Toward a Renewed Theology and Practice of Confirmation

by

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and the Theology Department of the Toronto School of Theology
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Abstract

Confirmation has often been viewed as a rite in need of a theology. Whether it is understood as a sacrament within Roman Catholicism or a reaffirmation of Baptism in Protestant denominations, there is no clear command in the New Testament directing the Church to confirm its baptized members. A commonly held view is that Confirmation developed in the Western Church from a gradual separation of handlaying and chrismation from the baptismal washing. This dissertation, while reflecting the author’s Lutheran context and convictions, seeks to make an original contribution towards the renewal of the theology and practice of Confirmation. It begins by suggesting Biblical images from Scripture which, while not commanding that the Church confirm, may nevertheless inform the practice and the theology of the rite. Next, it undertakes a comprehensive examination of the history of the development of Confirmation in the West by reviewing the relevant historical, theological and liturgical sources in order to offer new insights on older commonly held assumptions. It then suggests new perspectives by both Catholics and Protestants concerning a broader Sacramental economy which, through ecumenical dialogue, the Church’s Western traditions might come to welcome and appreciate more fully the role of Confirmation in the Church’s life and ministry. This is supported by an examination of a wide range of contemporary
Roman Catholic and Protestant rites of Baptism and Confirmation which, even in their diversity, point to significant degrees of common understanding. Thus, by more deeply appreciating the theology from previous centuries concerning the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, it may be hoped that both Protestants and Roman Catholics might not only mutually recognize Baptism, but also Confirmation in each other’s churches. And as members are mutually recognized as being fully incorporated into the “Apostolate of the Laity,” this project offers new opportunities which might eventually make possible the joint mutual reception of members at the Sacrament of the Holy Communion. To this end, this dissertation also offers suggestions which might be utilized in ecumenical dialogue. In short, a renewed theology and practice of Confirmation can offer a concrete ecumenical step towards greater catholicity in the Church.
Acknowledgments

My Ph.D. studies which have culminated in this dissertation would have been impossible without the care, devotion, and love of my wife, Karen Foil Russ Shaw who has spent countless hours proofreading and offering constructive comments to help me to make for smoother reading of my manuscripts, papers and articles during the course of my advanced degree studies. In addition, our daughters Sarah Grace Russ and Taylor Jeanette Russ along with Karen were willing to relocate to Toronto from our home in North Carolina in order that I might pursue my doctoral studies at the Toronto School of Theology in the University of Toronto. Without their help and the financial assistance of my parents Maude and C.P. who supported from a distance my entire foray into college, seminary and advanced degree work, these endeavors would have been impossible.

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Manda Vrkljan who is the Kelly Library Article Coordinator. Manda spent numerous hours in her work with the Kelly Library at the University of St. Michael’s College, in obtaining articles and sections of printed materials and making them available to me by way of email. Another is Debbie Lineberger from whom I was always able to request articles and materials from at the Lineberger Library at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. There is Martin Otts a research librarian at the Patrick Beaver Memorial Library of Hickory, North Carolina whom I called upon continually to obtain manuscripts and materials through interlibrary loan.

Finally, there were the catechism students whom I have had the privelege of teaching and preparing for Confirmation during my time as a seminarian, internship and as a parish pastor under call as as an Interim Pastor. For all of these:

*Ad honorum et ad memoriam soli Deo Gloria et memiens quoniam Dominus Iesus “dixit ergo eis iterum pax vobis sicut misit me Pater et ego mitto vos hoc cum dixisset insuflavit et dicit eis accipite Spiritum Sanctum.”* (Jn 20:21-22)
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# Abbreviations

- **AG**: *Ad Gentes* (Second Vatican Council’s *Decree on The Mission Activity of the Church*, 1965)
- **ALC**: American Lutheran Church
- **AELC**: Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches
- **AME**: African Methodist Episcopal Church
- **AMEZ**: African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
- **AUMP**: African Union Methodist Protestant Church
- **BAS**: *Book of Alternative Service* (Anglican Church of Canada, 1985)
- **BCP 1928**: *Book of Common Prayer 1928* (Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States)
- **BCP 1962**: *Book of Common Prayer 1962* (Anglican Church of Canada)
- **BCP 1979**: *Book of Common Prayer 1979* (Episcopal Church, USA)
- **BCW**: *Book of Common Worship* (PCUSA and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1993)
- **BEM Order**: *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (World Council of Churches Faith and Order Paper, no. 111, 1982)
- **BM**: *Bobbio Missal*
- **BRBF**: *Baptism and Renewal of Baptismal Faith* (The United Church of Canada, 1986)
- **BW**: *Book of Worship* (United Church of Christ, 1986)
- **CCM**: *Called to Common Mission* (ELCA and ECUSA, 2000)
- **CD**: *Church Dogmatics*, by Karl Barth
- **CFO**: Commission on Faith and Order, World Council of Churches
- **CJ**: *The Church and Justification* (1994)
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CGP</td>
<td>Celebrate God’s Presence: A Book of Services for The United Church of Canada (2000)</td>
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<td>CME</td>
<td>Christian Methodist Episcopal Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRCNA</td>
<td>Christian Reformed Church in North America</td>
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<td>CW 8</td>
<td>Contemporary Worship 8 (1975)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DV</td>
<td>Dei Verbum (Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 1965)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECUSA</td>
<td>Episcopal Church USA</td>
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<td>ELCA</td>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church in America</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELCIC</td>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELLC</td>
<td>English Language Liturgical Consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELW</td>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELCA, 2006)</td>
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<td>GS</td>
<td>Gaudium et Spes (Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965)</td>
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<td>GS 571</td>
<td>Gelasian Sacramentary (571 CE)</td>
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<td>GTG</td>
<td>Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal (PCUSA, 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICET</td>
<td>International Consultation on English Texts</td>
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<td>ILCW</td>
<td>Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ALC, AELC, LCA, and LCMS working group on the LBW)</td>
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<td>LBW</td>
<td>Lutheran Book of Worship (1978)</td>
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<td>LCA</td>
<td>Lutheran Church in America</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCMS</td>
<td>Lutheran Church Missouri Synod</td>
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<td>LG</td>
<td>Lumen Gentium (Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964)</td>
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<td>LSB</td>
<td>Lutheran Service Book (LCMS, 2006)</td>
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<td>LW</td>
<td>Lutheran Worship (LCMS, 1982)</td>
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<td>Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>DM</td>
<td><em>De Mysterii</em> (Ambrose of Milan)</td>
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<td>MBW</td>
<td><em>Moravian Book of Worship</em> (Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church, 1995)</td>
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<td>MG</td>
<td><em>Missale Gothicum</em> (Gothic Missal)</td>
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<td>MGV</td>
<td><em>Missale Gallicanum Vetus</em> (Old Gallican Missal)</td>
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<td>MH</td>
<td><em>Methodist Hymnal</em> (Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1905)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NALC</td>
<td>North American Lutheran Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCCB</td>
<td>National Conference of Catholic Bishops</td>
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<tr>
<td>OR XI</td>
<td><em>Ordo Romanus XI</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>PCUSA</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCUS</td>
<td>Reformed Church in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td><em>De Sacramentis</em> (Ambrose of Milan)</td>
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<td>SB</td>
<td><em>Service Book</em> (The United Church of Canada, 1969)</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td><em>Sacrosanctum Concilium</em> (Second Vatican Council’s <em>Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy</em>, 1963)</td>
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<td>SHRC</td>
<td>Special Hymnal Review Committee (LCMS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAME</td>
<td>Union American Methodist Episcopal Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCC</td>
<td>United Church of Christ (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMBW</td>
<td><em>United Methodist Book of Worship</em> (United Methodist Church, 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMC</td>
<td>United Methodist Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCCB</td>
<td>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops</td>
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<tr>
<td>VR 316</td>
<td><em>Vaticanus Reginensis</em> 316</td>
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WCC  World Council of Churches

WD  *The Waterloo Declaration* (Anglican Church of Canada and ELCIC, 1999)
List of Appendices

Appendix I: Layers of the Redacted *Apostolikā Paradosis*
Chapter 1
Introduction

Handlaying and consignation with chrism have been practiced for nearly two millennia in both Western and Eastern Christianity. Yet, by the beginning of the 9th century a second rite of handlaying and consignation with chrism began to be practiced in the West. While there were reasons the Western Church was led to employ this second rite, there is no clear “dominical,” much less a Scriptural, warrant for such a practice after an extended period had passed following Baptism.

William Bausch was led to write an entire chapter in his *A New Look at the Sacraments* entitled “Confirmation: In Search of a Theology.” While Kenan Osborne suggests that this is overstating the matter a bit, it would be fair to say that the kernel of truth is exacerbated by the fact that no tradition, Protestant or Roman Catholic, has a grasp on a clearly articulated theology of Confirmation. Since many of the concerns bound up in the rationale for Confirmation have increasingly become connected to the efficacy of infant Baptism, it is impossible to escape the fact that Baptism and Confirmation are inextricably linked. This is reinforced by the fact that the rite of Baptism practiced in the Patristic Period down to the present (especially in Catholicism) has included, among other gestures: washing, handlaying, chrismation with oil, and some sort of signing. These gestures, along with other gestures and liturgical actions, continued to evolve over the early centuries. What seems apparent is that a redundant action of handlaying and consignation with chrism, separated often by years from the baptismal rite, is derived from the liturgical gestures in the baptismal

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1 “Dominical warrant,” from the Latin *Dominus* (Lord), meaning commanded by Christ.

rite already in use in the early centuries of the Church. But there is much more to the story of development.

This thesis seeks to make an original contribution towards a renewed theology and practice of Confirmation which could be utilized in future ecumenical dialogue. While it is admittedly advanced from the vantage point of a Lutheran pastor and scholar, with all that this can imply by way of theological perspectives, ecclesial location, and pastoral concerns, it is offered in the spirit of generous ecumenicity and respect. Confirmation, as it has been practiced among Western Christians, has a very long, complex, and often confusing history. There has often been debate among Church historians and liturgical theologians as to when or how Confirmation began to emerge as a Sacrament separated from the Sacrament of Baptism. As a result, Confirmation itself has lacked a fully coherent theology justifying its practice. In some cases, popular piety has continued to compel many traditions to observe Confirmation rites, and this piety (rather than theology) has justified the practice. Confirmation has historically been retained by traditions in Western Christianity which offer Baptism to younger persons, who are often unable to speak for themselves. Over the centuries, Confirmation thus became a strategy for some denominations to argue for the continued practice of baptizing infants.

At the same time, Confirmation, however it is understood, has inextricably served as a link between Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Thus, the ordering of the Sacraments has varied depending on the historical context, prevailing denominational practice, or even the particular canonical or pastoral reality. In some circumstances, Confirmation has been viewed as a rite which permitted confirmands admission to Holy Communion. In other circumstances Holy Communion was seen as nourishing a person in preparation to receive
Confirmation. Therefore, depending on the sequence, the theology of Confirmation has often been used to justify the preferred ordering of the Sacraments at a particular moment in time. As a result, discussions about the practice of Confirmation are inseparable from debates over baptismal practice.

In light of these complexities, along with the persistent desire to retain the observance of a rite of Confirmation among those Western Traditions which practice the Baptism of younger persons, denominations would benefit from – indeed, do well to heed – the discussion of scholars from different church traditions. Such engagement and consideration of ecumenical scholarship could lead to a more coherent systematic theology, informing a liturgical praxis which is more doctrinally and canonically sound. Thus, an overarching task of this dissertation is to provide some theological considerations toward the goal of a fuller systematic theology of Confirmation.

While the practice of Baptism has clear Scriptural warrant (even if its theological meanings and pastoral praxis can be viewed as debatable), theologians supporting the practice of Confirmation as a rite have found it difficult to find a clear Scriptural text to support the practice. Yet, as we will see in Chapter 2, a thorough survey of relevant Scriptural texts can offer rich biblical resources which could begin to inform a theology of Confirmation. In Chapter 3 we undertake a comprehensive examination of the history of handlaying (with or without the use of oil) in the early centuries of the Church until the dawn of the Reformation. Chapter 4 will continue with a similar study of the history of a redundant handlaying, both with and without chrismation, from the dawn of the Reformation to the present. From these three chapters we will seek to offer new contributions to our understanding of Confirmation, and how both Scripture and the historical tradition contain
new insights for the theology and practice of Confirmation. In the succeeding chapters we will explore the following questions:

- How does Confirmation fit within a broader Sacramental economy?
- How is the Holy Spirit at work in the rites of Confirmation used by various Protestant denominations and Roman Catholics and are there some general considerations which these traditions might consider with respect to the practice of Confirmation?
- What developments in recent decades might assist the Church in moving toward greater ecumenical convergence on Confirmation?

Each of these questions will be taken up in Chapters 5-7 respectively, in order to offer new perspectives on the theology and practice of Confirmation, with concrete suggestions for what a reformed rite of Confirmation might look like in the 21st Century. In Chapter 9, we will also examine when Confirmation is appropriate and, finally, gather together some of the things we have learned from the previous chapters in order to reach some definitive conclusions for use in future ecumenical dialogue. In short, the ultimate goal of this dissertation is that of a renewed theology and practice of Confirmation, including concrete ecumenical, liturgical and pastoral recommendations, directed towards greater catholicity in the Church.
Chapter 2
The Witness of Scripture

2.1 Rationale for Beginning with the Scriptures
It is appropriate that we begin our study with historical liturgical texts, and there is an important sense in which Scripture bears witness to the entire economy of salvation which provides the theology for the historical liturgical texts. Roman Catholics at the Council of Trent and in both Vatican Councils affirmed the primary role of Holy Scripture in formulating Dogmas and Sacred Doctrine of the Church. Lutherans confessionally affirm that all things in the Church are to be normed by Scripture. From the Reformed traditions, John Calvin understood that the Church “venerates” Scripture because of its authority. The “Thirty-nine Articles of Religion” for the Anglican Communion recognizes that Scripture contains “all things necessary to salvation.” In Wesley’s abridged version of the “Articles of Religion” the same was affirmed. Methodists within the Churches of the Worldwide Methodist Communion—including the United Methodist Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, African Union Methodist Protestant Church, Union American Methodist Episcopal Church, and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church—all adhere to this latter Article. Moravians likewise assert the

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primacy of Holy Scripture.⁶ Since the Church retains a primary place for Scripture in her theology, we begin our study on this basis.

I would submit that Confirmation separated from Baptism enjoys no direct Scriptural, much less a dominical, warrant.⁷ Yet, there are canonical texts which have informed and continue to inform a theology of both. We will examine some relevant texts in four groups: 1) the role of the work of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation; 2) blessing and the gesture of handlaying; 3), anointing with oil; 4) endeavoring to keep the precepts of the Lord. The last category is admittedly a bit ambiguous, but texts with this generalized tone have often informed the haphazard theology around Confirmation. In so doing I am suggesting that rather than attempting to identify any text of Scripture which sees Confirmation in any way as an ordinance, per se,⁸ we may look for how Scripture might inform a possible theology and practice of Confirmation. In so doing, I hope to make new contributions to the Church’s understanding of the scriptural basis of Confirmation.

The history of Israel was, in part, one of struggle against what it saw as the superstition and worship of nature exhibited by her neighbors. For Israel, creation was not comprised of deities with magical powers. There was no God but Yahweh, who had richly designed the created order and who was active in Israel’s history. Historical events, rather than nature, became the place where Israel saw her God. Ritualized remembrance, rather than a sacramental religion, enabled Israel to enact the sacred history of God’s divine acts.⁹

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⁷ “Dominical warrant” refers to the principle of being commanded by the “Lord” (“Dominus”), Christ himself, in scripture.

⁸ “Ordinance” is used here to refer to a scriptural command (order or rule) which the Church must follow.
Israel’s God acts without the mediation of signs. However, historically-rooted rituals reminded Israel of the sacred promise of her God. Law was part of a covenant which God had made with Abraham and his descendants. Oaths and promises ritually enacted were rites which took on sacred aspects. While not regarded as “sacramental” *per se*, as we will see, Israel understood the power of symbol. In this and the two succeeding chapters, we will examine some Biblical images in the canon which would come to shape the theology and practice of the Western Sacrament of Confirmation.

### 2.2 Texts related to the work of the Holy Spirit

The work of the Holy Spirit as described in Scripture is inextricably tied to the symbols of water, washing, Baptism and the Paschal Mystery. In the pre-history of the first Chapters of Genesis, the “*Ruah*” or the Spirit of God moves over the primordial waters of chaos. In Ezekiel 36:23-26, the Prophet declares that God will gather again the peoples scattered in the Diaspora and cleanse this people with water renewing them with “a new spirit.” Leviticus 15:5-13, Isaiah 1:16-17 and Ezekiel 36 contain imagery and actions which describe a practice of ritual washing. In Leviticus the people had been commanded to wash themselves and their clothes so that they may be clean from ritual defilement. Isaiah and Ezekiel in turn interpreted Leviticus.

The baptism of the Essenes, John the Baptizer, and ultimately of Jesus of Nazareth find their roots in Ezekiel and Isaiah, informing a historically accurate practice preserved in the

---


10 “*Ruah,*” from the Hebrew, meaning breath or wind of God.
Fourth Gospel where Jesus himself baptized (John 3:22, 26; 4:1). We also see washing imagery in Psalm 51. Isaiah 11:1-2 describes the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit, which a coming descendant of David will receive. Interpreted christologically, they are fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. The Spirit’s descent upon the Son consequentially empowers disciples who are joined to Christ in Baptism. This Spirit is continually active, enabling the faithful to show forth the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit first attributed to Christ.

In 2 Esdras 14 the Spirit is said to be at work in the preparation and transcription of the Septuagint. Historically speaking, this text would later inform Justin the Martyr’s description of Jesus’ Baptism as the Holy Spirit descending as fire upon the waters. Melito of Sardis, in an extant work, would link the Spirit’s presence in the waters of Baptism and the σφραγίδιον (seal) given in the baptismal washing. Tertullian in De Baptismo would make an argument that suggested a doctrine of pneumatological “Real Presence” in the baptismal waters, yet this made Tertullian quite unique among the fathers. Tertullian intentionally downplayed a

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12 “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”

13 “A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse . . . . The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” (Isaiah 11:1-2).

14 Justin, S. Justini philosophi et martyris, cum Trypnone Judaeo dialogus, ed. William Trollope (Cambridge: J. Hall, 1846), Ch 88, 39-40. G. W. H. Lampe would argue in the twentieth century that Justin was taking liberty with the Biblical Baptism narratives, yet despite Lampe’s claims one will see that Justin’s vivid image of fire upon the water was informed by the imagery of 2 Esdras. See G. W. H. Lampe, The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1951), 34.

15 Again Lampe was critical of Melito’s hermeneutic. Yet, I would submit that Lampe failed to appreciate that Melito and many of the Church fathers were interpreting texts with a pneumatological connection to water found in the Septuagint. Lampe would go so far as to argue that such an unscriptural understanding would lead to the later development of a baptismal doctrine approaching “that of ‘Real Presence’ of the Spirit in the font.” Ibid., 115.
reception of the Holy Spirit through baptismal washing by linking the angel at the Pool of Bethsaida in John 5 with the Spirit’s presence in the water for our healing.16

As we consider other Scriptural images, we see that in I Corinthians 12:12-13 Paul speaks of the unity of the members of Christ’s body brought about by having been joined to Christ in Baptism. For Paul, to be joined to Christ in Baptism is to be called by the one Spirit. The Baptism of Jesus in the four Gospel accounts serves to remind the New Testament Church that Baptism into Jesus also means being baptized into the Holy Spirit. Luke’s community apparently was accustomed to baptizing in “the name of Jesus.” Matthew 28:19-20 commands that Baptism be done in the triune name. The differing baptismal formulas in Matthew and Luke demonstrate that the early Church had more than one baptismal formula. Yet, even when one was baptized into “the name of Jesus,” from the perspective of Luke-Acts, one was baptized into the Holy Spirit in which Jesus himself is baptized, and with which he “baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire.” There is a thorough-going pneumatology throughout the narrative of Luke, as well as a Paschal theme, running through this entire gospel narrative.17 Throughout the second volume of Luke-Acts, the Paschal and pneumatological shape is continually re-articulated throughout the twenty-eight chapters as to compel many to refer to the Book of Acts as the “Book of the Holy Spirit.”18

The Baptizer in John 1 testifies that the one upon whom the Spirit descends and remains is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. The Baptizer testifies that this has

16 Tertullian, “De baptismo,” in Opera omnia: cum selectis precedentium editionum lectionibus variorumque commentariorum. Libri ab auctore nondum montanista scripti, inter quos integer de oratione liber ex recensione muratorii, ed. J. P. Migne (Garnier, 1844), caput v, column 1204-06.


indeed taken place and this Jesus is the Son of God. In Chapter 3 Jesus reflects with Nicodemus on the role of the Spirit in rebirth. In John 14-16 in the “farewell discourse” Jesus promises the disciples that the Father will send upon them the Paraclete. In John 19:31-37, as soldiers break the legs of the crucified, they find that Jesus was already dead, and pierce his side with a spear. Theologically, this links Jesus with the sacrificial Paschal Lamb, since Exodus 12:46 had commanded the Israelites not to break any bones of the lamb for the Passover. Blood from Jesus’ pierced side is connected to the consecration with the baptismal waters for all time.\(^{19}\)

I John 5:6 speaks of water and then blood, in an apparent reference to the baptismal bath and the Eucharist. Bultmann noted that this theological imagery is often conflated with the theology of the Fourth Gospel where the Evangelist speaks of blood and then water.\(^{20}\) While echoing the pneumatology of the Fourth Evangelist, I John reorders the substances flowing from Jesus’ side. For I John the Spirit is that which makes this testimony true. Such a claim may well prevent the author’s words from being dismissed by pseudo-gnostic or Montanist-like teachers in the Johanine community. Interpreted sacramentally, 1 John seems to support a later instruction in Didache 9:5 to a Syrian community of Jewish converts: no one comes to the Eucharist, except by way of Baptism. The Gospel of Matthew was likely

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\(^{19}\) This consecration has been interpreted pneumatologically by theologians and commentators, including hymnwriters and many in the Lutheran Pietist movement. See, for example, the hymn “From God the Father Virgin Born,” which contains the line in the first stanza: “... by death the font to consecrate... “ The text is an 11th Century Latin Office Hymn, translated by John M. Neal. *Lutheran Book of Worship*, [LBW], ed. ILCW (Minneapolis, MN and Philadelphia, PA: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), hymn # 83. In the early eighteenth century, Count Zinzendorf, commenting on this text, would speak of the “seven Holy Spirits” going forth from the cleft side of Jesus to strike human hearts with living sparks” in Nicolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf, *Twenty-one Discourses or Dissertations Upon the 'Augsburg Confession,'* trans. Francis Okely (London: W. Bowyer, J. Beecroft, 1753), 39. The spear-pierced side ties the Passion of John with Zechariah 12:10; 13:3. Thus, the prophet's words and the Passion are tied to the promised Paraclete and the pierced side by which Jesus becomes the fount of living water as discussed in Raymond Edward Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1st ed., vol. 2, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 954-55.

used by the same community. In Matthew 22:1-14’s parable of the “Wedding Feast,” one without a wedding garment is thrown out. This astonishing twist may have been a warning not to receive one who had not first been baptized and thus clothed in Christ for the Eucharistic foretaste of the wedding banquet to come.

In John 20:19-23, Jesus passes through locked doors and pours out the Holy Spirit through exsufflation. A week later, with Thomas present, Jesus appears again. Yet Jesus does not repeat the exsufflation for the Paraclete. Instead, Jesus’ sending of the Paraclete, promised in the “farewell discourse,” seems to imply an outpouring which is not limited to a specific moment in time. It is continual. At the “first Sunday appearance,” the exsufflation is tied to the authority to loose and bind, i.e. the authority to forgive sins, and the dominical promise of forgiveness and the authority given to the ordained to offer the Sacrament of Penance. In contrast, the “office of the keys,” given to Peter in Matthew 16:19, is a gift to the whole community of the confessing faithful for mutual consolation.

In summary, we see in the Scriptures numerous activities of the Holy Spirit as that which: 1) washes; 2) offers the sevenfold gifts interpreted as connected to the person of Jesus of Nazareth; 3) acts as the overarching theme of Luke and Acts; 4) is continually poured out as the promised Paraclete; 5) consecrates the baptismal waters through the blood which flowed from Christ’s side on the cross; 6) draws us to Baptism by which we are clothed in Christ for the Great Wedding Banquet of the Eucharist. Thus it is by way of Baptism that one comes to the Lord’s Table.

2.3 Blessing and the Gesture of Handlaying

There are several places in both the Hebrew Scriptures and in the New Testament where handlaying, either with one or two hands, is utilized in connection with a blessing. In Genesis
25 Esau casually gives up his own birthright to his brother Jacob, to satisfy his own appetite. Paul Galbreath suggests that this story is in fact a modern parable about the human desire to fulfill our own needs at any price. Yet the Prophet Isaiah would also remind us that the God of Israel and Judah will accomplish that which he purposes. In Genesis 26 Isaac blesses Jacob with handlaying. In Genesis 28, after Esau has taken up with Canaanite women, Isaac charges his youngest son Jacob to take as his wife one of the daughters of Laban from his mother’s family. The concern here is not one of ethnicity, but one of faith. Postexilic generations would struggle mightily with the question of foreign wives who worshiped foreign pagan gods. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:11-21 offers guidance to new converts to Christianity whose spouses are not Christian, even when children are involved.

In Genesis 47 an aged Jacob wishes not to be buried in Goshen. This is attested to by Joseph who grasps “under his father’s thigh” in what is in fact an oral “last will and testament.” In the following chapter, Jacob sits up in his deathbed and tells his son Joseph that he will make Joseph’s sons Ephraim and Manasseh as much his own as Reuben and Simeon. Joseph deliberately positions Manasseh at the right hand side of a near blind Israel, while Ephraim is positioned at the left. The implication is clear. The eldest son, who should by all means receive the inheritance and the blessing from the power hand, is in the position

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22 The images of snow and rain are used sacramentally in Isaiah 55:10-12: “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven . . . so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”


24 The right hand was regarded as the hand of power and preference.
as his birth order would dictate. Semitic custom is again turned on its head and Israel’s greatest blessing is given to the younger under Israel’s crisscrossed arms. This is more than an irrevocable blessing; it is in fact an adoption. The blessing and adoption continue the promises of God revealed though the elements and visions in the narrative. Descendants of both Ephraim and Manasseh would intermarry and be viewed by their Judean cousins as despised half-breeds, while they still regarded themselves to be legitimate descendants of the adoptive sons of Jacob. A Samaritan woman would remind Jesus of this lineage at Jacob’s well in John 4. The use of handlaying in Genesis 48 as both blessing and adoption would come to have profound implications in the theology of handlaying in the Ante-Nicene Church.

In Numbers 11, the Lord commands Moses to gather seventy of the elders of Israel at the tent. There the Lord takes some of the spirit from Moses and puts it on the people. In contrast in Deuteronomy 34, Joshua, son of Nun, is already full of the spirit of wisdom because the Spirit was conveyed in a handlaying. Yet, often in the Hebrew Scriptures a portion of the Spirit is transferred from one to others without the mention of any mediating human act or gesture. In the Elijah and Elisha story of 2 Kings 2 there is a recalling of the story from Numbers, which we examined above. Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. After Elijah is taken up and Elisha crosses the Jordan, 2 Kings tells us that a double share of God’s Spirit has been transferred to Elisha without mediated gesture. The Spirit serves to equip Elisha that he might continue in carrying out the prophetic ministry as God’s mouthpiece among a people who have increasingly forgotten the promises of the God of Israel.

In Mark 10 and its parallels, Jesus blesses children. In Luke 18 even βρέφη are brought to Jesus. A “handlaying” is not specifically mentioned. Instead, the βρέφη are brought that Jesus αὐτῶν ἀπηταν. In all three accounts, the disciples are chastised and told μὴ κωλύετε the children. In Matthew 19, the story takes place within a larger block of teaching after the Evangelist specifically mentions that Jesus ἐπορεύθη ἐκεῖθεν. This serves as a transition to the next vignette in which Jesus is engaged by one who asks what he must “do to have eternal life.” In Matthew the handlaying is both a blessing and a dismissal of the children before Jesus ἐπορεύθη ἐκεῖθεν. In Mark and in Luke, the very placement of the story serves to emphasize to the disciples their calling to be among the least and the lowest, even as they argue who is the greatest. Receiving the “least” will not grant the disciples any great rank amid their quest for status. Beyond the liminal role of children, who serve as a model for the liminal status of disciples, the expectation of the followers of Jesus is to receive children. In receiving children, one receives Jesus, and to receive Jesus is to receive the one who sent him.

Such texts have been at the centre of significant debates regarding infant Baptism. Thus it is important that we digress momentarily to take into account how these texts have been interpreted historically as it applies to those debates. One text in particular warrants examination as we consider how parts of Scripture have often been cited in an effort to

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26 “infants”

27 “might touch them”

28 “do not stop”

29 “went away from that place”

“proof text” a practice. In the middle of the twentieth century, for example, Jeremias and Aland engaged in a debate through rivaling treatises as to whether the early Church in fact baptized infants. Aland relied partly upon the work of Oscar Cullman. Cullman had suggested that there might have been some truth in the proposition that the phrase μὴ κωλύετε may have been redacted into the oral legacy of the logia, and in fact may have originated from early baptismal liturgies as a precaution against denying children baptism. However, Cullman cautiously avoided the assertion that the whole blessing episode had been created by the early Church. Nonetheless, he suggested that this text served to inform communities that they should μὴ κωλύετε τὰ βρέφη from coming to the waters of life.31

While Aland saw other occurrences of the verb κωλύετε such as Acts 11:17 as a precaution against hindering children from coming to baptism, he did not go as far as Cullman in asserting that the word may have been redacted into the story in Mark. Aland, however, in his ongoing debate with Jeramias, noted that the word κωλύετε32 in Acts 11:17 is used in reference to the admission of Gentiles. Other than Acts 11 and the story of the children in the three synoptic accounts, the word occurs only nineteen other times in the New Testament. Aland argued that the New Testament texts containing this verb do not prove that the Church baptized infants, even when texts mention whole households being baptized.33

Jeremias countered by arguing that it is an established fact that in the early Church Mark’s story of the blessing of children was linked with John 3:5. Since John 3 is commonly understood as Jesus discussing baptism with Nicodemus, Jeremias understood its link to the


32 “try to prevent”

“blessing of children” story to sufficiently demonstrate that the New Testament had permitted the baptism of infants. Mark 10 and its parallels have been the inspiration for much reflection on the efficacy of infant baptism, including the question of whether or not the New Testament Church might have baptized infants. Certainly this text has been cited by those who argued in favor of the practice of baptizing infants.

While questions surrounding Confirmation cannot be divorced from questions emanating from Baptism, it is impossible to conclude definitively that the New Testament Church in fact baptized infants. However, from the standpoint of Scripture, there is nothing which would preclude the Church from engaging in the practice. One may therefore argue in favor of the practice of pedobaptism from the standpoint ex silentio scriptura. Above all, this text should give the Church great pause as she reflects upon the admission of children to other sacraments of initiation. If the Church is to take seriously that she μὴ κολύετε τὰ βρέφη, then her members need to ask if her baptismal practice is disingenuous if we do not also receive to the Communion τὰ βρέφη who are baptized. As we will examine in the next chapter, in the 11th century the church in the West prevented the youngest who were baptized from being admitted to the Table. In light of Mark 10 such a practice seems indefensible. Beyond the issues of the age of admission to Baptism or to the Lord’s Supper, these synoptic texts seem to suggest that the blessing of children was familiar to the New Testament Church. Yet, these texts do not provide proof that such blessings were common in early Christianity.

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35 In this same vein, Cullman noted that Calvin had used this text polemically against the Anabaptists in Cullmann, Baptism in the New Testament, 77n3.

36 “Do not try to prevent (τὰ βρέφη) the youngest child”
As we turn again to our survey of Scriptural sources, the Acts of the Apostles has many references to handlaying not directly connected to healing. After Philip baptized Samaritans in Acts 8, Peter and John lay hands on them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. However, this story does not constitute a proof text for episcopal handlaying upon those who have been baptized. After all, Philip baptizes an Ethiopian eunuch in the same chapter without the mention of Apostolic handlaying. The Samaritans, we are told, “had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Yet, as we have said, for Luke, to be baptized into Jesus was to be baptized in the Spirit. It is easy to become focused on the story of Simon Magnus in Acts 8:1-13 and become distracted from why, for Luke, apostolic handlaying was necessitated among the Samaritans in Acts 8:14-25. Baptism stories of Luke-Acts are to be understood in the context of the work of the Holy Spirit present in, prior to, during, and following the Baptisms. The handlaying among the Samaritans by Peter and John in Acts is cast into sharp relief by the fact that there is no Apostolic handlaying needed for the Ethiopian eunuch whom Philip the Deacon baptizes in Acts 8:26-40. Given that Samaritans were seen as “half breeds” by the Jewish community in Palestine, from the perspective of Luke-Acts, the Jews of Palestine and their cousin Samaritans were both descended from the people who often remained “stiff-necked” and slow to change, even amid all that the God of their ancestors had done for them. Yet, it seems that for Luke there were special concerns regarding Samaritans, since they had intermarried with pagan tribes. Now newly baptized and reconciled, Samaritans are to submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Handlaying in Acts 8 thus seems to offer the Holy Spirit in a restorative role.

Acts 9 tells of Paul’s Damascus Road conversion and transformation. The handlaying in this chapter is clearly connected with healing. In Acts 13 handlaying is concerned with
setting Paul and Barnabas apart for missionary work. Ironically, while the term οἱ ἀπόστολοι specifically denotes those who are sent, the title is used to refer to Barnabas and Paul only once in the Greek text of the Acts: Acts 14:14. Any other use of the phrase in the Greek edition of Acts refers to the remaining eleven surviving witnesses to Jesus ministry along with Matthias. Joseph Fitzmyer would see in Acts 13 the possibility of commissioning rite while avoiding a notion that an ordination rite it taking place. Yet, since οἱ ἀπόστολοι is not an office that Luke-Acts ever directly ascribes to Paul, Fitzmyer’s effort to define the purpose for the handlaying, either for commissioning or ordination would seem to be a bit anachronistic.

In Acts 16, the story of the baptism of the Philippian jailer and his whole family, there is no account of handlaying. However at the end of Acts 18 Apollos, who was a native of Alexandria and knows only about the baptism of John, is persuaded to go over to Achaia. In Chapter 19 Paul journeys through the region and lays hands upon the Ephesians who had been baptized into John’s baptism by Apollos. Clearly, the issue is that the Ephesians had only received what Luke had described in the Gospel as John’s “baptism for repentance.” For Luke, to continue to baptize in the name of John was to practice heterodoxical baptism, and was not Baptism into the paschal mystery with the risen Christ. The laying on of hands following an orthodox Baptism reconciled those who had been misled by the heterodoxical teacher, Apollos. This story also seems to suggest that in Luke’s community, there remained significant concerns about those who were either practicing a baptism in John’s name or who had been baptized into John’s name and not the name of Jesus.

In Hebrews 6:1-6, Jewish converts to Christianity seem to be familiar with a handlaying rite after the washing. They are instructed that if a member of the community has been properly catechized, washed, and received the handlaying, the Apostle is not going to waste good ink going back over the basic rudiments of the faith. In Greek “baptisms,” “laying on,” “resurrection,” and “eternal judgment” are all in the Genitive case. The syntax suggests that all of these are part of the context of instructions and mystagogy. Thus, while Hebrews mentions the laying on of hands, it cannot be seen as commanding the practice, much less proffering any guidance as to when it should be offered. In 2 Timothy 1:5-7, the Apostle seems to commend the laying on of hands, linking it with a rekindling of the Spirit. Here, for the first time in our survey of New Testament texts, we encounter a text suggesting that through the laying on of hands one receives a rekindling of the gift of God. The Spirit is seen to be active in Timothy’s mother and grandmother; and as with the Genesis stories above, this Epistle reminds us that handlaying links one generation to the next. In summary, the biblical texts concerning blessing and handlaying suggest the gesture may serve as a sign of adoption, may be extended to even the youngest of children, and may even serve as a blessing at dismissal. Yet the gesture also may have pneumatological implications.

2.4 Anointing with Oil and Marking

The use of oil for anointing may be found to serve a variety of functions in the Scriptures, not only for healing or denoting a special office such as royalty, but also to signify a relationship between the one who offered the anointing and the recipient. Following the first fratricide in Genesis, Cain, under judicial examination, confesses to having killed his brother, Abel. In the

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midst of Cain’s torment over the weight of what he has done, God makes a promise that anyone who kills Cain in retribution will suffer a sevenfold vengeance. The nature of the “mark” which God puts on Cain is not what is essential. What is important is that this mark has a simultaneous, twofold purpose: 1) it puts on public display the crime of which Cain stands convicted; 2) it reveals that Cain comes under God’s protection. The mark is not prophylactic *per se*; rather it displays whose Cain is. For future generations in the Diaspora and Exile, this story would be a reminder that despite their sinful ways, even as they had failed to heed the word of the prophets, they nevertheless remain God’s children under the promise.

There are also numerous passages from the Hebrew Scriptures which have a long history of being interpreted christologically and of being used to inform Confirmation theology. The author of Hebrews speaks of Christ belonging to the “order of Melchizedek” – i.e. a priestly king. Melchizedek’s disciples are anointed in his name “as little christs” or anointed ones. As such, they share in the inheritance which he has so ignobly won on the cross. We also find anointing imagery in Psalm 23 and Psalm 89. In the latter, God’s servants are promised a strengthening through the power of God, of which anointing is a sign. In Exodus 13, Moses is to anoint Aaron and his sons for the priesthood, and Psalm 133 recalls this anointing. In Matthew 6:17 Jesus directs those who fast to put oil on their faces instead of making public show and disfiguring their faces. In Mark 6:13 anointing with oil is connected with healing. In Luke 7:46, Jesus’s head is not anointed with oil, prompting his

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40 Luther would interpret the image of Aaron’s vestments pneumatologically in his lectures on the Psalms when he said “‘Vestments’ are spoken of in Scripture as the adornment with the power of the Holy Spirit, indicating that we are adorned with various gifts . . . .” in Martin Luther, “Psalm 45,” in *Luther’s Works*, Selected Psalms I, vol. 12, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 1999), 250.
rebuke of Simon. In the parable of Luke 10.34, the victim is anointed with oil by the Samaritan. Hebrews 1 quotes Psalm 45 referring to the royal anointing for Israel’s kings. In James 5, the Epistle writer commends anointing with oil for healing. Yet none of these passages seems to speak directly of the use of oil after one has received the laver of Baptism.

