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**A theological examination of the place of Sacraments, and
in particular Baptism and Eucharist, in fresh expressions of
the Church**

A dissertation submitted by Andrew J Dodwell to the Department of Theology,
University of Exeter in May 2008 as part of an undergraduate Diploma in
Theology.

I certify that this dissertation is my own unaided work, and that any work or
material included in it which is not my own has been identified as such.

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May 2008.

Introduction

‘For the times, they are a-changin’

Bob Dylan, 1963

This refrain, originally heard in a protest song against the political division within 1960’s America, has become increasingly true of Western society during the last decades of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st. However it is measured, most observers would suggest that ‘something’ seismic is happening, whether it is described as the development of late modernity or the dawning of postmodernity (whatever those terms mean). If the world is changing, it is an unavoidable truth that the people within and without the Church are also changing in some way. The present work seeks to look at how the two dominical sacraments of the Church, Baptism and the Eucharist, are to be interpreted and celebrated in this changing cultural climate with particular reference to the Fresh Expressions initiatives (which are themselves part of as well as being a response to this change) that are being generated within the Church of England, as well as broader forms of emerging church.

In order to progress I will first sketch out a description of the substantial cultural changes that are underway in our society today and suggest a way in which Christianity, in its broadest sense, should look upon and respond to these changes. In particular, I will centre upon the Fresh Expressions of Church movement as an example of this response and raise the question of the place and providence of the sacraments in this movement. In section B, I will then turn to the Christian tradition and outline the ways in which theology has understood and explained the meaning of sacraments in general, and Baptism and Eucharist in particular. From here, in section C I will endeavour to bring these threads together and examine how the new forms of Church are developing are engaging with the challenges and opportunities that the sacraments provide within the context of society. Finally, I will consider some ways in which that relationship can be deepened.

Section A: Signs of the times

a) The seismic cultural shift: Postmodernity

Social commentators and theologians alike have noted profound changes occurring in the late 20th Century as western culture shifts from one era into another, sometimes described in geological terms to give a sense of their magnitude and significance (McClaren, 2000: 15). Another way of observing these changes on a more human scale is through popular entertainment such as the television series *Star Trek* (Grenz, 1996: 1-2).

In the original series of *Star Trek*, produced in the late 1960's, the crew of the SS Enterprise would, each week, arrive in orbit around an unknown planet where adventure awaited them. Each week Captain Kirk, Mr Spock, Dr McCoy and their shipmates would beam down to explore this new frontier, a 'wild west' transposed to the stars, with its alien inhabitants. The drama would unfold and somehow be resolved within the space of an hour, and then they would be gone, with the captain's log as a homily- declaring the moral of the story. This was the narrative of modernity: the endless and successful quest of western (American!) civilization to explore, unlock and finally conquer all that remained mysterious and 'other' about our universe.

In the *Next Generation* series of the 1990's, the crew are more racially diverse (including many more non-humans), their futuristic technology is not the solution to every problem they face- the diplomatic skills of Captain Picard and the intuition of Counsellor Troi are as valuable as the android logic of Data; and storylines often lack simple answers: scenarios far more akin to the narratives of postmodernity: plural, local, ironic, self-referential, and irresolvable.

But why did the series develop in this way? Better scripting – possibly; improved special effects – undoubtedly; but it has been suggested that the changes seen in *Star Trek* over the years parallel those seen in western culture during the same period (Grenz, 1996: 1-4; 8-9). As such, *Star Trek* is an example not only of how things have changed over the past 40 years, but of how people's worldview has changed; an observation that can be paralleled in

art and architecture, literature and even computer games, with the growth of free-form non-linear games during the last decade.

This change, evident in popular culture, has been theorised as the shift between two cultural eras: modernity and postmodernity. The terms postmodern and postmodernity will be used throughout to describe the period and cultural perspective that has been developing within much of Western society since the 1980's, without intending to suggest that the cultural dust has, as yet, settled or that these terms are set in stone as the terms and dates remain widely contested. It has been suggested that in certain respects the dawn of the postmodern era was in early 20th century politics (Grenz, 1996: 15-17), but it has also been dated from the work of 1960's social theorists such as Foucault and Lyotard (Berman, 2001: online). However as the results of such social theory are only now beginning to be felt in wider society, so postmodernity can be seen as arising at the tail-end of the last century as a result of the development of mass culture and consumerism (Walker, 1996: 161), while other writers use terms such as late modern (suggesting that in such a state of flux new terms will be inescapably negative (Wilson, 89-90)) or hypermodernity (emphasising the increasing speed of change while refuting the claims of postmodernity (Wikipedia, 2007: online)). Alternatively the social theory of postmodernity can be held apart from the development of the postmodern perspective (Cray, 1999: 74-5). However, 'something' is happening, and the timeframe suggested is a conservative one.

This change has occurred at various times in various places (Davie, 1994: 192-3; Grenz, 1996: 15-17) and is best defined by contrasting postmodernity to modernity, in order to highlight the differences between the two. If modernity as a worldview consisted of rationalism, control, universality, progress and purpose (both in terms of secular and religious frameworks), then in contrast postmodernity emphasises uncertainty, intuition, lack of direction, pluralism, chance and most significantly, freedom from imposed 'metanarratives' (Davie, 1994: 192; Grenz, 1996: 39-56; McGrath, 2001: 112-3).

A metanarrative is an overarching 'meaning framework' through which a community or entire culture makes sense of its place and destiny within the world and is exemplified in both religious and secular models. For example, the classic Christian metanarrative is seen in the Biblical story: God created the world, man has sinned, God has acted to save and will finally fully redeem Creation. This contains purpose and direction, but it is outside of human control to a great extent. Other secularized versions of this narrative include scientific rationalism, capitalism, and communism. Each of these claimed supremacy and sought to claim the dominant position held by established religion (Davie, 1994: 192; Grenz, 1996: 66-72). Postmodernism rejects the exclusive claims of each of these metanarratives as imposing rather than discerning meaning (McGrath, 2001: 114), rather as a reader imposes their own meaning on a text; a concept which has serious implications for theological interpretation.

Truth is in the ear of the interpreter- but only within a specific context. The claim that the grand metanarratives of modernism can no longer be upheld is, effectively, a new universal structure and in true postmodern style, this claim can be deconstructed and rejected and any other worldview advanced in its place. Increasing levels of support for conservative theology and nationalism have been suggested as an expected response to postmodernism – an individual choosing one worldview and committing to it fully in a rapidly changing context rather than accepting all that is before them (Davie, 1994: 199-200). If interpretation depends upon context, truth may be variable, but this does not mean there is no 'truth'. Truth becomes limited by place, time and interpretation- a community can claim to have a true interpretation, but must recognise the validity of alternatives within different contexts.

b) Christian theology's engagement with culture

From the earliest chapters of Genesis culture, community and shared communication has been taken as central in the Biblical metanarrative: 'it is not good that the man should be alone' (Genesis 2:18). God spoke in the Old Testament in ways that could be understood, and Jesus' incarnation was within a particular culture. The early church within Jerusalem spoke to the Jews of their awaited Messiah (Acts 2:31-36), while Paul spoke to the Athenians of 'an

unknown god' (Acts 17:23), and throughout history Christian practice has changed to speak to the surrounding culture (Atkins, 2006: 50-51).

So if God has always engaged with culture, and called the Church to reach the culture that surrounds it (Atkins, 2006: 10-12) then how is the Church to respond to the challenges of postmodernity, globalization, consumerism, post-Christendom?

