## (1) Prerequisites

The ordained minister was the proper administrator of baptism, but from the Middle Ages onwards it had been maintained that even in the minister a correct intention was required. For this contention there was very little patristic support: indeed, in a famous case it had been argued by some writers that baptism in jest is still a valid baptism if correctly administered. Similarly, the Schoolmen had not tried to press the doctrine of intention too far. Lombard taught that the observance of the true form was in itself a guarantee of intention. Thomas agreed, except in those obvious cases where the minister confessed to some quite different intention.<sup>2</sup> By the sixteenth century, however, a personal intention was regarded as necessary in each case, and in spite of a minority party, which alleged the authority of Catharinus, the Council of Trent adopted this stricter view,<sup>3</sup> and apologists like Bellarmine defended it. According to Bellarmine, the minister had not merely to do what the church did, but he had also to intend to do what the church did. This did not exclude altogether the baptism of heretics and schismatics, for in this respect the heretical minister could still intend to do what the church universal did.4 The mischief of the view was not the mere demand for intention. for it is reasonable that there should be an evident desire to do as Christ commanded if baptism is to be regarded as valid, but the demand for a personal intention, which means that the validity of the sacrament is suspended upon what are ultimately unknowable or unverifiable factors.

Calvin went quickly to the main point when in his *Antidote to Trent* he brought two objections against the traditionalist teaching: first, that it "did utterly overthrow whatever solid comfort believers have in the sacrament", and second, that it "suspended the truth of God on the will of man", thus destroying the divine objectivity of the sacrament.<sup>5</sup> The phrase "doing what the church does" Calvin dismissed as meaningless

<sup>1.</sup> Lombard, IV, Dist. 6 E.

<sup>2.</sup> S., III, qu., 64, 8.

<sup>3.</sup> C.D., Sess. VII, Sacr. can. 11.

<sup>4.</sup> T.B., p. 342.

<sup>5.</sup> Tracts, III, Antidote to Trent, VII, can. 11.

and silly, but his main fear was that the doctrine would enhance the status of the priest at the expense of the divine sovereignty on the one hand and the faith of the recipient on the other. The very same points were made by Jewel when the topic arose in his controversy with Harding. To suspend the validity of our baptism on the intention of the minister is to destroy its objectivity and certainty: "The heart of man is unsearchable. If we stay upon the intention of a mortal man, we may stand in doubt of our own baptism." Hooker, too, rejected out of hand the insistence upon an individual intention: "What a man's private mind is, as we cannot know, so neither are we bound to examine." Even if the minister later confessed that he had been a hypocrite or an infidel, Hooker did not think that this affected the administration, "for in these cases the known intent of the church doth suffice". But this kind of intention was, of course, only an obvious and superfluous generality.

From the Reformed standpoint the intention of the minister could never be regarded as in any way a decisive question. But the case was far otherwise in respect of the intention of the recipient, at any rate so far as it concerned the efficacy of the sacrament. In the one case, it was the Reformers' task to safeguard the objectivity of the ordinance against an undue exaltation of the human minister. In the other, it was their task to prevent that objectivity from degenerating into a guaranteed and automatic efficacy. They admitted that in the last resort only God can know the inward disposition of the recipient, but they also emphasized that some demonstration of fitness may legitimately be required at least in the case of adults.

A first and essential prerequisite was that the candidate for baptism should have at least an elementary understanding of what it was that he proposed. In other words, there must be instruction. In New Testament days, this instruction seems often to have been of the briefest, but of course those to whom the message came usually had a knowledge of the Old Testament background, and it was sufficient if they understood that the life and death and resurrection of Christ, to which they committed themselves in baptism, were the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies. But with the widening of the field of evangelism the Gospel came more and more to those who had no basic knowledge, and the need for instruction grew. The answer to the

<sup>6.</sup> Jewel, P.S., I, p. 139.

<sup>7.</sup> L.E.P., V, LVIII.

<sup>8.</sup> L.E.P., V, LVIII.

problem was the fully developed catechumenate, with its ceremonies as well as the intellectual instruction, and with a careful progression from the initiatory to the more advanced stage.