Finally, in 2 Corinthians 1, Paul writes of anointing as a seal. The verb χρίω is also found in Luke 4:18, Acts 4:27; 10:38 and Hebrews 1:9, while the noun χρίσμα is found in I John 2:20, 27 in reference to Baptism. There is no evidence that chrismation was yet a custom in the Church at the time of the Apostle Paul, yet it would be hard to imagine that by the time of the writing of Gospel accounts, that anointing would have not been known to those authors. Given the images of anointing in the Psalms and the Pentateuch it is hard to imagine that baptismal rites in this period would not come to have utilized an anointing. Chrismation with oil would have served to remind the faithful that in this action after being washed, they are anointed. It would have been a sign of the bestowal of the Paraclete. The σφραγίς means that the one who is chrismated comes under the assurance of God’s presence as in the story of Cain. It is also serves to deepen and recall the rich promises of Baptism.

1 John 2:20-25 uses the image of anointing in an effort to convey that the one in whose name one is chrismated or anointed is the Christ who is the only Son of God. Ephesians 1:12-14 refers to the σφραγίς. Baptism Eucharist and Ministry (BEM) or the Lima Statement comments on this particular text by saying, “As was the case in the early centuries, the gift of the Spirit in Baptism may be signified in addition always for example by the sign of the laying on of hands, and by anointing or chrismation.” BEM continues, “The recovery

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of such vivid signs may be expected to enrich the liturgy. In II Corinthians 1:21-22, Paul seems to point to a postbaptismal chrismation. In I John, chrismation seems to effect knowing, and it is in knowing the one in whose name we are anointed who enables the faithful to remain steadfast against all false teaching. In Ephesians 1:13-14 and 4:30 chrismation may well be connected to both the gifts of the Holy Spirit and our inheritance. Both I John 2:20-25 and Ephesians 1:13-14, leading into 4:30 where anointing is connected to eternal life, offer a rich description of the symbolic action of chrismation, anticipating the coming παρουσία.

Thus, anointing is seen in the Scriptures for healing or as a sign of hospitality or as we have seen, it may be understood as enabling one to display a healthy countenance before others as in Matthew 6. But anointing or marking also may serve to identify a relationship between the anointer and the one being anointed, as with Cain or as in the case of priestly or royal anointings. Finally, anointing in many of the epistles carries soteriological implications.

2.5 Profession of Faith

The Scriptures contain numerous creedal statements and places where the people are called to a renewal of faithfulness. In Joshua 24:1-18 Joshua gathers all of the tribes at Shechem after he has led a successful conquest of Canaan. Among those who have gathered are the descendants of Leah along with Canaanite tribes. This pericope recounts the salvation history: deliverance from bondage in Egypt, God’s victory at Yam Suf, the driving out of enemies from the land, the gift of a land with towns, and vineyards and olive groves which the tribes had not planted. The people are to put away the gods which their ancestors had

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worshipped and turn solely to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The point upon which the whole text turns is verse 15: “Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” The choice after rejecting all other gods shifts to a *credo* from the people. Israel’s history was continually recalled to memory in her rituals and in her Scriptures, which both became almost sacramental. The rejection and *credo* serve to call Israel to avoid idolatry and syncretism.

Aside from Joshua 24, the most important confession of the faith in the Hebrew Bible is the *Sh’ma Yisrael* of Deuteronomy 6:4-12. These texts remind God’s people that not only does this people have but one God, but that God whom they worship is one. The *Sh’ma* also serves to remind the faithful of all ages that the love of God sums up both tables of the Decalogue. In Matthew 23:2-7, Jesus is critical of those “Pharisees who sit on Moses’ seat; . . . but . . . do not practice what they teach.” Jesus was not directly criticizing the piety of the Pharisees; rather he challenged a public display of piety amid hypocrisy. Jesus’ words serve as a fitting caution against the practice of many who would confess one thing and yet behave in a completely contrary manner. The *Sh’ma* serves to remind the faithful of all generations to zealously live what one professes.

Jeremiah 31 reminds the people of the covenant that a new covenant will be put within their hearts. This comes with the intimacy of knowing God, who has planted this knowledge in their hearts. Nehemiah 9 and 1 John 2 echo this theme of “knowing” in the Hebrew sense of a husband who “knows” his wife. Such knowing involves the heart and carries a sense of spousal intimacy. This knowing enables the people to repent, to forsake

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44 Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 20.
their old ways, to avoid apostasy, and to live faithfully as God’s covenant people. There is also the call to cross-bearing in Mark 8 and its parallels. In Mark 15, Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus (who may have been sons known to Mark’s community) was an icon of the true calling of cross-bearing discipleship. Jesus’ warning to “tell no one” (the so-called “Messianic Secret”) serves in Mark to point to the Paschal mystery. This is the hermeneutical lens through which all of Jesus’ teachings, even hard ones, should be interpreted. Jesus’s self-identity as the “bread of life” in John 6 becomes a cause of offense to the disciples. Titus 3:5 contains a short creedal formulation from what is likely an early Christian hymn implying that the gift of the Spirit is poured out upon the community continually. The Spirit’s call is to Baptismal rebirth and renewal, but these are not to be taken for granted. In 2 Clement 6 (part of the Alexandrian Canon), there is an allusion to Ezekiel 14, as the author continues the book’s overarching theme. The focus is on faithfulness by keeping “our baptism pure and undefiled.”

2 Clement challenges the Church not to take God’s covenant for granted as the faithful have been called to the eschatological hope in the waters of life. In summary, profession of faith may be thought of as including ritualized remembrance, rejection of false gods and hypocrisy, intimate fidelity, passionate commitment, faithfulness and hope.

2.6 Conclusions on the Witness of the Scriptures

Scripture is the primary source of the Church’s theology. In our four categories of examination we have sought a concise but comprehensive exegesis and historical examination that might offer new insights for a renewed theology and practice of Confirmation. In the Hebrew Scriptures, we examined handlaying as blessing, adoption, and

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45 Ibid., 188.
as a sign of generational continuity as well as a sign of the promises God made through our ancestors. Hebrews 6 certainly speaks of a postbaptismal handlaying, yet it gives little clarity to those addressed by the sermon as to when handlaying should take place. Hebrews may be interpreted to suggest that Confirmation like baptism is not repeatable, and that the faithful are called to mature in the faith, not just remain in the most rudimentary elements of their catechesis. The only text in our survey which would appear to support a handlaying removed by some period of time from washing is 2 Timothy 1. While the author of this text commends the practice of handlaying after the washing, there is no mention of chrismation. Handlaying serves to rekindle the faith handed on by our forbearers in the faith. We have seen that practices concerning baptismal rites seem to have varied widely in the first century.

From these texts, we also see that Scripture testifies to the fact that God’s Holy Spirit is active in creation, in the work of salvation history, and is continually poured out in the life of the Church. The baptismal waters are consecrated by our Lord’s own pierced side and the Spirit testifies to the truth of the gospel against false teaching. Amid this, one’s birthright should not be trivialized and taken for granted, for this is a birthright which Christians receive as they are washed in the waters of Holy Baptism. Christians are called as disciples to careful discernment and are compelled to be aware and alert to the hazards of false gods. While the Holy Spirit works where and when it pleases, it is at work among God’s people for the sake of their work in Christ. Children are a sign of the least in the Kingdom, for to receive the least is to receive Jesus, and to receive Jesus is to receive the one who sent him.

Marking and anointing in the Scriptures, as in the story of Cain, serve to denote who we are and whose we are. As children of God, we are called to remain within the promise. While we remain sinful beings who are in need of God’s grace and forgiveness, the mark
(which is not merely prophylactic) points us to that which the sign signifies: we are God’s own. The practice of anointing with oil has a long and rich history dating back to the Pentateuch, wisdom literature, and the prophets. It is in light of these rich images and their connections in the New Testament that the ecumenical vision of *BEM* commends its use in the baptismal rites of all the churches. To be anointed is to be sealed and receive the σφραγίς. The σφραγίς points to the promise which it signifies, giving us assurance that we are prepared for the coming παρουσία.

We are reminded by Joshua that before we can confess the one who has called us by name, we are compelled to make a deliberative choice to reject false gods, and to turn to confess the one who has led our ancestors in the faith. Jeremiah and Nehemiah point us to affirm the covenant God has made with us. In affirming this covenant we come to truly deepen our “knowing” of the one who has made covenant with us. To do this, disciples of Christ are called to see the teachings and ministry of Jesus in a paschal light, through the lens of the cross. As we affirm that mode of discipleship, we are enabled to become faithful cross-bearers. From the Gospel of John we are reminded that it is God who has called us through his Holy Spirit into Christ. It is by God’s Holy Spirit that we are strengthened and enabled to keep even the teachings that are hard. Titus reminds us that our Baptism is in the Spirit, a Spirit continually at work, strengthening us in the faith. 2 Clement reminds us that affirming the covenant enables us to keep our Baptism undefiled.

While these texts do not directly offer a literal warrant for Confirmation, as it has been practiced in the Western church, they do not prohibit such a practice, *per se*. Moreover, they can do much to help inform a renewed theology and practice of baptism, as well as a separated rite rooted, first and foremost, in a robust understanding of Baptism itself. We now
turn to examining how the Western rite of handlaying, with or without chrismation, became separated from baptismal washing. We begin that historical survey with the early patristic period up until the dawn of the Reformation.
Chapter 3
Development and Early History of a Separated Rite

From our previous survey of Scripture only II Timothy 1:5-7 seems to commend handlaying separated by some span of time from baptismal washing. Yet, neither this text nor any other seems to mention handlaying directly connected with the anointing with oil, or any gesture which would resemble that which we call Confirmation. In this chapter we will undertake a similarly comprehensive look at historical texts prior to the dawn of the Reformation connected to Confirmation, in order to shed some additional light on the origins of this practice. Michael Whitehouse has challenged theologians of the Church to reexamine some of the early sources related to handlaying.¹

In our survey we will go beyond the earliest sources examined by Whitehouse and others, and proceed into texts at the dawn of the Reformation, offering some new observations. In the process I hope to counter some older theories about the historical development of Confirmation and, as a result, utilize a broad range of historical sources towards the renewal of the practice and theology of the rite of Confirmation.

3.1 Methodology of Study

Paul Bradshaw has described himself as a “splitter” in an arena dominated by “lumpers.”² In this study of texts I have sought the “fault lines” in hopes of revealing some findings which might better inform a renewed theology of the rite of Confirmation. Paul Turner notes that Aidan Kavanagh attempted to examine the development of Confirmation according to the

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¹ Michael Patrick Whitehouse, “Manus Impositio: The Initiatory Rite of Handlaying in the Churches of Early Western Christianity” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2008).

evolution of changes in its ritual celebration.\(^3\) However, Kavanagh tended to avoid theological treatises as relevant sources. As a “splitter,” I have sought to study a broader and more complex range of texts in an effort to historically follow both the theological and liturgical development of Confirmation as we know it.

### 3.2 East and West Distinctions

In the East, John 3 and its imagery of rebirth predominated in initiation, while in the West Romans 6 and the paschal mystery was a dominant theme. This distinction is not insignificant. In the oldest Syriac sources, a catechumen’s anointing connected one pneumatomatically to the messianic kingship of Christ, but in the washing, there was an eschatological thrust as the candidate was reborn and joined to Jesus’ Baptism at the Jordan. Yet, even in Syriac sources, over time catechumenal anointings would come to be seen as prophylactic rather than pneumatomalogical, and washing shifted from womb to tomb imagery.\(^4\) Kavanagh argues that while there was this eventual shift, both Dix and Fisher grossly over-generalized the imagery in Eastern catechumenal anointings. Dix and Fisher had suggested that Eastern anointings functioned as seal (hatma) or mark or sign (rushma), and Dix suggested that these anointings were an Eastern pre-baptismal Confirmation. Utilizing Winkler, Kavanagh argued that Dix and Fisher were anachronistically imposing later post-baptismal western imagery upon early Eastern pre-baptismal anointings.\(^5\) Fisher and Dix had attempted to superimpose Eastern catechumenal theology upon Western rituals after the

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\(^4\) Gabriele Winkler, “The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing,” ibid., 78-79.

washing. While Western post-baptismal handlaying possibly has its origins in Eastern sources, Eastern catechumenal anointings had a much greater relational and pneumatological focus.

3.3 Age of Maturity in the Early Centuries

The Jewish Talmudic tractate *Pirkei Avot* redacted from the fathers in the Mishnaic period prior to the Common Era, notes fourteen stages of life. The third stage was when a Jewish male child attained the age of thirteen and observed the *mitzot* or covenant, meaning that he was accountable for his actions. In the larger Gentile world within the Roman Empire, an *infans* (birth to seven) was one who was not *fans* (to speak). The child then became an *impuberitia* (seven to fourteen) after which one became a *pueritia* (fourteen to young adult). These stages were linked to physical developmental changes. Therefore, Roman law permitted boys to legally marry as early as fourteen, while girls could marry as early as twelve. At seven, a boy was fully accountable under the law for his actions. At *impuberitia* both genders were seen as in a pre-procreation age. Boys at fourteen and girls at twelve were at first called *adolescentes* and then only later were called *adulti*. These Jewish and Roman developmental stages still have implications in the present day regarding how moderns and post-moderns view the age for the onset of adolescence and the appropriate age for Confirmation.

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8 Horn and Martens, “Let the Little Children Come to Me,” 15.
3.4 Early Sources

The *Didache*, while establishing that Baptism is to be conducted using the formula of Matthew 28 in “running water,” contains no mention of handlaying or chrismation. Nevertheless, this absence of any mention of anointings or handlayings should not disprove that these gestures were used in the 2nd century community which utilized the *Didache*. In the writings of Justin Martyr, we gain another glimpse of Christian initiatory practice. However, his *Apology*, indicative of generic Christian practice, rather than Justin’s own Syrian community living in Rome, also contains no evidence of handlaying or anointing.

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lugdunum (now Lyons) in his *Five Books Against the Heresies*, describes those being initiated as anointed with a balm of balsam, baptized with water mixed with oil, and finally anointed again with balsam. However, Irenaeus was referring to candidates from Gnostic sects, including the adoptionist Valentinians. Thus, we cannot deduce from Irenaeus whether orthodox Christians in the East or West may have also practiced such anointings. It is conceivable that some Gnostics may have adapted practices...

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12 In Chapter 39 of the Dialogue Justin speaks of Elijah railing against the disobedience of Israel and the prophets of Baal. In so doing Justin quotes Isaiah 11. Ratcliff attempts to read back into the Dialogue what will later become known as the Ambroseean prayer, arguing that Justin’s use of Isaiah 11 makes a possible connection to handlaying. But the “lumping” seems hardly a convincing argument that handlaying is being alluded to in the Dialogue. E. C. Ratcliff, “Justin Martyr and Confirmation,” Theology 51: 135-39.


already in use among orthodox Christians. Therefore it is possible that some orthodox Christians may have anointed during this period, but we have no direct evidence, *per se*.

In the Papyri Heidelberg manuscript of the *Acts of Paul* (ca. 5th century), pieced together in the early part of the 20th century, there is a story which is found in no other known manuscript of that document. In this manuscript Paul baptizes “Artemilla” of Ephesus. The text mentions “a hand,” suggesting a possible handlaying. Yet, due to numerous lacunas in the papyri, it is impossible to tell whether such handlaying, if present at all, comes before or after the baptismal washing.15 Thus we cannot establish definitively if there is handlaying in this text.

Clement of Alexandria (not the author of I and II Clement) authored the *Paedagogus* focusing on the ethics and lifestyle of faithful Christians. In *Paedagogus* 3.11, Clement describes presbyteral handlaying, then chastises those who are wearing false hair.16 The description seems to concern handlaying as a blessing; however, there is no mention as to whether this blessing is connected to baptismal or catechumenal rites.17 This blessing seems similar to the blessing in Matthew 19:14, although there is no mention here of children. In Clement’s *Excerpts from Theodotus* 22, however, handlaying as a part of initiation is mentioned; only here Clement was describing part of the initiation rites among the Valentinian Gnostics.18 It is perhaps noteworthy that Clement does not speak of this handlaying in a pejorative sense, suggesting that Clement found nothing particularly

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problematic with initiatory handlaying. It is thus possible that Clement’s community practiced handlaying connected with baptismal washing.

### 3.5 Tertullian

Tertullian in his writings, especially *De Baptismo* from the late 2nd or early 3rd century, definitely describes handlaying and anointing. Overall, he offers a more robust pneumatology in the handlaying gesture than he offers for the anointing. For Tertullian, chrismation is more christic in nature. Yet, there may be a deeper meaning here. In the Roman world of the period, those held in servitude could be granted freedom by their masters. Manumission\(^\text{19}\) was a legally recognized process accomplishing a slave’s freedom. Yet, the former slave needed to then come under the patronage of someone who could help with economic and social transition into the populous of free persons. Prior to Tertullian’s time, one who was falsely accused of being a slave could prove her or his freed status by appearing before a magistrate.\(^\text{20}\)

In Roman culture, along with other ancient societies, a portion of the property which was claimed by one party would be grasped in the *manus* as a claim of ownership. For livestock, often the testes were grasped as a legal claim upon not just the one animal, but its offspring as well. Thus from the Latin *testis* we derive the English word “testimony” and “testify.”\(^\text{21}\) This is what is taking place in the “last will and testament” of Jacob in Genesis 47 (referred to in Chapter 2, above). In time, a rod or *vindicta* came be used. Before a

\(^{19}\) Meaning, literally, “sending from the hand.”


magistrate, the claimant pointed to that which allegedly belonged to the claimant, be it livestock or a slave. Later, if one were to be freed, especially in a city such as proconsular Carthage, in what lawyers would call “a legal fiction,” the slave was touched with the magistrate’s vindicta to declare that the person was now emancipated. Stewart-Sykes examined a still extant, although highly corrupted manuscript from a Deacon Paulus describing an alapa or slap at the manumission of a slave. Other ritual actions were in time added, including the vertigo or turning of the slave around as a part of this legal manumission ritual. The Deacon Paulus in later centuries described the part of the manumission in which the master publically claims the slave as his property and then desires that the slave be set free. Paulus simply speaks of grabbing the slave by the head or another member, releasing, and then declaring that the slave should be freed.

Whitehouse contends there is a connection between the handlaying in Chapter VIII of Tertullian’s De Baptismo and the story of Jacob adopting Ephraim and Manasseh in Genesis 48. Whitehouse suggests that the handlaying described by Tertullian in De Baptismo is not a manumission, but an adoption. Stewart-Sykes used Paulus (which is very late and was highly corrupted) to suggest a connection between Tertullian and manumission. There is no evidence that a slap or alapa was always a part of the Roman manumission ritual. In fact, as R.G Nisbet revealed, there are sources which demonstrate effectively that the alapa could be

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22 Stewart-Sykes, “Manumission and Baptism in Tertullian's Africa,” 143.
a gesture of grabbing and releasing, and this is not what seems to be done to the newly washed person coming under the hand of the bishop which Tertullian describes.

However, manumission may be what is implied by the new relationship established by God in Christian baptismal washing. I submit that there is manumission in Christian initiation in North Africa, but Stewart-Sykes was looking in the wrong place. One may well have experienced the vertigo and a grasp and release prior to the washing as one rejected sin and was led to the waters. Then after washing, one came under the hand of the bishop or other clergy and was claimed as God’s own in an “adoption.” In Roman law a former slave often came under the patronage of a former master. Handlaying served to establish the new relationship. Descriptions in Apologeticum 3.5-6 and De Resurrectiones Carnis 57.12 are suggestive of adoption.26 In his De Resurrectiones, Tertullian describes how a manumitted slave may receive a white robe and gold ring.27 Ancient inscriptions on burial markers evidence former slaves taking the name of the patron.28 Ulpian discusses in his Digesta how freed persons should respect their patrons as a father,29 and Cicero speaks of legal adoption in his speech “De domo sua ad Pontifices.”30 Gaius discusses how the manus establishes ownership prior to manumission and the legal adoption process in his Institutes, 1.98-100 and


28 Hermann Dessau, Inscriptiones latinae selectae (Berolini: Apud Weidmannos, 1892), Inscription 1763.

29 Ulpian, Digesta Iustini Augusti, ed. Paulo Kruegero and Theodor Mommsen (Berolini: Apud Weidmannos, 1868), tome 2, 37:15.9, 320.

Adoption certainly seems much more consistent with that which is alluded to by the handlaying in Chapter VIII of *De Baptismo* as Tertullian speaks of the story in Chapter 48 of Genesis. Prior to the washing in ritual actions, it is manumission which took place.

Tertullian makes pneumatological links in *De Baptismo* V in the washing. In Chapter VII chrism is linked with the horn, at the anointing of Aaron and his sons for the priesthood. Tertullian adds that neophytes are now counted among the “*christoi*.” The horn is actually not part of the Aaron story, yet while not accurate, Tertullian’s inclusion of the horn may not have been unintentional. The horn mentioned in I Samuel 16 connects the royal horn of anointing and the Aaronic anointing. Tertullian may well have been saying something about the kingly and priestly order of Melchizedek to which “*christoi*” is joined in chrismation. This anointing is pneumatic but, as Stewart-Sykes has noted, it is also highly christic. While Quinn sees a higher christological emphasis in chrismation, he and Marsh suggest that with the final chrismation after Baptism, the baptismal rite both liturgically and theologically are brought to completion. (I will challenge this on both points in Chapter 7.)

Tertullian’s challenge in *De Baptismo* concerning infant Baptism suggests that the practice was already common. He may well be challenging a practice through a directive

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32 Tertullian, “*De Baptismo*,” in *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani, presbyteri carthaginiensis: Opera omnia, cum selectis praecedentium editionum lectionibus variorumque commentariis*, ed. J. P. Migne (Parisiiis: Migne, 1844), caput v.

33 Ibid., caput vii, column 1260.

34 Stewart-Sykes, "Manumission and Baptism in Tertullian's Africa," 135.

given “post conspicatus malum prohibere id.”

Tertullian, in an example of what I will henceforth refer to as a directive “post conspicatus malum,” seems to have hoped to dissuade the practice of baptizing young children. Significantly, it also appears he was not successful in his efforts and the Church never felt compelled to enact a canon ending the practice. In De Corona 3 Tertullian discusses what appears to have been a common custom among Christians in which they repeatedly trace “the sign” of the cross upon their foreheads. In Adversus Marcionem 3.22 he interprets Ezekiel 9 christologically when he speaks of the sign of the TAU. Yet, with Whitehouse, we cannot assume that because we see this description of making the sign of the cross described here, that there was consignation which accompanied the handlaying and anointing gestures. To be sure, the catechumenal exorcism and scrutiny rites would develop over the next couple of centuries in North Africa and would certainly come to include consignation. It may help to recall that a Letter from Pope Siricius in 385 revealed that in Rome, Lent lasted three weeks and was marked by three successive weeks of scrutiny rites in preparation for Baptism, in which catechumens were charged with the need for repentance, called to a life of profession of the faith, and exhorted to prayer. This three week pattern in the Imperial City, long before the forty day pattern, serves to remind us not to “lump” all rites of this period together.

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36 Literally, “after perceiving a bad thing, to prohibit it.”


38 At the exorcism rite catechumens received the tracing of the sign of the cross as noted by William Harmless, Augustine and the Catechumenate (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 262n78. Exorcism and “Scrutiny rites” remain part of the sacraments of Initiation in the Roman Catholic Church to the present day and scrutiny rites have been retained as part of the catechumenal rites used in many Protestant churches.

3.6 Cyprian of Carthage

Cyprian was concerned that one was to be anointed with Chrism which had been confected by a bishop in communion with his brother catholic bishops and that one was washed by the one Holy Spirit which was present in the Church catholic. Here I propose that Cyprian borrowed an already established episcopal handlaying from Tertullian, with its adoption motif. Cyprian focused on consignation as a part of the pneumatically and christologically rich ritual actions of handlaying and chrismation. In so doing, he elevated the importance of chrism which had been confected by the bishop. His overall ecclesiology is evidenced in the way in which he would over time develop his understanding of the episcopacy in *De Ecclasiæ Catholicae Unitate*.

In *Letter 64*, Cyprian argues for the Baptism of the youngest and acknowledged that in extreme circumstances (*extremis*) a deacon or presbyter might administer Baptism. Yet he assumes that this deacon or presbyter remained in the Church catholic. On the other hand, according to Cyprian those baptized in heretical sects must receive more than chrismation and handlaying upon coming to the Church catholic. Nothing less than (re)baptism was required of those who had been baptized into heresy. Roughly in this same time period Cyprian authored the earliest edition of his *De Ecclasiæ Catholicae Unitatae*. This first edition would later be used by many Roman Catholic theologians in the 16th century against their Protestant opponents. Cyprian made it abundantly clear that one needs to be in

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42 Whitehouse makes an important stylistic distinction between (re)baptism and baptism, which will become especially relevant when we examine a work by Pseudo-Cyprian below. (Re)baptism is used to clarify that for Cyprian one was never baptized legitimately in a community which was heretical. Whitehouse, "Manus Impositio," 162n1.
communion with a bishop who is in communion with other bishops to include the see of Rome. Later after a disagreement with Pope Stephen I, Cyprian would author a new edition of *De Eccliae* which elevated the importance of catholic bishops who remained in communion with one another.\(^{43}\) In *Letter 70*, Cyprian and his fellow bishops declared that not only Baptism in water, but also anointing with oil, were necessary because the one who was washed was sanctified and cleansed by a bishop who was in communion with his brother bishops. Therefore, this bishop must not be a schismatic or a heretic. In this way one who was baptized and anointed received the grace of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, it is at the Eucharist that the oil with which the baptized are anointed was sanctified upon the altar. In *Letter 70* Cyprian wants to make this clear – all in defense of the unity of the Church catholic.\(^ {44}\)

In *Letter 71* Cyprian speaks of how the Lord had poured out the Paraclete Spirit upon the Church, and it was into the Church catholic in which the Spirit was to be received. Using the example of Acts 8, he concludes that while the Samaritans received valid baptism, it was through handlaying by Peter and John that they received the Holy Spirit. With this, Cyprian was the first Patristic source to use Acts 8 as an argument for handlaying by the bishop following the washing, thus setting in motion a long history of the argument that baptism necessitated not only chrismation, but handlaying and consignation by a bishop.\(^ {45}\)

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In addition, Cyprian’s tone in Letter 74 suggests he was seething from Pope Stephen’s decision not to require (re)baptism for those baptized in heretical sects. Stephen only required heretics to come “that they might receive the imposition of the hand for repentance.”\textsuperscript{46} However, Cyprian describes two types of handlaying and, as a result, creates a great deal of confusion – those baptized into Christ receive the handlaying in Christ “\textit{ad accipiendum spiritum}” and “\textit{in paenitentiam};”\textsuperscript{47} those baptized into the Church catholic, who left for heresy and returned, “\textit{manus illis inponatur in paenitentiam.” Thus, Cyprian allowed those baptized in the Church, who then left for heresy, to return via a simple handlaying. But Cyprian also posited that baptism in the Church catholic is in the name of Christ. Handlaying in the name of Christ is “to receive the Spirit” as well as “for repentance.”\textsuperscript{48} A consequence of Cyprian’s argument with Stephen was that he created confusion over the meaning of handlaying by placing so much emphasis on a pneumatology of handlaying at the expense of the pneumatology of the washing. Actually, it seems that for Cyprian the Spirit was at work in the both washing and handlaying. Yet, ironically, Letter 74 was actually a polemic directed at Pope Stephen and had unintentionally created a bifurcation between both understandings of handlaying.


\textsuperscript{47} Meaning “to receive the Spirit” and “for repentance,” respectively.

\textsuperscript{48} Cyprian, “Letter 74,” 241n17.
impositionem episcopi, which is linked to baptismate spritus. Pseudo-Cyprian links the Paraclete poured out by Jesus’ exsufflation with the manus impositionem episcopi. But Baptisma aquae also requires baptismate spritus. Finally, the author in passing suggests that manus impositionem episcopi is a baptismate spritus. One who leaves the Church catholic after having been baptized into heresy needs to receive both Baptisma aquae and baptismate spritus. He also cites John 5 and I John 5:7-8 to make his argument that baptism is perfected (perficere) by manus impositionem episcopi, which he has already tied to the giving of the Holy Spirit. Yet, he never makes clear whether the handlaying by a bishop is a manus illis inponatur ad accipiendum spiritum or an inponatur in paenitentiam. Such lack of clarity further confused the types of handlaying, meaning that reconciliation of heretics in paenitentiam may have soon become confused with manus illis inponatur ad accipiendum spiritum after the washing of Baptism. Pseudo-Cyprian makes no mention of chrismation nor makes any christological connection to handlaying. By this time the manus impositionem episcopi had become the primary focus.

3.7 Redaction of the Apostolikā Paradosis
An early liturgical text, the so-called Apostolikā Paradosis (Apostolic Tradition henceforth AT), often attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, contains third century rites which may be interpreted in several ways. Brent, and Stewart-Sykes, suggest that there are in fact two

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49 Meaning “Baptism in water,” “imposition of the bishop’s hand,” and “Baptism in the Spirit,” respectively.

layers of redacted material added to an original source found in AT. These layers may offer us a much better picture of the theology of this “Church order.” A redundancy of handlaying rituals by both presbyter and bishop in “Chapter 21” led Kavanagh to argue that AT led to a separation in the two handlaying rituals, resulting in the Sacrament of Confirmation. The bishop’s handlaying had originally been a missa or dismissal rite borrowed from Eastern sources, described centuries later in a manuscript attributed to Egeria from Iberia. Yet, Stewart-Sykes offers us another theory – one which leads us to conclude that in no way did AT mark such a separation. Stewart-Sykes borrows the term “living literature” from Paul Bradshaw to describe the redaction process of AT, as each redactor’s work reflected the ethos of the community within a given time frame. The Hippolytan community, made up of predominately Greek-speaking Christians, reflected more Eastern Christian customs than other communities in Rome at the time. Those portions redacted by a source Brent called Elenchus (El) reflect a period when the Hippolytan community looked to bishops to help preserve this community in orthodoxy. A later redaction by a source Brent calls Contra Noetum (CN) stressed that presbyters were to work in cooperation with their bishop in communion with the one Bishop over all Roman congregations to preserve unity. The names of these redactors derive their names from the titles of Patristic writings, which in Brent’s theory were authored by each redactor. The redactors along with the original source

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52 Kavanagh, Confirmation: Origins and Reform, 41-52.


54 Stewart-Sykes, On the Apostolic Tradition, 30.
of the tradition or the Paradosis (P) reflected differing sitz im leben. The three layers called upon the Hippolytan community to “live into” a new ecclesiology at the time of the writing.

Unlike Genesis which is comprised of separate sources later compiled by a redactor, the two redactors of the Hippolytan community began with P and to this El first added material, then likewise CN.\(^{55}\) Given that over time the Hippolytan community and its bishop would have increasingly sought full recognition of its baptismal practice, the custom of manus impositionem episcopi ad accipiendum spiritum in a later textual redaction becomes increasingly plausible. The Hippolytan community may have been ecclesiologically at odds with its Latin brothers and sisters over differing customs and practices such as the observance of the Pasch.\(^{56}\) Perhaps the episcopal handlaying was intended to restore ecclesial connectedness between the Hippolytan community and Latin congregations in Rome. In terms of one version of the English translation of the Latin text,\(^{57}\) P was made up of verses 19-20 and 25-26, while El consisted of verse 22-24. Finally, CN added verse 21.\(^{58}\)

Specifically, in the original P (verses 19-20; 25-26), candidates were washed and the presbyter declares that they will be anointed, and after wiping themselves, they leave the separated baptistery and go into church, where the people pray and then exchange the peace. El redacted the text so that in the church, the presbyter actually chrismates by pouring oil in his hand, then anoints and signs the forehead of each one newly washed (verses 22-24). Finally, CN further redacted the text to add the ritual action by the bishop in the church of handlaying and invoking the Spirit through what I would suggest is an epiclesis with a

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 26-27.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 14.


\(^{58}\) The reader may wish to refer to Appendix A for each of the three sources separated by verses.
Trinitarian blessing (verse 21). Rather than a redundant chrismation or signing, what we have here is a living piece of literature. This is not the beginning of a separated Sacrament of Confirmation. CN’s handlaying and anointing actually reflected Tertullian’s understanding of adoption. The role of the bishop in CN established that the baptized in the Hippolytan community were connected through a bishop who was connected to brother bishops and the bishop of Rome. The newly washed received *manus illis inponatur in paenitentiam* and *manus impositionem episcopi ad accipiendum spiritum*. Moreover, the oil used by the presbyter is the “oil of thanksgiving,” one of the two flagons of oil which had been sanctified by the bishop at the Eucharist. In the Latin translation of the Sahidic text of Chapter 21 “the oil of thanksgiving” and the “oil of exorcism” are mentioned.\(^5^9\) Bradshaw has suggested that the later *Canons of Hippolytus* added the “oil of exorcism” which the Coptic Church would adopt. However, Bradshaw submits that in the Greek urtext of *AT* there was only the “oil of gladness.”\(^6^0\) Stewart-Sykes is safe therefore in arguing that the “oil of thanksgiving” consecrated by the bishop at the Eucharist is what was in use as the presbyters anointed in verse 19 of *P*.\(^6^1\) *P*, along with the redactions, offers a very plausible explanation for apparent redundancies. It is also possible that CN may have been in some way affected by the handlaying from North Africa and the handlaying theologies of both Tertullian and Cyprian. Thus, the Hippolytan congregation may have utilized a baptismal rite which in its redacted form may have contained the theology and practice of handlaying and chrismation barrowed


\(^{60}\) Paul F. Bradshaw, “Baptismal Practice in the Alexandrian Tradition: Eastern or Western,” in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit*, 94.

from the Church of North Africa. This handlaying and chrismation permitted the Bishop and the entire Hippolytan community to be drawn into relationship with the Bishop of Rome.

### 3.8 Significant 4\textsuperscript{th} Century Developments

The Canons of several synods of the period were directed at "\textit{post conspicatus malum prohibere id.}"\textsuperscript{62} Canon 38 of the Synod of Elvira (ca. 305) directed that if a catechumen should become sick while at sea or while abroad, away from a church, a man who was not a bigamist could in this \textit{extremis} baptize the catechumen. If the neophyte survived "he or she should be brought to the bishop to be perfected by the imposition of the hand."\textsuperscript{63} Canon 9 (or 8) of Arles I (314) established that the Church was to ask those who had been baptized in heresy to confess the creed, and if they confessed the Trinity, a hand might be imposed for the Holy Spirit. Yet, if they did not confess the Trinity they were assumed not to have been baptized into the Trinity and thus they were to be properly baptized.\textsuperscript{64} No longer is there (re)baptism of heretics. In the wake of Cyprian’s conflict with Stephen, \textit{manus illis inponatur in paenitentiam}\textsuperscript{65} has been subverted by \textit{manus illis inponatur ad accipiendum spiritum}.	extsuperscript{66} Nonetheless, a separate rite of handlaying had become the established norm for receiving heretics.

\textsuperscript{62} As noted above (note 36): “after perceiving a bad thing, to prohibit it.”


\textsuperscript{65} Meaning “the hand imposed upon them in penitence.”

\textsuperscript{66} Meaning “the hand imposed upon them to receive the Spirit.”
In 325 at Nicaea I, Canon 8 discussed how to receive Cathars, who desire to be readmitted to communion with the Church catholic. It would seem that Nicaea did not put the Novatians on the same level as Arians. Though not stated, it would seem that this is a *manus illis inponatur in paenitentiam*, since the same canon speaks of those returning to the Church after divorce. Among the canons preserved in Arabic is Canon 31, which seems to allow for a reconciliation of heretics. This suggests that with *manus illis inponatur in paenitentiam*, the oil which Canon 69 permits a presbyter to bless is used as the oil for healing.

Optatus, Bishop of Milevis in *De Schismate Donatistarum*, like Tertullian, maintained both a pneumatological and christological understanding of the oil for baptism and connected chrism to the descending dove and the voice of the Father in Jesus’ own baptism. In opposing the Donatists, Optatus made clear that the washing, handlaying, and chrismation are effected by the work of the economic Trinity, and not by the presider. During Optatus’ tenure, Canon 6 of Carthage II in 390 established that presbyters were not to consecrate the chrism. This prohibition was reaffirmed seven years later in Canon 32 and 36 at the Council of Carthage III and again in 411 at the Council of Carthage IV in Canon 36. These canons reflect part of Cyprian’s intent and suggest the need for directives “*post conspicatus malum.*” The fact that the Canons at Carthage III and IV were even necessary

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67 Likely referring to the Novatianists, a rigorist sect who refused the Lapsi readmission to communion.


71 Ibid., 149: 335.

72 Ibid., 149: 347.
suggests that Canon 6 of the Council in 390 was not being followed – presbyters in North Africa were not only blessing the chrism but were performing all of the rites of initiation without a bishop being present or involved. Augustine, in *Sermon 324* would speak of how the *presbyteri* were ministers of the entire rite of initiation. Given all these factors, there is no evidence to suggest that bishops of North Africa were always involved in the rites of initiation. As we have seen, in North Africa, Bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome, consecrated the chrism; however if one had been baptized by a heretical group, the local bishop may not have not been directly involved in one’s initiation. For those baptized in heresy, what evolved over time was that the bishop *manus illis inponatur ad accipiendum spiritum*. The much cited episcopal handlaying in the so called *Apostolic Tradition* may well have been the work of a later redactor who sought to establish closer ties between the Hippolytan community and the other churches of Rome by following a custom of handlaying practiced in North Africa. These newer insights will assist us as we consider the specific role of the chrism and of bishops in a renewed practice and theology of Confirmation.

### 3.9 Ambrose

From Augustine we know that Easter was a traditional time for baptisms in Milan. Yet we need to avoid the perception that all baptisms in the 4th century West took place at Easter. Ambrose suggested that Epiphany was when Christ was baptized, yet he seems to baptize at Easter and Pentecost. In the same letter of Pope Siricius, which we previously mentioned in Section 5, Easter and Pentecost baptism was the custom in Rome and parts of Northern

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74 Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, 149.
Two extant works of Ambrose are relevant to our study: *De Mysteriis* (henceforth *DM*) and *De Sacramentis* (henceforth *DS*).

It is clear from *DM* and *DS* that, unlike the practice in North Africa during this period, in Milan the bishop was very much involved in initiation. These treatises reveal that the bishop poured chrism or Myron on the head of those washed and, according to *DM* 34-40, candidates were clothed in a white garment. In both treatises the presbyter or bishop washed the feet of the neophyte. Finally, the washed are said to receive the “spiritale signaculum” (spiritual seal). But it is not clear whether this “spiritale signaculum” refers to the washing, chrismation, a handlaying or consignation. Yet whatever the “spiritale signaculum” was specifically, initiation in Milan included a prayer for the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit based on Isaiah 11 (which we are calling the Ambrosian Prayer) and this prayer is described in *DS* 3.8-10 and *DM* 41-42.

