pentecostal', and F.A. Sullivan, 'Sacraments', in Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (eds), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 40–48, pp. 653–54, and pp. 765–66 respectively; and David Petts, 'The Baptism in the Holy

a pattern that is found in many of the new churches of the Restoration Movement.<sup>27</sup> Among those denominated Baptist,<sup>28</sup> there is also a wide variety of opinion, from the closed membership and closed communion Strict and Particular Baptists,<sup>29</sup> to those who practice both an open membership and table,<sup>30</sup> and those who have a closed membership but welcome those from other traditions onto an associate or supplementary membership list.<sup>31</sup> There are also a growing number of Baptists who are more sacramental in their theology and practice.<sup>32</sup> For the majority of these

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Spirit: The Theological Distinctive', and Richard Bicknell, 'The Ordinances: The Marginalised Aspects of Pentecostalism', both in Keith Warrington (ed.), *Pentecostal Perspectives* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), pp. 98–119, and pp. 204–222 respectively.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., William K. Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain: New Ways of Being Church* (Studies in Evangelical History and Thought; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), *passim*.

<sup>28</sup> See Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, pp. 15–16 and 414–26; James Leo Garrett, Jr's 'Baptists concerning Baptism: Review and Preview', *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 43.2 (Spring, 2001), pp. 52–67.

<sup>29</sup> See Kenneth Dix, *Strict and Particular: English Strict and Particular Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2001), *passim*.

<sup>30</sup> Such as the majority of the churches in the Baptist Union of Great Britain. See Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, pp. 423–24; and Christopher J. Ellis, *Baptist Worship Today* (Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1999), pp. 21–23, who suggests that approximately 51% of the churches in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain accept people into membership on profession of faith without the necessity of baptism, while 24% require baptism for full membership though not for communicant membership, and only 17% require baptism for all members (with 8% not making any returns). It is also worth noting that not all Congregationalist churches in the UK have always insisted on baptism as essential for church membership, see Price, *Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians*, p. 24; and Albert Peel, 'Why I Worry About the Baptists', *Baptist Times* 26 May 1938, p. 409.

<sup>31</sup> Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, pp. 418–26; Ellis, *Baptist Worship Today*, p. 21, esp. n. 44.

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., Colwell, *Promise and Presence*; Anthony R. Cross, 'The Myth of English Baptist Anti-Sacramentalism', in Philip E. Thompson and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Recycling the Past or Researching History?: Studies in Baptist Historiography and Myths* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 11, Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), pp. 128–62, and *Should we take Peter at his word (Acts 2.38)?: Recovering a Baptist Baptismal Sacramentalism* (Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies Occasional Papers, 1; Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2010); Fowler, *More Than a Symbol*, and 'Is "Baptist Sacramentalism" an Oxymoron?: Reactions in Britain to *Christian Baptism* (1959)', in Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson (eds), *Baptist Sacramentalism* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 5; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), pp. 129–50, and all the essays in this volume, as well as the companion volume, Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson (eds), *Baptist Sacramentalism 2* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 25; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008). In his 2003 Didsbury Lectures on the influence of infant baptism on baptismal theology, David F. Wright, *What has Infant Baptism done to Baptism? An Enquiry at the End of Christendom* (Didsbury Lectures, 2003; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), p. 10, recognizes 'the growing evidence of sacramental thinking among Baptist theologians'. In this, Wright is not alone: see, e.g., the historical and theological discussions in Thompson,

baptism is by immersion,<sup>33</sup> though in some exceptional circumstances affusion is adopted,<sup>34</sup> while some have abandoned antipaedobaptism altogether, and see both forms of baptism as valid.<sup>35</sup> In ecumenical churches, Baptists will happily co-exist with paedobaptist traditions in the same church,<sup>36</sup> while some Baptists will practice

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*Baptism, Church and Society in Modern Britain*, especially pp. 127–30, 168–70, 172; and Alan P.F. Sell, *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century* (The Didsbury Lectures 2006; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), pp. 105–106. It has also not gone unnoticed in liturgical studies, see, e.g., Spinks, *Reformation and Modern Rituals and Theologies of Baptism*, pp. 157–58.

<sup>33</sup> See Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, pp. 18–21 and 397–403. See the ‘Declaration of Principle of the Baptist Union of Great Britain’ 2, ‘That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who “died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day”’, <[http://www.baptist.org.uk/baptist\\_life/what\\_is\\_a\\_baptist/dec\\_of\\_principle.html](http://www.baptist.org.uk/baptist_life/what_is_a_baptist/dec_of_principle.html)>; and the Southern Baptist Convention’s ‘Baptist Faith and Message’ (2000), Article VII, ‘Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord’s Supper’, see <<http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>>.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., see Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, pp. 402–403.

<sup>35</sup> See Richard Kidd, ‘Baptism and the Identity of Christian Communities’, in Paul S. Fiddes (ed.), *Reflections on the Water: Understanding God and the World through the Baptism of Believers* (Regent’s Study Guides, 4; Oxford: Regent’s Park College, 1996), pp. 85–99 (pp. 96–97), who admits, ‘I can no longer work ... with a stark and uncompromising contrast between believers’ baptism ... and infant baptism. Rather, I am discovering ... two histories of the one sign we call baptism, both of which are proper responses to social and cultural encounters across the years. Each has about it an integrity: both in the sense of self-contained authentication, and in the sense of serious and responsible scholarship.’ Cf. Haddon Willmer, ‘Twice Baptized Christians – A Way Forward for Church Reform and Unity’, *The Fraternal* 175 (February, 1976), pp. 12–16 (p. 12), where he recognizes the need for baptismal reform, but believes that ‘we can only get it in a united church which practises both forms of baptism, not merely allowing them but rejoicing in both, and conscientiously free to let Christians be baptised both as infants and believers’. Further, p. 15, he maintains that each ‘baptism requires the other: not one being dominant in one church, the other in another church, but both together accepted in one church, practised happily and offered freely to all Christians’, and, pp. 15–16, where he claims this does not contradict the principle of one baptism. See also Neville Clark, ‘The Theology of Baptism’, in Alec Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism: A Fresh Attempt to Understand the Rite in Terms of Scripture, History, and Theology* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959), pp. 306–26 (pp. 309–11) entertains the possibility that both believers’ and infant baptism existed in the New Testament.

<sup>36</sup> See Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, pp. 91–96 and 289–315; Alec Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966); *Believing and Being Baptized: Baptism, so-called re-baptism, and children in the church* (Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1996). It is worth noting that, e.g., in Great Britain there are agreements on baptismal



both credo- and pedobaptism, the Baptist minister of which will sometimes perform both forms of the rite.<sup>37</sup> This dual practice of equivalent alternatives is also to be found in the Independent Methodists, who leave it to the individual local church, subject to its trust deeds, to decide which form of baptism they adopt,<sup>38</sup> and the Nazarene Church in which baptism is administered to believers and young children, and by means of sprinkling, pouring or immersion according to the choice of the candidate.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the Vineyard churches leave it to the local church to decide whether they baptize believers or infants, and some also leave it to the parents as to whether their infants are christened or dedicated.<sup>40</sup>

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practice in Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs), see 'The Baptist Union of Great Britain/United Reformed Church agreed Guidelines for Baptismal Policy in Local Ecumenical Partnerships' (rev. 2009); and 'Baptist Methodist Agreement on Baptismal Policy within Local Ecumenical Partnerships (rev. 2010). Precursors to these LEPs were the union churches and mixed membership churches, often Baptist and Congregational, on which see Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, pp. 91–96; Ernest A. Payne, 'Baptist-Congregational Relationships', in Ernest A. Payne, *Free Churchmen, Unrepentant and Repentant and other Papers* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1965), pp. 93–104, esp. pp. 96–99; and Brian Haymes, Ruth Gouldbourne and Anthony R. Cross, *On Being the Church: Revisioning Baptist Identity* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 21; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 85–86 and 98 n. 156.