The conversion of Western Europe meant that baptismal instruction ceased to be a major activity of the church except in missionary districts, but it was still recognized to be a necessary prerequisite to normal adult baptism. Thomas considered the objection that life ought to precede teaching, but he answered that the faith which is demanded in an adult can come only by hearing. He divided the instruction into four types: the elementary given by any Christian, the more detailed by the priest, the moral by the sponsors, and the most profound by the bishop. The question acquired a new point in the sixteenth century with the great expansion overseas, and the Council of Trent insisted that in all normal cases, i.e. except where there was extreme sickness or other peril, there must be a long period of instruction and testing before the adult can be admitted to baptism. In

The Reformers had no great opportunity for missionary work, and therefore no very practical interest in the subject, except in the case of the Anabaptists. But a few adults were evangelized, mainly Jews and Lapps, and the need for prior instruction was strongly emphasized. Apart from an incidental reference to the catechumenate in Jewel, 12 the Anglicans did not even mention the subject, although when the confusion of the Civil War and the needs of the plantations made necessary a service of adult baptism, the usual preparation by instruction and fasting was clearly enjoined. The insistence upon thorough instruction was wholly in line with the Protestant call for a proper understanding of the sacrament, and indeed of the Christian faith as a whole.

A second and no less essential prerequisite was the renunciation of the former life and the public avowal of faith in Jesus Christ, often accompanied by the expression of a desire for baptism. This profession served as the external guarantee of the sincerity of the candidate. It probably developed out of New Testament examples like that of the eunuch, although in apostolic days the public manifestation of the Spirit often rendered it superfluous. The simple confession of faith was gradually expanded, especially with the conversion of pagans

<sup>9.</sup> S., III, qu. 71, 1.

<sup>10.</sup> Ibid., 71, 2.

<sup>11.</sup> C.T., II, 2, qu. 35, 64.

<sup>12.</sup> Jewel, P.S., I, p. 119.

and the development of heresies. The early liturgies make it plain that great importance was attached to the confession, for in some rites there was a threefold renunciation and profession in addition to the interrogatories.<sup>13</sup> The Lutheran, Reformed and Anglican offices all preserve something of this primitive feature.

The need for an expressed intention on the part of the adult recipient was keenly felt by the Schoolmen, in spite of the possible objections that the recipient is passive, that reiteration might be necessitated, and that baptism has primary reference to original sin for which there is no personal responsibility. For as Thomas pointed out, in answer to these criticisms, intention is equivalent to desire, which is self-evidently necessary, and in any case there can be no true penitence unless there is the will to repent. Even the passiveness of the recipient is a voluntary passiveness. Intention and determination to receive the sacrament were still demanded in the *Catechism* of Trent, and adults were required to answer the usual interrogatories and make the traditional profession: something which had to be done in person.

Of the Protestants, the Anabaptists laid the greatest emphasis upon the confession of individual faith, for of course their baptisms were exclusively adult baptisms. Calvin did not agree with the Anabaptists that repentance and faith must always precede the sacrament, but naturally he called for a public profession in all those whose age made them capable of it. Beza taught that those adults who could not render a clear account ought to be excluded. The same point was made by the English formularies and theologians. The Article of 1536, for example, laid down that the benefits of adult baptism depend upon "their coming thereunto perfectly and truly repentant, confessing and believing all the articles of the faith, and having firm trust and credence in the promises of God adjoined to the said sacrament". The King's Book, too, described belief, service, and the forsaking of sin as the human side of the baptismal covenant. Amongst individual writers Frith, Nowell, and Hooper all mentioned the need for an expressed repentance and

<sup>13.</sup> Cf. *Liturgy and Worship*, pp. 410 f.

<sup>14.</sup> S., III, qu. 68, 8.

<sup>15.</sup> C.T., II, 2, qu. 35.

<sup>16.</sup> C.T., II, 2, qu., 42.

<sup>17.</sup> C.T., II, 2, qu. 43.

<sup>18.</sup> Tracts, II, p. 87.

<sup>19.</sup> Q.R.C., 119.

<sup>20.</sup> Strype, Cranmer, I, p. 85.

<sup>21.</sup> K.B., p. 44.

<sup>22.</sup> B.R., p. 92.

<sup>23.</sup> Nowell, P.S., p. 87.

<sup>24.</sup> Hooper, P.S., I, p. 74.

faith, and Becon made it plain that "ungodly and wicked hypocrites, which feign repentance and faith, only receive outward baptism". <sup>25</sup> Jewel thought it only reasonable and right to demand of adult converts an "acknowledgement of the error in which they lived, and the seeking forgiveness of their former sins". <sup>26</sup> Hooker quoted some words of Isidorus on the twofold covenant of the Christian, demanding "an express confession of faith ... on the receipt of the first sacrament of faith". <sup>27</sup> It was everywhere agreed that the external confession could never be a perfect guarantee of internal disposition, but it was also agreed that it was the necessary prerequisite for an external administration, and that it could be charitably accepted as the evidence of true conversion, and therefore of a true intention.