Ambrose mentions the reading for the day, which seems to have included Isaiah 11. However, the Ambrosian Prayer specifically follows the foot washing and precedes a discussion on the neophytes approaching the altar for the first time (S 3.8-10). Ambrose uses the word *perfectio*, which may well reflect his sense that the prayer for the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit enumerated in Isaiah 11 may well bring the ritual actions to completion. In *M* 34-40 Ambrose mystagogically reflects upon the white garment and the

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76 Whitehouse, “Manus Impositio,” 323n5.


78 Ibid., 96.
spiritale signaculum. Whatever the spiritale signaculum is, it clearly confirmavit (strengthens).

Pope Siricius practiced the reception of heretics who joined the Catholic Church “only through the invocation of the sevenfold Spirit by the imposition of a bishop’s hand.” I would submit, however, that Ambrose’s spiritale signaculum included the washing, a pouring of chrism, a handlaying, a consignation and the Ambrosian prayer. What is clear from Ambrose’s mystagogical reflections in DM and DS is that Ambrose maintains strong Trinitarian and Christological connections to the spiritale signaculum. In the laver of regeneration one entered the Paschal Mystery. It is difficult to consign with chrism without some sort of manus imposition, yet unlike Tertullian and Cyprian, Ambrose does not theologically reflect specifically upon the manus impositio. Nevertheless, I would argue that Baptism in Milan included washing, washing of feet, chrismation, handlaying, consignation, Ambrosian prayer, and clothing with a white garment. These collective ritual actions completed the initiation process and carried both christological and pneumatological implications. What I am proposing may offer new insights into initiation practice in Ambrose’s Milan and may offer important contributions to ritual practice and theology of initiation which will affect how we understand Confirmation.

3.10 Jerome

In Jerome’s Dialogus Contra Luciferianos, aimed at the rigorist, Lucifer, Bishop of Cagliari, Jerome utilized some of Cyprian’s polemics against Pope Stephen I. Yet Jerome assumed

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79 Ibid., 178. Ambrose is exegeting Song of Songs 8:6: “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame.”

80 Ibid.

Stephen’s position, opposing (re)baptism.\textsuperscript{82} Jerome insists that the \textit{manus impositio} would be an appropriate way of receiving Arians since this is the manner in which the Apostles received the Samaritans in Acts 8.\textsuperscript{83} This might suggest that the \textit{manus impositio} by a bishop was neither practiced nor had a history in Rome prior to the end of the 4\textsuperscript{th} century. The \textit{Dialogus} seems intended for Italian readers to promote handlaying for heretics throughout Italy. Handlaying should constitute only a \textit{manus illis inponatur in paenitentiam}. Yet, as we have already noted \textit{manus illis inponatur ad accipiendum spiritum} had begun by this same period to become the predominate understanding in the reconciliation of heretics in North Africa.

However, more significant, Jerome, in his \textit{Commentary on Galatians} in exegeting Galatians 2, suggested that Paul and Peter faked a “lawsuit” over the Judaizers in order to bring Gentiles to Christianity. Jerome contended that there was no real conflict between the two apostles. Augustine in his Letters 28 and 40 reacted fiercely to the notion that Paul perpetuated such “lies.”\textsuperscript{84} Additionally, in Epistles 122 and 130, Jerome suggested that penance constituted a sacramental “plank” after the post baptismal “shipwreck” caused by human sinfulness.\textsuperscript{85} Late scholastics would use this image to argue for Penance and Confirmation. In our next chapter we will see how Jerome’s \textit{Commentary} will affect Reformation debates concerning Confirmation.

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\textsuperscript{82} J. N. D. Kelly, \textit{Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies} (London: Duckworth, 1975), 63-64.
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\textsuperscript{83} Jerome, \textit{Altercatio luciferiani et orthodoxi: Débat entre un luciférien et un orthodoxe}, ed, Aline Canellis, Sources chrétiennes (Paris: Cerf, 2003), 118-20.
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3.11 Augustine and Prosper

Augustine, amid the Donatist controversy, was quick to note that the Holy Spirit comes from God and does not proceed from the presider. In *De Trinitate* 15.46 Augustine connects bishops with apostolic handlaying in Acts 8, since for Augustine handlaying is important. With it even the youngest might receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.86 Placing a high pneumatic emphasis on chrismation,87 he spoke of the chrism as the Sacrament in the Holy Spirit. He compares it to the fire which follows water, as the neophyte is baked into the bread which is the body of Christ.88

Whitehouse sees a pneumatological and Christological understanding of handlaying and chrismation in many of Augustine’s works.89 In the *Exposition of Psalm* 44 Augustine speaks of the inner action and the outward sign of chrism,90 yet an overarching pneumatology prevents them from being disconnected. In *De Baptismo* 3.21, again with the Donatists in mind, he stated that a sacrament’s efficacy comes from God and not the one imposing the hand: “the sacrament is one thing, while the operation of the Spirit is another, which even


89 Whitehouse notes, for example, Augustine’s *Sermon* 351.12, *On the City of God* 17.49, *Expositions of the Psalms* 44.19 and in *Tractate on the Gospel of John* 33.3. Whitehouse, "Manus Impositio," 281n20

Simon Magus could possess.”91 This relationship would became important to the Scholastics as they spoke of the “sacramentum et res.”92 According to the Scholastics some 800 years later, Simon would be seen as possessing the sacramentum but not the res. Significantly, in his *Tractate on the Gospel of John* 80.3, Augustine posits that handlaying is connected to the Word through prayer. He makes a similar connection to chrismation in *Sermon* 266.7. This Word connected with the element would become an important way of thinking about sacraments for the Reformers centuries later. In *Sermons* 229M.2 and 249.3 Augustine utilizes the Ambrosian Prayer, though he does not make it clear if it were accompanied with handlaying, chrismation, or the consignation. Suffice it to say that Augustine understood initiation rites pneumatically and chistologically, yet linked inextricably to the Word in prayer.

While it goes beyond this dissertation to take up the doctrine of original sin, it is worth noting that Augustine, operating within his developed doctrine, challenged the Pelagians on the subject of the Baptism of infants. If they did not believe in original sin, which even children carry since birth, why do they baptize infants?93 Here it is important to note what Augustine is not saying. Augustine is not saying that the youngest children should be baptized to wash away original sin. He is asking the Pelagians why they continue the practice, suggesting that their own theology is inconsistent with their liturgical practice. However, over the centuries, Augustine’s argument was turned around to become a

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92 Literally, the “sign and reality,” the sign and the thing signified.

theological rationale for the Baptism of infants. While a misunderstanding of Augustine’s doctrine of original sin led to a rise in the number of pedobaptisms in succeeding centuries, it is overly simplistic to suggest that it was Augustine’s doctrine that gave rise to what we know today as Confirmation.  

(We will discuss rationales for infant Baptism in Chapter 5.)

Augustine advocated catechumenal rites promoting a sacramental understanding of all the rites of initiation guided by the Holy Spirit. His contributions to sacramental theology were vital, but these contributions also need to be placed in the context of his overall understanding of the Church herself as a Sacrament. Certainly his distinction between the inner and outer \textit{sacramentum} had implications into the Scholastic period, and his connection of sign and the Word had implications for the Reformers. Augustine’s theology, as reflected in his voluminous corpus, can contribute to a richer understanding leading toward a renewed theology of the rite which, in the West, we call Confirmation. I contend that it would be a serious misstep to assume that Augustine himself ever intended to see the rites of initiation separated.

Prosper of Aquitaine, a disciple of Augustine, continued the legacy of Augustine’s struggle over Pelagianism. Prosper too was concerned that prayer be viewed as central to all parts of the Church’s life and a part of all the rites of Christian initiation. Under a directive from Pope Leo, amid a surge in Semi-pelagianism, Prosper wrote his “\textit{Auctoritates},” or the \textit{Celestian}. In it he articulated his famous dictum: “Let the rule of faith establish the rule of prayer.”

It can also be translated, “Let the rule of prayer lay down the rule of faith.”

\footnote{Latin: “\textit{ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi}” in Prosper of Aquitaine, \textit{S. Prosperi Aquitani, s. Augustini discipuli, s. Leonis pape notarii, Opera omnia}, Patrologiae cursus completus, Series prima latina (Lutetiae Parisiorum: excudebatur et venit apud J. P. Migne, 1861), 219-20.}

\footnote{Robert M. Grant, “Development of the Christian Catechumenate,” in \textit{Made, Not Born}, 38.}
Kavanagh argued that the latter translation provided a methodology for liturgical theologians
and, in particular, a method for tracing the history of the development of Confirmation in the
West.97 Kavanagh’s thesis that Confirmation had its origins in a missa rite led for him to call
for the discontinuation of modern Confirmation rites. His work had a great deal of influence
upon liturgical studies across the Western Church, and his conclusions had a profound impact
upon Protestant theologians and Christian educators such as Richard Robert Osmer and
Luther Lindberg.98 In contrast, as I hope is becoming increasingly evident in this study, it is
the goal of my work to support a renewal of Confirmation theology and practice which
benefits from reforms gleaned from the full breadth, depth and richness of rites of the
Church’s first 1500 years. The rite of Baptism in much of the Church’s history involved a
number of ritual actions in a unified rite, and any renewal of Confirmation will need to begin
with an appreciation of the richness of Baptism.

3.12 Innocent I

Innocent I (d. 417) distinguished between two types of reception into the Church catholic.
Like the Council of Nicaea and Augustine, Innocent called for the manus impostio for those
joining the church from heretical sects. Yet for those who were apostate he called for the

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96 Prosper of Aquitaine: Defense of St. Augustine, ed. and trans. Prudentius de Letter, Ancient

97 We noted in section 8 above how Kavanagh’s methodology led him to discount sources prior to the

(Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1996), 40-44; Luther E. Lindberg, “Lutheran Confirmation Ministry in
(Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 42-49.
reception of heretics through *manus illis inponatur in paenitentiam*. However, Innocent did not mention the use of chrism for this rite.\(^9\)

On the other hand, in a Letter to Decentius in a city north of Rome called Gubbio, Innocent may have been engaging in a bit of Roman propaganda, by bolstering the prominence of Bishops through the assertion of the necessity that the chrism for use across the diocese be consecrated by a bishop. The Visigoth invasion and sacking of Rome in 410 had disrupted communications between Rome and the outer-lying sees. The Pope needed to increase the prominence of the See of Peter. Utilizing Acts 8 to argue for the bishops’ apostolic authority,\(^1\) he argued that presbyters anointing with oil should anoint with chrism which has been consecrated by the bishop. He also seemed to imply that if the bishop happened to be present for the Baptism at the chrismation, the presbyter should not anoint the forehead, since the forehead is reserved for the bishop, who gives the Paraclete Spirit.\(^2\)

Interestingly, a misreading of this letter’s intent would later be used to justify Confirmation as a separate sacrament.

Significantly, there is here no explicit mention of handlaying, even though it has often been assumed that handlaying is implied by Innocent. Innocent is certainly promoting the role of the bishop, yet the structure of the Letter in Latin suggests that Innocent was referring expressly to the bishop’s hands confecting the chrism. But it is through the chrism, not handlaying, of which he speaks as bestowing of the Paraclete Spirit. Thus, it would seem that again presbyters were illicitly confecting chrism. In addition, the letter does specifically


\(^1\) Kavanagh, *Confirmation: Origins and Reform*, 63.

speak of a consignation, meaning by this time this may not have been the practice in Rome. This offers another directive “post conspicatus malum,” as Innocent, like Cyprian, seems concerned that the chrism be consecrated at the Eucharist over which a Bishop in communion with his brother bishops had presided.

With increases in the number of Baptisms more chrism was required. We see evidence of this reality in Innocent’s Letter 2.9 to Victricius of Rouen. Innocent even says that in Rome, not a day passes without a Baptism. This increase in the need for chrism seems to have led to the temptation by more presbyters to take it upon themselves to confect chrism. In a fifth century letter, Pope Gelasius (492-496) speaks of his concern over presbyters who are confecting chrism. Amid the need for chrism at Baptism many presbyters likely felt the need to confect chrism on their own. Gelasius’ letter also suggests that despite Augustine’s intentions, the faithful were increasingly anxious to have their young children baptized soon after birth.

3.13 Gregory I

In a letter to Januarius, Bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia, Pope Gregory (590-604) directed that after the washing the presbyter should anoint the breast so that the forehead may be left to the

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102 Eugene Finnegan, “The Origins of Confirmation in the Western Church: A Liturgical-dogmatic Study of the Development of the Separate Sacrament of Confirmation in the Western Church prior to the Fourteenth Century” (PhD diss., Theological Faculty of Trier, 1970), 242.

103 Innocent, Patrologiae cursus completus: seu bibliotheca universalis, integra, uniformis, commoda, oeconomica, omnium SS. Patrum, doctorum scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum, sive latinorum, sive graecorum, qui ab aevo apostolico ad tempora Innocentii III (anno 1216, Volume 20), ed. J. P. Migne (1857), 476; Michael Patrick Whitehouse, “Manus Impositio,” 301n65.

His major concern seemed to be that a bishop should not create a redundancy by chrismating one whom a presbyter had already chrismated. Gregory’s intent seemed to be that if the bishop is present for a Baptism, a presbyter should not anoint at all. If the bishop is present, presbyters should anoint the breast, reserving the forehead for the bishop. However, in another letter to Januarius, Gregory clarifies that in the absence of the bishop the presbyter should anoint on the forehead. This would suggest that, like North Africa as we noted above, bishops were often not present for initiation rites during this period throughout their dioceses.

In a homily on Luke 10, Gregory made reference to handlaying after the washing, suggesting that by his time in Rome the gesture of handlaying after the washing was custom. In a Homily on Ezekiel 7, the Pope made reference to the seven steps mentioned in the vision in Ezekiel 40, linking each step to the sevenfold gifts of Isaiah 11. While Ambrose’s prayer linked the sevenfold gifts to the “spirituale signaculum,” Gregory linked the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit to the heavenly life which one receives in Baptism. For Ambrose, Baptism is perfected and completed by the “spirituale signaculum.” Yet, for Gregory the sevenfold gifts were understood as an entrance to the heavenly life which once receives in Baptism. The descent from wisdom to fear is possibly descriptive of the descent down steps


109 As noted in section 9, I contend that this includes all of the ritual actions of Baptism as practiced in Ambrose’s Milan.
into the baptistery. Such an entry meant that, for Gregory, not only were there strong eschatological links in Baptism, but it suggested that, for him, Baptism is completed in the fulfillment of the beatific vision.

3.14 Gelasian Sacramentary

We find the first Roman inclusion of the Ambrosian Prayer in the GS of 571. However, the Vaticanus Reginensis 316 (VR316), compiled ca. 750, is probably the best preserved edition of the so-called Gelasian Sacramentary, offering the closest we have to a liturgy in Rome from the 5th and 6th centuries. Despite the VR316’s later compilation, in this edition of that sacramentary Chavasse had argued that a ritual in Chapter 75 for the blessing of the water for asperges predates any of the initiation rites found in the Gelasian Sacramentary of 571 (GS of 571). However, a rite for baptizing sick catechumens and administering Communion, in accord with the Council of Elvira (ca. 305?), was added to Chapter 44 of the VR316 and other Roman sacramentaries. This suggests that there were Galician influences in what is often perceived to be purely Roman rites well before the time of Charlemagne. While Chavasse was certain that each part of the rites had not undergone redaction, it is clear that the VR316 reflected Galician influence even before the promulgation of the Ordo Romanus XI (OR XI) or the Gregorian Sacramentary — i.e. the Hadrianum, instituted by Charlemagne.


111 Ibid.


113 Johnson, The Rites of Christian Initiation, 186-87.

114 Chavasse, Le sacramentaire gélasien, 156.
Three sources reflect chrismation by the presbyter in accord with the spirit of Pope Innocent’s letter from fifth century. These sources, likely from the early 8th century Gaul, contain only presbyters anointing in the Missale Gallicanum Vetus (MGV), Missale Gothicum (MG), and the Bobbio Missal (BM). These three sources reveal almost no role for Galician bishops in rites of initiation.

3.15 Faustus of Riez

A sermon from the 6th-century Bishop of Riez named Faustus unwittingly impacted Confirmation as it is known in the West. Dix went so far as to call this Pentecost homily “the foundation of the whole Western medieval theology of Confirmation.” Dix’s statement is certainly an exaggeration, and is factual only insofar as Faustus’ sermon would later become redacted. Both Austin and Johnson have suggested that this famous homily delivered on Pentecost Sunday in Riez in Gaul possessed a Semipelagian anthropology. However, I would contend that this is not the case. The homily, dated by Buchem to Pentecost Sunday

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between 449 and 461, prior to Arles III,\textsuperscript{121} was discovered in a collection of sermons attributed to Eusebius of Emesa. Winkler suggests that the homilist was not Faustus, but someone known to the bishop, who had been a champion against Arianism.\textsuperscript{122}

In the homily, the preacher stated that Baptism brings one to innocence. Eight times a form of the noun \textit{confirmatio} is used; and once the word \textit{roboramur} is used, appearing in the phrase “\textit{post baptismum roboramur}.”\textsuperscript{123} According to the preacher, strengthening alone comes through the Holy Spirit’s work, whose decent upon the Apostles in Acts 2 was a reading for that day. Through the Holy Spirit one is preserved as a soldier. Nowhere in the sermon does it speak of the \textit{manus impostitio} by the bishop as completing or perfecting Baptism. In fact, the homily acknowledged that if one should die before having received the \textit{manus impostitio}, one is “strengthened” by death because one no longer can sin after death.\textsuperscript{124}

Like the Eastern fathers, this homilist used military imagery. But in the East the focus was typically on pre-baptismal exorcisms and anointings. It is important to note that \textit{confirmatio}, just as we found in Ambrose, was not used in this sermon as a proper noun; nor does it suggest a semi-pelagian theology, since the \textit{confirmatio} of which “Faustus” spoke was the work of the Holy Spirit. The words of “Faustus of Riez” might well have been lost to

\textsuperscript{121} L’homélie pseudo-eusébienne de Pentecôte: l’origine de la ”confirmatio” en Gaule méridionale et l’interprétation de ce rite par Fauste de Riez, ed. L. A. van Buchem (Nijmegen, Pays-Bas: Drukkerij Gebr. Janssen, 1967), 113.

\textsuperscript{122} Winkler, “Confirmation or Chrismation?” 214-15.

\textsuperscript{123} Meaning “after Baptism we are strengthened.”

\textsuperscript{124} The Latin: “. . . confirmatur morte, quia iam non potest peccare post mortem” in L’homélie pseudo-eusébienne de Pentecôte, 45.
history had it not been for a mid-9th-century work purportedly written by Pope Melchiades to Isidore Bishop of Seville.125

3.16 Gaul and Iberia

In 441 at Orange I, Canon 2 forbids a Baptism to proceed without chrism and there is to be only one chrismation. However at the confirmatione (strengthening and firming) the sacerdos will be advised by the deacon if a Baptism had taken place without chrismation. There is also a hint at the conclusion of the canon that some priests have not taken this chrismation seriously and regarded it as a mere blessing.126 For this reason, it seems that the word confirmare is used to clarify that chrismation with prayer serves to strengthen the baptized person. In Gaul at this point deacons are baptizing and priests are chrismating. Arles II was actually a series of synods which met from 442-506. Canon 17 stipulated that in reconciling the followers of Bonoso,127 the same provision was to be followed as set down by Nicaea I, Canon 8.128

At Toledo I (c. 397-400) Canon 20 serves as another example of a directive “post conspicatus malum” as presbyters were again taking it upon themselves to bless chrism. The canon directs that while deacons may not chrismate, presbyters may chrismate so long as the

125 Austin, Anointing With the Spirit, 14.
126 Kavanagh, Confirmation: Origins and Reform, 55.
128 As noted in Section 8, Canon 8 provided for the reconciliation of the Novatianists.
chrism was confeated by a bishop.\textsuperscript{129} Braga I in 563 stipulated in Canon 19 that any presbyter who blessed chrism was to be deposed.\textsuperscript{130}

Clearly in this period there remained in Iberia a close connection between all liturgical actions associated with Baptism, yet Spanish sources do reveal that the role of the bishop in handlaying was quite important in Spain. We find in manuscripts from Toledo in the time of Ildefonse that following Baptisms, neophytes remained in their baptismal garments until the Tuesday, a week after the Pasch. After the eight days, according to one manuscript, neophytes shared the Eucharist, received the bishop’s blessing, and were dismissed by the deacon. In another manuscript from the period following the episcopal blessing (which contains the word “\textit{confirmare}” in the prayer) the neophytes removed their baptismal robes and then were dismissed without a Eucharist.\textsuperscript{131} This blessing after eight days is not indicative of the beginnings of Confirmation as a separate sacrament as would take place a few centuries later. The handlaying and the anointing separated by eight days from the washing seem to have been intended to remind the candidates that one was called to live one’s entire life modeled by eighth day, i.e., resurrection, living. The unique custom in Toledo seems to have been clearly understood as part of Baptism and not understood as a separate sacrament as we will find with Confirmation centuries later.

\textsuperscript{129} Concilios visigóticos e Hispano-romanos, 24-25; Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy, 155.

\textsuperscript{130} Braga I, Braga II in Canon 7, Toledo IV in Canon 57 and Toledo VIII in Canon 7 took similar actions, as seen in Concilios visigóticos e Hispano-romanos, 45.

3.17 Children in the Middle Ages

Following Constantine’s reforms, a father still retained *potestas* (power or authority) over his daughter before her marriage. Prior to Constantine the *potestas* even extended to the son-in-law, yet, following the reforms this had no longer been the case.\textsuperscript{132} Canon 21 from the 541 Synod of Orleans stipulated that, under the threat of excommunication, no one was to marry a girl without parental consent.\textsuperscript{133} In the Middle Ages, children were still regarded as *infans* until seven. *Infans* were regarded as in an “age of innocence” since the child might still be nursing and had not yet formed clear distinctions between right and wrong.\textsuperscript{134}

Perceptions about childhood development were still rooted in the Roman stages of life (as outlined in Section 3 above), with the age of seven becoming pivotal. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 seems to have had the age of seven in mind when they said in Canon 21: “All the faithful of either sex, after they have reached the age of discernment (*discretionis*) should individually confess all their sins in a faithful manner to their own priest at least once a year.”\textsuperscript{135} Amid fears of infant mortality, Baptism of newborns was common. The Church would soon begin to prescribe episcopal handlaying, yet many families still did not bring children to the Church for *manus impostio*.\textsuperscript{136} The world within the Church and beyond was rapidly changing.

\textsuperscript{132} Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages: Fifth-Fifteenth Centuries*, The Laura Shannon Series in French Medieval Studies (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 7.


\textsuperscript{134} Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages: Fifth-Fifteenth Centuries*, 8-9.

\textsuperscript{135} *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, 245.

\textsuperscript{136} Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages*, 14.
3.18 False Decretals

Alcuin of York, as scholar in Charlemagne’s court, offered a commentary on the Ambrosian Prayer, discussing how one received the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit only through postbaptismal anointing. Rhabanus Maurus Magnentius (d. February 856), known also as Hrabanus or Rabanus, was a Frankish Benedictine monk who became the archbishop of Mainz in Germany. In his De Clericorum Institutione Rhabanus described redundant chrismation depicted in the redacted Apostolikā Paradosis. Rhabanus noted how in the presbyterial anointing, the neophyte became a habitatio (dwelling place) for God. Then in a second Sacrament one received the Confirmation and the sevenfold gifts.

Rhabanus along with his contemporary Paschasius Radbertus (786-860) utilized Augustine and other patristic writers in such a way that by the time of Peter Lombard, three centuries later, the Church had interchanged her understanding of the veritas corpus and corpus mysticum. For Ambrose, Augustine and many of the Church Fathers, the Church is the veritas corpus which receives the corpus mysticum of the Eucharist. Beginning with Rhabanus and Radbertus a steady process of reversal would begin. The Church continued on this path of juxtaposing veritas corpus and corpus mysticum. The gradual movement reached its zenith in the 11th century amid concerns over Berengar of Tours. In refuting Berengar, the Church began to present what Chauvet called a “deadly dichotomy” between the Eucharistic body and the ecclesial body. Chauvet sees the theology of Eucharist having


been reflected upon as separated from the community gathered. The *corpus mysticum* became only understood as that which received the *veritas corpus* born of Mary in the Eucharistic *corpus*.\(^{140}\) This dichotomy would have the unintended effect of separating a reception of the Sacrament of the Eucharist from its ecclesial meaning.\(^{141}\) In turn, in the centuries which followed, this would lead to intense debates over sacramentology and sacramental mediation apart from honest reflection on the nature and mission of the Church as the people of God who gather around the means of grace.

Orange I and Arles III had used the terms *confirmatio* or *confirmare*\(^{142}\) when speaking of the episcopal anointing. Orange I had also dealt with chrismation and in that context had made clear that chrismation, if performed at Baptism, was not to be repeated. The terms *confirmare* and *confirmatio* were not understood by these synods or Faustus as proper nouns, but what one received from the Holy Spirit. The Frankish Council of 798, the Council of Aix-la-Chappelle of 802, the Council of Paris of 829, the Council of Aix-la-Chappelle 836, the Council of Meaux of 845 and the Council of Tribur of 895, along with the *False Decretals* took the canons of the synods in southern Gaul in the fifth century and began using this theology, which led to Confirmation as a Sacrament in southern Gaul, and ultimately throughout the West.

As we found in our cursory examination of the Galician sacramentaries, bishops had a minimal role in the baptismal rites from the 6\(^{th}\) through the 8\(^{th}\) centuries and took very little

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\(^{142}\) Meaning to make strong or firm.
part in the catechesis of the faithful.\textsuperscript{143} Collectively, the Frankish Synods attempted to advance the \textit{admonitio gerneralis} which was promulgated during the reign of Charlemagne. The purpose behind the \textit{admonitio gernalis} was to augment the power of Bishops and clergy and to firmly establish that Bishops were responsible for the education of catechumens and the young and were to be responsible for Confirmation.

The \textit{“False Decretals,”} as they came to be known in later centuries, were in all likelihood composed by Frankish clerics in the second quarter of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{144} Alcuin had promulgated a collection of Letters purportedly sent to all the Bishops of Spain.\textsuperscript{145} One of decretals was attributed to Melchiades who was the thirty-third occupant of the see of Peter, (reigning 311-314.)\textsuperscript{146} Bausch\textsuperscript{,} however made the erroneous statement that this Pope had never existed. Of the sixty letters in the Collection attributed to Popes, only two of the papal letters are even genuinely letters of pontiffs.\textsuperscript{148} Writings from various sources were used in the decretals to lend greater authority to the clergy, and particularly bishops.\textsuperscript{149}


\textsuperscript{147} William J. Bausch, \textit{A New Look at the Sacraments}, Rev. ed. (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 98.


\textsuperscript{149} Davenport, \textit{The False Decretals}, 22.
One of the decretals, which I will identify as “Melchiades” was a redacted edition of the
Pentecost Homily attributed to “Faustus.” At the conclusion of the text of this homily the
redactor citing John 6 speaks of the need to adhere to this decretal since the Apostles after the
resurrection benefited from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The implication is not only that
the faithful of Carlolingian Gaul need to follow this teaching, but perfecting handlaying is
that which will offer the Holy Spirit to those who are still in need of being perfected. No
longer is it merely the Holy Spirit which rubitur and confirmare the candidate. It is the
manus impostitio by the Bishop which perfects, confirms, strengthens and through which the
Holy Spirit is poured out. It is the Holy Spirit which leads the faithful into all truth.150 Now
the Confirmatio as a proper noun comes to be understood as a separate sacrament on par with
Baptism.

3.19 Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas
In the patristic sacramental economy there are numerous rites which the Latin Church
Fathers would have regarded as sacramentum. Peter Lombard, however, spoke of seven
sacraments. In the Sentences, Lombard offered his interpretation of Gregory’s Letter to
Januarius. Lombard interpreted the letter as saying that only the bishop should chrismate on
the forehead. From our reading of Gregory’s letter,151 it appears that Lombard was
misreading Gregory’s intent. Lombard used Rhabanus’ argument that Confirmation is
conferred by the bishop who is the higher minister. Lombard cited Acts 8, elevating the role
of the bishop in bestowing Paraclete, as well as a quote from “Melchiades” from the
Decretals establishing that the sevenfold gifts of Isaiah 11 are alone offered by the bishop.

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MPL 130 Col. XVI-XXIV.

151 See Section 18 above.
Lombard repeated the claim that Baptism established a dwelling place for God and, in Confirmation, the dwelling is sanctified. Augustine had argued that ordination was not repeatable, and Lombard used Augustine’s principle to argue that neither was Confirmation.\(^{152}\) Lombard had not doubted the Decretals’ authenticity, and as a result he had likely unwittingly codified a Semipelagian rendering of “Faustus” as part of his theology of the seven sacraments.

St. Thomas authored the *Summa Contra Gentiles* five years before he began work on the *Summa Theologica*. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles* Aquinas connected the sign of the cross in the consignation with the sign which a soldier receives, serving and conquering under a prince. The bishop as “prince” serves to confer this sacrament “suitably” since “it is the prerogative of the army leader to select some men to be enrolled.”\(^{153}\) In the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas lined up the sacraments in the most reasonable order for discussion, with Confirmation being the second. Aquinas suggested that Confirmation might precede or follow first Communion. Yet, one may be nourished by the Eucharist at any time, insofar as it sustains the one who is baptized.\(^{154}\) Aquinas’ argument is relevant as we consider the ordering of reception of the Sacraments. Aquinas used “Melchiades” to support counting Confirmation among the sacraments. Along with Alcuin and Lombard’s interpretation of Innocent I, Aquinas suggested that only a bishop confirms, and that in Confirmation one is strengthened through a Sacrament which is not repeatable. Using the Patristic theology of an unseparated baptismal rite, Aquinas suggested that in Confirmation a character is imprinted,

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and it increases what Baptism had granted. While “Melchiades” had said in the Decretals that women should not be confirmed, Aquinas argued for women’s Confirmation. Finally, the priest may chrismate the top of the head while the forehead is reserved for the bishop.\footnote{Ibid., Q 72.2-72.11, 2419-27.}

3.20 Sacramental Reordering

John Pecham, Archbishop of Canterbury, became increasingly concerned about the lack of catechesis among the laity throughout England and Wales. Few seemed able to demonstrate knowledge of the basics of the Christian faith.\footnote{M. Brett et al., Councils And Synods: With Other Documents Relating to the English Church, vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 886.} Canon IV of the Synod of Lambeth of July 1279 stipulated that, with the exception of imminent death, no one was to be admitted to the Sacrament of the “body and blood” without first having received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Under Canon V no one was to be ordained without being confirmed. Lateran IV had established that no one was to be admitted to first Communion who had not attained the “age of reason.” Lambeth effectively changed the order of Sacraments known to Aquinas. Now, in many dioceses, one was baptized, went to first Confession at the “age of reason,” and was then confirmed—all before receiving first Communion. The move affected pieties which remain with us even into the twenty-first century.

In an interesting additional change, further entrenching a particular view of Confirmation, at the close of the 13th Century, the canonist William Durandus drafted a pontifical calling for the bishop to impose both hands collectively on the confirmand, and for the alapa or slap to be added to the rite as a sign of strengthening following the imposition of the hands of the bishop.\footnote{Austin, Anointing With the Spirit, 22.}
3.21 Final Reflections

In our examination we have seen various expressions and dimensions of the early development of handlaying, chrismation, and consignation and the theology connected to them. From our study there are several major themes found in an unseparated baptismal rite prior to Charlemagne: 1) With Tertullian there was a connection between the ritual actions leading to the washing as manumission (i.e., sending, from slavery, by the hand) from sin. After the laver in the handlaying of the bishop, one was coming under a new patron in the Church and adopted as a son or daughter of God. 2) All the ritual actions were understood as connected pneumatologically and christologically. 3) In some places deacons baptized, with presbyters authorized to chrismate, but only bishops who were in communion with brother bishops who were in communion with the Bishop of Rome could confect the chrism. 4) Heretics could be readmitted with a simple handlaying for penance, while Arians requiring anointing with the oil for healing. 5) Confirmation as a proper noun is anachronistic prior to Charlemagne.

By the eighth century reforms of Charlemagne, theologians had no difficulty in speaking of Confirmation as one of the sacraments of the church. Kavanagh was indeed correct that the historical reasons for the development of a second Sacrament in the West was much more complicated than one might have suspected;\textsuperscript{158} only he was looking for its development centuries before it actually began. The Carolingians did have some difficulty in explaining a rationale for this new sacrament. While the \textit{Decretals} attempted to make a case for the necessity of Confirmation, any common layperson at the time knew from first-hand experience that there were many who had never been confirmed. This made the task of

convincing the laity that Confirmation was necessary even more challenging. As we will see, Jerome’s description of Penance as a “plank after the shipwreck” would be pressed—and it would be to the impoverishment of the sacrament of Baptism, even as post-Carolingian understandings of Confirmation would present new challenges for the Church.

In this chapter I have sought to contribute to the scholarly understanding of the history of Confirmation by offering a comprehensive study of the range of relevant primary sources, including patristic and medieval materials, concerning handlaying, chrismation, and consignation. By examining the full scope of such sources with fresh eyes, we have been able to see how their authors understood the theology of these ritual acts, thus offering us potential resources which may ultimately enrichen our current theology of baptismal living. In the process, I have suggested that many widely held perceptions—such as the view that the bishop needed to be involved in the actual handlaying, chrismation, and consignation at Baptism in the early centuries—may have been the result of reading medieval rationalizations for Confirmation back into these early texts. Specifically, I have argued that early sources were redacted amid the Carolingian reforms to justify the implementation of the Sacrament of Confirmation. These new insights will assist us as we seek to move toward a renewal of the theology and practice of Confirmation.

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159 Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 195.
4.1 Early Reformers

Peter Waldo, 12th century founder of the Waldensians, John Wycliffe in the 14th century, and Jan Hus of Prague in the 15th, each called for a return to Scripture and for reforms in ecclesial financial power.1 Wycliffe and Hus lived during the “Great Schism” (1378-1418). At first there were two Popes, one in Avignon, the other in Rome. Then in 1409 the Council of Pisa elected a third.2 On July 6, 1415, the Council of Constance declared Hus a heretic. In Constance, Hus was formally stripped of priestly vestments, arraigned for public execution, and led to the stake where he was executed as one espousing the “Wycliffite” heresy.3 That same day, at the 15th Session of the Council, 260 articles of Wycliffe were condemned, including Wycliffe’s denunciation of Confirmation as a rite “introduced at the devil’s suggestion so that the people might be diluted in the Church’s faith and the solemnity and necessity of bishops might be believed the more.” Wycliffe had denounced the “the oil with which bishops anoint boys and the linen cloth which goes around the head,” suggesting that “it seems that this is a trivial rite which is unfounded in Scripture.” The Council also denounced Wycliffe’s charge.4 One month earlier, the 13th Session of the Council of Constance officially forbade anyone to commune the laity under both kinds, as practiced by

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the Bohemians. The Doctrine of Concomitance, largely the work of the 13th century Scholastic, Alexander of Hales, was used to justify the Council’s denunciation. Along with the Synod of Lambeth, the Council’s action further precluded the youngest children from receiving the Eucharist.

At Session 5 in April 1415, the Council had declared that Church Councils held greater authority than Popes, officially calling for an end to the “Great Schism.” In succession all three popes were deposed, but the Council went on to condemn other leaders of the Prague Reform. At session 8 in Ferrara, the Council established that there were seven sacraments, including Confirmation. The Council further affirmed that at Confirmation a bishop, best representing the apostles, was to preside, impose hands, and anoint using chrism blessed by a Bishop and scented with balsam. Bishops were to consign with the words: “I sign you with the sign of the cross and I confirm you with the chrism of salvation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 8 was cited to support the practice in which a priest might participate. The Council did seek compromise with moderate Hussites, but tensions as to whether Papal or conciliar authority was greater remained.

Soon Gregory or Řehoř emerged as a prominent leader of the Bohemian reform which joined with some German Waldensian groups to form the Unity of the Brethren. After

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1478 small children were baptized with the understanding that parents and sponsors would instruct these children in the faith. Often around the age of twelve, after a long period of catechetical instruction in the discipline of the Unity, adolescents “completed their Baptism through a rite of confirmation,” and were understood to have been “received into the obedience.” After a handlaying from the priest, the newly confirmed were admitted to first Communion. Much of the piety which informed this practice of Confirmation had come from a sect of the Bohemian Reform which by this time had died out. This old sect had justified Confirmation based on Acts 8, and had even preserved the alapa.

Luke of Prague became the leader of the Unity in 1500 and implemented a formal process of examination of both children at Confirmation and new members at Baptism. Luke understood Confirmation as a threefold process of entry into the church. First, in a child’s Baptism, Christ embraced the young person. Secondly, around the age of twelve, one chose to obey the teachings of Christ and was then admitted to the Eucharist. Thirdly, a young person in a rite of Confirmation professed the faith and received the laying on of hands in the hope of eternal life. Thus, Luke permitted a young person to commune before Confirmation.  

4.2 Wittenberg Reform

In 1517 outside Wittenberg, as Johann Tetzel was selling indulgences, Martin Luther called for a debate concerning the Church’s penitential system. What began as a crisis over indulgences would evolve into a movement concerning conciliar and papal authority, Scripture, and sacramental mediation. In 1520 Luther may well have borrowed a term from

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Tertullian when Luther said as we are joined to Christ in Baptism we are called to be “christs one to another.” In another of his early treatises, Luther regarded something as a sacrament if it had been instituted by Christ when he said, “We see no reason for numbering confirmation. For to constitute a sacrament there must be above all things else a word of divine promise.” Luther went on to note that Christ had called for the laying on of hands for the sick in Mark [16:18],” yet the Church did not regard this as a Sacrament. Luther was therefore accusing the Medieval Church of inconsistency in its sacramental theology. Yet, Luther was still very much shaped by his old Augustinian order. For Luther divine promise served as the inner sacramentum, as he relied upon Augustine’s doctrine of the inner and outer sacramentum. In his criticisms of Confirmation, therefore, Luther would direct his criticism at chrismation in Confirmation and not the handlaying. For Luther the Augustinian, in the chrismation at Confirmation there was no promise from Jesus, much less the New Testament warrant that such an anointing on the forehead effected anything. Without the promise there was no inner sacramentum and therefore no valid outer sacramentum. Luther was, in effect, reasoning: How may we assure the faithful that a promise is offered through such a sign as anointing at Confirmation?