<sup>37</sup> E.g., 'Baptist Methodist Agreement on Baptismal Policy', B v), 'Whereas those Baptist ministers "Authorised to serve" as Methodist ministers (SO 733) are expected to administer infant baptism in appropriate circumstances those with "Associate" (Methodist) status (SO 733A) have greater flexibility here. This latter category may accordingly be more acceptable to (most) Baptist ministers in Local Ecumenical Partnerships.'

<sup>38</sup> See John Dolan, *The Independent Methodists: A History* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2005), *passim*. See also *The Independent Methodists: An Introduction to the Independent Methodist Churches* (Wigan: Independent Methodist Churches, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 2000), p. 5. Cf. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Christian Initiation* (Ecumenical Studies in History, 10; London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), p. 56, 'It may well turn out that both "believers' baptism" and also the varying patterns of initiation governed by infant baptism must all (each theologically justifiable, though in differing degrees) somehow be deliberately retained in any ecumenical pattern of initiation, with the circumstances of the Church in each particular place determining which is to preponderate, the baptism of the infants of Christian parents or the baptism of professing believers.'

<sup>39</sup> So *Manual 2001–2005* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 2002), pp. 32–33; and Jack Ford, *In the Steps of John Wesley: The Church of the Nazarene in Britain* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1968), pp. 193–95, cited by Wright, *What has Infant Baptism done?*, p. 16 n. 5.

<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., The Vineyard Church, Ithaca, Illinois, which practises believers' baptism, <[http://www.thevineyardchurch.us/media/beliefs/belief\\_baptism.pdf](http://www.thevineyardchurch.us/media/beliefs/belief_baptism.pdf)>, accessed 18 August 2011; and Sutton Vineyard Church, Surrey, 'Christenings and Dedications at Vineyard Church Sutton', <<http://www.vineyardchurch.org/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=303&mid=428&fileid=69>>, accessed 18 August 2011.

Officially neither the Society of Friends<sup>41</sup> nor The Salvation Army<sup>42</sup> practise water-baptism, though in practice some do,<sup>43</sup> but instead both emphasize the centrality of Spirit-baptism.<sup>44</sup> Further, The Salvation Army have developed ‘quasi-sacraments’,<sup>45</sup> such as the dedication of children, the swearing-in of soldiers, the flag, and the mercy seat,<sup>46</sup> which effectively function in the same way as the Catholic Church’s seven sacraments or the dominical sacraments practised in other traditions.

All traditions acknowledge the prevenience of God’s grace and that the Holy Spirit is operative in salvation. However, they disagree on where and when the gift of the Spirit is to be found. As *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* puts it, ‘Different actions have become associated with the giving of the Spirit’, with some seeing it in the water rite, others through the anointing with chrism or the laying on of hands, often called confirmation in the older traditions and the baptism in the Spirit in the Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions, while others locate it in all three ‘as they see the Spirit operative throughout the rite’.<sup>47</sup>

The baptismal landscape, however, becomes even more complicated when we leave the denominational theologies and practices of baptism and enter the ecumenical sphere in which the subject of baptism has long occupied an important place.

### Baptism in Ecumenical Discussions

Baptism figured prominently in Britain in the early days of the Free Church movement from the 1890s onwards, in the discussions between the Anglican Church

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<sup>41</sup> See Pink Dandelion, *The Liturgies of Quakerism* (Liturgy, Worship and Society; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), e.g., pp. 23–24, 45, 54–55, 63, 70, 75, 78 and 85, and on ‘sacramentality’, see pp. 114–15; *To Lima with Love. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: A Quaker Response* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1986); and Carole Dale Spencer, *Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism. An Historical Analysis of the Theology of Holiness in the Quaker Tradition* (Studies in Christian History and Thought; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), *passim*.

<sup>42</sup> See, e.g., R. David Rightmire, *Sacraments and the Salvation Army: Pneumatological Foundations* (Studies in Evangelicalism, 10; Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1990); John Casey, ‘Holiness in the Salvation Army 1850–1930’ (unpublished MLitt thesis, University of Stirling, 2002), pp. 54–76; Harold Hill, *Leadership in The Salvation Army: A Case Study in Clericalisation* (Studies in Christian History and Thought; Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2006), pp. 50–61.

<sup>43</sup> E.g., Dandelion, *Liturgies of Quakerism*, p. 82; and Hill, *Leadership in The Salvation Army*, p. 53 (in the early years of the movement).

<sup>44</sup> Dandelion, *Liturgies of Quakerism*, pp. 23–24, 55 and 75; Casey, ‘Holiness in the Salvation Army’, p. 62 and 76; Hill, *Leadership in The Salvation Army*, p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> Casey, ‘Holiness in the Salvation Army’, pp. 54–76. On these more broadly, see below chapter 2 below.

<sup>46</sup> Casey, ‘Holiness in the Salvation Army’, pp. 68–69 and 73–75.

<sup>47</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* B.14, p. 6.

and the Free Churches, and through the founding of the British Council of Churches in 1942 to the 1990s, when it was replaced by the ecumenical instruments centred around The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland.<sup>48</sup> Similar conversations have taken place elsewhere,<sup>49</sup> the most significant of which have been those conducted through the international ecumenical movement,<sup>50</sup> most notably by Faith and Order, which grew out of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference<sup>51</sup> and became a part of the World Council of Churches, founded in 1948. This culminated in the 1982 Lima document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, and there have been many conversations and publications which have resulted from it.<sup>52</sup>

Baptism has also featured prominently in dialogues between various traditions, and in many of these baptism has figured prominently.<sup>53</sup> At the time of writing there

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<sup>48</sup> On these, see Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, pp. 42–97, 127–81 and 244–318.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Georges Tsetsis (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1968–2000: Volume 3* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2004), esp. chapters 18–26.

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517–1948: Volume 1* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 1986), *passim*; Harold E. Fey (ed.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1948–1968: Volume 2. The Ecumenical Advance* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 1986), *passim*; Briggs, Oduyoye and Tsetsis (eds), *History of the Ecumenical Movement*, III, *passim*.

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, ‘Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council’, and Tislington Tatlow, ‘The World Conference on Faith and Order’, both in Rouse and Neill (eds), *History of the Ecumenical Movement*, I, pp. 351–402, and pp. 405–407 respectively; and David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now* (Regnum Studies in Mission; Oxford: Regnum Books, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Lukas Vischer (ed.), *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927–1963* (St Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1963); *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*; Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright (eds), *Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration* (Faith and Order Paper, 117; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983); William H. Lazareth, *Growing Together in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper, 114; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983); Max Thurian (ed.), *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper, 116; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983); Max Thurian (ed.), *Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the ‘Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry’ Text* (6 vols; Faith and Order Papers, 129, 132, 135, 137, 143 and 144; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986–88); *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982–1990* (Faith and Order Paper, 149; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990); Günther Gassmann (ed.), *Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963–1993* (Faith and Order Paper, 159; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993); Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*; Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, pp. 84–91, 152–58 and 266–78.