But if instruction and profession were necessary in the case of adults, it is obvious that neither could be demanded where the recipient was still an infant. The Anabaptists deduced from this fact the conclusion that infants ought not to be baptized, but the deduction was not accepted either by the traditionalists or by the Reformers, who agreed that in the case of infants the requirements may in some sense or form be met by the sponsors.

The representing of infants by sponsors could hardly claim to be scriptural, but it was certainly of great antiquity, and it possibly derived from the Old Testament demand for two or three witnesses (as at the Jewish proselyte baptisms). 28 Where adults were baptized, the function of sponsors was more purely one of witness: to guarantee the sincerity of the candidate, to witness his profession, and to assist him in the new life. But when infants were baptized, their task became rather more onerous, for in a sense they had to represent the child as well as to undertake its future instruction. In the first centuries the parents themselves were usually the sponsors, 29 for, as Augustine said, the child believed in the parent. But others could also act on occasion: e.g. the master for infant-slaves, or a virgin for foundlings.<sup>30</sup> The hazards of death or apostasy during the great persecutions probably helped to popularize the practice of having at least one sponsor who was not the parent.<sup>31</sup> The number of sponsors was not fixed, but there would usually be two, or at the most three.

<sup>25.</sup> Becon, P.S., II, pp. 224-225.

<sup>26.</sup> Jewel, P.S., II, p. 1105.

<sup>27.</sup> L.E.P., V, LXIII, 1; LXIV. 4,

<sup>28.</sup> Daniel, op. cit., p. 412.

<sup>29.</sup> E.R., p. 202.

<sup>30.</sup> Wall, op. cit., I, p. 137.

<sup>31.</sup> Daniel, op. cit., p. 412.

During the Dark and Middle Ages many regulations were passed in relation to sponsors. The most revolutionary was that of the Council of Mentz in 815, which in defiance of all antiquity forbade parents to be sponsors for their own children.<sup>32</sup> The Penitential of Ecgbert laid it down that a man should receive a girl from the font, and a woman a boy.<sup>33</sup> The Council of York restricted the number of sponsors to two men and a woman for a boy, two women and a man for a girl, 34 but the Sarum Liturgy specified only two sponsors, and the Greek and Latin churches both regarded one as sufficient.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the most curious development was the postulating of a spiritual relationship between godparents and godchild and between the godparents themselves,36 a relationship which brought them within the prohibited degrees.<sup>37</sup> It is difficult to see what solid foundation there was for this theory, although it had no doubt the advantage of widening the field of ecclesiastical discipline and dispensation. Yet it was endorsed in the Catechism of Trent,<sup>38</sup> in which the rules concerning sponsors and their qualifications and duties were carefully set out.<sup>39</sup>

The office of godparent survived in all the Protestant churches in spite of Anabaptist objections and certain scruples on the part of the Reformed school. The Lutherans took over the traditional teaching very much as it stood, except that they demanded a real understanding on the part of the sponsors, and made a more definite effort to instruct them in their duties. The use of the vernacular was a great help in this connection. The Anglicans approached the matter in much the same way. In the early period Frith and Tyndale drew attention to the need for properly qualified sponsors who "should know their office and do it". Tyndale in particular complained bitterly of the laxity in instruction and the evasion by all parties of their responsibility: "And when the bishops no longer opposed the children one by one, the priests no longer taught them, but committed the charge to their godfathers and godmothers, and they to the father and mother, discharging themselves by their own authority within half an hour. And the father and mother taught them

<sup>32.</sup> E.R., p. 202.

<sup>33.</sup> E.R., p. 194.

<sup>34.</sup> E.R., p. 202.

<sup>35.</sup> Daniel, op. cit., p. 412.

<sup>36.</sup> And also the baptizer, as foreshadowed perhaps in the earlier prohibition of the kiss, E.R., p. 194.

<sup>37.</sup> E.R., p. 202.

<sup>38.</sup> C.T., II, 2, qu. 26.

<sup>39.</sup> C.T., II, 2, qu. 25-28.

<sup>40.</sup> Jacobs, op. cit., Baptism.