England’s Henry VIII, in a strong polemic against Luther, argued for the inclusion of Confirmation as a sacrament. To counter Luther’s charge that there was no dominical warrant for Confirmation, Henry badly paraphrased Augustine’s “Against the Letter of a Manichean”

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15 Ibid.
and suggested that the Church alone had authority to interpret Scripture.\textsuperscript{16} However, Augustine had been debating a Manichean and in this context argued that Scripture was given by God to the Church and it was within the Church that Augustine (a former Manichean) had come to the truth of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{17} In 1521 Luther would directly challenge Henry’s reading of Augustine.\textsuperscript{18}

In a 1522 Christmas Sermon on Titus 3:4-8, (a scriptural text which we examined in Chapter 2), Luther seems to have been responding to critics who had used Acts 8 and Pseudo-Cyprian to argue that only in the church Catholic does one receive \textit{manus impositionem episcopi} for the \textit{baptismate spriritus}. Luther told his parishioners, in reference to Titus 3, “Note here also the apostle’s apparent ignorance of the sacrament of confirmation . . . ; in baptism we are indeed born of the Holy Spirit. True we read how (Acts 8:17) the apostles laid their hands upon those who had been baptized, . . . . But in the course of time the ceremony was abandoned.”\textsuperscript{19} Luther would suggest that from the time one was baptized until one drew his or her last breath, Baptism enabled the believer to turn again from sin and appeal to the baptismal covenant. Luther had said, “The life of a Christian, from baptism to the grave is nothing else than the beginning of a blessed death.” He had asserted “I will remember my baptism and remind God of his covenant, and then fulfill the work and purpose


\textsuperscript{17} “Contra Epistolam Manichaei Quam Vocant Fundmenti Liber Unus,” in Augustine, \textit{Aurelii Augustini Opera}, vol. 42, 176.


of my baptism.”

He also asserted “the spiritual birth and the increase of grace and righteousness, even though it begins at baptism, lasts until death, indeed until the last day. Only then will that be finished which lifting up out of baptism signifies.” Thus Luther strongly tied a life lived out in the baptismal covenant with the whole of Christian life, shaped by the paschal mystery itself. For Luther, Baptism was made complete in realizing the eschatological vision of the resurrection to eternal life, not in the manus impositionem episcopi. Baptism thus is fulfilled in God’s promises through Christ.

In the “Large Catechism” of 1530, Luther answered critics, including the Anabaptists who claimed that infant baptism was not valid; arguing that the Church had maintained a long history of baptizing infants and God had not intervened to stop it. For Luther, the promises of God connected to the external sign of water maintained their validity even where there was no faith. He understood that faith is not what makes Baptism, rather faith receives Baptism. Not only were the promises received in Baptism, these promises were not invalidated when one received Baptism without faith.

In that same year Johann Eck drafted “Four Hundred-four Articles for the Imperial Diet of Augsburg,” addressed to the Emperor Charles V. In his articles, after spending much time in travel debating the now growing number of Reformers throughout Europe, Eck noted that Luther and Zwingli both shared a common conviction that Confirmation along with

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21 Ibid., 31.
23 Ibid., 474.
Extreme Unction was not to be numbered among the Sacraments since they were not instituted by Christ.⁹⁴

In the “Smalcald Articles” of 1537 Luther appealed to the promise of Jesus blessing the children in Matthew 19 (which we examined with its parallels in Chapter 2). He argued that Jesus had declared that children belong to the promise and for this reason the Church baptizes them.⁹⁵ In his “Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews” delivered 1517-1518, Luther had not spoken disparagingly of Confirmation. But after Luther’s excommunication became official in November of 1520, he repudiated much of what Lombard said concerning Confirmation: “rejected is confirmation, that deceitful mumbo-jumbo (Gaukelwerk) of the episcopal idols. It has no foundation in Scripture. . . . they say that grace, a character, a mark are conferred in Confirmation. It is rather the character of the beast, Revelation 13. A Christian should not at the peril of his soul, base his faith on human fantasy . . . .”⁹⁶ In the “Sermon on the State of Marriage” Luther was equally blunt: “avoid that monkey business, (Affenspiel) confirmation which is really a fanciful deception (Lügentand).” He went on to say that he would permit Confirmation as long as it were understood that God knows nothing of it and had said nothing concerning it. For Luther, Confirmation had been thoroughly contrived by human beings.⁹⁷ However, in a sermon for 4th Sunday of Lent, 1523, he stated

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⁹⁵ Luther, The Book of Concord, 320.


that he did not find any fault if every pastor examined the faith of children and then laid hands upon them to confirm them.\(^{28}\)

Thus, what is important to note here is that despite Luther’s apparent belligerence concerning Confirmation, he was willing to permit pastors to lay hands on the young after examination. Further, most of his ire seems most directed at a chrismation separated from Baptism in which it was being argued that there was the imparting of character. As noted above in my comments concerning “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” Luther seems to want to maintain the Augustinian understanding of an outer *sacramentum* and the inner *sacramentum* connected to Christ’s promise. For Luther the claim that chrismation at Confirmation imparted character seemed a completely baseless claim on the part of the Medieval Church. Luther's younger contemporary Philipp Melanchthon actually used the German term “*humbug*” to describe Confirmation as something which bishops had retained for themselves.\(^{29}\) In the “Augsburg Confession” Melanchthon had not included Confirmation among the sacraments.\(^{30}\) In the “Apology of the Augsburg Confession” he does not dispute that Confirmation and extreme unction were handed down from the “fathers” and as such he has no difficulty with the Church observing them. Yet since they lack a dominical command, and thus a promise, they are not to be counted among the Sacraments.\(^{31}\)

Despite Luther’s polemics against the 16\(^{th}\) century rite of Confirmation practiced in the Roman Catholic Church, as we have already noted, he was not opposed to the Church

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\(^{31}\) “Apology of the Augsburg Confession,” in ibid., 13.6, 220.
utilizing a reformed rite of Confirmation, as can be evidenced by his approval of a rite for Confirmation in the “Brandenburg Church Order of 1540,” compiled by Johannes Bugenhagen. In a letter to Prince Joachim II, however, he remained concerned about some of Roman tendencies in this rite. Bugenhagen and Luther both gave approval to Melanchthon’s “Wittenberg Reformation of 1545.” Luther liked the rite’s emphasis on the promises of God. Ironically, like Alcuin, Luther agreed that catechetical instruction was sorely needed, as this enabled faithful reception of the Sacrament of the Altar and this concern is evidenced in both catechisms.\(^{32}\)

Luther’s 1523 Taüfbuklein (Little Baptismal Book) retained chrism, candle, clothing with a robe and even the use of a cap to cover the chrism—all from the Latin rite.\(^{33}\) A 1526 revision of the rite concluded without the use of chrism, or giving of a candle. At the beginning of both rites, the sign of the cross was traced on the baptizand, which Luther adapted from a longer series of ritual actions found in the Magdeburg Agenda used in his own diocese. This longer series of ritual actions actually developed from an ancient exorcism rite, including the tracing of the sign of the cross which had been incorporated into the Medieval Baptism rite. Both rites concluded with the laying on of the hands by the priest and concluding prayers.\(^{34}\) Andreas Osiander included the 1526 rite in the “Brandenburg-Nuremberg Church Orders” used throughout Hesse.\(^{35}\)

\(^{32}\) Repp, Confirmation in the Lutheran Church, 17-18.


\(^{34}\) Luther, “The Order of Baptism Newly Revised, 1526,” in ibid, 106-109.

4.3 Bucer And Cranmer

Under the influence of Martin Bucer of Strasbourg, a rite of Confirmation became part of many of the Church Orders throughout Hesse.36 Bucer’s rite utilized a prayer for the Holy Spirit and handlaying.37 A rite used among the Lutherans in Hesse incorporated both a confession of faith and a vow of obedience to the Church.

Upon the death of Henry VIII, Thomas Cranmer who was Archbishop of Canterbury, began to experiment with new reforms under the newly coronated, ten year old, King Edward VI.38 Corresponding with bishops throughout the realm, Cranmer suggested the recognition of three sacraments: Baptism (typically in infancy), Penance, and the “Sacrament of the Altar.” The remaining four were not to be counted among the Sacraments. This understanding would eventually be included in the “Thirty-nine Articles of Religion.”39 In 1548 Cranmer himself translated the Lutheran Catechism from the Nuremberg Edition40 and, a year later, drafted a rite of Confirmation based largely on the 11th Century Latin Sarum Manual or Use of Salisbury rite, reflecting views in the more conservative English Reformation movement. It called for the Bishop to preside; however, a second chrismation, in continuity with Luther’s concerns was omitted. In 1552 Cranmer revised the rite to make rectors accountable for ensuring that children were learning the catechism. Utilizing a feature borrowed from Bucer, the bishop was only to proceed with the Confirmation if the candidate knew the catechism. The prayer for the Holy Spirit at the laying on of hands was modified to

36 Ibid.
37 Repp, Confirmation in the Lutheran Church, 37.
38 Senn, Christian Liturgy, 370-71.
40 Senn, Christian Liturgy, 371.
clarify that the Holy Spirit was not imparted at that particular moment, but was rather part of the continual spiritual gifts. A signing and a prayer from the earlier rite were replaced with a prayer for confirming and strengthening with the “inner unction of the Holy Ghost.” The word “strengthen was added to the Ambrosian prayer. Only after Confirmation could one begin receiving Holy Communion.\textsuperscript{41} The \textit{Prayer Book of 1549} did nothing to alter the Synod of Lambeth in this respect. However, infant Confirmation, which had last been used in 1533, was abolished. In 1533 a three-year-old future Queen Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VIII had been baptized and confirmed. A convocation in 1536 at Canterbury had to legitimize Elizabeth’s Confirmation. Not until 1662 was a rite for adult Baptism added to the \textit{Book of Common Prayer}. Anabaptists under Oliver Cromwell had necessitated the inclusion of this rite. Following the Restoration large numbers of adults in England had to be baptized.\textsuperscript{42}

\section*{4.4 New Reforms}

The “Brandenburg Church Order of 1540” inspired the adoption of the \textit{Nova ordinatia} of 1575 used by Swedish Lutherans. Use of the \textit{Nova ordinatia} was discontinued in 1593, ending the use of a Confirmation rite in Sweden until the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. At the Ratisbon Colloquy of 1541 Lutherans had expressed their willingness to accept some of the parts of the Roman Confirmation rite so long as it was understood that among the Lutherans, Confirmation was not a sacrament. Handlaying, signing without chrism and a blessing were


not objectionable. However, extremists on the Roman Catholic side were unwilling to make concessions.  

Ulrich Zwingli, while departing with the Anabaptists over their opposition to infant Baptism, in his work with Heinrich Bullinger, recognized the need for a personal confession of faith. For Zwingli, such a confession should include that God was sovereign, the source of salvation, and the one who had established covenant with his people. Although Zwingli himself did not develop a rite of Confirmation, in 1526 he developed the *Order of the Christian Churches of Zürich*, placing the “Order for Baptism” within a covenantal framework. For Martin Bucer, discipline among members—which he understood as accountability—was one of the marks of the church. The life of the Church guided by the Holy Spirit is best articulated in his *Shorter Catechism* of 1537. For Bucer, catechetical instruction continued, since profession of faith if it were heartfelt could not be merely grasped intellectually. While Bucer regarded a confession of faith as important, daily living out one’s baptismal covenant was a visible sign that the Holy Spirit was active in the life of the baptized person. Confirmation should only take place when there are visible signs that the Spirit was at work. In Confirmation services which Bucer drafted, there was an examination of all confirmands one week before the service to ensure that they understood the catechism. The rite called for each confirmand to renounce evil and confess the faith through the Apostles’ Creed, with specific questions concerning the meaning of the Creed. Candidates then asked God to confirm the faith which she or he had just confessed. There followed a

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43 Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*, 46-47.

44 Osmer, *Confirmation*, 77.
handlaying without chrism. Bucer intended this Confirmation so that “both ministers and people may be strengthened and advanced in the faith and life of Christ.”

4.5 Trent and Its Aftermath

In Session 7, the Council of Trent, anathematized anyone who claimed that Confirmation was an empty ceremony, that it slighted the Holy Spirit, or who denied that a Bishop was not the ordinary minister of Confirmation. The Council’s word on Confirmation became the definitive conciliar word until the Second Vatican Council.

In his *Loci* Melanchthon connected Confirmation and Acts 8. In late centuries, he noted, confirmands had been expected to recite a summary of the doctrine of faith and demonstrate that they rejected heathenism and heresy. Melanchthon argued that this was not in vain when accompanied by prayer, but a rite reserved for bishops was a useless ceremony. Chemnitz, commenting on the *Loci*, reiterated again that two things were required among the Lutherans for something to be deemed the sacrament: the command of God and the promise of the gospel. He also reiterated that unlike the Scholastics, Lutherans recognized that the sacraments were visible actions and that they did not confer grace *ex opere operato*. Properly understood, the sacraments reveal the work of God himself.

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45 Ibid., 77-80.
47 *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. ii, 686.
4.6 Calvin and Knox

In his Institutes, Calvin shared similar sentiments as both Luther and Melanchthon. For Calvin, Confirmation should in no way be upheld as a legitimate sacrament. Instead, he visualized a practice which he believed had been practiced among ancient Christians. He advocated a process of examination for ten year olds, and if they lacked an understanding of the faith, they were to be taught.\textsuperscript{50}

In his Antidote to the Canons on Confirmation III, Calvin directly challenged the doctrine of Confirmation dating back to the False Decretals. Calvin charged that “half of the efficacy of baptism is lopped off, as if it were said in vain, that in baptism the old man is crucified in order that we may walk in newness of life.”\textsuperscript{51} In the Institutes, he said, “. . . it is a false promise of the devil, which draws us away from God’s truth. Or, if you prefer, it is oil, befouled with the devil’s falsehood, which deceives and plunges the simple-minded into darkness.”\textsuperscript{52} Clearly he had very little use for the medieval sacrament of Confirmation, yet ongoing catechesis was imperative. Many Calvinists might well join their Lutheran brothers and sisters and think first of hours of catechetical classes. As Hughes has noted, for modern Lutherans, what one thinks of most often when one hears the term “Confirmation” is something in which one develops a deeper “cognitive” content of the faith. In this, she points to the long tradition begun by the Lutheran reformers.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Calvin, Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, vol. ii, IV.13, 1460.


\textsuperscript{52} Calvin, Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, vol. ii, IV.19.8, 1457.

H. O. Old has reconstructed a version of Calvin’s rite for examination and *The Genevan Shorter Catechism of 1553*. Since Calvin’s focus was on a young person confessing the faith before being admitted to the Lord’s Table, his rite is in interlocutory form between the presider and each candidate. There is no handlaying; however, there is an affirmation of the three articles of the Creed. Neither had been part of Calvin’s baptismal rite. Yet in Calvin’s baptismal rite parents had promised to bring up the child in the Christian faith. For Calvin, God was establishing a covenant in baptism, not human beings. Calvin cited I Corinthians 1 where Paul had said Christians were baptized serving as a confession of faith before the world. Calvin believed that in due time a baptized person would profess the faith. In the rite of preparation for the Lord’s Table, the candidates speak for themselves, affirming that they are a Christian “through the Holy Spirit, who dwells in our hearts and who makes sure to us the promise of God, which we have in the gospel.”

Calvin influenced John Knox, who in August 1560 would help establish a Reformation movement in Scotland modeled on Calvin’s work in Geneva. As William Kervin has noted, while Knox did not develop a Confirmation rite in his *Order of Prayers*, he maintained a strong theology of Baptism. In an exposition of Matthew 28, Knox had said “The sacrament thus instituted is a sign and seal of our engrafting into Christ, of remission of sin by His blood, and regeneration by His Spirit, of adoption, and resurrection unto

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55 Ibid., 203-04.

56 Ibid., 218.
everlasting life; and by it we are solemnly admitted, by Christ’s appointment, into His Church, and enter into an engagement to be the Lord’s.”

While Knox did not develop a Confirmation rite, he contributed to a theology of baptismal living and anthropology which are helpful in ecumenical work in renewing the rite of Confirmation. He wanted the faithful to remember their Baptism. Knox utilized the language of seal and sign which Calvin had borrowed from patristic sources. But Knox also coupled this imagery with the image of “engrafting” from Romans. Knox also understood Baptism as a sign of adoption which we saw in Tertullian in Section 5 of the last chapter. In Knox we also see links between Baptism and the eschatological promise which we saw in Pope Gregory in Section 12 of the last chapter, and which we see in Luther above in Section 2.

4.7 Anglicans and Puritans

Hooker in his defense of Confirmation traced the practice of handlaying from Genesis 48, Acts 8, and many of the sources we have examined, including Faustus of Riez. Hooker acknowledged that the act of handlaying had been separated from baptism as observed by the church Fathers. He regarded Confirmation as efficacious and called it a “sacramental,” defending the practice against the Puritans and Knox, as well as Anabaptists. He rejected chrismation at Confirmation and avoided the notion that Confirmation conferred a distinct

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58 “But if some of the branch es were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree . . . .” (Romans 11:17)
gift of the Spirit apart from the continual outpouring of the Spirit which was granted to Christ’s whole church through the gift of the Paraclete.\textsuperscript{59}

In Northampton, Massachusetts, Solomon Stoddard was increasingly concerned about declining church attendance and impious behaviors in his parish. He proposed a “halfway covenant” in which those who were baptized, yet who had not yet shown signs of a conversion might receive the Lord’s Supper and have their infant children baptized in the church. However, if by the third generation the grandparents had not yet shown signs of conversion, the grandchildren were not to be baptized and were not to receive the Lord’s Supper. In this regard, Stoddard had said the Lord’s Supper functioned as a “converting ordinance.”\textsuperscript{60} As we will see, this phrase used by Stoddard would come to take on an entirely different meaning in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

### 4.8 The Rise of Pietism and the Enlightenment

The Thirty Years’ War was actually several conflicts raging across Central Europe (1618-1648), and estimated to have taken 7.5 million lives.\textsuperscript{61} Prior to 1618, Lutheranism had enjoyed a rich period of work by orthodox theologians, but by 1648, amid a decline in strong theological training, Pietism became more prevalent. One of the early Lutheran Pietists, Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705) understood that the spoken Word had a profound impact


\textsuperscript{60} Sydney E. Ahlstrom, \textit{A Religious History of the American People}, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 162.

\textsuperscript{61} M. White and S. Pinker, \textit{Atrocities: The 100 Deadliest Episodes in Human History} (W. W. Norton, 2011), 215.
upon rational creatures. Conversion and renewal of the baptismal covenant, not rites of Confirmation, became important.⁶²

Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, trained in Lutheran Pietism, invited many Bohemian Brethren to his estate known as Herrnhut.⁶³ There Zinzendorf wrote of Confirmation as a renewal of the baptismal covenant through which one became a member of the congregation.⁶⁴ Operating out of his Lutheran understanding of Baptism, he said, “Baptism never was Regeneration itself, but it is the Bath or washing of Regeneration; it is the Water wherein the New-born Child is bathed . . . we could not be saved, nor be Partakers of the Holy Ghost, were it not for his Wounds and Stripes.”⁶⁵ For Zinzendorf water does not function in baptism ex opere operato, but rather it is water with the promise of the Holy Spirit. Bishop Augustus Gottlieb Spangenberg noted that Zinzendorf, later in life, tended to advocate a type of Confirmation to which he referred as “solemn confirmation,” in which a 15 or 16-year-old would reflect upon his or her own Baptism. However, it would not be until 1818 that this form of “solemn confirmation” would become standard in Moravian usage.⁶⁶ Whether Moravians utilized “solemn confirmation” or a more traditional form, such as the rite developed by Zinzendorf, not until the late 20th century did Moravians begin to discuss whether one might be admitted to Communion prior to Confirmation.

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⁶² Osmer, Confirmation, 90.


⁶⁵ Zinzendorf, Twenty-one Discourses or Dissertations Upon the "Augsburg Confession," 40.

4.9 Methodism

For John Wesley, Communion might well be the very means of grace which could bring about the transformation in one’s life. But his understanding of conversion was that which takes place in the life of one who, like he, had been baptized in infancy and had experienced a conversion of the heart. Wesley declared, “the very beginning of your conversion to God (perhaps, in some, the first deep conviction) was wrought at the Lord’s Supper.”67 The phrase “converting ordinance,” first used by Stoddard and English Calvinists, was adopted by Wesley to describe a baptized person reaching a turning point in life as a result of participation in the Lord’s Supper. However, as noted in Section 7, the term is often used in modern parlance, and with the invocation of the authority of Wesley, to justify the admission of the unbaptized to the Eucharist—a meaning never intended by Wesley himself.

John Wesley had great difficulty with the Roman Catholic understanding of Confirmation. Like the Reformers of previous centuries, he argued Confirmation had no dominical command.68 In his Sunday Service, a worship book for American Methodists, Confirmation was not included.69 Article XVI of the “Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church,” adopted in 1784, explains that Confirmation is not considered a sacrament among Methodists. Confirmation, like the other four,70 are instead “states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they


68 Ibid., vol. 10, 151.

69 Osmer, Confirmation, 107.

70 The other four, understood as Sacraments in the Church of Rome at the time, were penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction.
have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.”

Going even further than the “Articles of Religion,” John’s brother, Charles Wesley, argued that among Methodists, the Spirit was present without such practices as Confirmation as practiced in the Church of England.

In 1739 George Whitfield initiated what has often been called the “First Great Awakening.” Whitfield, along with Cotton Mather, promoted a more evangelical style, centered around a conversion experience. This needs also to be seen in stark contrast to, indeed as a critique of, the style of baptismal identity brought from Europe by Lutheran Pietists who practiced Confirmation as a baptismal affirmation.

4.10 Rationalism

Rationalism was a new movement outside the church which had lasting consequences not only for the theology in the Western church, but in the practice of Confirmation as well. A Pietist named Georg Frederick Seiler (1733-1807), affected by rationalism, suggested that Confirmation was added to baptism and actually completed the baptismal covenant. Frederick Schleiermacher considered Confirmation as the second part of baptism. He was concerned that Reformed and Lutheran churches should form a unified Protestant church in Prussia. In a post-Napoleonic age, Schleiermacher, utilizing the language of the Romantics,

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71 The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 60.


74 Repp, Confirmation in the Lutheran Church, 77.
suggested that human beings were increasingly becoming a secularized intelligentsia and, further, that human dependency on God needed to be intellectually grasped.75

In America, Samuel Simon Schmucher promoted an understanding of the Lutheran Confessions which called for cooperation among orthodox Protestants, but not with Roman Catholics.76 In this period Confirmation was seen as an entry into the denomination, while Baptism was entry into the whole Church. It became a “great festival of youth,” “the most important day of a child’s life,” “the festival that cannot be made solemn enough.” Pastors were known to tell confirmands, “Know this day is really your first true baptismal day,” as pastors often adapted a rite suiting their personal whims.77 Reflective of the social context of secular rationalism, Confirmation began to be viewed in increasingly juridical terms, seen as bestowing the new “privileges”78 and “rights”79 of Church membership.

4.11 The Nineteenth Century

By the middle of the 19th century, many countries (with the exception of Spain) came to adopt a French custom. The French began the custom of confirming at the age of 12 after first Communion. While Rome at first opposed the practice, popular piety took hold. This again reversed sacramental order, returning to that permitted by Thomas Aquinas. The

75 Bainton, Christianity, 381-82.


77 Repp, Confirmation in the Lutheran Church, 76-84.


79 James I. Good and David Van Horne, Aid to the Heidelberg Catechism (Cleveland, OH: Central Publishing House, 1904), 179.
resulting delay also had the effect of providing more time for catechetical instruction prior to Confirmation.  

In 1860 the Scottish Presbyterian Church in its second edition of *Euchologion* became the first Presbyterian book with a rite of Confirmation. Based on the rite from the *Book of Common Prayer*, Presbyterians followed Calvin’s guidance that Confirmation should be catechetical, preparing young people for the Lord’s Table. Kervin suggests that Canadian Presbyterians retained this sense of Confirmation as “catechetical” rather than “sacramental.” However, Calvin and Luther both had viewed the household as the appropriate environment for catechetical instruction.  

In the *Euchologion* (1869) a rite entitled “An Order for the Confirmation of Baptismal Vows and Admission to the Lord’s Table” and in 1896 a rite entitled “The Order for the Admission of Catechumens to the Confirmation of the Baptismal Vow, and to the Participation of the Lord’s Supper” each reflected changes in the name and understanding of the Presbyterian rites. Movements in Scotland affected Presbyterians in the United States as well. In the *Book of Common Worship* of 1906, American Presbyterians included a rite utilizing the same title as the rite in the 1896 *Euchologion*. However, in the 1932 edition of *Book of Common Worship* the title of this rite became simply “Reception to the Lord’s Supper.” Presbyterian piety clearly wanted to avoid any semblance of “High Church” Anglicanism.

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81 Kervin, *The Language of Baptism*, 16.

82 Ibid., 41n74.

83 Osmer, *Confirmation*, 138-42.
Revivalism and the “Second Great Awakening” took on a special fervor in the United States, but also impacted Europe. Unlike the conversion experiences of adults in much of the “First Great Awakening,” the “Second Great Awakening” was often directed at youth conversions. The notion of adolescence as a time to preserve innocence resulted in Catechism and youth programs throughout the church recasting theological concepts into sociological, physiological and psychological terms.\(^{84}\)

4.12 Twentieth Century

In 1910 Pope Pius X promulgated *Quam singulari*. Borrowing from old Roman Law, it established the “age of discretion or the age of reason” (the age of seven) as the point at which one might receive first Penance, and consequently first Communion. Although *Quam singulari* did not discuss Confirmation, it effectively lowered the age of Confirmation.\(^{85}\)

In 1962 Pope John XXIII called for a new Council. The Second Vatican Council, which continued into the pontificate of Pope Paul VI, recognized that the rite of Confirmation needed to be revised, maintaining a close connection with the whole process of Christian initiation. It also directed that it would “be a good idea” for those who were being confirmed to renew their baptismal promises before receiving the sacrament.\(^{86}\) Confirmation was seen as binding the faithful more completely to the Church as they were enriched by the Holy Spirit and given a special strength. This was so that the faithful might press toward the


obligation “to spread the faith by word and deed as true witnesses of Christ.” The laity were to be properly understood as those who share in the Church’s overall mission of salvation. Everyone is commissioned into this apostolate by “the Lord himself through baptism and confirmation.” Confirmation was understood to be that which strengthens a baptized person through the power of the Holy Spirit, “so that others, seeing their good works, may glorify the Father and may grasp more fully the true meaning of human life and the bond that unites all humankind.”

In 1971 a post-conciliar letter issued from the Vatican announced the release of a new ritual for Confirmation which had been called for by the Second Vatican Council. In the revised order the Bishop is understood to be the original minister of sacrament, though he may share the duty with priests. The whole congregation, including parents, was invited to participate. Those who are to be confirmed must meet certain requirements. “They must have been baptized, be in a state of grace, and be able to renew their baptismal promises.” These developments were also to take place in the larger context of the emerging modern ecumenical movement in the aftermath of two World Wars, ushering in new ecumenical agreements, organic mergers, and Full Communion agreements around the globe. In such a setting, the theology and practice of Confirmation were to take on renewed significance.

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90 Turner, Confirmation: The Baby in Solomon's Court, 79.

91 Atwood, Always Reforming, 322.
4.13 Conclusions

The Reformers did not dispense with Confirmation; rather they adapted it, adhering to their theological, ecclesial and pastoral concerns. They were compelled to address: Scriptural authority, sacramental mediation, ecclesial abuses and power struggles. This resulted in a call for changes in the Church’s view of the sacramental economy. Pietism, conversion and revivalist movements, the Enlightenment, Rationalism and the movements of the 20th century affected how Confirmation functioned and was practiced. Yet, the disunity and destruction of two World Wars compelled the Roman Catholic Church to call for reforms, and the whole Church, led by the Spirit, began to engage in an ecumenical movement toward healing. These latter movements may yet offer hope for a renewed theology and practice of Confirmation.

In this Chapter I have once again sought to offer new insights for the renewal of Confirmation by examining afresh the polemical arguments made concerning the Church and the means of grace from the earliest Reformers to the present. By examining the later history of Confirmation against the historical backdrop and some of the related secular trends, one can see how Confirmation has been impacted over those centuries. Significant historical figures throughout this period have made numerous contributions which, when viewed anew, can offer valuable contributions to an ecumenical renewal of the theology and practice of Confirmation.
Chapter 5
Confirmation Within a Broader Sacramental Economy

In this Chapter, our aim is to suggest an interpretation of the Sacraments which could advance the cause of ecumenical agreement on the meaning and practice of Confirmation. At issue is a way of interpreting our whole understanding of Sacraments within the Church so that Western Christians might together consider anew how rites, Sacraments and sacramentals simultaneously glorify God and edify the faithful to such a degree that there might be ecumenical agreement that Confirmation may be considered a Sacrament of the Church. A major concern for the Reformers was the matter of ecclesial mediation of the sacraments themselves. Much blood was spilled from the time of Wycliffe forward by those who sought to maintain particular views of ecclesial authority—either papal or conciliar—and by those who sought to become unshackled from the captivity of an overly mediated system through which the faithful might receive the use of the means of grace.

If then we are seeking a new way of perceiving the sacramental economy and the place of Confirmation within it, how would we reach such an agreement? Is it possible for denominations to reach full ecumenical consensus based on an agreed upon: 1) interpretation of Scripture, 2) ecclesiology, 3) sacramentology? We will briefly examine each of these options. But, first, it will be helpful to consider the context and implications of the Reformers’ polemics regarding the medieval sacramental economy—an approach which continues to exert enormous influence on the shape of ecumenical discussions to this day.

5.1 Sacramental Mediation

Robert Jenson has acknowledged that we may speak of the spiritual presence of a person or of Christ. In the case of Christ, it is to really speak of the Holy Spirit, as well as the bodily or
object presence of Christ. This is to be understood in five determinants: 1) The body is the object-presence of a person. Personal presence is always occurring in the address as the word-event “by which one person enters the reality of another.” 2) The mediated self-consciousness, whether immediately recognizable, relates to the consciousness of our own bodies. The word of address to others becomes our own interior reality. 3) The body becomes the “to-be-transcended presence of a person.” The words addressed to each of us personally may come as words from another. They may be transcending words speaking of the unalterable past, or they may be words which speak to the freedom of the future. 4) The body that is available to us is the person’s identifiability. We may speak of the “one who . . .” or the “one who or has done such and such.” 5) The possibility of object-presence is also revealed in nonverbal visible words. Were we only limited to utterances in (verbal) language, a person could withhold objectivity. But object-presence is also revealed in visible addresses in bodily gestures and acts.1 Similarly, Christ has initiated the Eucharist that he might be truly present with his people as they gather for the breaking of bread in his name. Moreover, Christ has directed his followers to convey his story and message through embodied teaching and proclamation. In this way, Jenson argues, Christ’s presence is already being mediated.

Also, St. Paul reminds the Corinthian congregation that he and others who preach to the Corinthian Church are to be viewed as “stewards of the mysteries.”2 Such stewardship indeed requires those who discern a specific vocatio, or calling, to serve in certain ministries for the sake of the whole body. This stewardship serves to offer the one who has deemed that in his own self-giving his presence might be mediated. Thus, as we pursue three possible

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2 I Corinthians 4:1.
pathways towards a new ecclesiology, we must acknowledge that there is a certain degree of mediation which exists in the very relationship between the Church and her risen ascended Lord. First, let us look at the possibilities of reforming an ecclesiology of “over-mediation” by turning to the norming authority of Scripture.

5.1.1 Reform through Scripture?
As noted in our earlier historical survey, the Medieval Church’s mediation of sacramental grace was an overarching concern beginning with Wycliffe. Against the backdrop of the “Great Schism,” as there was more than one Pope at a given time who often clashed with Councils, the Church wrestled even more tenaciously over the question of authority. Questions over whether Pope(s), Councils, or Scripture carried greater authority, coupled with sacramental mediation, had pressed matters to the breaking point for Wycliffe and Huss. In the aftermath of the Council of Constance, which was unable to definitively find a way to establish whether conciliar or papal authority was greater, the concern of sacramental mediation continued to loom large. This continued well into the time of Luther and the Wittenberg Reformers, as well as with Calvin, Cranmer, Bucer, and Zwingli. From the time of Waldo, the earnest desire to understand Scripture as a norming principle for the Church’s mission and life became a primary focus.

However, was Scripture to be viewed as the norming authority against which tradition should be judged, or was Scripture to be viewed as a part of tradition given to the Church, whose episcopal, conciliar and papal authority were then vested with interpreting? Tragically, in order to respond most expeditiously to opposition, Councils and popes, in an effort to consolidate their respective authorities, often reverted to anathematizing. In effect, both popes and Councils argued that only ecclesial authorities could interpret Scripture
within the tradition. This approach only served to intensify the call for reform as reforming clergy looked to the Scriptures and early sources. The polemical arguments hurled back and forth were absolutely devastating. The loss of life in the violence, in which both sides used the horror of public execution, did nothing but intensify the divisions within the body of Christ.

The phrase *Scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpretes* is often quoted as a Lutheran hermeneutical principle in the interpretation of Scripture. The phrase is actually found in Luther’s 1520 *Assertio*, also known in its shortened title “The latest articulation of all the articles of Martin Luther.” It had come as a response to the Papal declaration or bull threatening Luther with excommunication if he did not recant his pernicious teachings. The *Assertio* was also Luther’s attempt to clarify why he and the Reformers of Wittenberg were arguing for reforms based on Scripture. There Luther recognized that Augustine and Aquinas had been permitted to interpret the Scriptures and that the same Spirit guided the Church of that day as it had in ages past in the primitive Church. Why was the study of Scripture not permitted to Luther and others? Luther continued, “It is proper then that this way of thinking bears the judgment of Scripture that we should give Scripture the first place in all things, in the way that Scripture is by itself the most clear and open and that it interprets itself most certainly affirming the revelation of my interpretation itself, altogether every proofing, judging and illuminating . . . .” To further his point, Luther appealed to the Psalmist, whom

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Luther saw as speaking of all of Holy Scripture as the revelation of opening, speaking, beholding, illuminating and teaching.\(^4\)

By 1525 Luther wrote *De Servo Arbitrio* in a response to Erasmus’ *De Libero Arbitrio*. In contrast to Erasmus, Luther saw the will as bound by God. In one of Luther’s many criticisms of Jerome, he accused Jerome and his teacher Origen of having perpetuated a poor exegetical method of Scripture. Luther was clearly alluding to Jerome’s theory of a faked lawsuit at the Council of Jerusalem of which we spoke in Chapter 3 and of which Augustine had been so critical. Therefore, Luther accused Jerome of “not paying attention to the simplicity of the Scriptures.”\(^5\)

The problem for Luther and the Reformers was that if Jerome and Augustine could not agree on the interpretation of Scripture, how, in the wake of the “Great Schism”—a time when Popes and Church Councils could not even agree—could the Reformers make any headway calling for *sola scriptura*? This made reforming the sacramental economy using Scripture completely impossible. The numbering of the sacraments was set in the canons of Church Councils, but the 16\(^{\text{th}}\) century Pope and his bishops resisted any reforms in this sacramental economy through Scripture.

### 5.1.2 Ecclesial Mediation Then and Now

As we noted in Chapter 3, amid the Church’s efforts to address the problems created by Berengar of Tours, the Church began to make a radical distinction between the Eucharistic

\(^4\) Translation from the Latin text my own: *Oportet enim scriptura iudice hie sententiam ferre, quod fieri non potest, nisi scripturae dederimus principem locum in omnibus quae tribuantur patribus, hoc est, ut sit ipsa per sese certissima, facilissima, apertissima, sui ipsius interpres, omnium Omnia probans, iudicans illuminins, sicut scriptum in Martin Luther, "Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheti per bullam Leonis X, 1520,” in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, 94-95.

body and the ecclesial body. Once the Eucharist became understood exclusively as the *veritas corpus and the Church became understood as the corpus mysticum*, the inevitable result was that all of the means of grace of God’s own self-giving became overly mediated by the corpus mysticum. The corpus mysticum was in turn mediated and guided on earth by her bishops and priests. Among the Lollards there was a resistance to the special status afforded clerics. By the 16th century, Luther would first articulate before the nobility in Germany that, regardless of one’s vocation in life, all by Baptism are a part of Christ’s royal priesthood. Luther first spelled out this doctrine of a “royal priesthood” in 1520 in a rapid release of three treatises following his excommunication, as he sought to clarify the intent of his called-for reforms. He told the German nobility that there is no distinction between the spiritual and secular realm; all are priests through Baptism into Christ.6 A couple of months later, in a theological treatise on sacramental mediation, Luther spoke again of the royal priesthood to which we have been called in Baptism, noting also that those who are ordained are called to a particular type of ministry for the sake of the whole priesthood.7 Before the end of the year he reminded his readers that in Baptism, Christ imparts both his priesthood and kingship.8

In all three of his early treatises, Luther, it seems, was unable to effect a change in the Church’s clearly delineated ecclesiologies. There remained a deliberate separation between baptismal calling and a calling to clerical mediation. In the twentieth century, amid the exciting new ecumenical work of the World Council of Church’s Commission on Faith and Order and Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, there was an increase in interest in the whole

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7 Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church of 1520," 112-13.
topic of ecclesiology. Following work on *BEM*, participants recognized that work needed to proceed which would help bring convergence on a common ecclesiology. Based on biblical insights, the Commission on Faith and Order (CFO) suggested that four approaches to the nature and mission of the church were required to honor these Biblical perspectives: “‘People of God,’ ‘Body of Christ,’ ‘Temple of the Holy Spirit’ and ‘*koinonia*.”

Based on this initial work, in 2013 the CFO issued a further study document in which it began by expanding upon the understanding of the Church as a part of the mission of God. Because the Holy Trinity is one, the Church is to be understood as being in the design of God. The ecclesial mission, which the Commission traced briefly through the history of the church, is a mission which is anchored in the Triune God pointing the church toward the importance of unity. This starting point enabled the CFO to expound upon not just Biblical images of the church from its earlier statement in 2005, but also images found within the church’s overall tradition and history. The Commission was able to speak definitively of the church as “‘sign and servant of God’s design for the world.’” Because the CFO was working on a conciliar statement, it sought broad convergence. Therefore the list of images of the Church’s mission became a list of options from which a given denomination might identify with some approaches to mission, more so than others. As such, the various perspectives of the churches offered agreement without clear specificity. This lack of convergence with specificity points to the difficulty of developing a coherent ecclesiology in conciliar and convergence documents.

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10 Ibid., 6.

In recent decades an ecclesiology of communion has become a part of many ecumenical dialogues. In an official German Catholic-Lutheran dialogue, one sees an ecclesiology of communion taking center stage. Utilizing a phrase from the Apostles’ Creed, dialogue partners were able to speak of the Church both in the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. Yet, at the same time, such a dialogue rooted in a communion ecclesiology pointed to divergences such as concerns over the role of the magisterium. This divergence pointed to the need for future conversation. In this dialogue, the relationship between Scripture, tradition and communion of saints beyond death are all addressed under the heading “The Communion of Saints through Word and Sacrament.” Differences were pushed aside in the interest of affirming an ecclesiology of communion as understood within the Communion of Saints as it is confessed in common by the whole Church. Here is an example of how an ecclesiology of communion is often employed in ecumenical dialogue. Dialogue participants seek to find a common ground within the structures and ministries among Roman Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox. Yet, as we see in this German Catholic-Lutheran dialogue, despite all the valiant effort, when an ecclesiology of communion is employed the effort often lacks important agreement on essential moorings. Since a common conviction is lacking as to what is the nature of the Church, unity is sought in an appreciation for various forms of polity and structures. The resulting agreed upon ecclesiologies, therefore, become very diffuse and overly broad. The very differences which may be pushed aside may often be the very elements upon which the unity we seek depends.