Three types of responses are evident within the Church: to resist all change in either practice or theology; to embrace change uncritically; or to accept the need for change but also the need to critique culture. Those current initiatives seen in the Church that are based on this third response, that stand within the tradition of continual reformation of the Church and explore the join between postmodernism and faith-based action, are those that I will be exploring, where both culture and tradition inform the developing church.

The claims of postmodernism are at one level deeply challenging to the Christian faith that professes the uniqueness of Christ, but at another level common sense: temperature is a relative measure of heat, but 'hot' water is always hotter than 'cold'. It is possible to accept relativism to a certain level while reserving the interpretations that can be attached to certain basic principles: the question then revolves around what those principles might be. To assess how the Church should creatively, if not uncritically, engage with postmodernity, some very general principles may be born in mind when considering postmodernism and theology:

- 1- The recognition of human driven progress as flawed is something that Christian theology can and should commend, however the rejection of all objective truth takes this too far. Christianity is centred upon the uniquely objective nature of God revealed in Christ, but human interpretations of this are all in some way incorrect (Grenz, 1996: 163-5) - the Church is a fallen people, but the central truth of the Gospel should not be cast aside.
- 2- The corollary of the postmodern insight that 'nothing is truly known and everything is interpreted' supports the Christian principle of wisdom

rather than knowledge: it is by living rightly that Gospel values are demonstrated (Grenz, 1996: 172-3); but this does not mean that it is impossible to trust anything beyond the immediate, or to act out of anything beyond self-serving pragmatism.

- 3- Seeing interpretation as 'meaning within community' raises the importance of communal unity to equal the power of the individual, but the community should remain peculiarly Christian without losing the individual aspect of salvation (Grenz, 1996: 168; Wilson, 2006: 94-5). This emphasis on community is present throughout both Old and New Testaments but its shape may differ markedly in today's contexts.
- 4- The postmodern use of techniques or ideas to rework and challenge accepted norms can provide a catalyst for change and innovation but may also have more serious consequences. For theology these include the view that no single interpretation of the Bible is 'sacred' and unchallengeable, and that any systematic theology is potentially flawed by its attempt to systematize what is fragmented (McGrath, 2001: 114-5).
- 5- The flexibility and freedom that postmodernism offers may suggest a situation where there are no fixed criteria and thus no greater purpose beyond the present moment (Wilson, 2006: 90); however the essence of play that replaces pattern should not be overlooked by a concern that novelty may replace sincerity.
- 6- The downgrading of rational logic and consequent elevation of intuition offer much in terms of engaging spiritually with culture, but this should not lead to a complete disregard for careful thought and a loss of attachment to any foundational principles.

Ultimately, it is the task of theologians, ministers and all Christians to engage with postmodernism with eyes wide open, to wrestle with it and make use of its strengths whilst appraising its weaknesses (Grenz, 1996: 174) and I intend to engage in this discernment through considering the responses made by fresh expressions of church to the question of sacraments.

c) Fresh Expressions of Church- a postmodern Christian response

What does the phrase 'fresh expressions of church' mean? Other terms seen include the generic term 'faith community', often used as a neutral term for any form of church, and 'emerging church', used to describe forms of church that are developing in the broader church. The phrase 'fresh expressions of church' was coined in '*Mission-shaped Church*' (Archbishops Council, 2004: 34) and is mostly used (particularly in its capitalised form) to refer to Anglican/Methodist forms that are within that initiative. It was originally used to describe new forms of Church that had several features in common but ranged across a broad range of backgrounds and as such was a fairly loose umbrella term (Archbishops Council 2004:43-44). These features included an emphasis on small groups and relational community, a deliberate move away from Sunday morning corporate meetings, congregations based on networks, and a post-denominational identity that is nevertheless connected to some form of broader resource or support base. As a fairly new term, its meaning is still developing, but at the simplest level it could be seen as 'new ways of being and doing Church that reflect culture'. From even this definition it's easy to see that it is a very open term that will take on various forms depending on the place in which it develops. A more recent working definition describes it as:

'A fresh expression is a form of Church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any Church. It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples. It will have the potential to become a mature expression of Church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the Church and for its cultural context.'
(Croft, 2007: online)

Clearly this has a strong missional thread: it's intended to benefit those who are not provided for by the current forms of Church in their context. One important aspect of this definition is the commitment to fresh expressions as something that will mature, and in that process be shaped by and engage with the 'enduring marks of the Church'- those things that define and mark out the Church as Christ's people. The intention that fresh expressions will mature,

while remaining distinct from other congregations and churches, marks them out as different from many Church-within-a-Church models (Gibbs and Bolger, 2006: 31-33). Over the years these have tended to be of the youth congregation or short-term 'stepping-stone' format (Anning and Pillinger, 2007: online) but observation has shown that those responding to fresh expressions come from a broad background of age and social make-up, and consider the fresh expression to be their Church, rather than one part of their Christian life. The realisation that this form of church is neither only for specific groups nor for a short period of an individual's life profoundly impacts the way that fresh expressions should be understood by the broader Church.

Emerging churches (including some Fresh Expressions initiatives) often avoid the label of a particular denomination as many of the individuals whom they seek to connect with have little or no understanding or positive experience of such things. Such churches can be described as post-denominational (Archbishops Council, 2004: 25; Gibbs and Bolger, 2006: 37-38). This gives them broader appeal to those outside the Church and to those struggling to remain within the Church, but it can also cause difficulties in terms of having links to a supporting body for resource and advice.

Not all Churches and worship will in time change to become some form of Fresh Expression, but Churches that wish to offer the Gospel in a culturally relevant form must engage with the process that generates such initiatives, with a view to considering what a fresh expression of church might look like in their context (Atkins, 2007: 26-46). The end result of this is a 'mixed economy': churches providing for the varied desires and needs of those around them in order to broaden the overall ministry of the Church but in a way that is not to the detriment of what already exists (Croft, 2008: 3).

The difference between aspects of emerging and pre-existing faith communities is one of intent: a group of individuals meeting together in a home to study the Bible and pray may form a home group within a pre-existing Church, but if for those people there is no other form of Church that speaks to them (such as the mixed patterns of Sunday services in many parish Churches), and there is no

intent to move on from this form to another pre-existing congregation (as in the case of short-term discipleship courses), then this form of meeting could be seen as a valid Fresh Expression. The difference lies in origin and intent rather than visible form.

Essentially the understanding that Fresh Expressions will be for those outside of pre-existing Church necessitates a re-evaluation of what Church means within the cultural context, while remaining faithful to the context of the Gospel and the tradition within which the expression is being nurtured. This may include evaluation of what Church *does*, but also what Church *is*; and the impact of these reflections will have great bearing on the development of each expression: in the context of a particular place, does Church meet...on a Sunday? Weekly? In a building? In the same context, is Church...a worship meeting? A shared activity? A commitment to certain principles? A state of mind? In each place the questions of what it means to *be* Church must be examined during the listening process that marks the first stage of the development of a Fresh Expression, but there are also further questions which become more pressing in time.

d) Identity and Maturity: How a fresh expression becomes a Church

One of the questions facing emerging churches, particularly those that have been in existence for some time, is that of identity and maturity. While some forms of emerging church may simply remain sector congregations a Fresh Expression of Church is expected to mature over time to eventually display the marks of a Church affirmed in the creedal affirmation 'one, holy, catholic, church'; marks which are traditionally exemplified in the sacraments.