<sup>41.</sup> Frith, B.R., p. 95.

a monstrous Latin paternoster. And in process, as the ignorance grew, they brought them to confirmation straight from baptism, so that now ofttimes they be volowed and bishopped both in one day; that is, we be confirmed in blindness to be kept in ignorance for ever."<sup>42</sup> Rather strangely this demand for capable and conscientious sponsors was resisted by the Warham régime,<sup>43</sup> which no doubt feared a Lutheran infiltration, but the demand grew steadily, and Becon claimed that parents ought at least "to be suffered to be present at the baptism of their own children".<sup>44</sup> A good deal of ground was gained in the Prayer Book revisions, in which three sponsors were permitted, their duties were clearly and forcibly defined, and an instruction was appended. Parents were still not allowed to act as sponsors, but they were no longer forbidden to attend the service.

The Reformed group was not at all satisfied with the Lutheran and Anglican revision. The exclusion of parents from the office of sponsor was one of the most fiercely contested issues. Calvin and Knox both thought that the parent ought to be the chief sponsor,<sup>45</sup> and the Elizabethan Puritans pressed strongly for this reform.<sup>46</sup> In the words of the *Admonition*, parents themselves ought normally "to make rehearsal of their faith", deputies being permitted "only if upon necessary occasions and business they be absent".<sup>47</sup> Some Puritans apparently took the law into their own hands, for in 1584 the "Person" of Eastwell was cited for admitting a father as godparent.<sup>48</sup> The Separatists pressed for a complete abolition of the office, although what they probably had in mind was the replacement of the traditional godparents by parent-sponsors.<sup>49</sup>

The Anglicans could not accept the full Puritan demand, but they were ready to make concessions. In the *Advertisements* parents were given clear permission to attend, although not as sponsors. <sup>50</sup> To prohibit child-sponsorship, communicant-membership was made a necessary qualification for the office. <sup>51</sup> The apologists of the church maintained this position, complaining that the Puritans "betrayed a useless and over-busy fondness for innovation", <sup>52</sup> although in this case they were

<sup>42.</sup> Tyndale, P.S., III, p. 72.

<sup>43.</sup> Foxe, V, p. 592.

<sup>44.</sup> Becon, P.S., II, p. 228.

<sup>45.</sup> Knox, VI, p. 97, IV, p. 190.

<sup>46.</sup> Zürich Letters, P.S., I, 106.

<sup>47.</sup> P.M., p. 14.

<sup>48.</sup> Strype, Whitgifl, I, p. 277.

<sup>49.</sup> E.E.D., I, p. 143; S.P.R., II, 70.

<sup>50.</sup> Gee and Hardy, Documents, Advertisements, Articles for Administration, 9.

<sup>51.</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>52.</sup> Zürich Letters, P.S., II, 94.

obviously appealing to antiquity as well as to the best Reformed churches and the evident fitness of the arrangement. The real reason for the rejection of the demand was probably because it formed part of that wider programme of readjustment which the church, and especially the Queen, was not prepared to accept. In addition, the vociferousness of the Puritans no doubt helped to stiffen the opposition. The judgment of the *Advertisements* was finally ratified and enforced in the canons of 1604.

A primary duty of the godparents or sponsors was to make some guarantee of faith on behalf of the infant. All parties agreed concerning the demand for this guarantee, but the exact nature of it was the cause of considerable debate and even controversy. The whole issue narrowed down ultimately to the meaning and significance of interrogatories as administered in the case of infants, and of the – in some sense – representative or vicarious replies which were made by the sponsors.

Even in the early church, in which the adult service had first been applied to infants in this way, there was no great clarity or unanimity on the point. Augustine seems to have inclined to the view that the sponsor was professing his own faith and that of the church, in which the child itself participated.<sup>53</sup> In this he was followed by Thomas, who argued that lack of personal faith does not constitute an obstacle to baptism or baptismal grace so long as there is no positive unbelief.<sup>54</sup> Other possible views which emerged were that the child has a genuine faith, to which the sponsor gives expression, that the sponsor guarantees the future faith of the child, or that the faith confessed by the sponsor establishes its covenant-right to the sacrament. In practice, the latter view cannot easily be distinguished from that of Augustine and the Schoolmen, although there is a real difference in implication.

By the sixteenth century two points at any rate were clear: first, that in the traditional service the interrogatories were definitely administered to the infants themselves; and second that the infants were regarded as pledged to the faith of their sponsors. On the latter ground the Protestants were frequently accused of treachery to their baptismal sponsors",<sup>55</sup> although Woodman raised an interesting point when he asked to what faith infants are engaged if their sponsors are at heart

<sup>53.</sup> Wall, op. cit., I, p. 137.