<sup>53</sup> For the purposes of this book, I’m only focusing on conversations between credobaptists and paedobaptists for the self-evident reason that baptism becomes a major issue in such discussions, whereas it is less so in conversations between paedobaptist traditions. See, e.g., the various papers from the Louisville Consultation in 1979, which was the first time that representatives of the paedobaptist and believer baptist traditions met to consider the possibility of a consensus in the understanding and practice of baptism, see *Review and Expositor* 77.1 (Winter, 1980), pp. 3–108 (see also *Louisville Consultation on*

are, for instance, conversations between the Baptist World Alliance and the Roman Catholic Church which began in 1990,<sup>54</sup> and the Baptist World Alliance have also been planning conversations with Pentecostals, and are exploring the possibility of doing likewise with the Eastern Orthodox Communion,<sup>55</sup> while in 2011 the Mennonites entered into tri-lateral conversations on baptism with the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Catholic Church.<sup>56</sup>

The pursuit of the goal of Christian unity has witnessed numerous conferences, committees, reports and publications at the local, national, and international levels, and all have striven for greater understanding and closer co-operation. Over the years Faith and Order's theological discussions have undergone methodological

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*Baptism: Papers and a Final Report of a Consultation on Believers' Baptism held at Southern Seminary, March 28–April 1, 1979* (Faith and Order Paper, 97; Louisville, KY: Faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1980); The Baptist World Alliance and Lutheran World Federation meetings from 1979–81, published in the *American Baptist Quarterly* 1.2 (December, 1982), pp. 99–215; *Baptists and Reformed in Dialogue: Documents from the Conversations Sponsored by The World Alliance of Reformed Churches and The Baptist World Alliance* (Studies from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 4; Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, n.d. [1984]); Charles C. West, 'Baptism in the Reformed Tradition', and Marlin E. Miller, 'Baptism in the Mennonite Tradition', both in Ross T. Bender and Alan P.F. Sell (eds), *Baptism, Peace and the State in the Reformed and Mennonite Tradition* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991), pp. 13–35 and pp. 37–67 respectively; Paul Toews (ed), *Mennonites and Baptists: A Continuing Conversation* (Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought, 7; Winnipeg, MB/Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1993); Gerald W. Schlabach (ed.), *On Baptism: Mennonite–Catholic Theological Colloquium 2001–2002* (The Bridgefolk Series; Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2004); *Pushing at the Boundaries of Unity: Anglicans and Baptists in Conversation* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005); *Conversations Around the World 2000–2005: The Report of the International Conversations between The Anglican Communion and The Baptist World Alliance* (London: The Anglican Communion Office, 2005). It is also worth noting that discussions in Britain took place in the 1930s–50s between the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland and the Churches of Christ, but these eventually came to nothing because of the former's non-sacramental and the latter's sacramental views of baptism, see Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, pp. 67–68 and 148–52. In 1981 the Reformed Association of the Churches of Christ joined with the United Reformed Church, itself the union in 1972 of the majority of Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in England. This is significant because the Churches of Christ are credobaptist and united with the paedobaptist United Reformed Church.

<sup>54</sup> See <<http://www.bwanet.org/bwa.php?site=Resources&id=15>>, accessed 10 February 2012.

<sup>55</sup> See <<http://www.abpnews.com/content/view/6551/53/>>, accessed 10 February 2012. For an overview of Baptist involvement in such conversations, see Ken Manley, *The Baptist World Alliance and Inter-Church Relationships* (Baptist Heritage and Identity Booklet, 1; Falls Church, VA: Baptist World Alliance, 2003).

<sup>56</sup> See <<http://ecclesialtheology.blogspot.com/2011/01/mennonites-lutherans-and-catholics-to.html>>, accessed 11 February 2012.

shifts from comparative studies to those seeking convergence on vital theological issues.<sup>57</sup> But it must be admitted that while there have been significant advances in inter-church relations directly attributable to the ecumenical movement, there continue to be major theological and practical obstacles. A key problem remains the mutual recognition of one another's understanding of what it is to be a church: in short, mutual recognition of the churchly nature of the various Christian traditions. This is much less of a problem for those denominations which have a 'Church' ecclesiology – the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican/Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Methodist Churches, for instance – but it is a major problem for those 'denominations' whose ecclesiologies are radically different. There is a problem here for Baptists whose ecclesiology does not lead them to form the Baptist Church: rather, local Baptist churches join together in associations and conventions of churches who covenant to walk together in the work of the kingdom.<sup>58</sup> Baptist ecclesiology begins with the local Baptist church, and their regional, national, and international bodies are associations and unions of churches. This was one of the reasons why the Southern Baptist Convention declined to join the World Council of Churches in 1948.<sup>59</sup>

Over the years, then, there has been a series of developments in the nature and goals of such inter-denominational conversations and ecumenical documents, best seen in the many Faith and Order papers that have explored baptism, as well as other issues, most notably, but by no means exclusively, eucharist and ministry. They started off as joint conversations, but in time became attempts to reach consensus, convergence, and, at present, the possibility of a common baptism or recognition of common patterns of initiation are being explored. In their preface to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, William H. Lazareth and Nikos Nissiotis note that

we have not yet fully reached 'consensus' (*consentire*), understood here as that experience of life and articulation of faith necessary to realize and maintain the Church's visible unity. *Such consensus is rooted in the communion built on Jesus Christ and the witness of the apostles.* As a gift of the Spirit it is realized as a communal experience before it can be articulated by common efforts into words. Full

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<sup>57</sup> E.g., Vischer (ed.), *A Documentary History*, pp. 85–86, reports the statement of the Third Faith and Order Conference held in Lund, Sweden, in 1952, 'we can make no real advance towards unity if we only compare our several conceptions of the nature of the Church ... We need, therefore, to penetrate behind our divisions to a deeper and richer understanding of the mystery of the God-given union of Christ with his Church.'

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., Paul S. Fiddes, "'Walking Together": The Place of Covenant Theology in Baptist Life Yesterday and Today', in William H. Brackney, Paul S. Fiddes and John H.Y. Briggs (eds.), *Pilgrim Pathways: Essays in Baptist History in Honour of B.R. White* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), pp. 47–74.

<sup>59</sup> See Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 1973), p. 445, '[the Southern Baptist Convention] claimed that membership in the World Council would threaten the autonomy of free churches and might jeopardize the witness of Baptists to believer's baptism and a regenerate church'.

consensus can only be proclaimed after the churches reach the point of living and acting together in unity.<sup>60</sup>

The emphasized sentence can be whole-heartedly assented to by Evangelicals as it reiterates the conviction that the Word made flesh and the written word are central to any baptismal theology and practice, and that the former's will is known through the latter. Therefore, scripture stands above tradition, whether that tradition is paedobaptist or credobaptist. This is not to say that all tradition is wrong; rather, that it must be tested as to whether it is in accord with biblical revelation,<sup>61</sup> as it is in the case of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. This also does not bypass the importance of detailed exegetical, biblical-theological, and hermeneutical study; rather, it highlights the necessity of them and, I believe, the importance of conducting such study in consultation with as many perspectives as are available – which is why this book draws and interacts with the work of paedobaptist and credobaptist scholarship, whether Evangelical or not.