The marks of the church have long been used as a benchmark for what forms Church, but various emphases and interpretations have been placed on them over history, not least prior to and during the Reformation (Atkins, 2006: 27-30). There is a tension here, as those marks and aspects can potentially all be interpreted quite tightly, yet the role of Fresh Expressions is to re-interpret such classical ways of being Church in the light of postmodernism. A Fresh Expression will not eventually turn into a 'normal' Church, but it remains

connected to the Church of England in a relationship that gives it identity and a sense of where it has come from; while other emerging church forms may identify themselves as independent of pre-existing Church.

The potential to mature into a Church, rather than remain a sector congregation, is an important distinction between Fresh Expressions and some forms of emerging church, but what form does that maturity take? The word suggests growth and a developing relationship between two parties: where at first a Fresh Expression may require nurturing and provide excitement as well as causing concern, as it matures it may offer wisdom and insight from its experiences back to the pre-existing Church and both sides may be willing to listen and hear what is being said by the other. A body of Christians that expresses the full marks of a church will somehow worship sacramentally, and this is seen as distinguishing between congregation and church (Urwin, 2008:38): a church provides internally what a congregation may require from outside; but there are limits to what an Anglican based faith community can do under lay leadership.

Lay leadership is one of the guiding tenets of Fresh Expressions; however it is important to consider how this relates to sacraments, particularly within the Anglican and Methodist Churches. One suggested solution is that after 2-5 years the identity of a lay-led expression will begin to coalesce (through forms of worship, financial independence and developing missional relationships) and recognition of that would lead to allocation of ordained leadership to allow the new church to continue to develop (Lings, 1994: online) or ordination of those leaders within the community who are already acting in a priestly role (House of Bishops, 1997: 8). An alternative is the allocation of pioneer ministers to deliberately establish fresh expressions of church, but while this enables sacramental worship, it can affect the shared ownership of those expressions.

Growth towards maturity is a process that takes time, and the form and speed of that growth will vary between expressions. For many fresh expressions of church the listening to and serving the community will come before anything that is recognisably worship, let alone a standard Anglican rite (Fresh Expressions & Church Army, 2007: online); while for others the direction may

move more quickly to include traditional or ancient forms of Christian worship. It is dangerous to assume that one of these indicates greater maturity than the other simply by virtue of its worship form, but considered reflection on worship will be part of the path towards maturity for both types.

Within Fresh Expressions the challenge is to engage with the ongoing process of discerning how best to worship God in a place, but in a way that is faithful to the cultural awareness that provides each initiative with its integrity. What does it mean to be part of the 'one, holy, catholic, church' to surfers? How might Baptism and the Eucharist look and feel in a context that is different to that of the pre-existing churches that have developed the traditions and forms most recently articulated in Common Worship? In order to answer these questions I will now examine the sacramental tradition to find resources to equip the developing Fresh Expressions.

Section B- The sacraments in history

In looking at the breadth of practice within the Church of England today, and especially if one includes other mainstream protestant churches within the UK, one could easily question whether some of the practices come from the same faith. On first glance the ordered beauty of the ritual during a high Mass seems so far from the simple shared Eucharist of a house Church that they cannot have been derived from the same source. But they are and, what's more, both are trying to honour that source through their worship: just as the raising of the Host is giving due reverence to the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, so the locating of Holy Communion in a meal at home with friends is giving due reverence to the original context of the Last Supper. Through identifying the threads of commonality, it is to be hoped that fellow Christians in churches from different sides of the galaxy that forms the breadth of Anglican tradition can look at one another and with honesty say "under their skin they are like us".

To do this I will first look at various interpretations of sacraments and then the historic accounts of the Dominical Sacraments, before considering how these historic resources may inform an understanding of the place and celebration of the sacraments Baptism and Eucharist in a fresh expression of church.

a) Sacraments- a sign, an action, or both?

The term comes from the Latin *sacramentum*, originally used for the oath of allegiance taken by Roman soldiers and used by Tertullian to translate the Greek *mysterium* found in Ephesians 1:9, Colossians 1:26 and 1 Timothy 1:16 (Macquarrie, 1997: 4). It implies that the words and the action are not the sum total of all that is happening: the person who has taken the oath is fundamentally changed from before and has entered into a covenant relationship that requires long-term allegiance as much as it offers a new way of life. It's meaning is distinct from 'hidden things' or 'mystery', another translation of *mysterium* which is found elsewhere, to suggest something that cannot be fully explained. Tertullian's contribution was to expand this meaning which was applied, among other things, to the 'mystery' of Christ's death and resurrection, to describe a set of symbolic actions that were found in the life of the Church (McGrath, 2001: 509-510). Possibly the clearest example is in Ephesians 5:31-

33 where the mystery of human love and marriage is compared to the connection between Jesus and the Church: a wedding and a marriage are more than the sum total of the words, symbols and actions but cannot be totally disconnected from them. However there is no clear example within the New Testament where Baptism or celebration of the Eucharist is portrayed as being a sacrament: rather the later development of sacraments was tied in to trying to understand the original sacrament of Christ.

A sacrament is therefore an action that is a sign of something else, as it is often phrased 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace': the grace being, in this case, entry into the presence of and remaining in relationship with God. The different approaches to sacraments, and particularly the Dominical Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, reflect the variable emphasis that can be placed on this phrase: the visible sign or the inward grace that the words and actions point towards. The meaning of sacraments has also been highly contested within ecclesial history, even down to how many sacraments there are. During the first centuries of the Church, the number of sacraments was not strictly defined- Augustine distinguished between sacraments of word and those of action but did not set boundaries to them (Thompson, 2006: 46), however within the Western Church there were efforts to systematize which resulted, by the 12th century, in the list of 7 sacraments that remain present today. This consists of Baptism and Eucharist, plus penance, confirmation, ordination, marriage and extreme unction, but the reasons for this list are due to the mystique associated with the number as much as any natural shape, as later reformers noted (Macquarrie, 1997: 43; Thompson, 2006: 47).

In the 1530 Augsburg Confession, Articles VII-XIII declared the importance of sacraments as 'signs and testimonies of the will of God' (Article XIII), but requiring an individual faith and not justifying through the outward action alone. Further, in Article VII, the Church was clearly defined as not only a place for teaching but for administering the sacraments, an idea which echoes with an understanding of Churches today as sacramental faith communities. The theology of reformers such as Zwingli who rejected all sacraments other than Baptism and Eucharist and contested even their deeper meaning led to the

strong affirmation by the Council of Trent of the essential nature of all 7 sacraments and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

The consensus has always been that sacraments are signs, but within tradition there have been various biases as to what they are a sign of; thus the 'deeper meaning' and the importance placed on outward actions has been at the heart of developing sacramental theology over the years. One way of viewing this is to ask whether meaning depends on the action, or on the intent: a phone call looks the same whether its intention is to book a taxi or call the police, while in today's culture the many ways in which it is possible to shop all have the same intent but look vastly different (Lucas, 1972: 2). The four headings below give a framework for thinking about the meaning of sacraments in general before moving on to consider Baptism and the Eucharist.

i- Sacrament as sign of remembrance- Sacraments have always referred back to their origin in the actions of Jesus himself. They are a way of 'putting us back in touch with' the origins of the Faith. In its more extreme form theologians such as Zwingli have emphasised the memorial aspect of sacraments as a means of conveying information about a past event but rejected their role as an effective means of imparting God's grace in the present time (Thompson, 2006: 55; White, 1999: 19-20). Baptism and Eucharist were pledges of faith, but, as was repeated by Kant in the 18th century, any suggestion of an actual effect is illusory (White, 1999: 22). The weakness in this image is potential irrelevance through distance: Jesus died to save sinners, but what do sacraments mean today aside from a vague and culturally distant memory?