<sup>54.</sup> S., III, qu. 71, 1.

<sup>55.</sup> Foxe, VIII, pp. m, 142, 450.

unbelievers. The answer would presumably be to the faith of the church as externally acknowledged by the sponsors.

Luther did not quarrel with the directing of the interrogatories to the infants, for as we have seen he believed that the infants do have a real faith of which the sponsors are simply the mouthpiece. In this view he was followed by quite a few of the earlier Anglicans, Becon, for example, and probably L. Ridley; but it was strongly opposed in Reformed circles, for Calvin did not think it proper to speak of faith in infants, or to exact a vicarious profession of that which by its very nature cannot be known. The Edwardian Anglicans were obviously influenced by this criticism. In place of the Lutheran teaching they inclined to the idea that godparents give a pledge of future repentance and faith of which mouthpiece. their own faith is as it were the surety. On this view, the questions ought properly to be addressed to the sponsors, but they undertake repentance and faith in the name of the child. In the words of Hooper, "the testimonies of the infant to be christened are examined in the behalf of the child", 56 and it is on the answer and pledge given that the child is declared to be an inheritor of the covenanted blessings.

The issue came to a head in England with the publication of the 1549 Prayer Book, in which the interrogatories were still addressed to the infant. To the more radical group this seemed to imply either the traditional or the Lutheran teaching. In any case, if the godparents were guarantors of the future faith of the child, as the Catechism seemed to suggest, it was to them that the questions ought properly to be directed. The malcontents were supported by Bucer, and they gained their point, for in the 1552 revision the questions were addressed to the sponsors, who answered in the name of the child. Taken in conjunction with the Catechism and the Confirmation service, the new form obviously suggests that the sponsors are engaging the child to a future individual faith, rather after the manner of Hooper's teaching. But of course the profession of the sponsors was still evidence of the child's title to the sacrament, and Lutherans could easily interpret the answers as the vicarious profession of a faith already present in the infant.

The Puritans of the Exile quickly became dissatisfied even with the revised order. Under the tutelage of the Swiss they had learned to regard all forms of infant interrogatories as "needless and trifling", and the

<sup>56.</sup> Hooper, P.S., I, pp. 129-130.

result of the negligent application to infants of the form "which in the beginning was used in the baptism of adult catechumens". <sup>57</sup> According to the Swiss view, all that was necessary was a confession made by the parent in his own name, in order to ensure a discriminate use of the sacrament. The Anglican form was unsatisfactory because the profession was still made in the name of the child. The sponsors were asked to make vicarious promises which even they themselves found it too hard to perform. <sup>58</sup>

The opposition gathered strength during the reign of Elizabeth, and with the support of Beza<sup>59</sup> the Puritans pressed for the complete abolition of the interrogatories, or at any rate for the replacement of the words "Dost thou believe" by "Do you believe", in order to make it clear that the question is addressed only to the sponsors.<sup>60</sup> Grindal himself favoured the alteration, for he confessed that he tolerated the interrogatories to infants only "until the Lord shall give us better times".<sup>61</sup> The point was mentioned in all the Puritan tracts and protests. Marprelate scoffed at the bishops' English which construed "My desire is that I may be baptized in this faith" to mean "My desire is, not that I myself, but that this child, whereunto I am a witness, may be baptized in this faith".<sup>62</sup> Some Puritans altered the service simply on their own authority, for Hall of Bury St. Edmunds was "indited" on this charge,<sup>63</sup> and Settles imprisoned.<sup>64</sup> The matter was finally raised both in the Millenary Petition and also at the Hampton Court Conference.

The main objections to the interrogatories were stated by Cartwright in his *Defence of the Admonition*. Historically, he could not agree that "these interrogatories and demands ministered to infants have so many grey hairs as Mr. Doctor would have us believe", for his Dionysius was "a counterfeit and start-up", and Augustine did not favour the Anglican view. <sup>65</sup> Theologically, he regarded it as a profanation and "foolish toying" to "ask questions of an infant which cannot answer". <sup>66</sup> He accepted the possibility of a special work of the Holy Spirit, but not of our knowledge of that work: "It can no more be precisely said that it hath faith, than it may be said precisely elected." But even if we did know that the child

<sup>57.</sup> Strype, Grindal, I, Appendix 41.

<sup>58.</sup> Grindal, P.S., p. 349.

<sup>59.</sup> P.M., p. 48.

<sup>60.</sup> Strype, Whitgift, I, pp. 386 f.