Of particular relevance to our focus in this book, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (*BEM*) acknowledges that baptism is associated with conversion (*BEM*, II.B.4, p. 2), and the gift of the Spirit, who is operative before, in and after baptism (*BEM*, II.C.5, pp. 2–3), though in both statements the wording is cautious, as is to be expected in a document seeking consensus. Baptism is both a divine gift and human response (*BEM*, III.8, p. 3), and under its discussion of incorporation into Christ's body it rightly states that 'Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place.' However, it immediately proceeds,

Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity. We are one people and are called to confess and serve one Lord in each place and in all the world. The union with Christ which we share through baptism has important implications for Christian unity.

Ephesians 4.4–6 is then cited in support of this, and it continues, 'our one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship' (*BEM*, II.D.6, p. 3). The commentary provided for this paragraph states as the heart of the ecumenical task 'The need to recover baptismal

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<sup>60</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, p. ix (italics added).

<sup>61</sup> David F. Wright, 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (the "Lima Report")': An Evangelical Assessment', in David F. Wright, *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective: Collected Studies* (Studies in Christian History and Thought; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), pp. 308–26 (pp. 310–11), observes that while the Lima report provides 'evidence of a stronger biblical commitment in ecumenical theology', nevertheless, at some points, 'it remains disturbingly captive to non-apostolic tradition', and this leads on to Wright declaring that 'It must be the responsibility of evangelical Christians to subject *BEM* to a stringently scriptural critique.'

unity ... as it is central for the realization of genuine partnership within the Christian communities' (*BEM*, Commentary (6), p. 3).<sup>62</sup>

It defends its position on one baptism being common baptism, even though it accepts that, while it is possible that infant baptism was practised in the apostolic period, 'baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents'.<sup>63</sup> Over time, baptismal practice developed 'in a variety of forms', of which mention is made of discriminate infant baptism and the baptism only of believers, with provision made in some of these churches for infants to be presented or blessed in a service of thanksgiving, while, it states, all<sup>64</sup> churches baptize believers from other religions or no faith (*BEM*, IV.A.11, p. 4). Implicit in the variety of developments is the service of confirmation, in which any person baptized in infancy offers their personal confession of faith (*BEM*, IV.A.12, p. 4, and IV.B.14, pp. 4 and 6).

Commenting on paragraph 12, the Lima text notes that in some churches where paedobaptists and credobaptists are united

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<sup>62</sup> This emphasis on baptismal unity, however, does not receive much support from Baptists and many Evangelicals. So, e.g., in the UK in the 1990s, the Churches Together in England (CTE) 'Called to be One Process' called for the affirmation of a common baptism, but the Baptist Union of Great Britain argued that common faith, not baptism, is the crucial issue. See *Called to be One* (London: Churches Together in England, 1996), pp. 67–70; and The Baptist Union of Great Britain's Faith and Unity Executive Committee, 'Response of the Council of the Union to the Report *Called to be One* of Churches Together in England Prepared for the Forum of CTE in July 1997' (final version typescript, 10 March 1997), p. 3, section 6.9, which contends, 'We ask our sister members of CTE to consider that the starting point of **visible** unity is *our common faith in Jesus Christ* rather than baptism' (emphases original). See the original comment in *Called to be One*, p. 17, section 3.3, 'The Baptist Union response points out that unity flows from the grace of God in forgiving sinners, and that unity between groups must be based on the gospel of Jesus Christ and of openness to the Spirit of God in worship and mission.'

<sup>63</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the comment by Peter J. Leithart, 'Infant Baptism in History: An Unfinished Tragicomedy', in Gregg Strawbridge (ed.), *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), pp. 246–62 (p. 258), that 'The church was rescued from Baptist theology and practice by Augustine ... His theology of infant baptism developed in the midst of polemics against Pelagius and his followers, and accordingly emphasized that infant baptism was a deliverance from original sin and condemnation.' It is almost shocking how so many scholarly theological and historical works on baptism pay so little attention to or display so little awareness of Baptist theology and practice. This observation, however, can be turned round, and it is equally shocking that Baptists have contributed so little and made so minute an impact on the study of the rite and doctrine that has given them their name. Leithart's comment is all the more surprising because elsewhere, p. 251, he examines the earliest baptismal liturgies and acknowledges that 'they were constructed on something like Baptist assumptions, even when children were included'. For this he is criticized by Wright, *What has Infant Baptism done?*, p. 8 n. 7, for his failure to 'draw the obvious conclusion from this evidence, that infant baptism can never have been the norm in this early period'.

<sup>64</sup> No allowance is made to the Quaker and Salvation Army traditions of no baptismal rite.

it has been possible to regard as equivalent alternatives for entry into the Church both a pattern whereby baptism in infancy is followed by later profession of faith and a pattern whereby believers' baptism follows upon a presentation and blessing in infancy. This example invites other churches to decide whether they, too, could not recognize equivalent alternatives in their reciprocal relationships and in church union negotiations.<sup>65</sup>

It is no surprise, then, that *BEM* asserts that 'Baptism is an unrepeatable act. Any practice which might be interpreted as "re-baptism" *must be avoided*' (*BEM*, IV.A.13, p. 4, italics added),<sup>66</sup> though an olive branch is offered to credobaptists by its recommendation of the renewal of baptismal vows, which ordinarily occurs in the celebration of the eucharist, but can also take place as part of the annual celebration of the paschal mystery or services when others are being baptized (*BEM*, Commentary (14), p. 5). For our purposes, *BEM* then notes that churches

are increasingly recognizing one another's baptism as *the one baptism* into Christ when Jesus Christ has been confessed as Lord by the candidate or, in the case of infant baptism, when confession has been made by the church (parents, guardians, godparents and congregation) and affirmed later by personal faith and commitment. Mutual recognition of baptism is acknowledged as an important sign and means of expressing *the baptismal unity given in Christ*. Wherever possible, mutual recognition should be expressed explicitly by the churches.<sup>67</sup>

In the three decades since the Lima text the ecumenical discussion of baptism has continued, exploring and developing *Baptist, Eucharist and Ministry's* proposals, with emphasis falling on the mutual recognition of baptism, a common baptism, equivalent alternatives, or recognition of a common pattern of initiation, as defined in the Lima document, and all of which, I believe, are closely related to each other.

Paul Meyendorff observes that all Christian traditions have a process for the admission of new members which typically includes 'formation and catechesis, a

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<sup>65</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* Commentary (12), p. 5 (original in italics, italics added). This pattern is advocated by Ralph G. Wilburn, 'The One Baptism and the Many Baptisms', *Theology Today* 22.1 (April, 1965), pp. 59–83 (p. 81), 'There does not seem a great deal of difference in basic religious values between the practice of "infant-baptism" completed in "confirmation," and the practice of "infant-dedication" completed in "adult-baptism."'

<sup>66</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* Commentary (13), p. 5, explicates this: 'Churches which have insisted on a particular form of baptism or which have had serious questions about the authenticity of other churches' sacraments and ministries have at times required persons coming from other church traditions to be baptized before being received into full communicant membership. As the churches come to fuller mutual understanding and acceptance of one another and enter into closer relationships in witness and service, they will want to refrain from any practice which might call into question the sacramental integrity of other churches or which might diminish the unrepeatable of the sacrament of baptism' (original in italics).