ii- Sacrament as sign of future promise- Slightly changing the emphasis, a sacrament can be seen as a promise or a signpost that points ahead rather than behind. In this understanding it points to Augustine's 'divine reality' that is, as yet, only partially realised. The sacraments here have a strong eschatological component as part of the act of remembering- the upholding of a past promise of something that is yet to reach fulfilment has become more emphasised in recent liturgies and has deep theological roots (Wainwright,

1992a: 335-336), but its potential weakness is an emphasis on the future to the detriment of today. In this Calvinist view the sacrament is a seal of God's promise- a demonstration of the benefits that God offers rather than the instrument (Fisher, 1992: 157). The important part of this view is to understand what is being promised by the sacrament; in one sense the sacrament could be seen as partly educational.

iii- Sacrament as sign of facilitation- in this sense sacraments form a means by which humanity can receive the meaning that is contained within them- which they also point towards through their form. Rather than just pointing backwards to a lost past or forwards to a distant future, sacraments realise what they point too: bringing together what God has done and will do in the here and now. This understanding of sacraments emphasises the proximity of Creator to creation but maintains the distinct separation. Liturgy and sacrament facilitate human reception of, and give thanks for what is described by them, a progression that could be seen in the developing Eucharistic prayers of the 17th century Reformers and Puritans (Tripp, 1992: 304). By this understanding, the form and shape of a sacrament are important as they convey the meaning of the sacrament, but not by themselves.

iv- Sacrament as sign of instrumental grace- this sense upholds the essential nature of sacraments as conveying the grace of God that they also point towards. At its most extreme this reduces any past or future significance (memorial or eschatological aspects) to a present one: Christ's sacrifice occurs at each Eucharist, and Christ's body and blood are present today as much as they ever were or will be. By this understanding sacraments are effective despite the flaws of priests (*ex opera operato*) but this can be misinterpreted to suggest that the sacraments are automatically effective despite the faith of recipients (Cooke, 1994: 8-9), a recurring question throughout the years. The form of a sacrament is of key importance, though recognising that the sacrament is still an instrument of receiving from God rather than human achievement. While this view is often associated with Catholic practices, it is also present within more recent independent Churches- the theology of Baptism by full immersion as instrumental in salvation is not limited to the 16th century

Anabaptists but is prevalent today in many Churches and understood as the causative agent for an individual's new life in Christ (White, 1999: 35-45).

Most sacramental theology is a mixture of these, and while the first two may have more emphasis on the meaning of the sacrament and the latter two emphasise the actions, all result in a combination of word and action. The development of theology over time has shown in the changing focus as practice has emphasised one or another of these images: in the Patristic period Justin Martyr stated that the Eucharistic prayer effected the transformation of bread and wine to Christ's body and blood (Noakes, 1992: 211) and Athanasius regarded the laying on of hands during reconciliation as instrumental to its accomplishment (Thompson, 2006: 184). Later, Thomas Aquinas combined both the promise and the instrumental by suggesting that sacraments are signs of a sacred reality that bring about that reality by means of their signifying it within the activity of God (Thompson, 2006: 50).

For Reformers such as Luther, the sacrament was chiefly a promise of something connected to a visible sign of that promise, while for Zwingli the sacramental activity was a ceremonial pledge- a sign to the Church of one's faith that retained power as an aid to faith by virtue of its place within the institution (White, 1999: 19). For Calvin the signs of the sacrament were effective, but not solely as an instrument (White, 1999:21) while Cranmer declared that while the sacraments are effectual signs of grace it is only as they are 'worthily received' that they have that effect. However, they retain some sense of the instrumental nature of a sacrament: neither the effect is reduced by the actions of an unworthy minister nor the grace diminished by a faithful recipient (Articles 25-26, BCP). One recent interpretation suggests that sacraments signify something other than what they are: they are part of what is happening, but they also explain what is happening in the bigger picture- Jesus' dealings with the sick were healings and signs that he was the Messiah, but they also signified the beginning of the reign prophesied in Isaiah 61 (Williams, 2000: 202-204).

Although it is possible to hold a sacramental theology based solely on one of these images, to do so is like staring at a flower petal and refusing to see that it is best understood as part of a whole that has grown from a bud and is still growing. The claim that one is 'better' than another is a distinctly modernist view, but the postmodern perspective suggests that each interpretation has equal but different validity, and their meaning and importance lies in the interpreted meaning within the specific community. One view that emphasises the blending of these aspects is that of seeing sacraments as a relational response to God's interactions with humanity: our definition of and relationship to God is framed by those interactions, which comprise of God's actions, and humanity's responses over the years (rather than any particular form of response) which together have the ultimate aim of making believers holy (Williams, 2000: 200-206).

In recent years many Churches from varying traditions have come to appreciate that their views and practices are more often closely aligned than is realised by first observation, and the acceptance that these traditions can all potentially offer something of value to faith communities from widely differing backgrounds and churchmanship rather than claiming an exclusive mandate on the interpretation of tradition (Lucas, 1972: 13; Wilson, 2006: 104). At the heart of all sacramental practice is the intent to draw the material and the spiritual closer together, but in understanding their meaning they are truly able to speak to us (Noll, 199: 139).

b) Baptism and Eucharist in the life of the Church

The sacramental practices that can most clearly be seen as having been instituted by Christ are the Eucharist (described most fully in Luke 22: 14-23 but also found in Matthew 26:26-29 and Mark 14:22-25), and Baptism (from the commission to the disciples in Mathew 28:19 and the description of Jesus' own baptism by John in Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-22), referred to often as the Dominical sacraments to distinguish them from those which were later rejected by Protestant Reformers. Whether these sacraments as described were part of Jesus' ministry or a rite of the early Church is debatable but they are undeniably rooted in the very early stages of Christian practice and

their existence makes most sense as something instituted by Christ rather than invented by the Church (Stein, 1992: 447-449). As these are the sacraments most broadly accepted as part of a church, it seems sensible to examine them when coming to consider the place of sacraments within Fresh Expressions initiatives and emerging churches. However there is a range of meanings attached to the actions of each sacrament and these will now be considered.

i- Baptism

The two main variations in Christian baptismal practice centre on the Baptism of infants or, as it is often called, believer's Baptism. Within those lie questions of detail such as amount of water and the time and place of Baptism, but at the root of all these are the understandings of what occurs during Baptism. Within the New Testament there is sufficient support to make a case for both pedo-Baptism (in Acts 16:30-34 the entire family of the jailer are baptised on the basis of his faith) and believers' Baptism (Acts 8:36-9, the eunuch is baptised immediately following a conversion experience, but his servants are not), but the main practice in the early Church seems to have been that of believers' baptism either by immersion or by pouring water over the head as described in the *Didache* (Macquarrie, 1997: 63-64). The increase in pedo-Baptism followed the development of the doctrine of original sin in the light of high infant mortality rates: if someone was to be assured of grace, they must be baptised and thus in parts of medieval Europe almost the entire population was baptised (White, 1999: 32-33). The separation of Baptism from receiving the Eucharist by the 12th century and the loosening of its ties to Easter and Pentecost further facilitated this practice, while the gradual erosion of pre-Baptismal preparation reduced the requirements of understanding and commitment that were seen in the early Church.

Five images were proposed by the World Council of Churches (WCC, 1982: online) to describe the broad meaning of Baptism, often used as headings for the discussion of baptismal theology (White, 1999: 53). They are:

Participation in Christ's death and resurrection- through the water of Baptism Christians identify with Jesus' death and resurrection: they die to their old life of sin and enter into new life as described in Romans 6:3-4 and

Colossians 2:12. The baptised passes from one into another, and it is important to note that the action is never self-determined: by Baptism we are raised from death to life; and thus Baptism is always performed by another- whether in infant or believers' Baptism one is brought into a different place (Williams, 2000: 210-211). This image emphasises baptismal immersion as symbolic of death and rebirth, and the unity of Christ suffering alongside believers (White, 1999: 58-61). It suggests the sacrament of Baptism as enabling but also as a memorial of Christ's actions, and can be tied to the imagery of new life or being born again that is emphasised by many evangelical traditions¹.