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In another example, Robert Jenson examined the effort to reach a commonly understood ecclesiology between Roman Catholics and the Reformed traditions in *Toward a Common Understanding of the Church* (1990).\textsuperscript{14} Jenson noted that it was a “simple failure: a laborious recital of pieties, good intentions for future dialogue, and vaguely discerned remaining difficulties.”\textsuperscript{15} This example points to the futility of trying to reform ecclesial structures through comparative ecclesiologies. They are well intended, but, alas, are not the way to really reform ecclesial structures.

### 5.1.3 Baptismal Unity?

The Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC, but has representation on the CFO which drafted *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (*BEM*). In August of 1987, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity offered the Roman Catholic Church’s official response to *BEM*. The work involved consultation among conferences of bishops throughout the world, as well as theological faculties and societies across the Roman Catholic Church. Finally, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, collaborating with the Secretariat, articulated the official response.\textsuperscript{16}

The Roman Catholic response to *BEM* was quite candid in recognizing the contradictions of receiving persons through one Baptism into a divided Church.\textsuperscript{17} As far as this response was concerned, in the section of *BEM* entitled “Baptism And Faith,” little

\[\text{References:}\]


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 90.


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 11.
consideration was given to an “ecclesial dimension to baptismal grace.” If in Baptism one is initiated into the Church, which is the body of Christ, it must be widely acknowledged that the Church remains visibly divided. While BEM shares common convictions concerning baptism among Christian communions, and while it recognizes that there are substantial differences concerning baptism among Christian communions, once again some concerns from various communions are pushed aside for the sake of broader consensus.

An example of differences pushed aside in BEM is noted by Susan Wood. She suggests that, in fact, we do not all believe the same things about Baptism. Christians have different understandings of what constitutes a sacrament. Some Christians do not even use the term sacrament. Christians disagree on the meaning in Baptism between sign and the reality which is signified. As a result, Christians often disagree about the effect of Baptism, resulting in heated arguments about who may be baptized. Some churches permit the Baptism of infants while some traditions reserve Baptism strictly for adults and older persons who can answer for themselves. These sharp distinctions affect how Christians may understand Confirmation or even whether Confirmation is an important or necessary rite within the church. (We will examine the issue of necessity more closely in Chapter 7.) For the moment, we must note that despite common convictions acknowledged in BEM, not only do we need to acknowledge the scandalous reality that we baptize into a divided Church, but not all Christians share similar convictions about the nature of the Church into which one is initiated.

Prior to BEM, in 1975 the CFO issued One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognized Ministry. Since the Commission met in Nairobi, Kenya, that year, the document

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19 Wood, One Baptism, 21.
is often called the “Nairobi Statement.” The “Nairobi Statement” was an important work leading to BEM, helping us see the work toward BEM in progress. In the section on Baptism, the “Nairobi Statement” discussed the implications of Baptism. It was suggested that Baptism is the bond of unity bringing one into Eucharistic sharing, commitment, and common witness to Christ. It simply stated that, “Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in the context of faith, is thus a basic bond of unity which impels us as one people to confess and serve one Lord in each place and in all the world.” It went on to acknowledge that baptismal unity calls for the Church to overcome disunity and to seek “full visible union.” This had been a mutually agreed upon goal and a part of a statement at the WCC meeting in Montreal in 1963.20

Two years after the “Nairobi Statement” the CFO in a follow up stated, “In responding, the churches should not only examine whether the agreed statements reflect their present teaching and practice, but indicate the ways in which they are prepared to contribute to the common advance towards unity.”21 Clearly not only was CFO acknowledging Baptism into a divided Church, it was utilizing this document as an opportunity to call for the churches to work toward full visible unity.

With this background in mind, despite the Roman Catholic Church’s concern that BEM had not adequately acknowledged the scandal of the division of the Church, the CFO perceived both BEM and the “Nairobi Statement” as an opportunity for the churches to work toward more visible unity in faithfulness to the goal of the 1963 WCC meeting in Montreal. In this spirit BEM acknowledges that all churches share the conviction that faith is necessary

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for the reception of salvation offered in Baptism. Yet BEM, which seeks to bring about unity, did not acknowledge our common convictions and witness which themselves are already distorted by our present disunity.

Therefore, what we are presented with in many ways is a “chicken and the egg argument.” That is to say, what should come first? Do we seek a common understanding of Baptism, albeit with significant differences in understanding and practice which could lead to full visible unity? Or do we seek full visible unity, which for some participants in the Commission on Faith and Order might lead to a common understanding of Baptism into a Church which exhibits such unity? ²²

In 2001 the WCC sought to take a serious look at Baptism and ecclesial divisions. One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition, “a study document rather than a convergence text,” explored the close relationship between Baptism and the believer's life-long growth into Christ as a basis for a greater mutual recognition of Baptism. It also addressed issues in “baptismal understanding and practice which cause difficulty within churches and hinder the mutual recognition of baptism among churches today.”²³ However, this study also contains a section entitled “The Renewal of Baptismal Faith” in which there is only a brief discussion of Confirmation. This section contains only the most cursory treatment. Instead of seeking common convictions on Confirmation, the one paragraph on the topic draws sharp distinctions between Confirmation as practiced by Roman Catholics and Old Catholics on the one hand, and “those whose roots lie in the Reformation of the sixteenth century” on the

²² As a result of the statements which preceded BEM, the “Lima Statement” did acknowledge in the Commentary section not only the dividedness of the Church but also the reality that some had been denied Baptism because of sex or race. Yet the discussion concerning this type of division is part of the commentary and not the actual statement. “Commentary,” BEM, 6.

other. Among the first group, the study offers a description largely congruent with the common historical assumptions which I have attempted to dispel in Chapter 3—namely that Confirmation as anointing and handlaying became separated from Baptism over the centuries. The paragraph speaks of Confirmation practiced in Catholicism as a rite which sacramentally completes Baptism. Then, with respect to the Reformation traditions, the statement speaks of the rite as a “public profession in which an adolescent” as “a mature person witnesses to the Christian faith.”\(^\text{24}\) Aside from the stark contrasts amid the lack of any recognition of substantial commonalities, one might be easily led to believe from the statement that the rite practiced by churches of the Reformation had no common root in the rite observed within Catholicism or, further, that the rite as practiced by Roman or Old Catholics had undergone ambiguous developments over the centuries. Certainly, so far as this WCC study is concerned, there seems little to assist Protestants and Catholics in a renewal of the theology and practice of Confirmation together.

Prior to the 2001 study, in 1999, the CFO identified three major areas causing ecclesial division: the ordo, catchesis, and inculturation. With respect to the latter, it spoke of, “the inculturation of baptism, through which its meaning, and the irreducible elements of the baptismal rite, are expressed through the means particular to each culture;” and the "ethical economy" of Baptism, or the implications of the process of Baptism for the ethical formation, reflection and action of Christians.\(^\text{25}\)

J. M. R. Tillard, who had been vice-president of the CFO prior to his death, was particularly concerned with this matter of division over inculturation. He noted that

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 11.

especially among the nationalist churches in communion with Constantinople, the old temptation of phyletism (the identification of one’s church solely within a particular ethnic group, which was condemned in 1872) sadly remains a reality the present day.\textsuperscript{26} The 1999 study relied upon the important work of an earlier CFO meeting in Ditchingham, England, which had identified "formation in faith and baptizing in water together, leading to participation in the life of the community" as an essential element in baptismal practice.\textsuperscript{27} That study went on to emphasize the vital place Christian initiation has in moving toward a common understanding of Baptism. However, neither the Ditchingham gathering nor the final 1999 study document began with our common unity already established in Christ. In other words, these two studies addressed some of the imperatives without addressing the major indicative that our unity is already founded in Christ, and that disunity is the result of our sinfuless. Thus, the evidence from such ecumenical dialogue would suggest that, despite the very best of intentions of the CFO, overcoming ecclesial disunity by way of dialogues on sacraments, in and of themselves, will not help bring about the visible unity which we seek.

### 5.2 Taking Stock and A Way Forward

Our foray into three different paths toward reforming of ecclesiologies of division has demonstrated that efforts to reform understandings of Scriptural authority, comparative dialogues on ecclesiology, or even common conciliar studies and statements on sacraments will not bring an end to our divisions. Neither will these efforts ultimately enable us to overcome Reformation concerns over ecclesial mediation of the means of grace. This is not to minimize the importance of the work behind these ecumenical efforts from the time of the


\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Becoming a Christian}, par. 19.
Reformation forward. However, the problem seems to be that we have too often attempted to approach Scripture, comparative ecclesiologies, and dialogues on the means of grace as a way to reform our ecclesiology. Meanwhile, ecclesiology itself seems to trump and/or shape our understanding of all other categories. And since the Church is at some level called to mediate the means of grace, these three pathways to reconciliation only serve in the end to point to our continued division.

Perhaps a good way to move forward would be to consider the understanding of the Church which is reflected in The Second Vatican Council’s *Lumen Gentium (LG)*. “Since the Church in Christ is in the nature of sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is of communion with God and of unity among all men – she here proposes, for the benefit of the faithful and the whole world, to set forth as clearly as possible, and in the tradition laid down by earlier Councils, her own nature and universal mission.”28 And, further, “he [Christ] sent his life-giving Spirit upon his disciples and through him set up his body which is the church as the universal sacrament of salvation.”29

One might have expected that the Second Vatican Council would begin its work by taking up the matter of the nature of the Church. However, instead of taking on an identity question, the Council fathers first took up the matter of what the church in fact does. While work on the original drafts of what would eventually become *LG* proceeded, the drafts of the finalized version of *Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC)* was the first document to be voted on by the full Council. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy or *SC* set the tone for the remainder of the Council. Reforming the church’s liturgy first enabled the Second Vatican Council to consider the very important question of how the whole people of God are enabled to live out

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29 Ibid., 407.
their baptismal calling. Because SC reveals that in the liturgy the whole people of God are called to participate, as we will see in Chapter 5.2.2, SC would have the effect of reversing a more top-down ecclesiology, to one more rooted in the whole people of God.\(^{30}\) The inherent tension between *traditiones* and *aggiornamento* was directly alluded to by Pope John XXIII in his opening address *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, read following the opening Liturgy of the Council on October 11, 1962.\(^{31}\)

Cardinal Larraona introduced *SC* on October 22, 1962 and the final text was presented on December 4, 1963. The final vote was 2,147 in favor with only 4 opposed. Pope Paul VI then promulgated the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.\(^{32}\) I would submit that this background is important for understanding the high level of agreement on this foundational document of the whole Council. In its “Introduction” *SC* had specified the Second Vatican Council’s desire that the rites of the Church were to “be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet present-day circumstances and needs.”\(^{33}\) *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* suggested a certain tension between reform and maintaining tradition. This is further seen in *SC*’s mandate that the church reform rites with careful consideration to, on the one hand, what has been handed on by previous generations, while considering the needs and circumstances of the current generation. *SC* further specifies, “The texts intended to be sung must always be in conformity with Catholic teaching; indeed, they

\(^{30}\) While other documents were in the process of being drafted, *SC* was the first document approved by the Council. Vatican II’s emphasis on an ecclesiology of the whole people opens up potential avenues of ecumenical dialogue. *SC* set this tone because it proffered that the people of God live out their Baptism especially in worship, as discussed in John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 95.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 95.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 138-39.

\(^{33}\) *SC*, in *Vatican Council II*, 2.
should be drawn chiefly from the sacred scripture and from liturgical sources.\textsuperscript{34} The significance here is that the people of God as the visible Church are involved in the \textit{liturgia} or work of the people. The primary source of this \textit{liturgia} is Holy Scripture and from the tradition. The parts of the Church’s \textit{liturgia} which are to be sung should be in conformity with the Church’s \textit{magister} which intends that the \textit{liturgia} is offered to the glory of God. The use of the means of grace is celebrated within the context of worship and is then extended to the world. However, most significant of all, is the document which establishes these mandates were developed by the Council prior to proceeding to work on the nature or mission of the Church. The Second Vatican Council was committed to a vision of the Church in which the Church is never more the Church than when she is gathered for Word and Sacrament, as the Church’s mission and service in the world extends from worship.

Michael Fahey has noted that John XXIII reflected in his diary how much he was impressed by the 19\textsuperscript{th} century work of Antonio Rosimini, \textit{Cinque piaghe della Chiesa} (\textit{The Five Wounds of the Church}). The book and its history are noteworthy, given the fact that Rosimini’s book published in 1832 had only been in circulation for fourteen years when on the eve of the election of Pius IX it was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books. Though the book was removed from the Index of banned books before Rosimini’s death, Rosimini had dared to speak of the division of laity and the ordained in public worship, the insufficient education of clergy, the disunity among bishops, the practice of some bishops being nominated by civil governments, and the restrictions on the church’s free use of its own temporal processions. These “five wounds,” which Rosimini saw as plaguing the Roman

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 34.
Catholic Church of the 19th century were also the concerns which had so concerned the Reformers. This background helps us to better appreciate what became an important motivation for Pope John XXIII as he called for a new ecumenical Council in the 20th century.

The late Avery Cardinal Dulles has strongly suggested that any view of documents from the Second Vatican Council which are examined expecting to find signs of aggiornamento should be understood as “intrinsically connected with the principle of ressourcement.” This was especially the case with respect to LG. Dulles’ analysis offers us an overall, albeit generalized overview, or what might be seen as the skopus of continuity with the tradition of the Church which inspired the work of LG. However, in Dulles’ work we also see the description of a clearly defined path or ductus as the Council developed the final draft of LG. Dulles points out that the First Vatican Council, while it did not “apply the term ‘sacrament’ to the ‘Church’, did speak of the Church as a ‘standard lifted up among the nations’ and as inviting all, by her Catholic unity and by other wonderful properties, to believe in her divine testimony and to enter her fold.”

Four times Dulles points out that LG contains the idea of church as “sacrament” as foundational. The concept was first mentioned explicitly in SC, and repeated in GS, and AG. Nevertheless, Dulles traces the history of the concept of church as sacrament from Augustine, through his medieval followers, through the sacramental ecclesiology in the 19th century, and even to Pius XII and his encyclical the Mystical Body. Dulles notes that while

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36 Literally meaning “bringing up to date,” a theme popularized by Pope John XXIII when he opened the Council.

Pius XII’s encyclical does not specifically call the Church a “sacrament,” nonetheless the pontiff had portrayed the “Church as a visible, grace-filled institution through which Christ carries on his saving work.” Thus, Dulles reveals the ductus of a continuity which leads from the Patristic period to LG.\textsuperscript{38} It is important also to remember that in LG the Council fathers had said, “This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure.”\textsuperscript{39}

Yves Congar notes that Augustine’s understanding of the Church as sacrament serves as a dialectic of conversion which “situates genuine reality,” leading the Church from outside to the inside and from the external aspects toward the internal reality that she symbolizes. Congar is suggesting that such a metaphysics permits the Church to be viewed as a pilgrim Church, which has not reached perfection on this side of the eschaton but, insofar as she is the bride of Christ and is made by this mystical union the true body of Christ, the Church herself is a sacrament. Congar argues that in using this dialectic, Augustine had rediscovered a profoundly Biblical understanding.\textsuperscript{40} Here it is also helpful to look at how the Bari Statement of 2007 between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church discussed this very topic of the Church as Sacrament: “the Lord sacramentally makes his work pass

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} LG, in Vatican Council II, 357.

\textsuperscript{40} Yves Congar, True and False Reform in the Church, Rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 192-93.
into the Church’s celebration. The sacraments of the Church transmit grace, expressing and strengthening faith in Jesus Christ, and are thus witnesses of faith.”41

A word of caution and clarification should be expressed here. If one is to proceed forward with the presupposition conveyed by SC that the Church is a sacrament, we need to be careful to avoid what could be construed as the sacramentalization of every act of the church. As we have noted, sacraments transmit God’s grace and are intended to strengthen the faithful. The Bari Statement also affirmed that all sacraments are linked to the sacrament of the Eucharist. However, every act of the Church is not a sacrament. The traditionally recognized sacraments of the Church are uniquely connected with the Eucharist, canonically and theologically, and have an essential pneumatological dimension. The Bari Statement recalled an essential part of the Church’s tradition and history when it said: “councils, in which bishops led by the Holy Spirit express the truth of the Church's faith, are always associated with the eucharistic celebration.”42

As we will explore in Chapter 5.4, the Church could benefit from ecumenical conversation regarding how the Church may be understood as a sacrament while at the same time the people of God remain sinful beings. We will take this even a step further in Chapter 7.8 when we examine what happens when the mission of the Church becomes tainted and corrupted by the sin and evil of the world and how that corruption can distort the gospel and the grace of God conveyed by the Church.

Thus the understanding of the Church as sacrament with Christ as primary sacrament needs to be pursued with some important caveats. We may speak of the Church as a sacrament insofar as she is locus of the eucharistic celebration and her activity is guided by

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41 The Bari Statement, para. 17.

42 Ibid.
the Holy Spirit. The essential activities of the church which are associated with the eucharistic celebration convey God’s grace. The faithful are members of the body of Christ but they are also sinful beings. As such the Church must always be careful to recognize that not every act or decision is necessarily led by the Holy Spirit. Such caveats can help to avoid an over sacramentalization.

We also should not be under any illusion that at the present all churches agree on such an understanding the Church is a Sacrament with Christ as primary Sacrament. As we will explore in greater detail in Chapter 5.3, the work on *The Nature and Mission of the Church* revealed that many participants on the CFO found a great deal of difficulty in accepting the notion that the Church herself is a Sacrament. Yet, as we will discuss, Cardinal Walter Kasper has suggested some ways forward which might help those dialogue partners be better able to accept the notion of the Church as sacrament.

### 5.2.1 Scripture’s Role Reconsidered

As we noted above, *SC* had established that the people of God as the visible Church are involved in the *liturgia* or work of the people and that the primary source of this *liturgia* is Holy Scripture. Thus Scripture is broken open in worship as the body of Christ, the bread of life, is broken in the midst of the Christian assembly. The Bible truly becomes the Word of God when it is opened and read in the hearing of the people. Since we may understand the Church as Sacrament with Christ as primary Sacrament, it stands to reason that Scripture likewise may be viewed as a Sacrament insofar as it points to the *truth* which is Christ. We now turn to explicating this further.

Robert Bertram would remind us that, for the Lutheran Reformers as well as other 16th century reformers, Scripture and tradition mean “Scripture and confession.” These were
not understood by the Reformers as two magisterial authorities—one being canonical and the other a normative interpreter. Instead, tradition understood in this sense meant that doctrinal authority was not original but rather derivative. By speaking of the Church as a Sacrament, the Second Vatican Council brought significant convergence between the Roman Catholic Church of the modern era and the major concerns of the 16th century Reformers. With Scripture as a sacrament, the magisterium itself comes to be regarded as a servant of the Word, not its mediator. Together with a focus on Baptism shared by the people of God, the entire tone for the Council set out to consider ways in which the offices of the ordained might be reformed.

Patrick W. Carey, in critiquing the work of the 19th century Roman Catholic theologian Orestes A. Brownson, notes that Brownson had been immersed in Jonathan Edwards and other New England Protestants from his Boston upbringing. Yet, amid the pressures of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, Brownson tended to view doctrine as part of continued divine revelation. In many ways Brownson departed from the perspective of those like John Henry Newman who viewed Christian doctrine as informed by human reason. Brownson saw this as problematic and argued that the view held by Newman and his contemporaries meant that Christian doctrine was not immutable. As Carey suggests, since doctrine for Brownson was one and the same with divine revelation and not derivative, he had resorted to a view that the magisterium served to interpret the Church and her practices exclusively. Brownson, in Carey’s words, viewed “the church as the continuation of the

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incarnation” making it impossible “for him to distinguish between Christ and the church. This ecclesiological monophysitism . . . made his understanding of the church ahistorical.”

In contrast, understanding the Church as Sacrament with Christ as primary Sacrament helps to provide a corrective for such “ecclesiological monophysitism.” This tendency is especially true amid the pressures of modernism and postmodernism. It is easy for there to remain a view in which tradition and divine revelation are one and the same. However, since Christ is of two natures which are neither divided nor confused, we may also see “sacred doctrine” as derivative of divine revelation and therefore undivided. Yet at the same time we may see Scripture as norming the tradition since the two are not confused.

This notion of the norming role of Scriptures was furthered by Le Groupe des Dombes, an ecumenical group made up of theologians of the Reformed, Lutheran and Catholic traditions in French speaking Europe. In their joint statement, Un seul Maître recognized that not just Luther, but also Wycliffe, Huss, Bucer, Calvin, and Zwingli (and we could include Cranmer and later the Wesley brothers in that list), all considered Scripture as bearing its own interpretive norm. Le Groupe des Dombes understands that, for the Reformers, the “Word, the Gospel, and Christ are at once prior to and flow from Scripture.”

Thus they recognize that the question of Scripture and its interpretation was a Christological dilemma for the Reformers before it became an ecclesiological concern. Convergence on this issue is key since it establishes that what the Reformers were seeking was a faithful way in which Christ might be revealed to the faithful. This gathering of the faithful for worship

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around Word and Sacrament was also why the Second Vatican Council began its work with *SC*. With Louis-Marie Chauvet, therefore, “we can say in a completely literal sense that the liturgical assembly (the ecclesia in the primary sense) is the place where the Bible becomes the Bible.”

5.2.2 Ecclesiology Reconsidered

The phrase “subsists in” appears only once in *LG*, and yet it is quite significant. One helpful way of understanding this term is to remember that in the Mass, Christ subsists in the Eucharist. Throughout all peoples of the world, it is the Word that subsists in human nature. There is a subtlety in the use of this one word “subsists” that is often overlooked. *LG* does not say, “This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, *is contained* in the Catholic Church . . . .” The distinctions between “subsists in” and “is contained in” are deceptively enormous. The distinction is one of exclusion and not inclusion. To say “This Church . . . subsists in the Catholic Church” is not to imply that the Church may not also subsist in ecclesial communities as well. *LG* reminds us, “many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity.” It should therefore be the impassioned work of theologians, both Protestant and Catholic, that may help us to see how and where Christ “subsists” in one another’s communions, in order that we might see the day when in dialogue we may adequately discern such a level of subsistence, that together all might be in communion with “the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.”

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46 Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 212.

47 *LG*, in *Vatican Council II*, 357.
One of the dramatic developments of the Second Vatican Council in many ways answered several of Rosimini’s concerns. Because the Council took up first the church at worship in SC, it not only spoke of the church as a sacrament, but spoke of reforming the liturgy in such a way as to enable all the people of God to become more fully engaged in the liturgy, i.e., the work of the people. The emphasis thus is shifted from clergy and bishops to the call in Holy Baptism to join together as the people of God, gathered as the Church. This radical shift from a top-down ecclesiology to an ecclesiology anchored in Baptism would enable LG to follow the path of a discussion in this order: the people of God, the laity, the priests and, finally, bishops. As Richard McBrien notes, in one of the earlier drafts of the Constitution on the Church, the treatment of the hierarchical structure of the Church was placed before the chapter on the people of God. The matter became one of the most intense debates of the entire Council. In the end, the order was reversed. It was argued that to speak of the hierarchy before the people of God would only serve to reinforce a long-held textbook tradition that the church is a hierarchical institution to which people belong in order that they might receive mediated benefits. LG, in this reversal, enabled the Council fathers to anchor its ecclesiology as an ecclesia which is in union with Christ, the primary Sacrament. It is Christ the anchor who called the Church into being as the pilgrim people of God, who together shared in Christ’s threefold mission as “Prophet, Priest and King.”\footnote{Richard P. McBrien, \textit{Catholicism}, New ed. (New York, NY: Harper, 1994), 670.} This reversal looks remarkably like an ecclesiology for which the Reformers Wycliffe, Hus, Luther, Cranmer, Calvin and, Bucer were clamoring.

However, even within the Roman Catholic Church, such a term as “Church as Sacrament” in no way should be seen as limiting the use of other images which are included in the work of the Commission on Faith and Order. Denis Doyle, in his examination of

communion ecclesiology, shares the experience of speaking to a group of catechumens in a Catholic parish. He describes writing on a board three sets of dialectical phrases describing the church: 1) Mystical body of Christ - People of God; 2) Bride of Christ - Pilgrim Church; 3) communion of saints - Servant church. After explaining these terms to the catechumens he asked those present to write down the phrase within in each dialectical set to which they were more drawn, or in which they found the most interest. As he went around the room, all the catechumens, and the majority of sponsors and team members, indicated a preference for the first descriptive phrase in each of the dialectics. For them these images had been in large part what had drawn them to the Church. However, the Director of Religious Education, who shared his choices last, was drawn to the second set of the phrases in each pairing. For him, the first phrase in each pairing was indicative of the “old church,” while the second seemed to him to represent what was “at the heart of the Second Vatican Council.” Doyle recalls that at the time he felt that the last respondent viewed others in the catechumenal group as representing a pre-Second Vatican Council mentality. Doyle suggests that which is commonly referred to as “communion ecclesiology” would have helped this theologically trained, religious educator appreciate the richness of the juxtaposed images as an interconnected harmony. Not only does communion ecclesiology assist the faithful in appreciating a diversity of images within one’s own tradition, but such an ecclesiology enables Roman Catholics that understand the Church as sacrament to subscribe more fully to images extrapolated from Scripture and tradition, such as those of the Faith and Order Commission. Communion ecclesiology, as Doyle envisions it, is anchored in the Church as the body of Christ within the work of the economic Trinity.

“Communion ecclesiology” can be effective when those who wrestle with and engage in reflecting on varying images of the Church are in fact in visible Communion. As we have already seen from our conclusions drawn in Section 2, comparative ecclesiolgies explored without visible unity often digress into listing images of the Church in which all participants can find some agreement while differences are pushed aside. In the end comparative ecclesiologies without visible unity, sadly move the Church no closer to the unity we seek.

The danger of losing the essential mooring of Christ is that doctrine does not grant salvation and grace; that is given by Christ. As Ola Tjørhom reminds us, seemingly echoing Bonhoeffefer, “Justification can only function as the hermeneutical center of theology when it is the center of something, and not when it is placed in splendid isolation and even played off against the fullness of the church’s witness throughout history. Moreover, it is only Christ who can justify sinners, not a doctrine of Justification.”

5.2.3 Sacramentology Reconsidered

I noted above that the work on BEM led to a Roman Catholic response which presented a “chicken or egg argument.” If the Roman Catholic Church seeks among “ecclesial communities” sufficient signs of Christ subsisting in them, by understanding the Church as sacrament, with Christ as primary sacrament, the Sacrament of Baptism truly is viewed as an initiation into one body of Christ. The concern about overly mediated sacraments is lessened as the Church perceives Christ as the one to whom we are joined in our worship. SC viewed sacramentology within the Church’s liturgy. When one begins by asserting, as LG put it, “the Church in Christ is in the nature of sacrament,” then the true sacrament is truly seen as the one who is our sure foundation and cornerstone of our faith. It is Christ who offers us the

means of grace through the Word and Sacraments. The Church is never more the Church than when it is gathered around the Word and the Sacraments. Divisions which inevitably will come in ecumenical dialogues on sacraments stand to be minimized as the undivided sacrament who is Christ is seen as the primary sacrament. Division was the concern in the Roman Catholic response to BEM. In coming chapters we will examine how anchoring the Church’s theology of the Word, ecclesiology, and sacramentology in christology impacts the Churches mission and life, particularly as it relates to Confirmation. For the moment we will direct our concern toward ways a reformed sacramental economy rooted in a sound christology may foster closer ties toward visible unity and a faithful practice which may lead to a renewed theology and practice of the rite of Confirmation.

5.3. A New Sacramental Economy among Protestants?

_The Nature and Mission of the Church_ acknowledged that using the term “sacrament” to describe the church was something that some traditions could acknowledge insofar as these traditions could speak of the church in “sacramental terms.” The statement also allowed that since the use of the term sacrament was not part of the language of some traditions, such a term as it applied to the church had to be rejected outright.51 Yet, Walter Kasper reminds us that for Anglicans, Methodists and the Churches of the Reformed Tradition in dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, there is a level of convergence on the notion of the Church as Sacrament. Such convergence is critical to furthering ecumenical dialogue since, as we have noted, it offers the potential for greater convergence in understanding the role of Scripture, ecclesiology and sacramentology. All three of these are extremely helpful in the renewal of the Church’s theology and practice around Confirmation.

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Kasper notes, however, that in the case of Lutherans, they are often hesitant about such a description, which some fear blurs the distinction between Jesus Christ himself as the “single sacrament of God” and the church as the recipient of salvation.\(^{52}\) The view of some Lutherans is reflected in *The Church and Justification* (*CJ*) which states, “Lutheran theology points to the fact that calling the church ‘sacrament’ must be clearly distinguished from the way ‘sacrament’ is applied to Baptism and the Lord's Supper.”\(^{53}\) In addition, some of these same Lutheran participants questioned, “how does the understanding of the church as ‘sacrament’ relate to that of the church as holy and sinful?”\(^{54}\) *CJ* goes on to acknowledge, “There are certainly Lutheran theologians who apply ‘sacrament’ to the church. Yet reservations about references to the Church as ‘sacrament’ remain in Lutheran theology, since such references can lead to misunderstandings on both the points just explained.”\(^{55}\)

We first need to recognize that not all Lutheran theologians would oppose the notion of the Church as sacrament with Christ as primary sacrament. However, among those for whom this notion is a concern, *CJ* points us to three principles of resistance: 1) The term sacrament should not be used for the church since the term itself applies primarily to Baptism and Eucharist; 2) It would result in too close a connection between sinners in the Church and Christ; 3) Christ, who is the second person of the Trinity, cannot be a Sacrament of God since the sign is confused with that which is signified.

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\(^{54}\) Ibid., par. 117.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., par. 118.
From this, it becomes readily apparent how divided Lutherans often find themselves on an issue such as the application of the term sacrament. However, it may also help to remember that, historically, particularly in North America, Lutherans emigrated from many European countries, bringing many languages, cultures, and pieties reflecting practices, and even divisions in their countries of origin. Greater organic unity among Lutherans is only something which has come about in recent decades. Between 1840 and 1875 no less than 58 Lutheran Church bodies were in existence in the United States alone! Borrowing a term from George Lindbeck, we need to acknowledge that many Lutherans understand their confessions as strictly “regulative.” However, as Eric Gritsch has noted, properly understood, the “Augsburg Confession” and the “Apology” were themselves ecumenical documents articulating how the Wittenberg Reformers desired to call for reforms, not schism. Therefore, despite the differences among Lutherans, there may be ways to reach convergence on this issue.

5.4. A Way Forward

As we consider the matter of the Church as sacrament with Christ as primary sacrament, the “Apology” or Apologia “Article XIII” on sacraments makes the following argument: “if everything that has the command of God and some promise added to it ought to be counted a sacrament, why not include prayer, which most truly can be called a sacrament?”

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Lutherans and Moravians, who consider the *Apologia* a norm for their traditions, this might well help broaden their understanding of the definition of a sacrament, with Christ as primary sacrament, since it is by the command of Christ himself that his very body, the New Testament *ecclesia*, was gathered and sent. Another relevant view on sacramentology is expressed by David Yeago who reminds us that for Augustine, sacrament carried the present meaning, and it could also take on a figural meaning. Such is the case with a Scripture text or Old Testament figure or event or character that prefigures Christ. Since the term *Sacramentum* is Latin and not Greek, it was used for what the Apostle Paul spoke of as the *mysterion*. *Sacramentum*, understood in this way, could be applied analogically to a wide range of ways in which the faithful experience the mystery of Christ by the Spirit. Yeago makes an allusion to imagery common in Augustine’s sermons and letters, one quite familiar to fourth century seafarers who approached the rocky coastline of North Africa. Yeago points out, “The specific practices called *the* sacraments are not therefore isolated ‘outcappings of rock’ in [the] middle of an ocean; the whole life of the Church is a ‘sacramental’ ecology within which the ‘sacraments’ play a distinctive role.”

With respect to those who are concerned about too close a connection between Christ with a Church which is both holy and sinful, this broad area of concern may best be addressed among Lutherans in ecumenical dialogue. Some years ago, Eric Gritsch while in a panel discussion noted, “One is tempted to conclude that Lutherans are better off when they are involved with other Christians. When they wait until the next Lutheran body acts, usually

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nothing gets done. This is a problem." The second of the concerns which we listed from *CJ* could be addressed in a dialogue dealing with anthropology. I have suggested elsewhere that one of the matters which might be taken up by Lutherans in ecumenical dialogue is an understanding of anthropology.

One of the dialogue areas for Lutherans and Roman Catholics on anthropology would be a discussion on what is often a common part of parlance for modern Lutherans. Luther’s often quoted dictum, “*simul iustus et peccator,*” ironically is a phrase which was all but forgotten among Lutherans until it was rediscovered in 1903 by a Dominican critic of Luther named Henrich Denifle. Denifle found the phrase in *Luther’s 1515-1516 Römerbriefvorlesung.* Not only should the meaning of the *simul* be a part of any dialogue on anthropology, but also Luther’s doctrine of effective justification found in the Catechisms and the “Commentaries on Galatians.” “The Commentaries on Galatians” have Confessional standing for Lutherans in the “Formula of Concord.” Luther’s doctrine of effective justification should also be contrasted with Melanchthon’s more forensic view as a part of any dialogue on anthropology.

With respect to those who are concerned about viewing Christ himself as a sacrament as a confusion of sign and the signified, we can look to the work of Karl Barth. Barth had great difficulty in accepting any sacraments, save one. He said, “It [Baptism] is not itself,

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61 Lindbeck, *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, 52.


64 Article 3, the “Solid Declaration” of the “Formula of Concord,” in *The Book of Concord*, 573.
however, the bearer, means, or instrument of grace. Baptism responds to a mystery, the sacrament of the history of Jesus Christ, of His resurrection, of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.”\(^{65}\) Thus, for Barth, Jesus Christ is the only true sacrament. Baptism is in response to Jesus through whose ministry and paschal mystery, in the midst of human history, is the sign and sacrament *sine qua non*. He is sacrament in his mission, as he is revealed; not in his coeternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. For Barth, Jesus is sacrament in His being sent *pro nobis*. For those who would find the notion of Christ as primary sacrament difficult because he is God, Barth would seem to answer, “Christ is only Sacrament in his being sent.”

### 5.5 Confirmation as a Sacrament

With agreement upon the church understood as sacrament, with Christ as primary sacrament, the whole church, particularly in the West, is gifted with new opportunities. The 16\(^{th}\) and 17\(^{th}\) centuries represented a difficult period for the Western Church as much blood was shed over the question of what constitutes a sacrament. Moving to an understanding of Christ as primary Sacrament clarifies, sharpens and deepens the definition of “sacrament.” It means that all in which the church engages in the name of Christ may be understood sacramentally. In addition, the Church envisions herself as the people of God or, as the Reformers so often spoke, the priesthood of believers.

In this Chapter, I have sought to offer a new theological perspective aimed at assisting the Church to develop a renewed theology and practice of sacraments in general and Confirmation in particular. By first attempting to expose the roadblocks toward coming to common understandings on essentials as a way to achieve the unity we seek, I have sought to

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argue for another way forward. With Christ as primary sacrament, controversies over
mediation and use of the means of grace are lessened, since the church is reminded that she is
the sign and Christ is the one signified. The Word which conveys Christ becomes more fully
seen as the norm of tradition. Christ as sacrament enables the church to recover a
metaphysics of conversion in which, as Congar had suggested, the Church may be accurately
viewed as a pilgrim Church, which has not yet reached perfection because we are on this side
of the eschaton. Insofar as she is made the “Bride of Christ” through this mystical union with
the true body of Christ, the Church herself may be seen as a Sacrament. This ecclesiology, in
which Christ in his mission is a Sacrament for the Church and the world, provides a
corrective for “ecclesiological monophysitism.” Like others, it has been my experience that
moderns, and even more so postmoderns, tend to view any authoritative canon, not just the
Church’s canon of Scripture, with skepticism. The same can be said of the modern and
postmodern view of tradition, which is often relegated to being a relic of the past. Under such
pressure, it is easy for there to remain a view in which tradition and divine revelation are one
and the same. In contrast, since Christ is of two natures, which are neither divided nor
confused, we may see “sacred doctrine” as derivative of divine revelation. Therefore the
Canon of Scripture can be seen as transcending human authority, which is already highly
suspect from both moderns and postmoderns. With a reformed sacramental economy, the
whole church is better able to grasp new and varied ecclesial images, even furthering her
witness among those who are highly “spiritual,” but “not particularly religious” or loyal to a
particular denomination.

In ecumenical dialogue, Methodists, Anglicans, Reformed traditions and Lutherans
may be able to find new areas of convergence on the mediation of the means of grace
because the Word, our ecclesiology, and our sacramentology are rooted in a sound christology. As these three areas of theology are first anchored in christology, a way can be opened up for a renewed understanding of Confirmation as it is practiced among all of these traditions as a sacrament of the Church.
Chapter 6
How Shall We Profess the Holy Spirit
To Be Present in Confirmation?

At first glance the title of this chapter may seem an odd question. However, some Protestants would argue that the Holy Spirit is only present in Baptism and not in anything resembling a rite of “Confirmation.” Such is the case with Arthur Repp who, in describing the “confirmation service,” has said:

Nothing happens in the rite which has not previously taken place. No extraordinary change occurs in the catechumen [sic] through the prayers of the congregation or the rite. The prayers are in behalf of the catechumen, [sic] but they do nothing to him [sic] in an unusual way. Conversely God comes to men [sic] with His grace in Holy Baptism and in the Lord’s Supper, but not so in confirmation. In marriage, ordination, and installation, persons enter into an estate or office which God has created, but not in confirmation.¹

Repp’s statement seems questionable given a rite of Confirmation at least involves prayer. How can one pray with or on behalf of a community gathered and suggest that God does not come to us in grace through the prayer, and further conclude that nothing happens? St. Paul in contradiction to what Repp is suggesting had said: “the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”² How then can one say that God neither comes to us, or that nothing happens in the prayers for confirmation? Is Repp so confident that God will not accomplish that for which we ask in the rite of confirmation?

I established in the last Chapter that there is substantial convergence on understanding the Church as Sacrament with Christ as primary Sacrament. To be sure, for many Lutherans

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¹ Repp, Confirmation in the Lutheran Church, 211.