<sup>67</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* IV.C. 15 (italics added).



rite welcoming members into the community (typically, but not always, including baptism), followed by ongoing life in the community'. From this it is possible to discern a fundamental pattern, even if its stages are not always explicit in the rites, and this is true in traditions that eschew rituals, such as the Quakers, and those with elaborate baptismal rites, such as the Orthodox Churches.<sup>68</sup>

One result of Faith and Order's studies of baptism is that a number of communions have significantly renovated their baptismal rites, and in so doing have consciously or unconsciously brought them closer to ancient patterns of initiation, not only structurally but also in content, and have come to recognize that the baptismal liturgy visibly expresses a lifelong process of initiation and growth into Christ within the Christian community. For Meyendorff it is

particularly the common recognition of this larger pattern that allows the various churches to discern it in other communions and thus to recognize their baptism. And this implies not merely the recognition of a particular ritual, but *de facto* the recognition of ecclesial reality in the other. Though short of full communion, this recognition is nevertheless a significant ecumenical advance, an important step toward the full communion we all seek.<sup>69</sup>

Ultimately, he maintains, such questions are ecclesiological, and 'To the extent that churches can recognize marks of the Church in other communions, they are able to recognize *their baptism*.'<sup>70</sup>

Meyendorff continues, noting that such an emphasis on 'the lifelong process of initiation' is helpful because it presents the essence of the church which is to lead people into the kingdom of God. It does so combining the individual, the gathering community, faith, the wider church, and its liturgical and sacramental life which are all bound together in a process that begins at birth and ends after death. He concludes, 'Discerning this larger pattern will allow us to overcome the many differences in practice that will inevitably remain'.<sup>71</sup>

Echoing *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM, II.D.6, p. 3), the goal of a common baptism<sup>72</sup> – that is, a shared baptismal identity – is that through it 'we are

<sup>68</sup> Paul Meyendorff, 'Toward Mutual Recognition of Baptism', in Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*, pp. 195–206 (p. 196).

<sup>69</sup> Meyendorff, 'Toward Mutual Recognition of Baptism', p. 203.

<sup>70</sup> Meyendorff, 'Toward Mutual Recognition of Baptism', p. 204 (*italics added*).

<sup>71</sup> Meyendorff, 'Toward Mutual Recognition of Baptism', p. 204. Such recognition of baptism has, e.g., received expression in Germany, see 'Mutual Recognition of Baptism Agreement: Germany', in Best (ed.), *Baptism Today*, pp. 227–29. See also 'One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition', June 2006, <[http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p2/fo2006\\_14\\_onebaptism\\_en.pdf](http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p2/fo2006_14_onebaptism_en.pdf)>, accessed 15 February 2012.

<sup>72</sup> This is explored in, e.g., 'Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism (Appendix C): A JWG Study', in *Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches: Eighth Report 1999–2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), see pp. 19–20 for an introduction, and pp. 45–72 for the text of the report:

all brought into Christ, and this forms the basis of our ecumenical engagement with one another', the implications of which are that 'because Christ has claimed us we have no right to reject one another ... Since we as Christians are all incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ, nothing – not even the churches with their centuries of division – can separate us from one another.'<sup>73</sup> However, as Paul Fiddes has noted, the Orthodox Church and Baptist churches have challenged this. The Orthodox do so because the idea of a process of initiation mitigates it, as initiation is larger than the event of baptism, which is just one of the three sacraments of initiation (the others being chrismation, and eucharist) which together constitute initiation.<sup>74</sup> The Baptists also understand becoming a Christian as a process and look for a moment in the initiation rites of other traditions when the baptismal candidate exercises their own faith in Christ. If this cannot be located in the event of baptism, as in infant baptism, then initiation has to be stretched in some way in order to accommodate it. In the western churches this is traditionally done in confirmation, 'but whether or not it takes this particular form, Baptists will expect personal faith (arising from divine grace) to be a part of Christian *beginnings*'.<sup>75</sup> Christopher Ellis further notes that Baptists argue for the basis of unity not to lie in a common baptism, with its acceptance of infant baptism, 'but in the saving work of the Triune God', which is manifested in recognizing the Spirit's work in others and thereby as fellow believers. This highlights the value Baptists place on ecclesiology over due administration of the sacraments; that the church is comprised of believers.<sup>76</sup>

The third possible way forward suggested by the Lima document has been picked up by some leading Evangelicals. David F. Wright, for instance, observes that what *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* proposed in theological terms already exists in some churches, namely, the practise of both infant and believers' baptism side by

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<http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/pl1/8thjointworkinggroup.pdf> (accessed 15 February 2012); and also Janet Crawford, 'Becoming a Christian: The Ecumenical Challenge of Our Common Baptism', and 'Becoming a Christian: The Ecumenical Implications of Our Common Baptism. Report of the Consultation', both in Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller (eds), *Becoming a Christian: The Ecumenical Implications of Our Common Baptism* (Faith and Order Paper, 184; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999), pp. 8–12, and pp. 74–97. See also 'One Baptism: An Anglican Contribution', in *Pushing at the Boundaries*, pp. 58–74 (pp. 67–72).

<sup>73</sup> Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller, 'Introduction', in Best and Heller (eds), *Becoming a Christian*, pp. 1–7 (p. 3).

<sup>74</sup> So 'Romanian Orthodox Church', in Thurian (ed.), *Churches Respond to BEM*, III, pp. 4–14 (p. 6); see also 'Russian Orthodox Church', and 'Finnish Orthodox Church', both in Thurian (ed.), *Churches Respond to BEM*, II, pp. 5–12 (p. 8), and pp. 24–29 (p. 26).

<sup>75</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, 'Baptism and the Process of Christian Initiation', *The Ecumenical Review* 54.1 (January–April, 2002), pp. 48–65 (p. 49, italics original).

<sup>76</sup> Christopher J. Ellis, 'The Baptism of Disciples and the Nature of the Church', in Porter and Cross (eds), *Dimensions of Baptism*, pp. 333–53 (p. 348). One of David F. Wright's criticisms of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, '*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*', p. 311, is that the doctrine of the church, 'which must undergird any doctrine of sacraments and ministry is accessible, *if at all*, solely to the eye of the detective' (italics added).

side as equivalent alternatives: the United Reformed Church in Britain, the Nazarene Church, and the Church of North India being prime examples.<sup>77</sup> He believes that *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* appears resigned ‘to accept that there is no realistic hope of reaching agreement on one form of baptism’ in ‘fully-fledged “double-practice” churches’. However, Wright believes there is another way of looking at the matter and that agreement will only emerge ‘from allowing two baptisms to cohabit within one family’.<sup>78</sup>

In advocating such dual practice, Wright is by no means alone and has received support from some notable New Testament scholars from either side of the baptismal debate. For example, Oscar Cullmann argues that both infant and adult baptism were practised in the earliest Christian communities and that the evidence for this is clear in the New Testament documents themselves. He concludes that ‘both adult and infant Baptism are to be regarded as *equally* biblical’.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Ben Witherington believes that while infant baptism was neither the baptism New Testament writers had in mind, nor normative practice, nevertheless both options should be allowed, with services of infant dedication or infant baptism being offered to parents for their children.<sup>80</sup> In his last published article, George Beasley-Murray changed his mind on the whole issue and calls on the churches which practise believers’ baptism to ‘*consider* acknowledging the legitimacy of infant baptism, and allow members in Paedobaptist churches the right to interpret it according to their consciences’.<sup>81</sup>

Another advocate of this approach is Richard B. Hays, who admits that reading William Willimon changed his mind so that he came to see the possibility of two baptisms both being legitimate expressions of the gospel.