Conversion, pardoning and cleansing- John the Baptist baptised for the repentance of sins, and it has been noted how in Acts 8:36-39 the Ethiopian eunuch is baptised as a sign of his conversion. In Acts 2:38 Peter draws these two points together: 'Repent, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven'. The connection of physical and spiritual cleansing is seen in Acts 22:16 and 1Corinthian 6:11 (White 1999: 55), suggesting the new direction in the life of a baptised Christian. This image is highly suggestive of the instrumental aspect of Baptism: the spiritual cleansing and physical washing are tied together, and debates concerning the ecumenical Baptism often centre on this image: it was for forgiveness that the Anabaptists re-baptised those who joined them, and it is only in recent years that Catholics and Anglicans have recognised each others Baptisms (Macquarrie, 1997: 77; White, 1999: 56).

The gift of the Spirit- in Acts, there are strong connections between water Baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit, although the general order of water then Spirit as in Acts 2:38, is not set in stone as the episode at the house of Cornelius recounts (Acts 10:44-48). This passage suggests that a freer interpretation of baptismal practice is not out of keeping with Scripture- the Holy Spirit can come before, at, or after water Baptism. The nature of 'the gift of the Spirit' in the context of Baptism has been variously understood: is it the seal or character of God placed upon a believer (Ephesians 1:13) that commences one's transformation through the Spirit; or the varied gifts that Paul describes (1Corinthians 12:4-11) linked to the outpouring of the Spirit onto a believer

¹ The image of new birth was omitted from the WCC document due to its associations with conversion rather than Baptism in certain Churches (White, 1999: 70)

(which would preclude infant Baptism) which can occur with or separate from water Baptism (Macquarrie, 1997: 71; White, 1999: 67)? These can result in hugely varying practices starting from the same point, but the questions that they raise cannot be fully explored here.

Incorporation into the body of Christ- in Baptism, one not only joins Christ in his death and resurrection, but is joined to the body of the Church. This image conveys the 'initiation rite' aspect of Baptism as practiced by the early Church and it can be seen as instrumental in this understanding, especially where it led immediately to Eucharist (White, 1999: 62). However, as well as the material entry into a specific Church, this image also promises the entry into the universal Church. This aspect was less emphasised by some theologians such as Luther, while Zwingli saw the entry into a particular community of believers as being one of the primary roles of Baptism, thus rendering Baptism important but not essential for salvation (White, 1999: 62-3). The WCC used this image to emphasise the common bond of Baptism that all believers share as described in Ephesians 4:4-6, to encourage Churches ecumenical unity (WCC, 1982: online).

The sign of the Kingdom- The sacrament of Baptism, through the images described above, signals the outbreaking of the Kingdom of God into the world through the life of the baptised: they are raised to new life, justified by Christ, sealed and filled with the Spirit, and part of God's Church; but each one of those things is also something that is yet to come, and so this image holds the instrumental/enabling and signifier/promise aspects in balance. It contains the eschatological hope that a day will come when all will recognise the lordship of Christ and when the baptismal promises will reach final fruition, and while less significant in mainstream Churches in the past, it is an image that is becoming increasingly accepted (White, 1999: 54).

From this brief survey of Baptism, it is possible to see how the broad range of baptismal practice and theology grows out of varying levels of emphasis of these images; and whether the sacrament is understood as effecting or symbolising those things. The important thing to take from this is that Baptism is consistently seen as a rite of entry into the body of Christ, as represented by the Church, and that while it can be administered to someone (in the case of

infants) or asked for, as a sacrament the initiative and effective power is always with God, not the believer or minister (Macquarrie, 1997: 71). The continuing questions of infant Baptism, the separation of Baptism from Eucharist and private Baptisms all indicate that there is room within baptismal theology for the development of further practices within emerging Churches.

ii- Eucharist

The roots of the Eucharist lie in the Passover meal celebrated by Jesus and his disciples at the Last Supper, as recounted in each of the synoptic Gospels and 1Corinthians 11:23-26. In early Christianity it was celebrated as part of a meal to extend ownership of the Jewish Passover to gentile Christians in their Hellenist context. Until the 4th century the structure was largely extempore, whether in the meal context or a specific worship situation (Yarnold, 1992: 230) but this became formalised within the Roman Church by the 7th century, and patterns that included different indigenous aspects, including those drawn together by Celtic monks, were brought together into Eucharistic prayers that combined elements from across Europe until the Reformation (Hope, 1992: 273-274). However, this maintenance of form resulted in a decline in understanding as many worshippers could not understand the Latin words and so the symbolic actions such as elevating the host gained an increased significance. During the Reformation, the emphasis on preaching and worshipping in the native tongue led to a decline in Eucharistic celebration for some time, although Cranmer, having produced an English version, encouraged its weekly celebration in the BCP (White, 1999: 80). The chief variations in practice of the Eucharist are those of frequency, the elements consumed, and who may preside and receive, though the reasons may have as much to do with practicality as theology. The common nature of the Eucharist can be seen in four things, which correspond to the actions of Jesus: preparation (Jesus took the bread and wine), Eucharistic prayer (Jesus prayed over them), breaking the bread (as Jesus did), distribution (Jesus gave to his disciples). These four things are generally still seen in the Eucharist, however varied other parts may be.

In its 1982 paper, the WCC listed five key understandings of the meaning of the Eucharist (WCC, 1982: online), which were:

Thanksgiving to the Father- through the Eucharist worshippers thank God for all that has been accomplished through Christ: for creation and redemption, and all that will be accomplished through the final fulfilment of the Kingdom. As the word Eucharist comes from the Greek *eucharisteo* meaning 'to give thanks', this aspect is of greater significance to those traditions which use this term to refer to the sacrament, rather than other names such as Holy Communion found in more reformed Churches, although in more recent years there has been a shift in theology and practice to include more thanksgiving (White, 1999: 100-102). In this aspect the sacrament is both a promise and signifier of what has happened, and what is to come.

Memorial of Christ- this aspect is in line with the words of institution given by Jesus that the disciples are to 'do this in remembrance of me', but this may be more than just commemoration: rather a reliving and continued re-acceptance of the meaning of the sacrament (Irwin, 2005: 123-126). If this is the case, the sacrament is an enabler to understand the mystery of the Easter event that is celebrated at the Eucharist, but if this aspect is taken to mean a simple memorial, then the sacrament is understood as signifier. Properly understood, this charge to remember Christ's ministry at every Eucharist should flow out into the preaching and worship that surrounds the sacrament itself.

Invocation of the Spirit- in the Eucharistic prayer there is reference made to the work of the Holy Spirit, and although this is not scripturally based, it does stem from early tradition (White, 1999: 113-114). The Holy Spirit is seen as accomplishing the work of sanctifying the elements of the sacrament (in Roman Catholicism), but also working through the sacrament to sanctify the participants (Zwingli and Calvin). Cranmer's first prayer book had a brief reference to the Holy Spirit, which was lost in later editions; although there is now some form of *epiclesis* in each of the Eucharistic prayers in Common Worship. The language found in most of these prays that the elements 'may be to us' the body and blood of Christ- carefully striking a middle path in the contentious area of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Communion of the faithful- the Eucharist is a display of the fullness of the community of faith, as believers come together to bear witness to and share

in the thanksgiving and memorial aspects of the sacrament. The Eucharist formally expresses things that other acts of corporate worship hint at, enabling the development of community. It is also an expression of the unity of the whole Church into one body with Christ (1Corinthians 10:16-17) united in love, as signified in the peace (White, 1999: 107-108), and as an expression of the four marks of the Church (House of Bishops, 1997: 39). This aspect has become more richly developed in Protestant liturgy since the Reformation, and is one also shared by many independent churches, even though other understandings of the Eucharist may be congruent.