² Romans 8:26-27.
such convergence would necessitate further ecumenical dialogue. Insofar as the entire congregation prays for, supports, guides, nurtures and affirms candidates for Confirmation we may say that Confirmation is a ministry of the whole Church. Such a ministry is ritualized in the Confirmation rite and is hopefully lived out by the congregation through its intentional ministry. We also may proceed with the understanding that the Church as the community through which God’s gracious activity is at work is, in this sense, a Sacrament. As we also noted, the Apology established that prayer for Lutherans and Moravians may be similarly be regarded as a sacrament. While most of Luther’s writings do not rise to the level of confessional documents, Luther, using Ephesians 5:31-32, does speak of the Church as a sacrament because she is wed to Christ who is a sacrament. With Christ and the Church as Christ’s bride, Luther concluded that prayer, thanksgiving and praise, i.e. the liturgy were essential notae or marks of the Church.

6.1 Proposal for Dialogue

I am proposing that in ecumenical dialogue western denominations who continue the use of rites which include prayers for affirmation and confirmation separated from Baptism might enter into a dialogue in which Confirmation is intentionally examined. I would hope that many of the conclusions of my work here might help to inform such conversation. It would also help if such conversation were predicated from the outset from a conclusion which I proposed in Chapter 5, namely that within a broader sacramental economy the Church is a sacrament with Christ as primary Sacrament. With this in mind, within a broader sacramental economy Confirmation could be considered a sacrament of the Church. Further, as I

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4 Ibid., 164.
suggested in the last chapter, moving forward into ecumenical dialogue toward a future statement on Confirmation could proceed on a much stronger footing with greater potential for moving the discussion forward more effectively.

Such a proposed dialogue could potentially involve all of the Western traditions who would wish to participate in such an ecumenical conversation for the purpose of renewal of Confirmation. Participants could participate in such an ecumenical dialogue with an understanding at the outset that each dialogue member would have to discern within their own polities whether they could become signatory participants to a final agreement. In this way such a dialogue would not result in a conciliar document in which participants merely sought to “agree to disagree” and/ or a final document which merely sought to find some common points in which at least one participant could agree on at least one of the final points of conclusion. This model has the benefit of not favouring any one (or group of) tradition(s). The more level the playing field in dialogue, the more such dialogue has integrity. Beyond this it is perhaps helpful to remember that the outcome of such dialogues can be variously constructive, even without full "agreement - i.e., sometimes "agreement" is taken to be full unity. Instead we could proceed recognizing that dialogue may influence movement towards common liturgical practices and this in itself still represents major progress for some traditions.

As we noted in Chapter 4, SC directed that it would “be a good idea” for those who were being confirmed to renew their baptismal promises before receiving the sacrament. As we will see, this directive had implications far beyond the rite for confirmation used in the Latin rite. Many Protestants, with their Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, would see the appropriateness of remembering the baptismal promises and rooting Confirmation in
Baptism. In what follows we will look at examples of baptismal rites followed by the Confirmation rite from various traditions in order that we might reach some general overall conclusions. Our aim is to accomplish at least three purposes: 1) I hope to demonstrate that despite Repp’s thesis presented at the outset of this chapter, the Holy Spirit may clearly be seen as being present in these various rites of Confirmation. 2) To at the very least see these rites of Confirmation as a Sacrament, at least within a broader sacramental economy. 3) In conclusion to offer some general suggestions which might assist these traditions in a future ecumenical dialogue as we seek to move toward a renewed theology and practice of the rite.

6.2 Latin Rite

Prior to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, the experience of many Roman Catholics around the administration of Confirmation was attending a rite in Latin which involved little participation from the laity. Since the pre-conciliar rite was the medieval form without deliberate ties to Baptism, as we examine the rite utilized by Roman Catholics, unlike the other traditions we will not begin by examining the baptismal rite in this instance. Rather we will start by examining the Confirmation rite used by the Roman Catholic Church in the years prior to the Council.

*Ordo for the Confirmation Rite in the Liber Usualis:*

An opening litany (*congregation affirms with “Amen[s]”*)

Ambrosian prayer (*confirmands affirm with “Amen[s]”*)

Handlaying and consignation (*by the bishop, words established by the Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence-Rome*)

Litany (*while the bishop washes his hands*)
Concluding dialogue and prayer by the prelate\textsuperscript{5}

It is important to note that the action and words were primarily those of the presbyter and bishop. In contrast, the post-conciliar rite of Confirmation needs to be understood within the context of the baptismal rite. Since the Second Vatican Council called for Confirmation to be closely connected to Baptism, it will now be helpful first to examine the order for the post-conciliar rite of Baptism observed by North American Roman Catholics. The rubrics explain that this rite is preferably celebrated within the context of the Mass.

\textit{Ordo for the Post-conciliar Rite of Baptism:}

Questions (addressed to parents and godparents concerning intentions, consistent with those asked of catechumens)

Signing with the cross (Celebrant makes the sign of the cross upon the forehead)

Liturgy of the Word

Intercessions of the faithful

Prayer for exorcism

Anointing with the oil of the catechumens

Invitatory leading into the thanksgiving over the water

Renunciation of evil and confession of faith (interrogatory form)

Washing in water (Western baptismal formula in the first person declarative using the Trinitarian formula)

Chrismation on the crown of the head with consecrated chrism (by the presiding priest)

\textsuperscript{5} The Liber Usualis: With Introduction and Rubrics in English, ed. Benedictines of Solesmes (Tournai, Belgium: Desclée, 1959), 1844-45.
Clothing with a garment
Giving of the lighted candle
The *ephetha* or prayer (for the opening of the ears)
The Our Father . . .
Blessing and dismissal

Forms of the baptismal rite may vary depending on the number of children or particular circumstances including the unavailability of an ordained priest, or recognition of a Baptism conducted in an emergency. Since Confirmation was understood by the Second Vatican Council to be a part of the recovered sacraments of initiation, among North American Catholics the rite itself may be used in a variety of circumstances. Confirmation may be celebrated either within or apart from the Mass.

*Ordo for the Post-conciliar Rite of Confirmation:*

Liturgy of the Word (*precedes the Sacrament*)
Presentation of candidates
Homily (*Reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 on Pentecost*)
Renunciation of evil (*Interrogatory form in keeping with SC’s intent that there be links to Baptism*)
Confession of faith (*Interrogatory form in keeping with SC’s intent that there be links to Baptism*)
Prayer for the confirmands (*usually offered by the bishop, enjoined by the whole congregation*)
Bishop and priests extend hands over all of the confirmands as the bishop offers a Prayer (*Prayer recalls the Spirit sent at Baptism*)

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6 *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, 357-466.
Anointing with chrism (*a suitable piece(s) of sung music as the bishop washes his hands*)

General intercessory prayer (*Bishop and the deacon*)

The rite concludes with Eucharist when set within the Mass.\(^7\)

There can be no doubt that the Holy Spirit is understood to be at work and present in prayers in this rite. The whole congregation prays that God will strengthen the confirmands, and therefore we may confidently trust that the Holy Spirit is actively a part of the strengthening. Even apart from a Roman Catholic self-understanding of Confirmation as a sacrament, when considered within a broader sacramental economy we may say that Confirmation as practiced by Roman Catholics is indeed a sacrament. Further, since liturgy and prayer are involved based upon what we presented from the Lutheran Confessions in Chapter 5, Section 4 Lutherans argued that prayer may be regarded as a sacrament. Thus we may conclude that in the post-conciliar Roman Catholic rite for Confirmation we may trust that the Holy Spirit is understood to be at work and that in its proper sense it may be understood and recognized to function as a sacrament of the Church,

### 6.3 North American Lutherans

The rite of Confirmation for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) is to be found in a rite which serves several purposes under the title “Affirmation of Baptism.”\(^8\) The Confirmation rite is found in the *Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)*\(^9\) More recently, the ELCA and ELCIC have produced the

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\(^7\) Ibid., 487-515.

\(^8\) Turner, *Confirmation: The Baby in Solomon’s Court*, 40.
Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) containing an “Affirmation of Baptism” rite intended also to be used for those who are entering into “Confirmed Membership.”

6.3.1 Lutheran Book of Worship Rites

Since the time of the Reformation, descendants of the Wittenberg Reformers have relied heavily upon Luther’s Taufbüchlein of 1523 and his 1526 revision as sources for baptismal rites. In Luther’s rites of Baptism the liturgy began with tracing the sign of the cross on the forehead. We saw this retained in the current rite of Baptism of the Roman Catholic Church which we examined in Section 2 of the present chapter. In the case of both of the editions of the Taufbüchlein as well as the Roman Catholic baptismal rite, the signing with the cross in the early part of the rites is a historical holdover from the ancient catechumenal exorcism rites. The Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) made a decision not to include the sign of the cross on the forehead and on the breast in the LBW. Instead, the rite begins with a declaration that we are all born children of a fallen humanity.

Ordo for the LBW Rite of Baptism:

Questions addressed to parents and godparents (concerning intentions. Those who are able to speak for themselves are asked if they desire to be baptized.)

Sponsors, parents, and members of the congregation are asked for support (This includes but is not limited responsibly for bringing the children to the services of God’s house, instruction in the elements of the catechism—namely, the Lord’s Prayer and Ten Commandments, along with the Holy Scriptures. In the case of older persons, sponsors and the congregation are tasked with assisting candidates in every way.)

Prayers of the faithful

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9 LBW, 198-201.
Dialogue leading into the *Sintflutgebet* or “flood prayer”

Rejection of the forces of evil, the devil, and all his empty promises

*(single sentence by all)*

Confession of faith in interrogatory form with the Apostles’ Creed *(by all)*

Trinitarian formula for the washing *(both the passive formula ['“N. is baptized in the name of the Father, . . . . ’] and the traditional declarative first person formula ['“N., I Baptize you in the name of the Father, . . . . ’] are given as options)*

Singing of psalm as the party moves from font to altar

Laying on of hands with Ambrosian Prayer

Consignation with oil with the words “N., child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.”

Lit candle given by a congregational representative *(with Matthew 5:16 read)*

Congregational Affirmation of welcome *(Congregation in unison)*

Sharing of the peace.

*This rite is presumed either to come at the very beginning of worship or following the homily or sermon in the Liturgy of the Word.*

In the *LBW* there is a rite which may be utilized for Confirmation, reception into membership, or restoration to membership. For this purpose there are three sets of carefully arranged rubrics delineating which portions are to be used under particular circumstances. Since our concern is Confirmation here, we will focus primarily on those portions of the rite.

*Ordo for the LBW Rite of “Affimation of Baptism”*

Address

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11 “Marked with the cross of Christ forever” has become a motto for the ELCA.

12 *LBW*, 121-25.
Presentation of candidates (*Congregational representative reads the names*)

Congregational declares support (*Congregation in unison*)

Renunciation (*Rejection of the forces of evil, the devil, and all his empty promises in a single sentence by all*)

Profession of faith (*Interrogatory form with the Apostles’ Creed by all*)

Prayers of the faithful (*offered by the Assisting Minister*)

Inquiry of confirmands (*asking of them their intentionality to include the hearing God’s Word, sharing in God’s “supper”, striving for justice, etc. with each affirming by saying: “I do, and I ask God to help and guide me”*)

Prayer of Affirmation (*incorporating the Ambrosian prayer*)

Laying on of hands with a confirmation prayer (*“for Jesus’ sake, stir up in N. the gift of your Holy Spirit. . . ;”*)

Confirmands affirm with “Amen”

Sharing of peace.\(^\text{13}\)

Here some history of the development of the rites in the *LBW* is instructive. In the process of developing the *LBW*, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) joined the predecessor bodies of the ELCA and the ELCIC in hopes of producing a common worship for most Lutherans throughout North America. At the time the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and the American Lutheran Church (ALC) both had congregations in the US and Canada. They along with Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) and LCMS had never all enjoyed a common worship resource. Just before the *LBW* draft went to press, participants from the LCMS pulled out of the project.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 198-201.
Two major concerns were given for the LCMS abandonment: the rite of Holy Baptism and the rite of Confirmation. Prior to printing, the proposed “Rite of Baptism” had been evaluated by an LCMS “blue ribbon” committee. This committee would eventually become the Special Hymnal Review Committee (SHRC). The “blue ribbon” committee, while commending the ILCW and its work on LBW, nonetheless found fault with several matters in the forthcoming rite of Holy Baptism. Among the matters relevant to our study: 1) The renunciation which spoke of “all the forces of evil, the devil and all his empty promises.” This was seen as ambiguous since it was not clear how the “forces of evil” were connected to “the devil.” 2) The handlaying following the washing implied that the Spirit was not given in the washing itself. 3) Luther’s traditional prayer which spoke of “water and the Spirit” was replaced with the older Ambrosian prayer. 4) The sign of the cross and anointing with oil were unnecessary since the Spirit had already been received in the baptismal washing and the use of oil “obscures that our Lord commands that we baptize with “water.” The LCMS committee concluded that the baptismal rites contained in two previous Lutheran hymnals, Lutheran Agenda, utilized by the LCMS, and the Service Book and Hymnal used by many other Lutherans in North America at the time, were superior to the rite of Baptism proposed for the LBW.14

The LCMS also had many concerns related to the rite for Affirmation of Baptism or Confirmation. The SHRC in a letter to the ILCW was particularly critical of a part of the proposed “Affirmation of Baptism” rite which pertained to “Reception into Membership.” Among other matters, the SHRC was concerned that: 1) there was no explicit instruction that those coming from other denominations were to have received instruction in the Word of

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God; 2) the Order of Confirmation in *Occasional Services* in use with the *Service Book and Hymnal* and the LCMS’s *Lutheran Agenda* had specifically stated that those who presented themselves for Communicant Membership had been instructed in the Word of God; 3) The *LBW* implied that one could be received into membership from another denomination without such instruction, thus undermining the emphasis among Lutherans that persons should be instructed on the teachings of Scripture before admission to Holy Communion.\(^\text{15}\)

At issue here was the LCMS’s concern over a historical Lutheran policy known as “close [sic] Communion.”\(^\text{16}\) In addition, since the early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century the LCMS has maintained an emphasis upon the inerrancy of Scripture, as that term has been understood in the Fundamental Principles of Christianity drafted at Princeton in the early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century.

The hopes for a single worship book utilized by most Lutherans throughout North America had been dashed. The split over the Baptismal and Confirmation rites revealed deep theological issues between the major denominations of Lutherans in North America. Certainly a part of those differences included whether children could commune prior to Confirmation. We will explore this matter in some detail in Chapter 8. In addition, a major difficulty in producing one worship resource for North American Lutherans had been the large number of Lutheran bodies, as noted in Chapter 5, Section 3. Unlike the United Methodist Church (UMC) and Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), who have also experienced division, Lutherans in North America have never known organic unity. Such a complex juridical and theological landscape complicates all efforts toward liturgical convergence.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 190-91.

\(^{16}\) “Close Communion” presumes that those admitted to Communion receive the body and blood of Christ in a community which confesses the “real presence” of Christ. Those who preside in such communities are presumed to confess such.
However, the LCMS “blue ribbon” commission was not alone in expressing concerns about the LBW rites. Numerous concerns also emanated from within predecessor bodies to the ELCA. Many congregations who served as test sites for Contemporary Worship 8 (CW 8), submitted suggestions for changes through returned surveys. Lutheran theologian James Nestigen argued that the CW 8 “Affirmation of Baptism” was guilty of separating the divine initiative and the human response. He claimed such separation ran contrary to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. He argued that because of the separation, people might easily be manipulated into making responses to grace provided in the rite and then retrospectively re-evaluate the sincerity of those responses. He further suggested that such a separation between divine initiative and human response was in fact Semipelagianism. The “Affirmation of Baptism” rite in CW 8 was modified only slightly before appearing in the LBW, but among the subtle changes none directly addressed Nestingen’s concerns.

In the end, Nestigen’s concerns were judged unfounded as Jeffry Truscott and Eugene Brand both would take issue with him. Brand noted that even Luther recognized that in worship God speaks to us and that we respond in prayer, praise and thanksgiving. He argued that Luther clearly did not mean to imply that there was a separation of the divine initiative and human response, or that such human response constituted Semipelagianism. For Truscott, Nestingen’s concern resulted from the change in the traditional title of the rite from “Confirmation” to “Affirmation of Baptism.” For Nestingen, affirmation involves human activity whereas confirming was purely a divinely initiated act.

This concern reflects a particular piety within Lutheranism. Nestingen’s Norwegian Lutheran piety tends to react strongly to any implied sense of acceptance when speaking of the reception of God’s gift. As we saw in our examination of Joshua 20 in chapter 2, as the

17 Truscott, The Reform of Baptism and Confirmation in American Lutheranism, 223.
tripes were gathered at Shechem, Joshua reminds the tribes of the false gods whom their ancestors had served and the victory at Yam Suf and then calls upon the tribes to “choose this day whom you will serve.” In Joshua 20 the tribes affirm their obedience to the one who had saved their ancestors at the sea. They rejected foreign gods just as confirmands in the Affirmation rite reject all the forces of evil, the devil, and all his empty promises. Like the tribes, confirmands arereminded of the covenant God had initiated with them in Baptism then are asked to affirm their intent to continue in a pattern of godly living. Far from being a divine action separated from the people’s affirmation, the two actions are bound up in the ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit. Both the LBW and the study rite in CW 8 reflect this understanding that divine gift and the human affirmation joined in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

Prior to the LBW’s publication, the Rev. Russell C. Lee, a retired Lutheran pastor authored an article in Lutheran Partners, entitled “Communicating God’s Forgiveness.” Lee suggested that: “To speak of ‘the baptized’ and to keep ‘affirming our baptism’ smacks of a teaching that was rejected by Luther and the other reformers of his time. That teaching was the ex opere operato which referred to an understanding that the sacraments were efficacious in and of themselves. The early reformers made it very clear that the efficacy of the sacraments depended on faith in Jesus Christ.” Lee was basing his argument upon Article XIII of the “Augsburg Confession.” Yet Article XIII as Truscott has rightly argued does not say that “efficacy depends on faith. Rather it is saying that the right use of sacraments is made when faith is present in the recipient.” The presumption in Article XIII is therefore roughly equivalent to Aquinas’ statement “intention is required, whereby he [i.e. the priest]  

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18 Ibid., 222.

19 Ibid., 222. (Italics by Truscott.)
subjects himself to the principal agent; that is, it is necessary that he intend to do that which Christ and the Church do."20 This means that sacraments are valid when one uses them in the way in which the church would intend. Truscott is quite right in suggesting that Lee’s concern here was “questionable.”21

Like Nestingen, Lee seems to have been concerned with the motivation of the confirmand concerning whether with God’s help they intend to continue in the covenant God has made with them in Holy Baptism. At the heart of Lee’s critique there seems to have been a concern over a human response in light of the divine gift. He also may have been concerned that there not be coercion for confirmands to elicit a public response amid congregational and family expectations. This concern goes to the matter as to when this rite is appropriate as well as to maintaining ritual honesty when celebrating the rite.22

Arthur Repp, a theologian in the LCMS, reviewed historical Confirmation rites among Lutherans. As we noted above, he was concerned particularly about prayers for the Holy Spirit which accompanied the imposition of hands. These concerns were a part of his examination of a Tennessee Synod Agenda from 1843. The prayer which was addressed to the Son became epiclectic at the handlaying. Such a pneumatological shift for Repp made the rite overly sacramental. However, he failed to note the history of epiclectic prayers which

20 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. IV, Q 64, 2366.

21 Truscott, *The Reform of Baptism and Confirmation in American Lutheranism*, 222.

22 These are both questions which we will take up in Chapter 8. By “ritual honesty” I mean the coherence of form and content among what is being proclaimed, celebrated, enacted and professed in worship. For example, presiders need to maintain integrity when conducting liturgies and rites within the community to the degree that one does not attempt to misrepresent the emotions and intentions of a community at a given time. An example of ritual dishonesty would be to project a feeling of joy in the midst of a community which is experiencing pain. While hope is an essential part of the Christian message, presiders can engage in ritual dishonesty when they fail to permit a community to lament. As it applies to Confirmation, ritual dishonesty would mean expecting confirmands to make promises as a part of the rite which stands in complete contradiction to their own level of commitment, or to allow them to be coerced by family, clergy or congregational expectations. See, for example, Susan Marie Smith, *Caring Liturgies: The Pastoral Power of Christian Ritual* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 90.
begin by addressing the second person of the Trinity. It has long been a confession of the church, in keeping with the promise in the Fourth Gospel that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. The Western church in its confession of the *filioque* confesses just this. The Western church shifted to the inclusion of the *filioque* in order to doctrinally prevent a subordination of the Son to the Father. Obviously, Repp is quite uncomfortable with any use of epiclectic formula in the rite of Confirmation. Yet as we are exploring the question, “how should we profess the Holy Spirit to be present” it is appropriate that we again take up Repp’s concern.

While it may seem odd to those of other Western traditions, Repp’s concerns about the epiclesis are nothing new within Lutheran circles. In the liturgy of the Eucharist Luther in his reform of the mass called for the bare *verba* or words of Jesus to be used in lieu of an *anaphora* or Eucharistic Prayer. Luther’s concern was that the church should not convey that the prayers of the priest effected the presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. However in some Scandinavian countries and in some parts of Germany Eucharistic prayers were adapted from the Latin rites. In 1958 with the introduction of the *Service Book and Hymnal*, Luther D. Reed and Paul Zeller Strodach provided an option for a brief anaphora which provided another option to the traditional bare *verba* option for Communion. Reed and Strodach’s prayer was rendered in more contemporary and inclusive language for its use as “Eucharistic Prayer III” in the Presider’s copy of the *LBW*. Philip H. Pfatteicher notes that “in this prayer is the inclusion of a prayer for the Holy Spirit a part of all the classic Byzantine Eucharistic prayers.”

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In the general sense of the term “epiclesis,” Pfatteicher’s comment is correct. “Eucharistic prayer III” names the Holy Spirit in its conclusion. In fact, the concluding Trinitarian formula comes from the so-called *Apostolic Tradition*. Yet in no way does “Eucharistic Prayer III” have a full form of an epiclesis in the Byzantine sense, where the Holy Spirit is called upon to be poured out upon the gifts of bread and wine. Reed and Strodach’s prayer reflects a strong piety which resists a fuller epiclesis, even at the Eucharist. This piety may well be behind Repp’s insistence that apart from particular action of the washing in Baptism, the Holy Spirit is not and should not be understood to be actively involved. Yet, as we have already noted the very fact that prayers are involved means that the Holy Spirit is involved. Given the history therefore we should not infer that Repp is alone among Lutherans in reflecting a piety which is uncomfortable with epiclectic prayers at the Eucharist or in Baptism.

Johann Konrad Wilhelm Löhe (21 February 1808–2 January 1872) was a Lutheran Pastor in Bavaria and who is regarded as a co-founder of the LCMS in the United States. By Repp’s own acknowledgment Löhe included a prayer at the handlaying for confirmation which explicitly called upon the invocation of the Holy Spirit as a part of his rite.²⁴ Thus, we may say that Repp’s concern over the role of the Spirit’s presence and activity in Confirmation rites remains indicative of the numerous pieties exhibited within Lutheranism as a whole. The language in the CW 8 handlaying prayer was modified based on suggestions from Ralph Quere, a member of the ILCW who urged that the Ambrosian prayer be slightly

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²⁴ Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*, 119.
modified. The original “pour out” was changed to “Father in heaven . . . stir up in your? . . .” As Quere had said, this modification meant that the prayer technically was a bestowal formula in which God was doing something as the presider prays.25

6.3.2 Evangelical Lutheran Worship Rites

The same basic shape of the baptismal rite from the LBW is followed in ELW. Most of the rite in fact remains the same, yet additional options have been added. In addition to the opening address, a new option has been added that only speaks of God’s gracious and merciful activity which grants new birth without an acknowledgment of sin. The address to the parents in the ELW has added a specific mention of “care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.” Sponsors and congregational members are given a greater responsibility. Sponsors as they are empowered by the Holy Spirit are asked to help the children live in covenant of their Baptism and in communion with church. The congregation is asked to pray and support the candidates. ELW reflects the greater concern for the role of sponsors and members of the congregation in the nurture of the baptized. The renunciation question has been expanded into three questions as opposed to one, reflecting the three articles of the Creed. At the washing only the declarative formula of the baptismal formula is offered as an option without the option of the passive formula. Two options are given for the congregation to affirm its acclamation. The congregation may also join in the singing of a hymn or a form of the Alleluia in acclamation.

Added options include: the clothing with a garment; an abbreviated form of Luther’s prayer following the washing followed by the Ambrosian prayer at the handlaying; the giving of a lit candle by a representative of the congregation with the option of either Matthew 5:16

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25 Truscott, The Reform of Baptism and Confirmation in American Lutheranism, 170n105; 197
or John 8:12. The words at the consignation remain the same as in the *LBW* as do the words of the corporate baptiral welcome of by the congregation. The rite concludes with a hymn.26

The *ELW*’s rite of “Affirmation of Baptism” remains similar to the *LBW* rite, but with sparser rubrics. Since occasional services were developed separately for those joining the congregation, the only other use of the rite is the option of a corporate affirmation of baptiral faith. The key difference in the *ELW* rite from the *LBW* is in the prayers over the confirmands. The rubrics offer the option of either a form of the Ambrosian Prayer or a “confirmation prayer” (but not both). This means the rite could function ritually as either a confirmation or an affirmation—but, again, not both. The understanding that Confirmation involves an “affirmation of baptism” has been lost. The renunciation of evil is in the same three question form as the *ELW*’s baptiral rite. There is also a request that the entire assembly support the confirmands, with the congregation responding in the same manner as the response of the confirmands: “We do, and we ask God to help and guide us.” In both the Baptism and the Affirmation of Baptism rites, the *ELW* has moved the prayers of the faithful out of the rites themselves and placed them in their respective place within the liturgy for the Service of Holy Communion.

### 6.3.3 Lutheran Worship

(Lutheran Church Missouri Synod)

In 1982, The LCMS produced *Lutheran Worship (LW)*. The word “Confirmation” was retained as the title of the rite in *LW*.27 In its rite for “Holy Baptism,” as with the *LBW*, the

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26 *ELW*, 227-31.

presumption was that Baptism would be held within the context of Sunday morning worship.
The rite proceeded with the following shape:

**Ordo for “Holy Baptism”**

Presiding minister (PM) invokes the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Addresses (by PM to the congregation, paraphrasing Matthew 28, Mark 16:16 i.e. from the longer appendix to Mark) and I Peter 3:21. PM states that human beings are born sinful and are in need of forgiveness, God sent the Son

Marking of the forehead and the breast with the cross (from Luther’s Taufbüchlein)

Readings (From Matthew 19:13-15 for children or John 3 for older persons)

Charges of sponsors by PM (That they confess the Trinity, the name in which the candidate will be baptized, pray for the newly baptized, assist the parents in ensuring instruction in the Small Catechism, i.e the specific parts are enumerated, as well as the Holy Scriptures)

Handlaying (accompanied by the “Our Father . . .” corporately)

Charges or parents and sponsors by PM (That they offer testimony on behalf of the child; in the case of older persons, the PM acknowledges the person’s call by the gospel and prior instruction in the faith)

Renunciation of the “devil, all his works and all his ways” (single sentence corporately)

Confession of the Apostles’ Creed (interrogatory form corporately)

Naming (PM asks who brings this child and how is the child to be named; in the case of older persons, they are asked do you wish to be baptized, and how they are to be named)

Washing (the rubrics specifically state: “pour water three times on the head of each candidate” yet the Western declarative form [“I baptize you . . . .”] is the only option)

Handlaying with a single hand (accompanied Luther’s post-washing prayer)

White garment (May be put on the baptizand as the PM declares, “Christ has taken away and borne your sin . . . .”)
Giving of the baptismal candle (PM declares “...Live always by the light of Christ and the ever watchful for his coming...”)

(Baptismal party gathers at the altar)

Concluding prayer (for neophyte or parents for younger children)

Welcome by a representative

Welcome by the congregation (corporately)

Concluding benediction by the PM (leads to the introit or an entry hymn).28

This baptismal rite assumes that the rite itself will be celebrated at the beginning of worship. Yet the rite of Confirmation in LW follows the Hymn of the Day. This Hymn of the Day according to the rubrics may invoke the Holy Spirit. In the LW confirmands are referred to as “catechumens.” The rite of “Confirmation” follows the following sequence:

**Ordo for the Rite of “Confirmation”**

Charge (PM Recalls the baptismal charge from Matthew 28 and Matthew 10)

Inquiry (Confirmands are asked by PM if they acknowledge the gifts which God gave them in Holy Baptism)

Renunciation of evil (single sentence, as in baptismal rite)

Apostles’ Creed (Interrogatory form, confirmands only)

Inquiry of confirmands (asking of them whether they will continue in this “confession and in this church and to suffer all even death rather than fall away from it?” with each affirming by saying: “I do so intend with the help of God.” Then they are asked whether they hold to the Scriptures as the “inspired Word of God, confess the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and draw from the “Small Catechism?” to which they again each affirm by saying, “I do.” They are asked whether they desire to be “a member of Evangelical Lutheran Church and of this congregation?” They each respond saying, “I do.” Finally

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28 Ibid., 199-204.
they are asked by the PM whether they will “. . . faithfully to conform their lives to the Divine Word making faithful use of God’s Word and Sacraments “even unto death?” To this they affirm by saying: “I do so intend with the help of God.”

Hand offered by Confirmands as a pledge of this promise (PM offers the hand clasp with a much abbreviated form of the Ambrosian prayer specifically mentioning the role of the Holy Spirit)

Invitation (PM welcomes confirmands as members of the church)

Prayer for the confirmands

Benediction and dismissal of the newly confirmed. 29

Truscott has noted that amid many of the concerns leveled by the “blue ribbon” committee and the SHRC concerning the LBW, LW reflects changes which were directly addressed many of those concerns. Among those changes found in LW: 1) “catechumens” are asked whether they will “continue steadfast in the confession and church … Suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it”; 2) Confirmands are asked whether they hold that the Scriptures are to be understood as the “inspired Word of God” and whether they will “confess the doctrine of the evangelical Lutheran Church”; 3) the custom of the hand clasp common to previous LCMS worship materials is retained following the confession of faith by the confirmand; 4) the renunciation used reflects changes which are consistent with SHRC concern over the renunciation in the LBW; 5) the LW avoids the word “covenant;” 6) the “Reception of New Members” is a separate rite in which those coming from other denominations are asked to “confess the teachings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church” as

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29 Ibid., 205-07.
they have come to know them from “Luther’s Small Catechism” and whether they will remain “faithful and true to the word of God?”

### 6.3.4 Lutheran Service Book
(Lutheran Church Missouri Synod)

By 2006 the LCMS had produced the *LSB* as a new worship resource. There were some modifications from the *LW* baptismal rite including: at the “Naming” a simplification of the address so that the presider simply asks, “How are you named?”; a modified form of the *Sintflutgebet* (not in the *LW* rite) is inserted without an opening dialogue (with the candidate(s) for Baptism specifically named in the prayer); a charge to the sponsors omits specific instructions to remember the baptismal candidate at all times in prayer (sponsors are now asked if they are willing to serve as sponsors, to which they respond “yes with the help of God.”); inserted is a reading from Mark 10 with the affirming with “thanks be to God.” at the end of the reading; a threefold interrogatory form of the renunciation replaces the single sentence; as in the Latin rite, the presider offers each of the articles of the Apostles Creed as the sponsors and or the candidate affirm each article; presider asks the candidate and/or the sponsors if they are to be baptized; after the washing and the symbols are offered, there is a prayer in which the presider offers thanks that God has made this newly baptized person a member of “one holy Christian and apostolic Church.” All other concluding prayers and actions remain the same as in the *LW*.

The Confirmation rite in the *LSB* is adjusted from the *LW* in the following ways: a threefold renunciation is used following the same form as the *LSB* baptismal rite, but the Apostles Creed follows the older interrogatory form in which they affirm the faith with “yes I

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believe . . .”; the response to the questions from the PM have been simplified to “I do, by the grace of God.”; the presider now lays hands on the confirmands, traces the sign of the cross on each confirmand accompanied by the words of Luther’s post-washing prayer; there is the added option of a passage of Scripture for each confirmand being offered; two new prayers have been added offering thanksgiving to God for bringing these confirmands to the confession of the faith and a prayer recalling the gifts of Baptism; the Peace is shared with all as the liturgy resumes without a concluding benediction.\textsuperscript{31} We can clearly see that in the \textit{LSB} Confirmation rite prayers that the Holy Spirit may be perceived to be actively involved. Within a broader sacramental economy we may say that both the \textit{LW} and the \textit{LSB} confirmation rites function as sacraments in which the Holy Spirit is at work.

\section*{6.4 Moravians}

In the early 1990’s the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church in the US and Canada assembled a new worship resource, \textit{The Moravian Book of Worship (MBW)}, incorporating the rich tradition of Czech and German chorales and liturgies for Moravian congregations. Many of the revised rites also reflected liturgical reforms in \textit{SC} and the Second Vatican Council. The baptismal rite in the \textit{MBW} follows the following order:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ordo for the MBW Rite of “Baptism”}

Address by PM (\textit{links Baptism to the covenant which God made with Israel, freeing them from sin along with God’s promise in Jesus Christ who by his death and resurrection fulfills the covenant})

Congregation response: “we come before you with joy, oh God, to claim the promises of your covenant.”
\end{quote}

Address by PM (speaks of Baptism as a visible means of grace and an entry into the new covenant, and as that which brings us through grace and the power of the Holy Spirit into unity with Christ, cleansing us by his saving work, calling us to a “life of faith and willing obedience”)

Congregation response: (acknowledges being joined to the paschal mystery in Baptism)

Address by the PM (only in the case of Baptism of children, stating that they too share in Christ’s “redeeming work and through God’s grace and the faith of their parents and of the church)

Congregation response: “for God’s promise is to us and to our children”

Question (to candidates, parents and sponsors as to whether they believe in the work of the Triune God according to Holy Scripture. They respond “I do.”)

Profession of faith, (Apostles’ Creed, corporately)

Renunciation (PM invites candidates and sponsors to renunciation in which they respond: “I do.”)

Address to sponsors in the case of Baptism. (They are asked to lead children in prayer and instruction and by their example. They respond “I do”)

Address to the Congregation (They are asked to receive these children as members of the congregation, agreeing to nurture them in the faith. They respond: “We do”)

Chorale: “Come Holy Spirit” to the tune EISENACH or CHRISTE SANCTORUM

Thanksgiving over the water, (includes name(s)of candidate(s). In the case of children a prayer is offered for sponsors and parents)

Washing (Baptism in the declarative first person in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with a “threefold application of water”)

Handlaying (rubric specifically states that this symbolizes the outpouring of the Spirit, with sponsors and young children invited to join in the handlaying)

Epiclectic prayer (not Luther’s or Ambrose’s prayer)

Scripture passage (selected and read for Baptism of an adult)

Concluding benediction and congregational singing of the concluding “Amen,”
Chorale “Here in the Name of Christ our Lord” is sung to the tune HUS (if there are not reaffirmations, transfers of membership, or the Affirmation of Baptism on the same occasion)\(^\text{32}\)

In the rite for Confirmation in the *MBW* follows the following sequence:

**Ordo for the MBW Rite of “Confirmation and Affirmation of Baptism”**

Address by PM (*Same as Baptism rite above*)

Congregation response: (*Same as Baptism rite above*)

Address by PM (*Same as Baptism rite above*)

Congregation response: “claimed by God in baptism, we pray that through the power of the Holy Spirit our lives may faithfully affirm the blessings of Christ’s new covenant”

Question (*addressed to candidates, same as Baptism rite above. They respond, “I do.”*)

Profession of faith, (*Apostles’ Creed, corporately*)

Renunciation (*PM invites all to a renunciation in which they respond: “I do.”*)

Address to the Congregation (*They are asked to affirm these children as members of the congregation, and accept the obligation to nurture them in Christ. The Congregation responds: “We do”*)

Address to the Confirmands: (*PM asks if they “confirm” relying on the Spirit to strengthen and guide them in relationship with Christ and the Church. They respond, “I do.”*)

Prayer of thanksgiving (*thanking God for strengthening the candidates, i.e. a confirmation prayer yet note: no specific rubric for the presider to offer a general prayer at a handlaying*)

Chorale “Oh Jesus I have Promised” is sung to the tune: ANGEL’S STORY

Handlaying (*as the candidate’s name is then pronounced*)

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\(^{32}\) *Moravian Book of Worship, [MBW] (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Church in America, 1995), 165-69.*
Scripture text (read for each)

Benediction.

*This rite may be modified when used to receive members who wish to affirm their faith or for those transferring their membership. In both cases following the confession and renunciation affirmers and those transferring receive an explicit greeting and a charge from the presider.*[^33]

Both the “Baptism” rite and the “Confirmation and Affirmation of Baptism” rite remain recognizable within the church Catholic. In the confirmation rite there is an intentional act of prayer and a handlaying. As we have acknowledged with the other similar rites, given these facts, we may acknowledge this rite as a sacrament.

### 6.5 Presbyterian Church USA

The Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) produced the *Book of Common Worship (BCW)* in 1993. The *BCW* has typically not been utilized as a pew edition since it only includes rites and not hymns. It offers three baptismal rites for specific occasions within the same book. The first rite is designed to be used when Baptism is celebrated as a part of worship.[^34] The second option is intended as an explicitly ecumenically-recognized service, as developed by the Consultation on Common Texts.[^35] The third is designed for those who are being baptized at the same service with those who are affirming the faith.[^36] Since most PCUSA congregations receive young baptized children at Communion, children in the PCUSA are invited to the Lord’s Table even before beginning instruction in the catechism.

[^33]: Ibid., 170-74.


[^35]: Ibid., 418-29.