My own inclination is to think that the church’s normal practice should be to baptize believers upon profession of faith. Thus, *I ordinarily regard* infant baptism as a practice closely tied to Constantinian-era assumptions about the relation between the

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<sup>77</sup> David F. Wright, ‘One Baptism or Two? Reflections on the History of Christian Baptism’, in Wright, *Infant Baptism*, pp. 268–84 (pp. 277–78). See also his *What has Infant Baptism done?*, pp. 16–17.

<sup>78</sup> Wright, ‘One Baptism or Two?’, p. 278. Cf. his ‘Baptism in Scotland’, also in Wright, *Infant Baptism*, pp. 301–307 (p. 306). In his ‘Foreword’ to *What has Infant Baptism done?*, pp. vii–viii (p. viii), Tony Lane states that ‘It has become widely accepted that the basis for any future consensus will be the recognition of believers’ baptism as the normative form of baptism (the default setting, one might say) and of infant baptism as an acceptable variation from that norm.’

<sup>79</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Studies in Biblical Theology, 1; London: SCM Press, 1950), p. 70 (italics added).

<sup>80</sup> Ben Witherington, III, *Troubled Waters: Rethinking the Theology of Baptism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), p. 133. Cf. p. 127 where he expresses his doubts that infant baptism is a New Testament practice.

<sup>81</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, ‘The Problem of Infant Baptism: An Exercise in Possibilities’, in Faculty of Baptist Theological Seminary, Rüsclikon, *Festschrift Günter Wagner* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1994), pp. 1–14 (pp. 13–14).

church and the social order; it is *not exactly wrong, just misleading* in a post-Christian culture. In this case, however, reading Willimon's story through the lens of new creation allows me to understand this action of infant baptism sympathetically, as a radical proclamation of the gospel's eschatological promise. The considerable power of such a reading gives me pause and forces me to return in a fresh way to reconsider infant baptism as one possible expression of the gospel.<sup>82</sup>

However, perhaps the leading advocate of dual practice baptism is theologian Tony Lane.

Lane's position is based on his belief that it is not possible decisively to determine whether or not babies were baptized in the apostolic church, so he approaches the question from the direction of the post-apostolic period. Lane calls this a seismological approach in which he seeks 'to measure first-century practice by its effects in subsequent centuries'.<sup>83</sup> In the following two centuries, he shows, there existed a variety of practices in which no-one claimed that anyone else's practice was not apostolic, but neither was it wrong,<sup>84</sup> and this leads Lane to conclude that this dual practice is authentically apostolic, and this legitimates his advocacy of the contemporary practice of dual practice.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (London: T&T Clark, 1997), p. 461 n. 29 (italics added). Hays, pp. 459–60, cites William H. Willimon, *What's Right with the Church?* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 65, who tells the story of a group of ministers who met and were discussing abortion when an African American minister mentioned the baptism of the baby of a fourteen year old in his congregation the following Sunday. When asked if she was capable of raising the child he said "Of course not", as no fourteen year old was, and few thirty year olds either. He then explained, "Well, we baptize them so that we all raise them together."

<sup>83</sup> Anthony N.S. Lane, 'Did the Apostolic Church Baptise Babies?: A Seismological Approach', *Tyndale Bulletin* 55.1 (2004), pp. 109–30 (p. 110). He also sets out his argument in his 'Dual-Practice Baptism View', in David F. Wright (ed.), *Baptism: Three Views* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), pp. 61–69, 121–29, 139–71 and 187–92, esp. pp. 144–63.

<sup>84</sup> David F. Wright, 'The Origins of Infant Baptism – Child Believers' Baptism?', in Wright, *Infant Baptism*, pp. 3–21, has, to my mind, convincingly argued that infant baptism developed out of child believers' baptism, and he has also shown, 'How Controversial Was the Development of Infant Baptism in the Early Church?', in Wright, *Infant Baptism*, pp. 22–43, that the introduction of infant baptism in these early centuries was not controversial. This latter historical observation needs to be taken on board by Baptists and should dissuade them from continuing to make sweeping, and often intemperate, denunciations of infant baptism of the kind that have too often blighted their apologetic and polemical writing on the subject.

<sup>85</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991 [1978]), pp. 109–22, comes close to the dual practice position, but within a Catholic context, when he discusses adult baptism as 'the norm of baptism' and infant baptism as 'its abnormality', p. 109. Later, p. 110, he acknowledges that neither scripture nor tradition can 'support infant baptism as the pastoral norm' as they 'clearly support the practice as a benign abnormality in the life of the community whose

A development of the arguments for mutual recognition and a common baptism is acceptance of a common pattern of initiation. Paul Fiddes sees baptism as one moment in a larger process of initiation,<sup>86</sup> a position he advocates in the conclusion to his contribution to Anglican–Baptist discussions of the subject:

The way forward in partnership between Anglicans and Baptists, avoiding the hurt that has been caused by baptismal practices on both sides, cannot be that of a simplistic ‘common baptism’. The situation is too complicated and fraught with the memories of past pain for that. But the way forward can be through a sensitive recognition of sharing in ‘one baptism’ through different stories of initiation.<sup>87</sup>

Elsewhere he explains that

Rather than urging an equivalence of infant baptism with believer-baptism, it might be possible to recognize whole *patterns of initiation* as being equivalent. Baptism, at whatever age, could be seen as only part of a journey of Christian beginnings, a journey with its starting point in the prevenient grace of God and ending with an ‘owned’ faith of a Christian disciple, a believer saying ‘yes’ to God’s ‘yes’ to him or her and being commissioned for ministry in the world. Along the way there will be various kinds of opportunities for receiving children into the fellowship of the church (whether by baptism or by the blessing of infants) and for growth into faith in Christ. Baptism

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ministry regularly focuses upon the evangelization, catechesis, and initiation of adults of faith into its midst’. He continues by defending the practice of paedobaptism: ‘Initiatory normality in this sense provides the richest pastoral and theological milieu within which infant baptism can be ascertained for what it really ought to be in the life of the Church – not an unremembered substitute for conversion in faith, but a modest manifestation of God’s love for all ages and of the stunning liberality of his grace, especially in difficult circumstances.’ Wainwright, *Christian Initiation*, p. 82, proposes the Baptist position as ‘the best possibility of a unified initiation complex in which the divine and human roles in the work of salvation are suitably expressed’, partly because of the pastoral and missionary context in which the church in the West exists with ‘a melting Christendom’. He adds, though, that the Baptist pattern should be welcomed so long as the positive contributions of infant baptism are also incorporated.

<sup>86</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, ‘Believers’ Baptism: An Act of Inclusion or Exclusion?’, in Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 13; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), pp. 125–56 (pp. 139–145). See also his (though it is unattributed) ‘One Baptism: A Baptist Contribution’, in *Pushing at the Boundaries*, pp. 31–57 (pp. 41–57), which explores this route of ‘common initiation’, and his broader discussions in ‘Believers’ Baptism’, pp. 141–52, 155–56, and ‘Baptism and the Process of Christian Initiation’, pp. 48–65, and ‘Baptism of Believers’, pp. 73–80. Cf. ‘Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland’, in Thurian (ed.), *Churches Respond to BEM*, I, pp. 70–77 (p. 71).