Meal of the kingdom- as the first-fruits of the kingdom of God the celebration of the Eucharist, preceded by declarations of the forgiveness of sin, unity through love and the invitation offered by the president for all to come to the table, is reminiscent of the table-practice of Jesus. It is also anticipatory of the full kingdom that is to come- a foretaste of something not yet received. This eschatological sense was clear in the early Church, but was gradually lost over time except among groups living under persecution such as the Anabaptists (White, 1999: 98). Churches recognising the part-actualised, part-unfulfilled nature of God's kingdom (McGrath, 2001: 555; Wilson, 2006: 109), have re-emphasised this image, along with the social justice issues of upended hierarchies and inclusion. It combines all 4 senses of a sacrament: it points towards what is promised for the future and remembers a past event, but it also enables and brings about that promise in the here and now through the celebration.

One development which has occurred in both Catholic and Protestant Churches since the Reformation is the increasing link between celebrating and communicating. Previously the situation was that although the Eucharist might be celebrated weekly many in a congregation would not receive more than once or twice a year (White, 1999: 74-75), whereas now it is common practice for all those attending a service to be invited to communicate. Increasing levels of 'open table' practice and recognition of the Baptism of other Churches has led to a sense in which the Eucharist, although still the centre of the worship of many Churches, is now more open to those who might be seen as more on the fringe of a traditional faith community.

c) New theologies of Baptism and Eucharist

The theology of Baptism and Eucharist has continued to develop and many of the questions being asked are of an intrinsic nature, although not so much 'whether to baptise?' but rather 'what does it mean to baptise and how should it be done here and now?' Scriptural and traditional resources are being reassessed in order to uncover, where possible, the assumptions and understandings involved rather than simply the sacramental practice.

The universal nature of water as a cleansing agent and sharing food as a unifying action place sacraments within the broader human context (Wainwright, 1992b: 549), but it is important to also consider how the sacraments are to be fully understood within specific contexts.

Sacraments were given serious consideration by the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican II, and steps taken to recapture what was seen as the best practice of the early church (Noll, 1999: 63) with the development of adult baptismal liturgy including preparatory and post-baptismal discipleship (which also reconnects Baptism to Eucharist through immediate confirmation). In terms of celebrating the Eucharist, translation of liturgy was permitted, the altar was re-orientated more inclusively, and greater emphasis was placed on the presence of Christ through preaching (Noll, 1999: 55-56), but significantly these changes are seen as practical rather than theological.

Within Baptism some of the areas of change or new thinking are in fact a recovery of old patterns and a change in the emphasis placed on baptismal imagery rather than new theology. These include the increase in Easter Baptisms to stress the link to Christ's death and resurrection, the placement of Baptism within public worship to emphasise the entry into community, and the increasing number of fonts that are large enough to dip or immerse baptismal candidates, which emphasises the cleansing metaphor (White, 1999: 141-143; Wilson, 2006: 107). The links of Baptism to the Eucharist are being reinforced by an increase in children's/open communions, and through references to Baptism during Eucharistic liturgy (Giles, 2004: 101-102). The question of when to baptise has received much attention and seeing Baptism as a sign of entry

into relationship with Christ and the community suggests Baptism lies as an initiation of faith at the start of a disciple's journey, rather than as a climax of it (Witherington, 2007: 130-131). The recurring questions of who to baptise and how much water still exist, but to them could be added others, such as whether water is needed to accomplish the grace of which Baptism is an effective sign. The image of Baptism as entry calls into question the place of pedo-baptism and separate confirmation within the church: is Baptism only a partial initiation needing a further act of commitment, or is only required for those baptised as infants (which would relegate confirmation to the level of baptismal renewal)?

In thinking about the Eucharist some have suggested replacing 'European' bread and wine with indigenous food and drink, but this reduces the express link to the Scriptural institution and the ties to ecclesial tradition (Wainwright, 1992b: 550). The cost and benefit of this must be considered: would such a change be something that enabled a greater appreciation of the meaning of the sacrament and a fuller engagement with the grace that it represents, or simply be an act of novelty for the sake of change. The variations between the Scriptural accounts of the Eucharist do not support a prescriptive set of actions, but all emphasise the importance of repeating the sacramental activity (Howe, 2005: 43-44).

The question of Eucharistic presidency remains ever-present within the Anglicanism, especially as over-stretched clergy struggle to be seen as more than sacramental providers, but the current position remains that the responsibility to preside at the Eucharist remains solely part of the role of the priest (House of Bishops, 1997: 61). The effect of this and other issues surrounding the sacraments on Fresh Expressions initiatives as they engage with the questions of theology in new contexts will be considered in the next section.

Section C- Sacraments and Fresh Expressions

If, as has been suggested, the initiatives that are arising out of fresh expressions of church are to become mature Churches rather than sector ministries then they will need to engage with the sacraments in a way that is not only mindful of the Christian traditions of those who have gone before them and the cultural understandings that they are engaging with, but also theologically and intellectually rigorous. The tightrope must be walked that avoids the perils of theatre and tackiness in presentation (Riddell, 1999: 97); the assumptions that any change is either necessarily an improvement or a disaster (Davie, 1994: 193); and the accusations of syncretism and loss of reverence (Archbishops Council, 2004: 91). The challenge facing fresh expressions of church is to engage with traditional theology from the perspective of postmodernism, and to develop forms of sacramental worship that are authentic to specific contexts.

The purpose of Fresh Expressions is to reach the unchurched sections of society with the Good News in a form that is relevant, and to enable individuals to enter into relationship with Christ and grow in faith. The forms of church that are developed, the worship and ultimately the sacraments used, should be about making that process easier and less confusing, rather than more so.

a) Current state of play

Fresh Expressions initiatives arose out of a Church of England working group and operate under the joint Fresh Expressions initiative, supported by leaders of both Churches (Weetman, 2008: 1) and the CofE/Methodist Covenant. This effectively limits them to those things that can be permitted by the parent Churches, resulting in a slightly different situation from many emerging churches where one hallmark is their independence from pre-existing church structures (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006: 42-46).

By remaining within the Church of England, however, Fresh Expressions try to avoid the pitfalls of a weak theology that faces many emerging Churches. How to discern whether a theology or practice should be encouraged? Many would answer 'by reference to Scripture and the creeds', but this is of course open to

interpretation, and in a postmodern context, the equality of every interpretation weakens this argument. One solution is the oversight of Bishops: in their role as pastors and shepherds of their diocesan-wide flock they can act as a check. Ideally they should not need to, as careful theological reflection is available to all, but they can offer valuable wisdom and objectivity. This relationship has recently been further strengthened within the Church of England by establishing Mission Orders which allow for formal establishment of initiatives outside of traditional parishes, whilst retaining accountability through periodic reviews with a Bishop's Visitor (Lewis, 2007: online). Accountability is of course no guarantee, but it forms a safety net for this as well as for other potential problems that pre-existing churches are all too familiar with.