[^36]: Ibid., 430-35.
In BCW, like the LBW, the word “confirmation” is downplayed. The BCW contains a rite called “Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant.” This rite envisions that one affirms Baptism. The first of the rites is designated for use when there are no Baptisms at the same service and is intended for those who were baptized at a younger age who are prepared to affirm their faith publicly. In addition, there are four other rites for the reaffirmation of Baptism. These subsequent rites are for those joining the congregation, reaffirmation by a whole congregation, reaffirmation for those marking turning points or growth in faith or in connection with life’s transitions recognized while in pastoral counseling.37

Most recently the PCUSA has released a new resource hymnal, Glory to God, designed as a full worship book for congregations which include rites, services, and hymns in one book. Rather than offering several rites for Holy Baptism in a cluster as is the case in BCW, “The Sacrament of Baptism” rite in GTG offers several options appropriate to various circumstances and ages. In the GTG the Baptismal rite follows the following form:

**GTG rite for the “Sacrament of Baptism”**

Address: *(PM begins with Matthew 28:18-20 then there are options for a member of the congregations to offer a reading from Ephesians 4:4-6 or Galatians 3:27-28)*

Presentation *(appropriate options for adults and older children or younger children)*

Address to candidates *(appropriate options for adults and older children or younger children PM either asks whether the candidate desires to be baptized or whether the parents desire that their children be baptized)*

Address to sponsors *(asking for whether by prayer and witness the will help the candidate grow in the “full stature of Christ”)*

Address to the Congregation *(Congregation is asked whether they will nurture the candidates by word and deed through prayer. They respond, “We do.”)*

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37 Ibid., 447-88.
Address: *(call for the entire congregation to turn from evil and turn to Jesus Christ.)*

Renunciation of evil *(candidates are asked to turn from sin and renounce evil and the power of the world. Candidates respond with either “I renounce them” or “I do” PM asks, “who is your Lord and Savior? They respond, “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.” PM asks, “Will you be Christ’s faithful disciple, obeying his word and showing his love? They respond, “I will, with God’s help.”)*

Profession of Faith *(Congregation stands and confesses in unison the Apostles’ Creed, in a break from Calvin’s Baptismal rite.)*

Thanksgiving over the water *(Begins with dialogue, the outline of the prayer is included in the pew edition permitting the PM to offer the prayer in his or her own words)*

Washing *(in the Triune name in the declarative first person.)*

Handlaying *(with Ambrosian prayer)*

Option for marking with oil on forehead *(same second person formula as LBW)*

Address *(PM addresses those baptized)*

Welcome *(An elder or ecumenical representative may offer the welcome acknowledging that the baptized person has been received into “one holy catholic and apostolic church” and that the Holy Spirit has made them members of the household of God and “priesthood of Christ.” The congregation welcomes and affirms with “Amen. Alleluia.”)*

Baptismal Candle: *(Matthew 5:16 and Ephesians 5:8 are paraphrased as the candle is presented)*

Sharing of the Peace ³⁸

In the *GTG* the Affirmation of Baptism rite follows the following form:

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Address to the Candidates (PM reminds candidates of their Baptism making them members of “Christ’s church” and reminds them that they have been nourished at the Lord’s Table.)

Reading: (Congregation member reads a passage which may include Ephesians 2:19-20. A rubric refers to the BCW readings. These include the fuller 2:19-22 pericope, Ephesians 2:10; I Peter 2:9; Matthew 5:14-16) 39

Renunciation of evil (Same questions and responses as are in the “Sacrament of Baptism” above)

Affirmation: (Candidates are asked to follow the example of the Church in Acts 2:42. They respond “I will, with God’s help.”)

Profession of faith (Congregation stands and in unison confesses the Apostles’ Creed)

Prayer (Offered by the PM recalling the modeled on the thanksgiving over the water in “Sacrament of Baptism”, but this prayer includes an epiclesis that the candidates might be sent forth in the Spirit.)

Handlaying (Prayer is a form of the Ambrosian prayer.) 40

Prayer that God might guard . . . (this is not specifically a confirmation or strengthening prayer)

Welcome (A representative publically welcomes confirmands into worship and the mission of the church. The congregation affirms with “Amen. Alleluia.”)

Sharing of the Peace. 41

We can see from the some specific footnotes in the preceding ordo that GTG supports the congregational use of BCW. There is no specific mention of strengthening or confirming in either the BCW or the GTG. I would submit that we may say that the “Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant” for Presbyterians within the broader sacramental economy, as we

39 BCW, 448.

40 The Handlaying Prayer in the BCW included the choice of the Ambrosian prayer, or a prayer calling for God to "defend" the new confirmand that he or she might “continue as God's own forever.” Ibid., 461.

41 GTG, 20-22.
have discussed, may be regarded as a Sacrament and that through the prayers and specifically the epiclectic prayer in the prayer recalling the Thanksgiving over the water at baptism the Holy Spirit is indeed understood to be present.

6.6 United Church of Christ

In the *Book of Worship* of the United Church of Christ, there is the “Order for Baptism” which offers specific options for children or for those who are able to answer for themselves. The baptismal rite proceeds as follows:

**Ordo for the “Order for Baptism”**

Welcome (“Option A” invites all to celebrate the gift of grace in the sacrament of Baptism; “Option B” invites the faithful to the meaning of Baptism recalling 1 Corinthians 12.12; “Option C,” intended for specifically for the parents of children charges them and asks them to affirm their intent to rear the child to be a disciple of Christ.)

Address (“Option A” involves a litany between the PM and congregation recalling Matthew 3:13-17 and Matthew 28:19-20 and speaks of baptism as “an outward visible sign” and “mark . . . sign, and seal”; “Option B” invites the PM to read John 3:5 and Romans 6:3-4 and speaks of baptism as sacrament uniting us to Christ, in which we were given a part in Christ’s ministry of reconciliation.)

Assent of the congregation (regardless of age)

Questions (With infants and young children the PM asks if the parents: if they desire to have the children baptized, if they renounce evil, agree to teach the children so that they are led to profess the faith, follow as disciple in the way of the Savior, and celebrate God’s presence. To each the parents assent saying, “I or we will with the help of God.” With those able to answer for themselves the PM asks: if they desire to be baptized. The remaining questions are the same as those asked of the parents of children. An additional option permits the PM to ask sponsors if they are ready to lead by example.)

Congregational assent to support those being baptized
Affirmation of Faith (in a break with Calvin’s baptismal rite, the entire congregation affirms its faith with the use of the Apostles’ Creed or another Creed or a gender neutral confession in the Triune God.)42

Thanksgiving (After which the water is poured to make the sign of water visible. There is also an option for a prayer after the water which may be used in addition to the Thanksgiving or alone.)

Naming (The PM may ask “by what name are you to be called”)

Washing (Either the Second person formula or in the declarative first person form is used. Both are in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.)

Handlaying (PM says “May the Holy Spirit be upon N. . . . ”)

Prayers (“Option A” offers prayer for parents, all of the baptized and the newly baptized. “Option B” prays for the newly baptized, may include a prayer for parents and possibly sponsors, and for the unity of all.)

Benediction43

The Book of Worship also contains a rite of Confirmation which follows the following order:

**Ordo for the “Order for Confirmation: Affirmation of Baptism”**

Opening invitation (confirmands invited to come forward)

Statement (a Leader declares that one enters the Church by way of baptism and one affirming baptism is led by the Holy Spirit and is supported and prayed for by the congregation)

Reading (“Option A” John15:5-11 “Option B” Romans 10:8-10, or “Option C” Ephesians 2:19-22)

42 In a provision out of concern for the use of the masculine language of the Trinitarian formula, congregations may simply profess a belief in God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Questions (Candidates are asked if they desire to affirm their baptism to which they respond, “I do.”)

Renunciation and affirmations (interrogatory form, first renouncing “the powers of evil” along with the same questions asked of older children in the baptismal rite above. Then an affirmation using the same gender neutral confession of the Triune God or the Apostles’ Creed as are contained in the baptismal rite)

Prayer offered by candidates (standing or kneeling)

Prayers of the faithful (May include the “Our Father . . . .” if not used in another point in the service.)

Confirmation: (May include a handlaying by the PM and other members. “Option A” is a prayer for sanctification. “Option B” is a prayer for preservation. “Option C” is a prayer for strengthening. “Option D” is more epiclectic and calls for nourishment by the Holy Spirit. The “Prayer of Confirmation” is in fact a prayer of thanksgiving acknowledging that it is Christ who gives hope.)

Address (PM declares to the confirmands that in baptism they were joined to Christ but that the community rejoices in the confirmands journey this day)

Question (PM asks confirmands if they intend to participate in the life and ministry of this community. The candidates agree by saying, “I promise, with the help of God”)

Welcome (PM invites the community to offer welcome to the continued friendship and prayers)

Greeting in Christian Love: (The congregation sits as the pastor and congregational representatives welcome the confirmands with an optional hand clasp) 44

Concluding prayer (One of three options offered by the presider)

Final benediction 45

This rite itself includes a handclasp. As we saw above the LW replaced the handlaying on the confirmands with a handclasp while the BW in contrast utilizes a handclasp in connection with the sharing of the peace and welcome. In this rite the Holy

44 Kervin, The Language of Baptism, 72, 73, 85-86n121, 223, 229n66.

45 BW, 145-56.
Spirit is clearly understood to be active in the prayers, in the gestures, and in the ritual activity. Insofar as Confirmation could be seen in the UCC as a sacrament in a broader sacramental economy we most certainly can affirm that this rite of “Affirmation” is a sacrament in which the Holy Spirit is understood to be active.

6.7 The United Church of Canada

The worship resource *Celebrate God’s Presence (CGP)* reflects a broad range of pieties from Methodism, to Scots Presbyterianism and Calvinism, to Congregationalism. Rather than a pew edition resource, *CGP* is in the form of loose leaf pages in a three ring binder providing numerous options for congregations. Some of the sense of the process of the development of this resource may be helpful. William Kervin who served on the a committee which compiled *CGP* notes that the drafting committee had to dispense with early presuppositions following congregational surveys were compiled by the Hymn and Worship Resource Project and a Hymn and Worship Resource Committee. These latter two committees were tasked with studying how *Baptism and Renewal of Baptismal Faith (BRBF)*, an earlier “optional” resource for baptismal rites, was being utilized in congregations. *BRBF*, released in 1986, reflected some of the best liturgical scholarship and ecumenical liturgical convergence around rites of Christian initiation. Some had hoped that after considerable effort had been invested in the development of *BRBF*, which had sought to promote theologically and ecumenically sound rites for Christian initiation, these could be incorporated into *CGP*. Surveys however, revealed that many of the liturgical gestures and texts in the *BRBF* rites were not being utilized by many congregations of the United Church. However, the surveys did reveal that some of the newer liturgical elements in *BRBF* had proved to be welcome additions. The broader use of biblical images and increase in the visibility of the sign of
water were appreciated. However, many congregations were adapting new baptismal rites and supplementing them with material from the older (and frequently preferred) *Service Book* (*SB*) of the United Church. Many simply incorporated favorite older elements into the *BRBF*. As Kervin notes: “one can most helpfully locate the new liturgies of ‘The Covenant of Baptism,’ in *Celebrate God’s Presence* somewhere ‘between’ the *Service Book* and *Baptism and Renewal of Baptismal Faith*.\(^{46}\)

It does not appear that the surveys themselves were designed nor were intended to elicit constructive comments from congregations or clergy concerning practical changes which might have been made to *BRBF*. Sufficient onus was not placed on congregations and clergy to offer practical suggestions. The surveys only had revealed that congregations chose not to fully utilize *BRBF*. *CGP* then became a resource which, like many newer liturgical resources, offers numerous options and rubrics suggesting what may be utilized in a congregation’s liturgy without much theological or liturgical reflection on what certain elements and textual word choices should be utilized. Theological and confessional integrity and ritual honesty too often take second place to the maximizing of options and preferences, yet at the same time the United Church of Canada, as a result of its organic merger representing three distinct stains of Protestant pieties, values and prizes “ordered liberty” as a denominational strength. The rite of baptism proceeds in the following order:

*Ordo for the CGP’s “The Celebration of Baptism”*

Hymn (*May be sung as candidates come forward*)

Statement of Purpose (*Options include: a litany based on Ephesians 4:4-6; a recalling that in Baptism we are joined to Christ; a paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 12:12-13:27; Mark 10:13-16*)

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\(^{46}\) Kervin, *The Language of Baptism*, 275.
Reading (*from a selection of pericopes*)

Presentation of candidates for Baptism

Profession of Faith (*by candidate and/or sponsors; options include gender neutral language when referring to the Trinity*)

Commitment to seek justice and resist evil (*Three options*)

Commitment to follow Christ (*Three options*)

Commitment to the mission and ministry of the Church (*Two options*)

Commitment to baptismal covenant (*Options for candidate and/or sponsors and sponsors commit to lead in the faith*)

Commitment offered by godparents (*Three options for commitments to either pray or assist a child being baptized or in the case of one who can speak for themselves commitment by a sponsor to serve as a mentor*)

Commitment of the congregation (*Four options*)

Profession of Faith (*Apostles’ Creed or another Creed confessed by the Congregation*)

Thanksgiving; (*A dialogue leads into the Thanksgiving. Options include water poured into the font prior to the Great Thanksgiving or following the Great Thanksgiving which may or may not include congregational responses.*)

Washing (*Using the Trinitarian formula, with option of first person declarative, second person passive, or even a first person plural passive form*)

Blessing (*Three options for inclusive prayers of blessing*)

Signing (*An option including, three possible singing formulas with provision for use of oil and consignation or simply a signing without oil*)

Handlaying (*Option for handlaying with a three options for epiclesis*)

Other Symbolic Actions (*Options include the lighting of a candle, presentation of a Bible, clothing with a baptismal garment or stole*)

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47 While there are options for the use of either the passive or the declarative form, the traditional Trinitarian formula is used in each case for reasons of ecumenical agreement and mutual recognition of Baptism. Some optional inclusive language blessings following the action of baptismal washing are provided.
Corporate declaration and Congregational welcome (*Three options*)

Blessing (*Three options*)

The “Renewal of Baptismal Faith” which according to the heading is also known as “Confirmation” as it is contained in *CGP* was designed to “be used with those who have felt their ‘heart strangely warmed’ . . . [a]nd have experienced an awakening to a deeper understanding of the promises made in their baptism.”

The rite is adaptable to fit a variety of circumstances, including making a first public profession of faith (subsequent to Baptism), the marking of life transitions, and transfers from other denominations or congregations and is intended to be celebrated within the context of public worship. The rite itself proceeds as follows:

**Ordo for the CGP’s “Renewal of Baptismal Faith”**

- Statement of purpose (may be combined with the statement of purpose from the baptismal rite when the rites are celebrated at the same time)
- Scripture reading (Selected from a choice of several pericopes)
- Presentation of candidates (may be combined with the statement of purpose from the baptismal rite when the rites are celebrated at the same time)
- Profession of faith in the Triune God (options including gender neutral options)
- Profession of Faith (by candidate and /or sponsors. Options include gender neutral language when referring to the Trinity)
- Commitment to seek justice and resist evil (*Three options*)
- Commitment to follow Christ (*Three options*)

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49 Ibid., 358.
Commitment to the mission and ministry of the Church (*Two options*)

Commitment of Sponsors or mentors

Commitment of the congregation (*Four options*)

The affirmation of faith (Apostles’ Creed or another Creed)

Affirmation (*includes option for the asperges*)

Handlaying (*By presider and other participants, with an epiclectic prayer*)

Other options (*Lighting of a candle, and or presentation of a Bible*).

Prayer for the candidates (*Three options for those who have experienced “an awakening of the faith”*)

Blessing

Hymn (*optional*)

Welcoming (*for those for whom this rite is used to receive them into membership*)

6.8 North American Anglican Communion

Among Episcopalians and Anglicans in Canada, one finds older rites of Confirmation in the *Book of Common Prayer 1928 (BCP 1928) “Order of Confirmation”* and in the *BCP 1962 “The Order for Confirmation of Laying on of Hands with Prayer upon Those That Are Baptized and Come to Years of Discretion.”* These rites follow almost identical patterns as Thomas Cranmer’s rites in the 16th century. Both of these *Book of Common Prayer* rites proceed only when the confirmands have been examined. Only then was the Bishop prepared

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50 Ibid., 358-68.

51 *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church According to the Use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America: Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David, [BCP 1928], Cambridge ed. (New York, NY: J. Pott, 1929), 296-99.*

52 *The Book of Common Prayer: and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church According to the Use of the Anglican Church of Canada: Together with the Psalter as it is Appointed to be Said or Sung in Churches and the Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, [BCP 1962] (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1962), 556-61.*
to preside at a Confirmation. However, the rites were revised in “Confirmation with forms for Reception and for the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows” in *The BCP 1979*[^53] and in the rite “Confirmation” in *The Book of Alternative Services (BAS)* for the Anglican Church in Canada.[^54] As with the other traditions we have examined we begin our look with Anglican baptismal rites.

*The BCP 1979* in its rite of “Holy Baptism” presumes that Baptisms may take place in Lent or penitential occasions, as well as Ordinary time, or during the great 50 days. The Baptismal rite continues as follows:

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**Ordo for “Holy Baptism” in the BCP 1979**

1. Hymn, Anthem, or Psalm
2. Pronouncement (*Suitable for the season are provided for the celebrant with responses by the people*)
3. General pronouncement (*Quoting Ephesians 4*)
4. Invitatory and Collect (*Offered by the celebrant*)
5. Liturgy of the Word (*Readings and the Sermon*)
6. Presentation of candidates for Baptism (*older persons are asked if they desire to be baptized, for younger children, sponsors are asked if they will ensure that the child is brought up in the Christian faith, followed by the assent of parents*)
7. Commitment of parents and sponsors (*asked for a commitment of support*)
8. Renunciation (*Threelfold interrogatory form, renouncing Satan, evil of this world, and desires that draw one from God, offered on behalf of children who cannot speak for themselves*)

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[^53]: *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church: Together With the Psalter or Psalms of David According to the Use of the Episcopal Church, [BCP 1979]*. (New York, NY: Church Hymnal Corp., 1979), 413-19.

Commitment (Threefold interrogatory form, promising to turn to Christ, putting trust in him and promise to follow him as Lord, offered on behalf of children who cannot speak for themselves.)

(Provision is made for those times when confirmation takes place within this rite of Baptism for presentation to the Bishop)

Address (Celebrant addresses the entire congregation and solicits their support for the candidates. The people respond, “We will”)

Profession of Faith (Celebrant leads all in a threefold interrogatory form of the Apostles’ Creed)

Commitments (further made by all to continue in the apostles teaching, resist sin and evil, proclaim the good news, see Christ and all persons, and strive for justice)

Prayers of the faithful (With a petition which recalls the paschal mystery)

Thanksgiving over the water (Dialogue proceeding into Cranmer’s translation of Luther’s Sintflutgebet. If the Bishop is present for confirmation a chrism prayer is offered for the confection of chrism)

Washing (Threefold in water using traditional Western Trinitarian formula)

Handlaying (Using Luther’s handlaying prayer)

Chrismation (An anointing and consignation with the cross. The words at the consignation are in the passive second person)

Welcome (Reception of the newly baptized by the congregation and the celebrant);

Peace.\

We will move directly to the baptismal rite in the BAS, since the prayers and order follow almost precisely the order for baptism in the BCP 1979. Here we will only note the variations in the rite which include: a slight expansion in the Sintflutgebet to include the insertion of the name of the candidate and the addition of acclamations by the congregation; a return to Luther’s ordering of the renunciation of evil and the Creed to follow the

55 BCP 1979, 229-308.
*Sintflutgebet,* (while the commitments follow the Creed, they mirror those used among US Episcopalians); the words of the celebrant at the consignation are in the declarative first person (to conform to the same voice and person as the baptismal formula). The rite concludes with the giving of the baptismal candle. Since the *BAS* was published six years after the *BCP 1979* used in the US, the *BAS* reflects some later revisions to the baptismal rite.\(^{56}\)

The *BCP 1979* in keeping with the practice in the Anglican Communion calls for the Bishop, who is the sole minister of the rite to preside at the rite of Confirmation. The *BCP* rite is ordered as follows:

*Ordo for “Confirmation” in the BCP 1979*

- Hymn, Anthem, or Psalm
- Pronouncement (*Suitable for the season are provided for the celebrant with responses by the people*)
- General pronouncement (*Quoting Ephesians 4*)
- Invitatory and Collect (*Offered by the celebrant*)
- Liturgy of the Word (*Readings and the Sermon*)
- Presentation of candidates and examination of candidates (*Candidate presented to the Bishop by name. The Bishop then asks the confirmands to reaffirm a commitment to renounce evil. Each confirmand answers “I do.” They are asked to renew a commitment to follow Christ. The confirmands answer, “I do, and with God’s grace I will follow him as my Savior and Lord.”*)
- Support of congregation (*The Bishop asks for the congregation’s support as witnesses to the confirmand’s vows. The congregation assents with “We will.”*)
- Profession of Faith (*Celebrant leads all in a threefold interrogatory form of the Apostles’ Creed*)

\(^{56}\) *BAS*, 151-61.
Commitments (further made by all to continue in the apostles teaching, resist sin and evil, proclaim the good news, see Christ and all persons, and strive for justice)

Prayers (With a petition praying for the confirmands, concluding petition by the Bishop recalls the promise and sealing in Baptism)

Confirmation with handlaying by bishop on each (Epiclectic prayer speaks of strengthening. Prayer options are also included for the rite to be used for reception of members or for reaffirmation)

Concluding prayer over all the confirmands (Prayer asks for the leading of the Father’s hand and guidance of the Spirit)

Peace.

When the Eucharist is celebrated the Prayers of the faithful and offertory follow, if there is no Eucharist, the Bishop concludes with the “Our Father . . . ”

The rite utilized in the BAS follows precisely the same as the one in the BCP 1979. Anglicans utilize an order for “Reaffirmation of Baptism and Confirmation” which is closely connected to the order for the baptismal rite. It thus assists candidates and the congregation in recalling Baptism. The baptismal and Confirmation rites do not utilize a form of the Ambrosian prayer, yet within a sacramental economy which we have discussed in Chapter 5, it would be hard to miss the sense of this rite as a sacrament of Christ’s Church in which the Holy Spirit is understood to be active.

6.9 Methodists in the US

From the time of the Wesley no rite of Confirmation was to be found in Methodist worship books. An order such as “The Form of the Reception and Recognition of Members” was included in the 1906 Official Hymnal of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist

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57 BCP 1979, 412-19.

58 BAS, 623-30.
Episcopal Church. Because of the largely ambivalent feelings about Confirmation expressed by the Wesleys, it would be 1964 before a service of Confirmation would first be included in the Methodist Hymnal in the United States. In the United Methodist Book of Worship (UMBW) the rite of Confirmation is found under the heading “Baptismal Covenant I” which contains rites for “Holy Baptism,” “Reaffirmation of Faith,” and the “Reception of Members.” “Baptismal Covenant I” is designed to be used in cases where there are both Baptisms and some form of affirmation of Baptism at the same service. Among the other members of the Methodist Communion in the United States, i.e. Africano Methodist Episcopal (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), African Union Methodist Protestant (AUMP), and the Union American Methodist Episcopal (UAME) Churches, the same trend of not having a rite of Confirmation has been part of the history of these denominations as well. This does not mean that there was not a formalized process of receiving those who desired to enter into a deeper commitment of living out one’s baptism within Methodism. However, a formalized rite was not to be found in most Methodist hymnals in the United States as we have noted until 1964.

In addition to “Baptismal Covenant I” the UMBW includes “Baptismal Covenant II”, for use among baptismal candidates who are unable to answer for themselves. “Baptismal Covenant III” is for those are able to answer for themselves and includes Confirmation. “Baptismal Covenant II A” is a more abbreviated rite for use when children are unable to

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61 Ibid., 95-99.

62 Ibid., 106-10.
answer for themselves.\textsuperscript{63} and the \textit{UMBW} provides “Baptismal Covenant IIB” which resembles the Baptismal rite used among the former Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren Churches.\textsuperscript{64} Finally, “Baptismal Covenant IIB” is intended for corporate affirmations of baptism.\textsuperscript{65}

Since we are examining both baptism and confirmation rites in our survey we will examine “Baptismal Covenant I” since it contains both baptism and affirmation rites, celebrated at the same service. The rite proceeds as follows:

\textit{Ordo for “Baptismal Covenant I” in the UMBW}

- **Hymn** (Appropriate to the rite may be sung as candidates come forward)
- **Introduction** (Recognizing that baptism is initiation and incorporation into God’s economy of salvation. If used for affirmation of baptism or Confirmation congregants are reminded of renewal of the covenant God makes in Baptism)
- **Presentation** (Candidates for Baptism, Affirmation or Confirmation are presented by name for the appropriate rite)
- **Renunciation** (A Thanksgiving over the water may precede the threefold renunciation of sin and evil)
- **Confession of Jesus Christ as Savior and promise to serve him as Lord** (parents and sponsors make commitments to ensure the nurture of the child for those being baptized who are unable to answer for themselves. Those able to answer for themselves are asked to remain faithful members of Christ’s Church)
- **Addresses** (Congregation is asked for support of candidates for baptism of affirmers or confirmands)
- **Profession of Faith** (The entire congregation is invited to an interrogatory form of the Apostles’ Creed)

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 100-102.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 103-05.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 111-14.
Thanksgiving over the water (Includes congregational responses which may be sung)

Washing (After stating the candidates name the traditional Western Trinitarian baptismal formula is used for each)

Anointing (Provision for consignation on the forehead. Expands upon the formula in the LBW and ELW to make clear that the Holy Spirit comes in the washing)

Optional gestures (Clothing with a baptismal garment, lit candle, and certificate of baptism)

Reception (The new brother or sister in Christ is welcomed by the congregation.)

Confirmation (in the event of a Confirmation or reaffirmation of faith water may be used to enable the affirmers to remember their baptism, with affirmers invited to touch the water, scoop a handful of water, or touch the water and mark on another with the sign of the cross with the words: “Remember your baptism and be thankful.”)

Handlaying (For Affirmers or Confirmation the Pastors or other have the option for handlaying and epiclectic prayer calling on the Holy Spirit to continue to work in the affirmer. Recalls the rebirth by water and the Spirit in baptism asking that God will enable this person to be a faithful disciple of Christ). This rite may also be used for reception into the UMC or for those who are transferring from one UMC to another.

Clearly, when the handlaying is used with the epiclectic prayer among those who are affirming their faith, there is an explicit acknowledgment of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when this option is followed we may say that not only is the Holy Spirit present, but this handlaying functions as a sacrament within a broader sacramental economy. The challenge, of course, in a tradition long unaccustomed to a formal act of Confirmation, is that the handlaying and the prayer are in no way mandatory.

6.10 Is Grace Added or the Spirit Imparted?

In our examination of the ordo of Baptism and Confirmation rites we have seen a clear sense of the Holy Spirit’s activity. Our survey has also afforded us the opportunity for a general critique of Baptism and the Confirmation rites connected to them for their clarity, use of
certain liturgical gestures, and what is being conveyed. In some cases there was lack of clarity created by too many options and a lack of clear rubrics. In other cases, denominations may need to consider adjustments as we move toward an ecumenically informed renewed theology and practice of Confirmation.

In the rites themselves, however, we witness a recalling of the baptismal covenant by the congregation through their participation. These rites serve to remind the faithful of the paschal mystery in which one is joined to Christ. Confirmation rites help to inform this memory. Through one’s affirmation of the baptismal covenant, and especially where a specific confirmation prayer is used, the presider prays that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will strengthen and build up the confirmands in the baptismal covenant and the body of Christ. Congregations in these rites are asked to support the confirmands, and as the whole people of God all support one another and confess the faith. This confession is made stronger when the Apostles’ Creed is utilized, since in the West this is the Church’s baptismal Creed.

In all of these rites, some more so than others, the Holy Spirit is invoked in prayer and we see pneumatological connections made between Baptism and Confirmation. Since Baptism is remembered in the rites, we see a christological connection made between us and the Christ to whom we were joined in Holy Baptism. Further, we affirm this christological connection in Confirmation. Luther had argued in 1521: “. . .you may know that to have faith is to cleave to him, to presume on him, because he is holy and just for you. Observe that this faith is the gift of God, which the grace of God obtains for us, and which purging away sin, makes us saved and certain . . .”66 Confirmands guided by the Holy Spirit are led to affirm their faith in the Christ who cleaves or clings to us. As a Church, we ask that through the

66 Luther, "Against Latomus, 1521," 236.
Holy Spirit confirmands might continue to cling to Christ in their lives. As Luther had said, this affirmation is a gift of God, since faith is what enables us to cling to the promise of Christ’s presence who is holy and who makes us holy. Even though Confirmation is often separated from baptism over a span of years, there remains both pneumatological and christological connections.

In both our Scriptural and our historical surveys in previous chapters, we saw a pneumatological connection in initiation. In the “sacraments” of the Hebrew Scriptures we saw pneumatological activity. Pamela Jackson notes that since salvation history and the pneumatological activity are presented in a variety of texts, this was precisely why the Second Vatican Council’s SC intended that the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy should include a reading from the Hebrew Scriptures. As the Revised Common Lectionary containing a reading from the Hebrew Scriptures came to be used in many Protestant denominations, congregations gained a new appreciation for God’s participation in the life of his people Israel as well as the church both pneumatologically and christologically.\(^67\) Patristic sources we examined made hermeneutical links between Old and New Testament texts and the rites of intiation. The so-called AT retained such hermeneutical links and even mentions the baptism of children, likely in solidarity with their families.\(^68\)

J. M. R. Tillard posited that: “. . . the destiny of the Church hangs on faith. There is the baptismal ‘yes.’ It turns essentially on the acceptance of salvation. One says ‘yes’ to the

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offer of God while accepting the condition attached, which is *metanoia*. Now there exists a second ‘yes’ of Abraham.” Tillard went on to suggest that:

this second ‘yes’ has to do with the mystery of God who offers salvation through the implications of the second “yes”. While the first “yes” sprang from the heart as well as the spirit—it was a ‘yes’ of obedience, like the ‘yes’ of Abraham—this second ‘yes’ is not of the heart. The words which express it depend on the intelligence, illuminated by the spirit of God, striving to understand the content of the *kerygma* to which one said ‘yes’ in baptism. . . . Though all are agreed about the first, Christian communities do diverge about the second.”

Tillard is suggesting that the first yes is the obedience to the command to baptize. He recognized that there is little disagreement to that yes. However, some theologians in the Church have found difficulty with the second “yes,” precisely because it suggests to them that the second yes requires a receptiveness and willingness on our part.

James Nestigen was critical of this second yes or “affirmation” because he sees it as indicative of Semipelagianism. But clearly affirmation is also the work of the Holy Spirit bringing a baptized person to the “second yes.” This “second yes” is not simply our cooperation. For Luther, because Christ clings to us and is joined to us in Holy Baptism, it is Christ who enables us to reach out in affirming the faith through the “second yes.” Many Methodists and Roman Catholics would recognize a great deal of similarity to what Luther described and what is often understood as sanctification. While Luther spoke in more christological terms, sanctification also involves the ongoing work of the Spirit in and among the baptized believer. As St. Paul said, it is the Holy Spirit that intercedes for us, and it is that which calls, gathers and enlightens the Church of Christ, calling and renewing that we may come again to the Christ to whom we were joined in Holy Baptism.

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69 The Greek *metanoia*, frequently translated as “repentance,” carries connotations of a change of heart or conversion and can mean, literally, a turning around. Tillard is using the term in the general sense of conversion.

6.11 Pneumatological and Christological Connections

In our historical chapters we saw a strong pneumatology and christology in the patristic materials. We saw a strong pneumatology and christology in Tertullian who viewed the washing as manumission, and handlaying as a sign of adoption; and in Cyprian who was concerned that chrism be confected by a Bishop who was in communion with brother bishops in the Catholic faith. For Cyprian, the Bishop in his ministry represented the early apostles. Similarly, we saw both pneumatological and christological connections in Augustine’s understanding of handlaying and chrismation which he also understood sacramentally. We saw the connections in Ambrose of Milan, and Pope Innocent I in both his Letter 24 and his Letter to Decentius of Gubbio. Pope Innocent had quoted Acts 8 in his correspondence with Decentius in order to make a connection between the handlaying practiced by the apostles for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, just as the chrism was confected at the Bishop’s hands for use across the diocese. Gregory the Great in his Letter to Januarius had interpreted the chrism blessed by the bishop pneumatologically. And in the AP handlaying and chrismation were understood pneumatologically and christologically. Finally, Faustus’ Pentecost homily had connected the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost in Acts 2 with the liturgical gestures of handlaying, chrismation, and signing, following the washing to confirmatio (firm up) and roboramur (to strengthen). In a unified rite of Baptism, linking the reception of chrism confected by a bishop to Acts 2 and 8 made sense. Connecting Acts 2 or Acts 8 to a separated rite of handlaying, as we discovered in our survey of Scripture, makes such an interpretation a real stretch. Only II Timothy 1:5-7 seems to support a separated rite of handlaying.
Luther, like Hus, Wycliffe, Waldo, Bucer, Calvin, Knox, Cranmer, and Wesley, was absolutely committed to the reform of Christ’s Church. They also remained concerned about the need for ongoing catechesis among the faithful. These Reformers shared a common concern with the Carolingians. The Carolingians had initiated a separated rite of confirmation with the hope of fostering a deeper appreciation of catechesis. They were largely concerned about Arians and semi-Arians. Many early Protestant Reformers found that persistent ancient heresies were fostered by an inability among the faithful to articulate the very basics of the faith. This was a threat to remaining faithful to the very Gospel itself. For all of these Reformers, at the heart of their concern was that one confesses the Christ who has accomplished our salvation. To confess this Christ necessitated knowledge of who this Christ is. As we saw in Chapter 2, such a knowing is that to which Jeremiah 31 was referring. Such knowledge requires an ongoing process of catechesis, which itself remains pneumatically guided. Yet, as we consider the role of the Holy Spirit in the prayers of confirmation, enabling the faithful to remain rooted in the faith, the Biblical text which we examined in Chapter 2 which best typifies that understanding is the Paraclete, promised by Jesus on the night of his betrayal in John 14 and poured out upon the disciples following the resurrection in John 20:19-23. Jesus’ promised Paraclete is what we confess in the *filoque* clause of the Western version of the Nicene Creed.

The Church is a Sacrament with Christ as primary Sacrament in our expanded sense of a sacramental economy. Augustine had certainly understood prayer sacramentally and Luther and the Reformers understood that, like *SC*, prayer and the act of worship were essential activities of the Church’s being. Handlaying with prayer then becomes a *sacramentum*, and the *res* is the promised Holy Spirit. Such prayer enjoys the command of
Christ; the handlaying then may be seen as the outward sign accompanied by the same prayer and the promise of the Paraclete. Understood in this way, Confirmation involving handlaying as a sign with prayer could easily be understood even more so as a sacrament. And what are the benefits of this sacrament? In all of the handlaying prayers which we have examined, as various denominations recognize that Confirmation is a recalling of Baptism, we see that Confirmation, by being linked to the sending of the Paraclete, serves as an affirmation of the Baptism of the confirmand and all participants. Prayer in which the Holy Spirit is active, coupled with the laying on of hands, ritualizes and recognizes that God firms up (confirms) and strengthens us.

Through this pneumatological connection there is also a christological connection as Christ clings to us in Baptism and promises the gift of the Paraclete. Confirmation does not impart the character of Christ, *per se*. Rather, through handling with prayer and through the affirmation of the faith, we turn to God (here is the *metanoia* of which Tillard spoke) and intentionally seek to continue to hold to Christ to whom we cling in Baptism. As confirmands we affirm the promises of Baptism; but this is not a punctiliar event. Even as we remember our Baptism daily, we affirm that we cling to Christ as Christ promises to cling to us. As we will see, Confirmation helps us to remember this happy exchange.

### 6.12 General Recommendations

As we have examined these rites above it is appropriate that we pause here to make some general observations and recommendations concerning both the rite of Baptism and the rite of Confirmation in hopes that in ecumenical dialogue these initiation rites might be better refined and even greater convergence found. Many denominations are following rubrics for all initiation rites which often offer a great deal of flexibility. The price of this flexibility is
the rubrics are not clear as to when certain parts of the rites and liturgies should or maybe used. Those resources which contained fewer options often provided greater clarity in the rubrics with greater specificity. Much of this trend towards a lack of clarity has much to do with creating worship resources which did not attempt to strictly dictate how parts should be divided among participants. Invariably this lack of definability leads to the freelancing and adjustment without careful attention and consideration for ritual honesty and theological integrity.

The first matter concerns the rite of Baptism. One witnesses in some the rites of Baptism a temptation toward what Eugene Brand has termed a “kind of Biblical footwork” in which Scripture passages such as Mark 10 or its parallels are offered to lend a dominical credence for baptizing children. For Brand, a right theology certainly recognizes that children receive the baptismal covenant. But his concern remains that texts justifying the practice should not be removed from their context in an effort to “proof text” the practice of baptizing young children.71

Commitments made in Baptism should reflect a ritual honesty. Asking parents to pledge to denominational loyalty in the baptismal rite is highly suspect: first, since our Baptism is initiation into Christ and into his one Holy catholic and Apostolic Church; secondly, promises of denominational loyalty are highly suspect in a society which is far less denominationally loyal than in previous generations which preceded us. A threefold renunciation of evil, followed by an interrogatory form of the Baptismal Creed of the West, namely the Apostles’ Creed, invites members and candidates to follow the order of the rejection then confession sequence of the Shechem covenant in Joshua 12:1-18. The

congregation should be invited into participation so as to enable them to better remember and be grateful for the baptismal covenant in which each one was joined to Christ.

As I noted in Chapter 3, Section 11 in a Letter to Decentius of Gubbio, Pope Innocent had directed that presbyters anoint using chrism consecrated by the bishop. Clearly his intent had been that if the Bishop had not been present for the baptism that the presbyter might anoint and consign with the confected oil. Yet if the bishop were present at the time of the baptism the forehead should be reserved for the bishop, in keeping with the authority of the bishop’s office. Further, I suggested in Section 13 of that same Chapter that liturgies likely from the early 8th century Gaul, contain only presbyters anointing. Specifically, we find presbyteral chrismation at baptism in the Missale Gallicanum Vetus (MGV)73, Missale Gothicum (MG)74 and, the Bobbio Missal (BM).75 These three sources reveal almost no role for Galician bishops in rites of initiation. Tradition clearly is on the side of permitting presbyters at all Baptisms anoint the baptizand on the forehead, unless the Bishop is present, in which case “pastoral courtesy” would suggest that the bishop should anoint on the forehead with confected chrism.

Therefore, if one has been chrismated on the forehead at Baptism by the local priest or pastor, no further chrismation need to follow. The rite of Baptism therefore should make a rich use of ritual actions. In addition to confected chrism, handlaying, consignation, the baptismal candle, and clothing with a garment are symbols which I would submit should be employed. Without the use of chrism the christological and pneumatological connections

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72 Winkler, “Confirmation or Chrismation?” 203.
73 “Missale Gallicanum Vetus,” A Gallican Sacramentary, 42.
74 "Missale Gothicum," A Gallican Sacramentary, 61n261.
found in the Patristic sources which bind the washing to the handlaying, chrismation, and consignment are often lost.

The optional use of a baptismal stole is an odd symbol in Baptism of which some have been tempted to make use. Certainly clothing in the baptismal garment has a long history in baptismal practice. However the stole, which is a symbol for ordained ministry either to the diaconate when worn diagonally or over the shoulders, symbolic of the yoke of Christ, are symbols particular to ordained ministries. Such a use of the stole therefore becomes extremely confusing. The use of the oil as an option for anointing when making the sign of the cross on the one who has been newly washed, fails in many Protestant rites, since the liturgical action is often so minimalized as to diminish the importance of the anointing.