<sup>87</sup> ‘One Baptism: A Baptist Contribution’, p. 57.

would stand as a focus for the whole journey of beginning the Christian life, whether it came earlier or later in the process as a whole.<sup>88</sup>

This receives support from the understanding of salvation as a process and has appeared in a number of ecumenical documents.<sup>89</sup> It is worth remembering that more than one pattern of initiation has been practised by the Orthodox Churches for centuries; while practising paedobaptism, they believe water-baptism bestows regeneration, and chrismation bestows the gift of the Spirit.<sup>90</sup> These are not seen as existing in tension, but to be complementary to each other.

However, there is a fifth alternative, proposed by Haymes, Gouldbourne and Cross in their revisioning of Baptist identity. Though it cannot be prescribed, and is dependent upon Christians' ability to accept one another (cf. Rom. 15.7) in all our diversity and differences, it believes that what matters is that Christians seek the Lord's will and are faithful to that? Baptists, for example, are rightly proud of their forebears having pioneered universal religious tolerance and freedom of conscience,<sup>91</sup> so they need to live by it. In the same way that they strive before God to understand his word and his ways and to live accordingly, so they have to allow and respect others as they seek to do likewise, even when they do not come to the same conclusion(s). And they, in turn, need to show Baptists the same respect. Since, as Paul says, 'For now we see in a mirror, dimly' (1 Cor. 13.12, NRSV, or 'through a glass, darkly', AV)<sup>92</sup> so is it not inconceivable for Christians on this contentious matter of baptism and membership, as on so many other matters,<sup>93</sup> to recognize that those who interpret God's word differently to us are not beyond the pale, and therefore we neither need to anathematize them, break fellowship with them, or try to beat them into accepting our perception and understanding of the things of God? Surely 'to walk humbly with our God' (Mic. 6.8) carries with it walking humbly with others walking with our God? This is *not* to reduce the

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<sup>88</sup> Fiddes, 'Baptism of Believers', pp. 78–79.

<sup>89</sup> *Conversations Around the World*, pp. 44–51; 'Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism'; and 'One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition'.

<sup>90</sup> See Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, pp. 72 and 76, and the wider discussions of these points on pp. 37–70 and 71–108 respectively.

<sup>91</sup> See Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the miftery of iniquity* (n.pl.: s.n., 1612), p. 69, 'for mens religion to God, is betwixt God and themselves; the king shall not anfwere for it, neither may the king be iugd betwene God and man. Let them be heretikes, Turks, Jewes, or what foever it apperteynes not to the earthly power to punifh them in the leaft meafure. This is made evident to our lord the king by the fcriptures.'

<sup>92</sup> See Anthony R. Cross, "'Through a glass darkly': The Further Light Clause in Baptist Thought", in Anthony R. Cross and Ruth Gouldbourne (eds), *Questions of Identity: Studies in Honour of Brian Haymes* (Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies, 6; Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2011), pp. 92–118.

<sup>93</sup> This is not the place for a discussion of *adiaphora*, simply to say that the appeal to something being essential to the faith has too often been used as an excuse *not* to accept one another. And even if we are not able to agree on matters we deem essential, it is not our place to judge, for that is God's prerogative alone (see, e.g., Dt. 32.36; Mt. 7.1).

importance of baptism, but it is to recognize that differences of interpretation and practices of baptism should not be an excuse for division in the church.<sup>94</sup> While this approach is a practical way forward that seeks mutual respect,<sup>95</sup> it does, nevertheless, fall short of what I am proposing in this volume.

From what we have seen, it is clear that the idea of ‘one baptism’ is both theologically and practically important to many Christian traditions. As David F. Wright puts it, ‘What in a sense creates the difficulty is the often unspoken assumption that there is but one baptism, that the baptism given to infants is the same baptism given to Cornelius and company.’<sup>96</sup> For instance, Vander Zee’s study of infant baptism is predicated on the belief that ‘There are not two kinds of baptism, one for infants and one for adults, with different premises. There is but one baptism, into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’, and ‘infant baptism is not valid unless it is the very same as the baptism of adults. There is no unique institution called “infant baptism”; there is only one baptism.’<sup>97</sup> No matter how well intentioned and passionately held, I simply cannot see that this view, or the other expressions of it that we have discussed above, is sustainable. This, to me, is evident in the different recipients of baptism – infants and believers – and different views of whose faith is required – the person being baptized or others. Granted, there is much that is laudable and necessary at the practical level about the goals of such explorations and proposals, yet I still cannot accept that believers’ and infant baptism can be identified as one baptism, or that they are the same as New Testament baptism. Not only are the recipients different and the questions of whose faith is necessary, but their theologies conflict as well. Their theologies affect, even alter, other doctrines; not just soteriology, but pneumatology, ecclesiology, mission, and ethics to mention just some of the doctrines that we will explore in this study.

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<sup>94</sup> Haymes, Gouldbourne and Cross, *On Being the Church*, p. 87.

<sup>95</sup> In line with this argument for the need and practice of Christian respect and worthy of note, in this regard, is Beasley-Murray’s argument, ‘The Problem of Infant Baptism’, p. 14, that the variations in baptismal experience recorded in Acts (2.37–38; 8.14–17; 10.44–48; 11.1–18; 18.24–19.6) lead to the conclusion that ‘The great lesson of those variations is the *freedom of God* in bestowing his gifts’ (*italics added*). While I do not disagree with Beasley-Murray’s intentions I am unable to accept his conclusion. First, because the variations in Acts can be understood in a different way (see ch. 2). Secondly, because of the way baptism is used as a synecdoche, standing for the whole process of becoming a Christian (see ch. 2). And finally, because, as we shall see later, I believe the call that he made on numerous occasions for the reform of both paedobaptism and credobaptism to conversion-baptism is the path we should follow (see ch. 9). Practically, however, I believe Beasley-Murray’s path of mutual respect is to be highly commended and is a practical way forward, however, I also believe that this should in no way detract us from implementing baptismal reform.

<sup>96</sup> Wright, *What has Infant Baptism done to Baptism*, p. 93.

<sup>97</sup> Leonard J. Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), pp. 121 and 130 respectively.

As we have seen, many studies on baptism are predicated on the existence of basically two forms of baptism, credo- and paedobaptism, and that either one or the other, or both are legitimate expressions of New Testament baptism(s). This study questions those presuppositions and asks, What if Ephesians 4.5's 'one baptism' means precisely that, but not in such a way as to force together mutually exclusive baptisms? To me, as an Evangelical, this seems like an entirely reasonable line of enquiry.<sup>98</sup>

### Evangelicals and Baptism

There have been only a few direct responses to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* from Evangelicals,<sup>99</sup> and relatively few popular books by Evangelicals which engage to any degree with baptism. The latter have been examined by Tony Lane in a paper on Christian initiation in the New Testament and Evangelicalism.<sup>100</sup>

Lane begins by noting that two of Evangelicalism's key distinctives are its commitment to evangelism, and the role of scripture. Scripture is both true and normative for the church, and the church is to align her teaching according to it. Further, 'Scripture is not just normative but is the final norm', therefore, while tradition and the church's teaching is of great importance 'ultimately they must be tested by the norm of Scripture'. Lane's thesis, then, is 'that most Evangelicals in their practice of evangelism fail to submit their understandings of Christian initiation adequately to the norm of Scripture'.<sup>101</sup> This, I want to assert, is equally true for credobaptists as it is for paedobaptists.

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<sup>98</sup> What strikes me is that while so much work has been done exploring the various dimensions of baptism so little progress has been achieved. Arguments are repeated, those within a certain tradition who dare to think outside the box are usually summarily dismissed and castigated, and the main traditions – broadly credobaptist and paedobaptist – tend to resist different perspectives on and interpretations of the teaching of the New Testament.