Of the 400+ Anglican initiatives currently registered on the Fresh Expressions site, many are recently formed and as such their focus may be less on maturation and more on initial survival and growth. However, the question of sacraments can legitimately be asked of initiatives if they are, as stated in section A, to have the potential to grow into churches. It may be possible to suggest that for some forms Eucharistic worship might be an occasional celebration to be held in conjunction with other initiatives of a more sacramental nature or pre-existing churches, but this would hint that those forms were unwilling or unable to celebrate Eucharist in their own context or community. The question becomes more pointed when directed towards Baptism. If Fresh Expressions of church are about reworking the missional aim of God's church for those who are outside of pre-existing church, then how do they welcome those who join them into the universal body of Christ?

The possible answers to this question seem to fall under three categories: to ignore the sacrament; to ask others to do it; or to create a new liturgy. The first answer is, I would suggest, prevalent among forms where there is no use of a Church building or an expression among those who have rejected pre-existing church, but it is a solution that must be avoided as a permanent option. The second solution, deferring to others, may be theologically sound, but risks the future development of an expression into a mature church. In a sense it is saying 'thus far we can take you, but others have to do this bit, in their way' to

those who have made this expression their faith community and this could lead to a loss of faith in the long term vision for that community. The third, however, seems to offer a genuinely new way forward that could potentially offer something back to pre-existing churches in the future, and on this basis I will move to consider how new forms of sacrament might be developed.

b) Prospects and Possibilities

When a developing form of church starts to consider how to celebrate Baptism and Eucharist, in whatever way, they are engaging once again with the double listening process that typifies the start of such an expression: listening to God and the context. The process is one of bringing together the universal message of the Gospel and the specific place in such a way that that the message and power of the Gospel is transmitted in a comprehensible way that affirms its roots. This might consist of liturgy that combines plainsong, rap, dance and silence, or none of these things, but it must essentially be authentic both to the context it is in and where it has come from. Many emerging churches choose to make use of ancient forms of Christian worship but equally, others do not, and the freedom to develop the ways of becoming and being a Christian that are represented by Baptism and Eucharist are a sign of God's grace within the Church.

As with all churches, the frequency of celebrating Eucharist varies between Fresh Expressions initiatives, with those arising from more Catholic pre-existing churches tending to have a higher consideration for sacramental worship, and seeking to provide Eucharistic worship at an earlier stage and more often than others. At present, Fresh Expressions such as Moot and mayBe with ordained clergy as members or leaders, have monthly Eucharists; while lay-led expressions such as Grace utilise ministers from their affiliated pre-existing church (see Website links at end), while for others it is an occasional event (Urwin, 2008: 36).

Whatever it's particular churchmanship, the developing place of the sacraments within an expression is part of measuring not only its maturity as a Church but also the identity of that expression within both its denomination and the

universal Church. The process of authentically exploring the place of sacraments in today's culture involves engaging with the insights and claims made by postmodernism. The most challenging for sacramental theology of those raised in Section A were the suggestions that norms should be challenged with no single understanding given special or sacred consideration, and the idea that the present moment is of greater significance than anything else. However, alongside these sits the insight that intuition should be considered equal to intellect which, when combined with the increase in general spirituality that has been noted in society (Thompson, 1995: 1-5), gives cause for hope.

Postmodern insights can, when considered carefully, help to make sense of Christianity and the sacraments (Grenz, 1996: 165-167). For example, postmodernists would suggest that human insight and progress is flawed, while theologians might suggest that our flawed nature limits human understanding of God's grace: the two are not opposed. As shown in Section B, the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist have been practiced and interpreted differently by Churches over time- it is only more recently that these differing interpretations have begun to be considered as complementary rather than necessarily exclusive: a thoroughly postmodern form of debate.

A safe space is needed in which fresh expressions of church can develop sacramental practice and theology, that allows for experiments and mistakes without censorship, but also provides support and guidance when required. The historic debates and various interpretations of sacraments within pre-existing churches, and the Church of England's middle ground stance that suggests that each of the interpretations of sacraments has value in combination with the others, indicates that there may be more than one direction for fresh expressions to grow. If the image of sacraments as a promise connects most strongly with developing fresh expression, then their thinking around Baptism and Eucharist might focus more on them as signs of the kingdom and promises of the gift of the Spirit, rather than identifying with and remembering Christ's actions, but not to the total exclusion of other meanings.

From this start point of careful listening, and reflection based upon the various ways of understanding Baptism and the Eucharist, a Fresh Expression may begin to uncover the forms that the sacraments may take in their context, but those forms must be gently brought into being and allowed time to reach fulfilment rather than stifled by objections based on mistakes made. The phrase 'doctrine of exceptions' (Urwin, 2008: 35) suggests how this might look: flexibility of words and actions within liturgy, flexibility of order in which things happen (Eucharist before Baptism as part of welcoming people into the community which they might in the future belong to) but within the normative framework that the pre-existing church has always provided. This growth is linked to a search for meaningful action rather than novelty: while each celebration of the Eucharist can be significant and unique it should not be so radical that worshippers are constantly in awe of the creative process rather than God (Riddell, 1999: 98).

As fresh expressions develop forms of sacramental worship, these will become their own sets of rituals for worship which may look different from the traditional but express the same faith and desires (Ward, 2004: 44-50), and have meaning within that context precisely because they developed there. This work is being paralleled in other emerging churches such as *Après Church*, an expression based in a Wokingham coffee shop that has arisen out of the local house church which has little of its own tradition to reflect on and so is turning to Anglican and Catholic forms for inspiration.

Taking intention into consideration it could be suggested that a corporate act is not necessarily something done by many in the same place, but something done by many with the same shared concern (Lucas, 1972: 3). A recent application of this idea within online faith communities raises serious questions: can the Eucharist be celebrated in a virtual congregation, and would it involve bread and wine? Several aspects of the Eucharist can be provided in a virtual Church: community, remembrance and anticipation, as well as inclusion and invoking the Holy Spirit (some of these potentially to a greater extent than a virtual Eucharist that involves worshippers in bread-breaking), but the full

implications of a Eucharist that does not involve 'the Eucharist' have yet to be fully explored in the nascent online Church (Howe, 2005: 47).

The bottom line is that open principles within a broad framework, a doctrine of exceptions rather than prescriptions, will allow and encourage Fresh Expressions to take ownership of the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist that have been central to Christian faith and the ongoing life of communities over the years. In conclusion I make some suggestions of what those principles might look like, and finally give a brief of what they might look like in my home context.

c) Some closing thoughts

- Just as postmodernity is in part about defining something that is not modernity, so fresh expressions of church are a step away from what exists rather than a step towards anything specific. Leaders of fresh expressions cannot (and should not be encouraged to) say what will work-time and space will show what bears fruit, but keeping the framework loose allows room for God's Spirit and human endeavour to work together.
- Multiple images help to understand the sacraments and the grace they convey, just as preachers use more than image within a sermon to make their point. The development of flexible practice and a doctrine of exceptions rather than restrictions opens the door for sacramental worship to become meaningful to a new generation (Urwin, 2008: 35), and thus to enable rather than limit their spiritual growth.
- Applying patterns of good practice that will inform the ministry of a fresh expression. These patterns bring the sacramental and missional aspects together, and consist of listening to the context (discerning what is going on here and the shape of Good News for this context), listening to God (discerning what God is doing here already and what God's hope is for this context), looking to enable growth (individuals growing in faith, a faith community growing in this context), and looking to avoid division (asking how we risk damaging God's pre-existing ministry in this context).
- In order to take new ideas of sacramental theology seriously it is necessary to recognise the intent and purpose behind a particular set of

actions, but also accept that some of the aspects of sacramental theology that are essentially 'true' to a tradition may not be of first importance within other contexts.