<sup>61.</sup> Zürich Letters, P.S., I, 75.

<sup>62.</sup> Marprelate Tracts, p. 373.

<sup>63.</sup> S.P.R., I, 111.

<sup>64.</sup> S.P.R., I, 138.

<sup>65.</sup> Whitgift, P.S., III, p. 110.

<sup>66.</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>67.</sup> Loc. cit.

has faith, there is no point in pretending that it answers to that faith: all that may be done is to "ask those that presented the child, and not the infant, whether it were faithful", as Augustine seems to envisage.<sup>68</sup> He could not agree that the sponsors ought to make pledges which it was not in their power to fulfil. All that Cartwright himself recommended was a simple confession of faith on the part of the sponsors themselves.<sup>69</sup>

The Anglican defence was first conducted by Whitgift, who condemned the Puritan demand as "unsound, smelling of divers errors, contrary to the use of the primitive church, impious also and inconvenient ... the direct way to that heresie of the Anabaptistes".70 Apart from abuse, his main weapon was the appeal to antiquity; although he did make one useful point, that we ought not to seal the evangelical promises without a corresponding obligation on the part of the child.<sup>71</sup> As he saw it, the sponsors accepted on behalf of the child that repentance and faith which it would later take up for itself. He did not exploit the argument, but it was adopted by Hooker. As Hooker saw it, the church cannot waive its usual conditions in the case of infants, but the conditions ought to be accepted for the time being by the sponsors as their spiritual guardians.<sup>72</sup> At the Hampton Court Conference the Bishop of Winchester returned to the older notion of a vicarious faith: "Just as infants have sinned vicariously, so they can believe vicariously."73 At bottom, this did not differ greatly from the Reformed view, that the child has a right to baptism by virtue of its Christian descent. The main difference was that the Reformed party would not speak of any faith of the child, either actual or vicarious.

An impartial consideration suggests that the area of agreement between Anglicans and Puritans was far greater than that of disagreement. It was agreed that there is no actual faith in the child (apart from a special and secret operation of the Spirit). It was agreed that in some sense it is the faith of the parent which establishes the title to baptism. It was agreed that some profession of faith ought to be made by the sponsors. It was also agreed that the child was baptized to a future repentance and faith. The only disputed point was the propriety of allowing the sponsors to guarantee that future repentance and

<sup>68.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>69.</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>70.</sup> Strype, Whitgifl, III, Appendix 16.

<sup>71.</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>72.</sup> L.E.P., V, LXIV, 4.

<sup>73.</sup> S.S., p. 65.

faith. The Puritans did not think this right or necessary: as an infant the child enjoys the privileges of the covenant simply by descent, and without any vicarious undertakings. But the Anglicans took the opposite view. The sponsors are the spiritual guardians of the child, and as such they have a duty to act for the child, and as it grows to years of discretion to recall to it both the promises sealed and also the pledges given. In short, the Anglicans retained the interrogatories, not merely because they were ancient, but because they set out the baptismal conditions, tightened the bond between sponsor and sponsored, and provided a starting-point for subsequent catechetical instruction. It is to be regretted that for polemical reasons this small difference of emphasis was magnified into a dominant and malignant issue, with all the misrepresentation and bitterness which that inevitably involved.

## (2) Matter and Form

Baptism necessarily demands a liquid, and from the earliest times it had been recognized that water is the proper and fitting element to use, as was the obvious custom in the New Testament period. Various possible alternatives were considered by the Schoolmen: fire, for example, and oil: but, as Thomas pointed out, water corresponds most closely to the effects of the sacrament. Its almost universal accessibility was emphasized in the *Catechism* of Trent. The Reformers were impressed both by the correspondence between water and that which is "figured and represented", "the bloud of Christ", and also by its simplicity and ubiquity. "What is so common as water?" asked Latimer in his homely way. "Every foul ditch is full of it. There we begin."

In face of this unanimity it might seem unnecessary that there should be any discussion of the element, but various small points had cropped up from time to time. The first concerned the type of water used. In the first, period running water was usually preferred, probably in imitation of the baptism in Jordan. But it was understood that any form of water was sufficient. As Tertullian pointed out, it does not make any difference whether we are baptized in a sea or a pool, a stream or a fount,

<sup>74.</sup> S., III, qu. 66, 3.

<sup>75.</sup> C.T., II, 2, qu. 7.

<sup>76.</sup> B.P.S., 47.

<sup>77.</sup> Latimer, P.S., II, p. 127.