<sup>99</sup> E.g., Colin Buchanan, *ARCIC and Lima on Baptism and Eucharist: Including The Lima Eucharistic Liturgy* (Grove Worship Series, 86; Bramcote: Grove Books, 1983); the volume published by the World Evangelical Fellowship, Paul Schrotenboer (ed.), *An Evangelical Response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1992); and Wright, 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry', and 'The Lima Report: Baptism and Eucharist Compared', both in Wright, *Infant Baptism*, pp. 308–26 and pp. 327–33 respectively.

<sup>100</sup> Anthony N.S. Lane, 'Becoming a Christian: Christian Initiation in the New Testament and Evangelicalism' (unpublished paper from a conference on Evangelicalism co-sponsored by London School of Theology and King's College London in December 2007). I am grateful to Prof. Lane for sending me a copy of this paper.

<sup>101</sup> Lane, 'Becoming a Christian', p. 1. Scripture, however, is always read from within at least one tradition, whose influence cannot be minimized and always needs to be taken into account. This is recognized by Stephen F. Winward's more open view of church tradition than that held by the majority of Baptists, 'Scripture, Tradition, and Baptism', in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, pp. 25–53. See Wainwright's discussion of Winward, *Christian Initiation*, pp. 48–49, and his wider discussion of this Baptist volume, pp. 47–52.



Lane's brief exposition of Christian initiation in the New Testament focuses on the teaching of Acts and Paul from which he identifies four components that are repeatedly mentioned: repentance, faith, baptism, and reception of the Spirit. While not all are mentioned on each occasion this does not mean they did not occur, but that Luke was no pedant. He observes that in Acts baptism is clearly 'an integral part of Christian initiation, a part of what happens for someone to become a Christian', and this coheres with the rest of the New Testament, where faith and baptism are two sides of the one coin. But key is that this baptism is never without faith – faith confessed in baptism and baptism as a confession of faith (cf. Gal. 3.25–26; Col. 2.11–12). That this is so is confirmed by the structure of Romans, where Paul develops his doctrine of justification by faith (Rom. 1–5) before unselfconsciously addressing baptism in chapter 6. This is no change of subject, rather 'The faith that justifies is the faith that gave birth to baptism at their conversion.' A single reality is here being looked at from two different angles as is reflected in the combination of faith and confession of Christ in baptism in Romans 10.9–10.<sup>102</sup>

From this scriptural base, Lane proceeds to discuss initiation in key books by leading British Evangelicals dating from the 1950s onwards, all of which have had a great influence on Evangelicals and Evangelical practice.<sup>103</sup> He summarizes his findings of the works from the 1950s to 1970s, 'Baptism plays no part in the process of becoming a Christian as set out by these writers, though some of them refer to [the] need for baptism at other points in their account',<sup>104</sup> and, though unstated, this equally applies to the later books. When compared to the teaching of Acts and Paul, baptism is identified as the missing dimension. This leads him to conclude that

Comparing New Testament initiation (as found in Acts especially) with that found in recent Evangelicalism we have found two weaknesses in the latter. There is a weakness in seeing receiving of the Spirit as part of initiation ... [and] ... there is a complete

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Wainwright, p. 53, concludes, 'it is in the courts of theology that the main debate must take place'.

<sup>102</sup> Lane, 'Becoming a Christian', pp. 1–3. Cf. Lane's 'Dual-Practice', pp. 140–44.

<sup>103</sup> The books and editions Lane uses, 'Becoming a Christian', pp. 3–10, are Billy Graham, *Peace with God* (Kingswood Tadworth: The World's Work, 1954); John Stott, *Basic Christianity* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1958); Michael Green, *Man Alive* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1967); David Watson, *My God is Real* (London: Falcon, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 1977 [1970]); Norman Warren, *Journey into Life* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, rev. edn, 1980 [1964]); Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1993), and his booklet *Why Jesus* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1992 [1991]); and Rico Tice and Barry Cooper, *Christianity Explored* (Carlisle: Authentic Lifestyle, 2002), and the accompanying Rico Tice, *Christianity Explored Study Guide: Leader's Edition* (Carlisle: Paternoster Lifestyle, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 2003 [2001]).

<sup>104</sup> Lane, 'Becoming a Christian', p. 8.

failure (in practice at least; in theory as well for the majority) to allow any role to baptism in initiation.<sup>105</sup>

Five reasons are proposed for this marginalization, if not neglect, of baptism by British Evangelicals. First, in the 1960s the majority of Britons would have been baptized as infants. Secondly, recent evangelism has become detached from church life, often conducted by para-church organizations, with the result that both the church and sacraments have been sidelined. Thirdly, Evangelicals, including Billy Graham and Nicky Gumbel, seek to avoid controversial issues.<sup>106</sup> Fourthly, all these books stress the need for converts to join a church, and though some might claim that the writers assume baptism will be covered at this point, the fact is this is not stated and readers, therefore, would have no reason to see that baptism has anything to do with becoming a Christian. Finally, ‘there was and is a very widespread belittling of the sacraments among British Evangelicals’.<sup>107</sup> Two examples of this are given;<sup>108</sup> the first is a personal anecdote, the second from the writings of John Stott.

In a short discussion of Christian beginnings, Stott distinguishes between conversion (which he sees as a human work, synonymous with repentance and faith) and regeneration, or rebirth (which he sees as entirely God’s work), which is not identical with baptism.<sup>109</sup> He then announces that ‘baptism is very important’ as it was instituted and commanded by Christ, therefore Evangelicals do not and should not minimize it. Nevertheless, he insists, ‘baptism *must never be confused with the new birth*’ of which it is a sign (he also uses the term sacrament), though it does not automatically affect what it signifies.<sup>110</sup> Clearly, then, the reference to ‘born of water

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<sup>105</sup> Lane, ‘Becoming a Christian’, p. 11.

<sup>106</sup> That said, in Nicky Gumbel, *Telling Others* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 2001), pp. 203–204, states, ‘Teaching on the sacraments is limited, in the sense that *we only teach on Alpha what all the major denominations and traditions are agreed about*. For example, we teach about the essential meaning and necessity for baptism but we do not go into the divisive issue of infant baptism’. So, while the teaching on the sacraments is limited during the Alpha Course, both baptism and communion are essential parts of the course. Cited by Lane, ‘Becoming a Christian’, p. 9 (*italics added*). I do not see, however, how the highlighted phrase can be defended, as many from the major denominations simply would not agree with the form of Evangelicalism evident in the Alpha Course, e.g., the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Churches, and those wings of the major denominations not from the Evangelical wing. Another example of this is Lee Gatiss’ ‘Preface’ to John Stott and J. Alec Motyer, *The Anglican Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism* (London: Latimer Trust, 2008), p. 1, ‘Baptism is of course one of those subjects on which we have obvious differences with many of our closest friends and gospel partners in non-Anglican evangelical churches. So perhaps a certain reticence to discuss this potentially divisive “distinctive” is therefore understandable.’

<sup>107</sup> Lane, ‘Becoming a Christian’, p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> Lane, ‘Becoming a Christian’, pp. 11–12.

<sup>109</sup> John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity and Faithfulness* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 2003), pp. 105–106.

<sup>110</sup> Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, p. 107 (*italics added*).