- A failure to do this might allow the differences between positions to overshadow the basic shared commonality of Christian understanding with subsequent deterioration of dialogue. It is important to recognise that every theology and expression of sacraments is only partial and somehow falls short of God's perfection, but its redemption through God's grace may remind those involved of the importance of humility.

d) A contextual example (see appendix for further notes)

On the North Devon coast there is a strong surfing community, and during the last 9 years I have been part of it as I have learnt to surf and worked as a surfing instructor. Several churches in the area have ministers who surf or significant numbers of surfers in their congregations, but there are still many local surfers who have no connection with Christianity or the Church, outside of occasional offices and community events. I want to briefly consider a ministry going out from the local churches to surfers, intent on creating a worshipping community outside of the pre-existing forms rather than repackaging Christianity to draw surfers into the established communities. Such a ministry would recognise the transient nature of many in the community, and seek to minister either to those who visit the area to surf or those who live in the area, and for this purpose I will consider the latter.

Within surfing there are many powerful images that can be used to draw out ideas of Christian belief: the need to wait for swell to arrive and then respond when it does is akin to God's grace that cannot be controlled, the appreciation of creation both in the beauty of the surroundings and the power of a wave cause many to pause and whoop in wonder, the understanding of how water can symbolise death and life that comes from paddling towards huge waves and deliberately diving into them, to emerge gasping from the other side. However, there are also powerful negative images within surfing that need to be discerned and challenged where appropriate: the hedonistic party lifestyle with its sexual conquests, hard drinking and drug abuse is not purely an image from

Hollywood; but surfing is also an escape from reality, and those who choose that life are often denying any commitments elsewhere.

Within this context, a fresh expression that looks to reach the surfing community must commit time to be with and listen to surfers, gaining trust and building honest relationships whilst also standing apart from certain things that go on. The question I am asking is, if such an expression developed, what might its baptismal sacrament look like? Local Baptist and independent churches often have Baptism services on the beach, but there is little substantive difference during the service from their normal form (except the location) -would the understanding of Baptism in a specifically surf based expression lead to a different practice?

Under the five headings describing the intent of Baptism, several things come to mind. The location would be, if possible, in the sea, not on the edge but out beyond the breaking surf, where surfers spend their time waiting and contemplating: for me the beach is a transitional place, like the porch of a Church while the actual place of drawing closer to God is 'out back' (conditions on the day and non-surfer/swimmer guests may cause this to be reconsidered). Dying and rising to new life, and being powerfully cleansed by water are images that fit easily within the surfing context (taking the drop, making it out of a barrel, duck diving sets), so liturgy drawing on these images could be generated by those within the expression. When learning to surf, part of entering the community involves going on dawn surfs and being introduced to less well known breaks at 'secret spots', and the idea of Baptism as entry into a community would fit well with a form that included an early start, at a location that has significance. The gift of the Spirit might be most easily understood in terms of the power of a wave that can be used by a surfer: the power is not the wave itself but the interaction between the wave and the individual and so it might be appropriate for the worship to conclude in surfing. Finally, rather than being a sense of dissatisfaction with the present, the surfer's yearning for the next wave can be seen as anticipation of the kingdom that is yet to be fulfilled- is the 'endless summer' of surfing legend so far from the kingdom of God?

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Website links to Fresh Expressions initiatives:

Après Church: <http://apreschurch.com/>

Grace: <http://www.freshworship.org>

mayBe: http://www.maybe.org.uk/cms/scripts/page.php?site_id=mb

Moot: <http://www.moot.uk.net/SitePage/spaceapart.htm>

Appendix: Some Reflections on the possible shape of surfer Baptism.

The community? The surfing community rather than beach community as such

The people? Surfers and their families

The location? North Devon coast- Croyde to Woolacombe

How images of baptism speak to me as a surfer:

Dying and Rising with Christ: death and life, submersion and emerging are obvious images for surfing- during the paddle out one dives beneath waves, and especially during a big set it can feel like committing oneself to the grave; when catching a wave one commits to the drop down the face, and then pulls through the bottom turn into the 'new life' of surfing across the wave; being inside a barrelling wave, sometimes disappearing completely, and then coming back from the blue-green tomb echoes death and resurrection.

Conversion, pardoning and cleansing: the first time one catches a wave can never be repeated, the sensation and experience cannot be forgotten- one is converted to being a surfer. The power of water to cleanse is definitely felt by those who've felt a wave break over the back of their head as they duck-dive through it.

Gift of the Spirit: Surfers recognise that the swell is completely ungovernable, but one has to read what it is doing and go with that- this is partly suggestive of God's grace, but also the freely moving power of the Spirit. Weather patterns (most surfers are quite astute meteorologists)- on days when there is no swell somewhere the next swell is being generated, and in the meantime the sea is ever-present. The power of a wave as it breaks; to send a board forward and allow a surfer to perform is very reminiscent of the Spirit: the power of the wave is not the wave itself; it is what the wave can do when it touches something.

Incorporation into the body of Christ: for surfers, being included in a community is being invited to dawn surfs, taken to secret spots, shared respect with others when paddling onto a wave, its understanding the language of 'A-frames', 'backhanders' and 'cutbacks'.

Sign of the kingdom: the sense of something still to come is felt by many surfers who still look for the perfect wave, the idealised 'endless summer' and the itch to go and surf somewhere new. There is always talk of what the surf was like, but also what is anticipated.

Some of these influences came from films like Blue Juice, Endless Summer, Point Break and reading books like Walking on Water and Stormrider (the titles heighten the spiritual aspect of surfing but do not denigrate Christianity).

Questions being asked/ issues being raised: this would be part of exploring, not the end point of a journey just as much for the service as for the individuals... so next time it might be different, but for thought out reasons rather than just for the sake of it

This is something being done in God's creation, and surfers all know how it's not always what we expect- if an outside set comes through in the middle of a prayer, say amen and start paddling for the horizon!

Baptism into the particular but also the universal- invite others to join the beach celebration and pray for the event; ideally match it up to local confirmation service on same day, or a Eucharist at a church that the whole group can go to

What might happen:

A period of preparation and waiting for the right conditions- some swell (amount would depend on location, individual and group, ideally a confirmation service nearby, catechetical preparation of candidate

An early start, surrounded by others- going for a 'dawnie' as a group at a location that has meaning to the group or candidate, someone paddles out with candidate to where group are waiting outback, form a prayer circle of boards with candidate and leader in centre

A formal declaration- couple of questions and mini testimony/declaration, followed by teaching/reminders of baptism stuff plus offer of renewal or baptism for others

Prayer and sung worship- over the sea, prayers for the group, the candidate and the surf, space for open prayer, further worship could be unaccompanied singing or silence

The sacrament- using Trinitarian formula, dunking three times, laying on of hands and praying for Holy Spirit, followed by welcoming from group

The community response- surf together, candidate takes first wave, then have a surfing session observing community principles of shared waves and no dropping in without an invite, then onto beach for shared meal of bread and fish around a fire (started by someone so that food is ready as surfers emerge from water)

Afterwards- confirmation soon as feasible...in a perfect world, later the same day, with some images from the surf baptism being incorporated into the confirmation service alongside those from other candidates faith journeys.

In reality, churches with surf ministries in North Devon tend to baptise on the edge of the sea, sometimes going surfing afterwards, but not as part of the sacramental act. Those churches are, however, baptising surfers who have come to their church in its pre-existing format, which although of a fairly community oriented feel is still based in a traditional church format, and the beach baptism is a special service.