In both rites for Baptism and Confirmation it is important to place responsibility on the entire congregation to make commitments for the support of candidates and confirmands. Rites for Confirmation should contain both an affirmation prayer renewing the promises of Baptism and a handlaying, with an accompanying epiclectic prayer for confirmation and strengthening. The affirmation prayer suggests that when confirmands are confirmed there is both a recalling of baptismal promises as well as a desire for God’s continued work and presence in their lives that they might chose “whom they will serve.” In addition, a confirmation prayer with handlaying and signing with the cross serves to recall God’s baptismal promises. Yet, Confirmation should not be the first time that one is signed with the cross. The singing should serve as anamnesis of the consignation and chrismation and handlaying at Baptism. The accompanying prayer for confirmation should specifically ask that God might strengthen and fortify them through the Holy Spirit. Surely a rite of Confirmation involves both affirmation and God’s confirmation. The confirmation prayer
including the call for God’s Holy Spirit to “firm up” and “confirm” faith is not Semipelagianism. The prayer is certainly linked to the baptismal promises, but most importantly we pray that God would actively stir up the Holy Spirit to strengthen and confirm.

We would hope that when a confirmand comes to affirm his or her faith that Scripture study is already a part of the person’s life. Among young people who are being confirmed the hope would be that they have conducted Scripture study as part of their catechetical preparation. Why then should we now give adult affirmers or catechism students a Bible? Symbols in catechetical rites and Christian initiation often involved traditio, as certain symbols, such as the Creed were given over to catechumens before they are baptized so that they might reeditio by reciting them at their Baptism. These affirmers have already been baptized, and at the moment gifts are presented they have affirmed their Baptism and received the handlaying that they might be confirmed or strengthened by God, and receive the promises that the whole congregation will continue to confirm them. How can these newly confirmed members recite back the whole of Scripture which they have received? The lighting of a candle at Confirmation, while perhaps affirming a symbol used in Baptism may suggest that only now is the candidate becoming reflective of Jesus Christ who is the light of the world. Not only is the timing odd, but the giving of the symbol itself resembles a confirmation gift which may be better suited for a presentation outside the worship service itself. The giving of gifts to confirmands has a long cultural history among both Protestant and Roman Catholics. But this is a social custom and not of liturgical action.

76 Meaning, literally, the handing over of symbols and/or words.

77 Meaning, literally, to recite or say it back.
In this examination of the *ordo* of Baptism and Confirmation used among the separate traditions, I have sought to offer some new contributions to both Roman Catholics and Protestants. We have seen a strong sense that the Holy Spirit is understood to be present in Confirmation in the prayers. Further we have seen that in a broader sacramental economy all of the rites we have examined may be understood as sacraments. Finally, having examined the *ordo* for Baptism and Confirmation we are able to see areas which through ecumenical dialogue we might see areas for the renewed theology and practice of Confirmation.
Chapter 7

Work of the Holy Spirit

As we consider a renewed theology of Confirmation there are two questions which arise concerning what ritually is conveyed in the rite. First, while there are Protestants who practice anointing with oil at Baptism, what is the purpose of chrismation in Confirmation, should they desire to join with the Roman Catholic Church and to become faithful members of that Communion? Secondly, why should Roman Catholics at Confirmation need to receive a second chrismation when their brothers and sisters in the Eastern Catholic Church are not required to be chrismated a second time? While these two questions are not unrelated we will consider them in turn. Then we will examine how our conclusions may question the necessity of a redundant chrismation.

7.1 Chrismation by Protestants

The history which we outlined in Chapter 3 is significant here. Pope Stephen had directed that for those baptized in heresy only a handlaying should be used to reconcile them to the catholic faith. In 314, amid the Donatist Controversy in North Africa, Arles I in Canon (9) or 8 recognized that there were (re)baptisms taking place. This canon established that so long as one had been baptized in the Trinity, upon returning to the catholic faith from heresy they only needed to accept the Creed and receive handlaying. If one had not been baptized in the Triune name, (re)baptism was necessary. The canons of Nicaea required the oil of healing to be used for most heretics. Arians were assumed to have been baptized in the Trinity and admitted to the catholic faith by confessing the Creed and through the manus illis inponatur in paenitentiam. Cathars were guilty of being Donatists and thus as rigorists had themselves required the rebaptism of those who became apostate. For those baptized by Cathar heretics,
they could join with the Church catholic by receiving the *manus illis inponatur in paenitentiam* along with the oil of healing. Nicaea’s canon 69 had permitted one to be readmitted to the catholic faith from heresy by penance. Such penance involved the use of oil blessed by presbyters for healing. Nicaea did not require any heretics to be (re)chrismated since they were assumed to have already been chrismated. Augustine of Hippo and Innocent I called for the *manus impostio* for those joining the church from heretical sects. In summary, one who was deemed a heretic who returned to catholic faith or who had been baptized with chrismation by a heretical sect was received through the reconciliation of heretics not (re)baptism and (re)chrismation.

Why then would Protestants, who presumably are neither Donatists nor Arian need to be chrismated? Chrism confected by a bishop in full communion with the Bishop of Rome, is not used by Protestants for the anointing with oil at Baptism. Most oil used in Protestant baptismal rites has in fact never been blessed by a bishop. Among most Anglicans, chrism may have been blessed by a bishop, but that bishop was not in full communion with the Bishop of Rome. For those who were chrismated in the Roman Catholic or Eastern Catholic Churches and who return, only a handlaying is required. However, the same applies to those who desire to join the Roman Catholic Church coming from Eastern Orthodox Churches, who are not in full Communion with the Bishop of Rome.¹ All these variations in the use of handlaying and chrismation only serve to add to the confusion.

Today Protestants who seek to enter into full Communion with the Roman Catholic Church are received through handlaying, chrismation, prayers, and a confession. These Protestants are being received from ecclesial communities whose Sacraments are considered

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by Rome as *defectus.*\(^2\) Since Protestants are not in full communion with the Bishop of Rome, when such Protestants are received through the Sacrament of Confirmation, they confess the Nicene Creed, receive the prayers, the laying on of hands and are chrismated. They then confess: “I believe and profess all that the holy Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God.”\(^3\) Thus there are four liturgical actions involved when Protestants are received by Confirmation into the Roman Catholic Church: handlaying (for reconciliation), chrismation (which they had never previously received), the confession of the Symbol of Nicaea (as that Council stipulated), and a confession (recognizing the truth which subsists in the Roman Catholic Church). Thus Protestants who have never been chrismated are anointed that they may commune in the Roman Catholic Church with those who share in that common chrismation.

### 7.2 A Proposal for Protestants

The rites of Baptism and Confirmation examined in Chapter 6 come from denominations which presently enjoy a common recognition of Baptism. This mutual recognition rests in a common understanding that one is washed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, initiated into the body of Christ which is an eschatological community. Many Protestant traditions whose rites we have examined also share in full communion with a common recognition of Holy Communion. Full communion partners share in common recognition of each other’s ministries and the nature of the Gospel itself, yet this same relationship is not shared among these Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church nor the Orthodox Churches, resulting in painful divisions at Our Lord’s Table.

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\(^2\) Despite the cognate of the Latin *defectus,* which is often translated as “defective,” it may also be translated as “lacking.” It is this second sense which we are using here.

\(^3\) *The Rites of the Catholic Church,* rubric 491, 280.
Common recognition, however, of the Sacrament of washing compels us to seek a commonly shared Eucharist. Such a vision of visible unity may also be furthered by a common recognition of Baptismal Chrismation, not unlike the joint recognition in the Bari Statement, between the Orthodox Churches and Roman Catholics found, which it is hoped in the future may lead to Eucharistic sharing.

As previously stated, most Protestants who have a form of Confirmation rite also utilize chrismation in baptism—at the very least as an option. Moravians and the United Church of Christ, as denominations, do not have a baptismal rite in which oil can be used. Among Anglicans in North America (since 1979) the rite for Baptism contains a blessing to be offered over chrism for its use. Is it possible that Bishops and those who serve as judicatory heads among the Reformed Traditions could jointly offer a blessing over chrism utilized at Baptism among the denominations? Is it possible that in time Roman Catholic bishops might also participate in the blessing of chrism for use among Protestant denominations? Such a proposal might be first considered by Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Lutherans. If convergence could be embraced jointly by these traditions, Moravians and those of the Methodist Communion might well be invited to consider participating in such an agreement given that the latter two traditions have historically retained the office of episcopoi. Finally, those of the Reformed tradition in North America might well be invited. The obvious concern here becomes the thorny issue over polity and office of ministry. It is important to recognize the difficulties over offices of ministry and ecclesial structures which this type of ecumenical conversation would encounter as more ecumenical partners are brought into such a discussion. Yet, throughout the process, the vision of visible unity could help direct the process.
As more ecumenical partners join in this agreement, the exchange of oil among the bishops and judicatory heads of the Anglican, Lutheran, United Church of Canada, United Church of Christ, the Moravian, Presbyterian, and Methodist Communions would become likely a first step. The sharing and exchange of oil for blessing and use as chrism among sister denominations might well take place in keeping with historic western custom at the Holy Thursday liturgy. The conjoint exchange and consecration of chrism might also further the recognition of ministries of many of these denominations who are already full communion partners. Conjoint blessing of chrism and subsequent chrismation might also have the effect of making a stronger connection between mutually recognized Baptism, Eucharist and ministry. In time, Roman Catholics might agree to be a part of such a conjoint blessing and exchange begun by Protestants. It might further the efforts begun in 2010 as the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Presbyterian Church USA mutually agreed to recognize Baptism in each other’s communions. The Christian Reformed Church of North America, Reformed Church in the US and the United Church of Christ subsequently signed on to this agreement.⁴ In 1975 many of the Canadian Protestant denominations mutually recognized the Baptism practiced in each with the PLURA agreement (Presbyterian, Lutheran, United Church, Roman Catholic, Anglican) “according to the norms of the churches, with flowing water, by pouring, sprinkling or immersion, accompanied by the Trinitarian formula.”⁵

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⁵ In Whose Name? The Baptismal Formula in Contemporary Culture, Roman Catholic/United Church of Canada Dialogue, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and United Church of Canada Committee on Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relations (Etobicoke, ON: United Church of Canada, 2001), 40.
As a part of our proposal, Anglicans and Lutherans of North America, the United Church of Canada, the UCC, the Moravian Church, the PCUSA, the CRCNA, RCUS and the Churches of the Methodist Communion could agree to the importance of utilizing consecrated chrism. At the same time these several denominations could recognize the importance of conjointly consecrating chrism. Further, denominations could be invited to consider more seriously the use and, where necessary, the recovery of the use of handlaying, chrismation and consignation in their baptismal liturgies, and where possible call upon their respective congregations to make use of the practice as a sign of unity. The handlaying serves as a sign of adoption and the accompanying chrismation has pneumatological and Christological significance. Chrismation reminds all of how we are joined to Christ’s prophetic royal and priestly ministry. We are made little christs and through water, handlaying, anointing and consignation, we are joined to Christ receiving his seal. We are also linked to the Scriptural images from both the Hebrew Scriptures through water, oil, handlaying and consignation which are all joined together in one rite of initiation.

Under this proposal involving mutual agreement among Protestants eventually including an invitation for the Roman Catholic Church to conjointly exchange and bless chrism, both Protestants and the Roman Catholic Church could more fully enjoy the symbol of unity in and through chrismation at Baptism. Under such an agreement, the chrism of oils might be blessed by a Protestant serving in the office of episcopi along with a Roman Catholic Bishop, possibly at the traditional Holy Thursday Eucharistic liturgy. Would this be sufficient as not to necessitate chrismation at the reception of Protestants through Confirmation? In the language of ecumenical agreements on ministry, such as Baptism Eucharist and Ministry, might we not speak of the blessing of the chrism “as a sign, though
not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church?" Certainly this proposal offers a way forward in which the head of judicatories or episcopal ministers could offer an important “sign” of continuity and unity of the Church. Nevertheless, such a single chrismation at Baptism still raises the question, why are Roman Catholics who are being confirmed required to receive a second chrismation after having been chrismated once at baptism?

### 7.3 Necessity of a Second Chrismation at Confirmation?

In our historical study of the early history of Confirmation in Chapter 3, we saw that prior to the Carolingian development of a separated rite of Confirmation, presbyters using chrism confected by the Bishop, commonly chrismated. Tertullian, Cyril, Augustine, and Ambrose only spoke of one chrismation at the time of the baptismal washing. The *Apostolikā Paradosis* as it has come down to us reveals that chrismation by the presbyter was followed by a second chrismation by the bishop. However, as we were led to conclude in Chapter 3, the *Apostolikā Paradosis* shows clear signs of redaction, in which three separate sources are preserved in a piece of “living liturgy.” The *Apostolikā Paradosis* should not be viewed as a proof text for the need for both a presbyter and then a bishop to chrismate. Tertullian had understood the importance of being anointed as a means of making the baptized *christoi*. The overarching concern of Cyprian had been to maintain that the chrism was confected by a Bishop who remained in communion with brother bishops in the Catholic faith. In this way, Cyril’s intent was that the Bishop in his ministry, who represented the early apostles, would offer the chrism as an anointing in the Holy Spirit.

We suggested that Pope Innocent was not concerned with presbyters anointing; he was concerned that the bishop had confected the chrism. In arguing for the apostolic

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6 *BEM*, par. 38, 34-35.
authority to confect the chrism, Innocent had used Acts 8 as a proof text. Innocent had also directed that if the bishop were present for a Baptism, presbyters should permit bishops to anoint. Correspondence suggests that Baptisms were being celebrated in this period almost every week, making the bishop’s attendance at every Baptism for the purposes of chrismation impossible. It is clear that the duty of chrismating the baptized with consecrated chrism fell to presbyters. Gregory the Great had directed that if the Bishop were able to be present, a presbyter might anoint with chrism, but only anoint on the breast so that the bishop who was present could then anoint the forehead of the one who was newly washed. Numerous Synods in Gaul and Iberia were compelled to enact canons concerning the need for bishops to confect the chrism. This suggests that these were directives “post conspicatus malum” since it appears many presbyters in need of chrism were taking it upon themselves to confect the oil for anointing.

Clearly Pope Innocent and Pope Gregory were attempting to avoid redundancies in chrismation. The chrismation of the breast or top of the head by priests when the bishop was present prevented redundant anointing. Our historical survey revealed that one chrismation sufficed until the separation of the baptismal rite from a second chrismation sacrament in Confirmation during the Carolingian reforms. Session 8, of the Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence, after the Council had moved to Ferrara, affirmed that there were seven sacraments and that numbered among them was the sacrament of Confirmation. It stipulated that Confirmation was to be presided over by bishops since they represented the apostles as they imposed hands upon the confirmand. In keeping with the practice since Cyprian, chrism was to be blessed by the Bishop and scented with balsam. The canons directed that at Confirmation chrism was to be used in the consignation and that the Bishop was to say, “I
sign you with the sign of the cross and I confirm you with the chrism of salvation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Session 8 also permitted priests to perform other functions, but the unction of Confirmation was reserved exclusively for bishops and Acts 8 was cited to support the practice. It was understood that the confirmand in this sacrament was enabled through the Holy Spirit to confess the faith and, further, was strengthened as each candidate received the sign of the cross on her or his forehead. Thus the Council had mandated a redundant chrismation. The Council had reinterpreted the words of Pope Innocent and Gregory to direct that presbyters were to let the bishops alone anoint the forehead.

Canon 882 in the present code of Canon law for the Roman Catholic Church stipulates “The ordinary minister of confirmation is a Bishop. A priest can also validly confer this sacrament if he has the faculty to do so, either from the universal law or by way of a special grant from the competent authority.” The Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium (LG) had used this language of the Bishop as “original minister” of Confirmation. The term used by LG is a more juridical term and understands that the bishop has the power and ability to preside, but this may be conferred to a priest. By benefit of his office, the bishop as diocesan administrator is the one who bears the responsibility of determining who may administer the sacrament, whether the Bishop or a diocesan priest.

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9 Ibid.
7.4 Proposal for Roman Catholics

Here we offer another bold proposal which is consistent with the pastoral letters of Pope Innocent and Pope Gregory the Great, in keeping with canons of many of the Synods of earlier centuries, with the traditions of the Fathers, and in the spirit of Canon 882 of the code of Canon Law. We have already proposed that Protestants could through ecumenical agreement participate in a joint exchange and a conjoint blessing of chrism which could eventually lead to participation by Roman Catholic bishops. Such a move, we have suggested, could help not only Protestants but also the Roman Catholic Church to fully recognize the chrismation practiced in Protestant baptismal rites. Under such an agreement a single chrismation at Baptism, using oil blessed by a bishop at the traditional Holy Thursday Eucharistic liturgy, would be sufficient. There is no reason why the presbyter should not anoint with confected chrism on the forehead unless the Bishop is present at the time of the baptism, in which case the bishop may anoint the forehead. This would mean that a redundant chrismation at Confirmation would be unnecessary for Roman Catholics. Roman Catholics already recognize the practice of single chrismation which Eastern Catholics have retained.10

7.5 Implications of these Proposals

These proposals would mean that the chrism would truly serve “as a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church” in a pattern which was described fully by Cyprian of Carthage. In keeping with that same line of thinking, chrismation at baptism for Roman Catholics and Protestants is sufficient. In accord with the early canons of many of the early synods, the chrism for baptism has been blessed by a bishop. Some traditions have

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10 Turner, Confirmation: The Baby in Solomon's Court, 24-25.
not retained a person ordained to the office of *episcopoi*. Yet some denominations in the United States already enjoy a full Communion relationship with the ELCA which retains the office of *episcopoi*.\(^\text{11}\) In Canada the United Church of Canada, The Anglican Church of Canada, The ELCIC, and the Presbyterian Church of Canada have established provisions for sharing ministries in a case by case basis.\(^\text{12}\) Such agreements in North America do not require that the partner without the episcopal office need to attain such an ordering of ordained ministry. Because of these agreements these denominations who have established them mutually recognize the legitimacy of the ministries in each for the sake of mission. On this basis, denominations could utilize the bishop from a denomination which has retained the office of *episcopoi* at a joint Eucharistic service, preferably during Holy Week. In this way ecumenical and full communion partners sharing together in a common Eucharist could both receive the gift of consecrated chrism while sharing in the fruit of a common recognition of the ministry of dialogue partners.

A baptized person has been sealed and chrismated at Baptism. The baptizand receives in this chrismation, as a part of the baptismal rite, a promise that we are built up, strengthened, and that we receive the character of Christ. We have this promise in fact in Scripture. Insofar as we are speaking of these promised gifts and grace being offered in Baptism, Luther would

\(^\text{11}\) Despite the differences in the polity and ministerial ordering utilized by the ELCA, PCUSA, UCC and the RCUS there remains the principle that “participation by the four churches in the mission of God, can be an important sign of our unity of Christ . . . . It encourages those in our churches who are responsible for the placement of ordained ministers to draw upon the availability of the other participating churches to meet mission needs.” In *A Formula of Agreement, 2nd Printing*, (Louisville: KY, Office of the General Assembly of the PCUSA, 2000), 2.

\(^\text{12}\) “There may be broad principles regarding co-operation and ecumenical involvement that our churches have endorsed, but there are no constitutions, governing bodies, or oversight and review procedures for ecumenical shared ministries to which we have given common consent . . . . Denominational traditions, loyalties, responsibilities and concerns can be in tension with the possibilities and requirements of participation in ecumenical shared ministries and require adaptation and flexibility. Such diversity can also enrich and expand our experiences and can enhance our participation in and appreciation for the universal Body of Christ.” In *Ecumenical Shared Ministries Handbook*. (Toronto, ON: United Church of Canada, 2011), 8.
have agreed with St. Thomas Aquinas and Peter Lombard.\textsuperscript{13} One received the seal set upon the heart and has been received into the covenant in Christ. Calvin, along with Knox, upon whom he had great influence, could agree with this theology applied to baptism.\textsuperscript{14} The sign of oil and handlaying and signification, after having been washed, convey what we believe concerning Baptism. Moreover, the adoption imagery in Tertullian’s description of handlaying and the promise of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit would certainly find a champion in both John and Charles Wesley.\textsuperscript{15}

While there are challenges to putting this part of my proposal into practice due to historical differences among separated brothers and sisters, chrismation with episcopally consecrated chrism and handlaying following the washing of Baptism offers a possibility for the Protestant denominations in this study which should not be minimized. It would provide these traditions with the potential that such chrismation might, in time, enjoy the recognition of the Roman Catholic Church from which these denominations have now been divided for over half a millennia. As the Bari Statement jointly recognized the Sacrament of Chrismation as practiced among Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches,\textsuperscript{16} the proposal which we are suggesting in this study could offer the potential of the recognition of Chrismation following the washing among the denominations that were willing to make the use of consecrated chrism part of their rites of Holy Baptism. Such intentional use of confected chrism as understood by the fathers and the early canons of the Church, as explored in Chapter 3, has


\textsuperscript{14} Kervin, \textit{The Language of Baptism}, 16, 41n73

\textsuperscript{15} John Wesley, \textit{A Plain Account of Christian Perfection: As Believed and Taught by The Rev. Mr. John Wesley, From the Year 1725, to the Year 1765} (Bristol: printed by William Pine, 1766), 26-34.

\textsuperscript{16} The Bari Statement, 37.
the potential to help the Church to more fully realize the visible unity we seek in a common sharing of the Eucharist.

In a renewed rite of the Sacrament of Confirmation a presider could lay a hand upon the confirmand recalling the baptismal promise. Then in retracing the sign of the cross which one received in the chrismation at Baptism, Confirmation would serve as both a sacrament of the memory of Baptism and a sacrament and sign of the continual outpouring of the Paraclete Spirit by Jesus on the night of his betrayal.¹⁷ This sacrament does not necessitate that a bishop be compelled to be the celebrant since under these proposals Protestants and Roman Catholics could both recognize that conjointly confected chrism was used at Baptism. Yet the Sacrament of handlaying and memory may well include the Bishop as the regular minister of this sacrament. Among those who retain the office of episcopoi, the participation of the Bishop in this sacrament of affirmation of a commonly recognized Baptism may well also convey a greater sign of the larger Church catholic. At the same time, Roman Catholic Canon law permits the Ordinary to delegate this sacrament. This sacrament of memory has the benefit of being a sign of the Church, which is the bride of Christ with Christ as the primary sacrament. The promised Paraclete proceeds from both the Father and the Son and comes with the promise of the Lord himself. This promise is one of a continual, not a one-time, outpouring of the Spirit.

The presbyter who in Roman Catholic theology and in some Protestant theologies functions at the Eucharist in the role of in persona christi may preside at this Sacrament involving handlaying and prayer. This handlaying should be preceded by the affirmation of Baptism through the renunciation and the credo as it is presently practiced in the Post-Vatican II Confirmation rite. Then, as Confirmation further serves to help all to remember

what took place in Baptism, the rite should include a single handlaying with the retracing of the sign of the cross without the use of chrism. While this proposed revised rite would not contain a redundant chrismation, such revisions would still continue to maintain the strong connection between Baptism and Confirmation as Sacrosanctum Concilium had envisioned.

The prior renunciation of evil and an affirmation of the Creed would lead the confirmand to affirm his or her baptismal covenant in what Tillard described as the “second yes.” A prayer, such as the Ambrosian prayer, may be offered, to remind candidates that they were joined to Christ and to his Christlike character in Baptism. With a handlaying Confirmation epiclectic prayer, the presider asks that God through the Holy Spirit would be stirred up *rubitur* (to strengthen) and *confirmare* (to firm up) the candidates through the Holy Spirit.

Prayer and handlaying together are the *sacramentum*. The Paraclete promised by our Lord is the *res*—or, to put it in the language of the Reformers borrowing from Augustine, the handlaying and prayer offered are the outward sign pointing to the invisible grace which is the Paraclete. It is important that we do this since worship and prayer are essential *notae* of the Church. Through prayer in Confirmation we remember, and we are bold enough to remind God of the promises God made in Baptism. Reminding God of his promises may at some level seem a bit impious. Yet, in Confirmation, as a sacrament of memory, as we offer prayer to God we are in fact doing something strongly commended by Martin Luther who asserted “I will remember my baptism and remind God of his covenant, and then fulfill the work and purpose of my baptism.”

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18 Luther, “The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism,” 43.
In the washing we were joined to and clothed with Christ. As with our Lord’s Baptism the Holy Spirit declares that we are beloved children of God. In the anointing with chrism in Baptism we were made *christoi* and joined to Christ in his threefold office. So too we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. In the Western Sacrament of Confirmation we remember our baptismal washing and chrismation, we are reminded that we were clothed in Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit. Through handlaying and the retracing of the sign of the cross, confirmands are firmed up in the faith and they with the whole community affirm God’s promises in Christ and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation as anamnesis, as a Sacrament of memory, retains both the christological and pneumatological dimensions as a remembrance of our being washed and anointed.

The prayer offered by the presider in Confirmation recalls God’s promises, just as we remember God’s promises in the thanksgiving prayer over the water at Baptism. We recall God’s mighty acts of salvation in Baptism and we remember God’s salvific activity. We remember the baptismal promises in our Confirmation as in the handlaying we are offered a visible sign of the continual outpouring of the Paraclete.

In contrast to our proposal, we need to note that Robert Jenson is skeptical of the need to retain a separated rite of Confirmation. According to Jenson a separated rite suggests that at Baptism the Holy Spirit had been insufficient, requiring an additional handlaying. While he hopes that ecumenical progress might result in the restoration of a unified rite, he agrees with Aquinas that in Confirmation the Spirit is given to enable a “robust” Christian life.\(^1\) For Jenson, the Holy Spirit empowers candidates for Christian living. Yet, I would contend that there is an ontology of liturgical action in all sacramental rites. That is to say, all sacramental actions

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rites have as their purpose to be the living ritual embodiment of the faith of the Church catholic through their integrated use of images, gestures, words, music, and movement, as led by the Holy Spirit. In the case of Confirmation, such an ontology of liturgical action helps us to envision a rite in which both affirmers (those who have been baptized and previously confirmed) and confirmands can publicly affirm Baptism and ritualize life transitions. The rite should involve the support of the community which prays and supports candidates. The process and the rite are directed by the continual presence of the Holy Spirit which calls, gathers, enlightens and empowers the faithful. We can now turn more specifically to how the Holy Spirit is at work in and through such life transitions which the rite of Confirmation also ritualizes.

7.6 When is Baptism Made Complete?

We noted in Chapter 6 how Protestants and Roman Catholics might better reach convergence through ecumenical dialogue despite diverging anthropologies. However, we suggested that the Church is a sacrament with Christ as primary sacrament and this sacramental economy goes a long way in helping Protestants and Roman Catholics overcome concerns over sacramental mediation. A dialogue on anthropology might well help dialogue partners more fully consider how we live as the people of God as sinners and yet justified. Throughout our mortal lives we are strengthened and built up through participation in the body of Christ.

Yet we may also say that the rite of Confirmation is not what confirms a person. One is confirmed and strengthened by God’s Holy Spirit through one’s participation in the body

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of Christ. In Confirmation the whole church ritualizes, prays for, and assists one who participates in the Word and who enters into the stories contained in the Scriptures. As the Word is broken open, and through the sacrament of Penance and the Eucharist, one continues to be strengthened. The rite of Confirmation serves to acknowledge ritually the strengthening which takes place through the Holy Spirit within the community.

Alcuin promulgated the notion that Confirmation perfected Baptism. Lionel Thornton agreed and, in an allusion to 2 Corinthians 8, proposed that in baptism we identify with Christ’s poverty, but in Confirmation we are endowed with Christ’s riches. Thornton was highly critical of those who argued that Confirmation diminished the perception that God’s grace was sufficient in Baptism. Drawing on the paradox of poverty and riches in 2 Corinthians, Thornton suggested that Confirmation was in no way “derogatory to baptism” or that it completed baptism. As we saw in Chapter 2, while Hebrews speaks of moving “on toward perfection” or completion, the author in no way was suggesting a handlaying separated from the washing, or anything approaching Confirmation. Patristic sources often spoke of handlaying in Baptism as perfecting. This was not to suggest that the gesture of handlaying itself was what was perfecting. That would be to confuse the sacramentum with the res. The handlaying along with other ritual action in Baptism is the sign. It is the Holy Spirit which perfects and brings God’s work to completion. That is what is signified.


22 We will take up the matter of the age of admission to Communion below, yet as Aquinas argued one is strengthened through full participation in the Eucharist.


Thornton’s use of the 2 Corinthians paradox to justify Confirmation as completing Baptism is indeed a real stretch. Thornton seems to have pursued his project on Confirmation for Anglicans out of a desire to raise the rite of Confirmation to a high sacramental status. He seemed also to be suggesting that Baptism was not able to support its own theological weight, leaving the impression that the Spirit poured out in the baptismal rite was defective. This appears to be Jenson’s concern. Yet, can our theology of baptism bear the weight of all the gifts which God offers us through the sacrament?

Confirmation has often been used as a buttress for a deficient baptismal theology and this was true even prior to the twentieth century. As noted in Chapter 4, during the Enlightenment Confirmation came to be viewed by many Protestants as the second half of Baptism. Yet, Luther had asserted that it was only in death that one reaches the goal of Baptism; at our bodily resurrection the baptismal promise is completed. In Romans 6, Paul grounds his Baptismal theology in the paschal mystery. This remains the predominate theme of the Baptismal rite in the Book of Common Prayer as well as in the baptismal rites we examined in Chapter 6. But our baptismal theology is also Johannine as well. As we celebrate Baptism within the Church’s liturgy and utilize the Sunday lectionary, we hear of rebirth and regeneration (John 3) compelling us to acknowledge that our own family trees and genealogies do not matter. Our rebirth by Water and the Word joins us to brothers and sisters who are not a part of our biological families. With our brothers and sisters in Christ, we confess with Martha that our loved ones will be raised on the last day (John 11).


Peter Lombard spoke of Confirmation as that which made the baptized full Christians. In this sense, he seemed to imply that Baptism could only be brought to completion in a separated rite of handlaying and redundant chrismation.\footnote{Lombard, \textit{The Sentences}, 40.} Many modern Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox might well find such phraseology at odds with the way in which Confirmation is understood in current ecumenical dialogue. In a formal statement with the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics along with their ecumenical dialogue partners assert: “Christian initiation is a whole in which chrismation is the perfection of Baptism and the Eucharist is the completion of the other two.”\footnote{The Bari Statement, para. 37.} Therefore, as we consider the recommendations in this dissertation, it is important to be clear that Baptism, as understood in this study, is intended as historically understood in the West, namely washing, chrismation, and handlaying.\footnote{Thus, in Chapter 7.2 I have offered recommendations for Protestants as to how the use of chrism could be recovered in such a way as to be recognized by Roman Catholics in complete continuity with what Roman Catholics have agreed to in the Bari Statement.}

While the Bari Statement affirms that the Sacraments of Initiation are brought to completion in the Eucharist,\footnote{The Bari Statement, 37.} the USCCB also affirms that such agreement should not deny an important affirmation about the place of Baptism itself. The Bishops raised the concern that the Bari Statement “places such a heavy emphasis on the Eucharist as to suggest that Baptism itself does not already achieve entry into divine communion and participation in the eschatological community.”\footnote{“Response to Bari Document,” (Crestwood, NY: 36th Meeting of the USCCB).} The USCCB wanted to be clear that Baptism initiates one into the community which is herself an eschatological community and a pilgrim Church on the
way. While this affirmation may well not enjoy complete ecumenical convergence, it could most certainly find agreement among many Protestants. As Luther said, Baptism is itself brought to completion in bodily resurrection at the eschaton. For this reason some Lutherans might well be willing to assert that the resurrection itself can be viewed as the final sacrament, after which “all sacraments shall cease.”

7.7 Relationship of Confirmation to Baptism

In Chapter 1, I suggested, with others, that Confirmation was a sacrament in search of a theology. Donald Bridge, an English Baptist, and David Phypers, an Anglican in the UK, note that since the Reformation, Protestants and Roman Catholics have struggled to articulate a theology of Confirmation leading “to the frequent embarrassment” of both. Confirmation managed to survive the Reformation since it continued “to be embodied in the legal relationships between church and state.”

The inherited pattern was that infant Baptism and Confirmation led to first Eucharist. Chapter 4 suggested that the Reformers saw themselves as faithfully recovering the Church’s Biblical and Patristic tradition even as they inherited the medieval pattern of initiation. The Wittenberg Reformers sought this kind of continuity with the ancient Church’s Tradition. The same could be said of Calvin, Bucer, Cranmer, Knox and later the Wesley brothers.


33 Donald Bridge and David Phypers, The Water That Divides: The Baptism Debate, 1st ed. (Leicester, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 85. Phypers argues that since the Protestant Reformation arose in a time of intense geopolitical political power struggles in the context of Christendom, many Protestants inherited both an ecclesial and civic understanding of the function of Confirmation. Confirmation marked a coming of age when boys in particular assumed greater adult responsibilities in society.


35 Eric Gritsch, “Martin Luther's View of Tradition,” in The Quadrilog, 71.
Much theological reflection on Confirmation after the 16th century rationalized the continued practice of pedobaptism (child or infant baptism) in polemical terms, often directed at the Anabaptists. However, among Patristic writers, concerns over the Baptism of infants had only briefly been a controversy with Tertullian. With the rise of Rationalism and the revival movements of the “Second Great Awakening,” many Protestants and some Roman Catholics used Confirmation to justify the practice of pedobaptism. Kavanagh notes that in 1958, a year prior to the summoning of the Second Vatican Council, the Holy See felt obliged to reiterate that *quamprimum* (as soon as possible) Baptism was the pattern to be adhered to by Roman Catholics. Thus, while pedobaptism was not a major concern during the Council, in the years that followed, North American Catholics began debating the matter, only to be outdone in France. The Second Vatican Council called upon Roman Catholic parishes around the world to reinstitute the catechumenate which presumes adult initiation. This began to raise new questions concerning the appropriate normative age of Baptism. The reality of post-Christendom meant that since those who were catechumens might well have never been baptized the new normative age of Baptism varied from parish to parish.

Regardless of the local norm, one can say that the theology of Confirmation remains inextricably linked to the theology of Baptism. The first half of the 20th century witnessed intense debates over infant Baptism as Karl Barth and Oscar Cullmann, on the continent, and

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37 Dechristianization began decades earlier in France than in the United States. By the 1960’s many parents in France were electing not to have their children baptized resulting in a pastoral crisis in the French Church decades earlier than in North America, as discussed by Paul F.X. Covino, “The Postconconsiliar Baptism Debate,” in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit*, 327-28.

38 Ibid., 348.
Dom Gregory Dix, Geoffrey William Hugo Lampe and Lionel Thornton, in the UK, debated and further blurred the role of confirmation.\footnote{Osborne, The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, 119.}

7.8 Infant Baptism and Barth

Karl Barth’s later work presents a real challenge for those drawn to his theology but who themselves would permit the Baptism of those who cannot answer for themselves. We need to recognize that in Barth’s \textit{CD IV.4} fragment, he seems to be challenging modernism along with the Church’s tendency to baptize indiscriminately. Bromiley and Torrance help to put Barth’s \textit{CD IV.4} in context by reminding us that, for Barth, Christ is indeed the primary Sacrament. Barth wanted to convey that Baptism in the Spirit is properly understood in the context of God’s reconciling work. For Barth, Baptism itself was a rite within the Church’s liturgy which, along with the Supper, is a human response to God’s grace. According to Bromiley and Torrance, Barth was engaging in “a cautious and respectful demythologizing” of the rite of Baptism in an effort to awaken a Church immersed in modernism to the ultimate power of the Holy Spirit’s work of reconciliation.\footnote{Published immediately after Barth’s death in December of 1968 as noted in ”Editors’ Preface” in Barth, \textit{CD}, v.} In his own preface to his last volume of Church Dogmatics, Barth explains to his readers that he begins with God’s work of Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the human liturgical work of Baptism in water and the Supper. What was to follow “would be materially the true body of the chapter, namely a presentation of the various practical aspects of Christian life under the guidance of the Lord’s Prayer. As a conclusion and crown would come the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper (as the Thanksgiving which responds to the presence of Jesus Christ in His self-sacrifice and which looks forward
to His future).” Thus, from this preface we come to see that Barth understood Baptism and Eucharist doxologically, which along with the “Our Father . . .” he had envision as human responses offered to God’s work through the Holy Spirit.

On May 7, 1943, Barth delivered a lecture, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, before Swiss theological students at Gwatt am Thunersee. Taking up the Reformation concern over sacramental mediation he argued that Baptism had been made “practically meaningless” by Roman Catholics insofar as they had argued that obstacles could actually oppose baptismal grace requiring a supplement through the sacrament of penance. Recall, for example, how Jerome had depicted penance as a plank after the shipwreck. But for Barth, nothing is an obstacle to God’s grace. He went on to say “The baptized man differs from the unbaptized in all circumstances as one who has been placed under the sign of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, under the sign of His hope, His destiny, His advent, because of the divine decree accepted and expressed over him.” Barth, reflecting upon this “sign,” also spoke of four contemporary figures of the time: Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini and Pope Pius XII.

41 Ibid, ix.


43 Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, 58.

44 Ibid., 58-60.


46 Ibid., 60.
Some historical background is important to note here. In 1929 Mussolini and the Holy See entered into a Concordat guaranteeing the sovereignty of a Vatican state to include other specific sites (e.g., the Lateran Palace and Castel Gandolfo) with the assurance that anyone within said Vatican state (sites) was subject to Italian law.\footnote{Dudley Heathcote, “Mussolini and the Roman Question,” *Fortnightly Review*, 125, no. 748 (April 1929): 497-98.} Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli helped to negotiate this Concordat between the Holy See and Mussolini’s government, which in turn became the model for the 1933 *Reichskonkordat* between the Holy See and the government of Adolf Hitler (which Pacelli also negotiated). In 1939 Pacelli was elected as Pope and took the name Pope Pius XII.\footnote{Carol Rittner, Stephen D. Smith, Irena Steinfeldt and Yehuda Bauer, ed., *The Holocaust and the Christian World: Reflections on the Past, Challenges for the Future* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2000), 45.} That same year, Germany and the Soviet Union under Stalin signed the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact calling for mutual non-aggression in Eastern Europe.\footnote{Jan Plamper, Michael Wildt, review of *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, by Timothy Snyder, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 14, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 200.} Note also that all four figures were baptized in infancy, stood (in Barth’s phrase) “under the sign,” and all were involved in drafting treaties which were intended in some way to offer some level of self-preservation, but which inevitably led to the deaths of millions in the Second World War. Through his use of the extremes represented by these four contemporary figures, Barth through his ongoing dialectical method, was in fact attempting to point to the theological norm of Baptism.

Barth suggested that among Lutherans, when children were baptized, parents acted on behalf of the child. He noted that an older Luther suggested that a “primitive though true and real faith” was present even in the youngest child who was baptized. For Barth, Lutherans could never adequately describe how such faith was present at Baptism. Among Calvinists,
Barth contended, there remained an understanding of “unconscious faith.” Yet for Barth, Calvin had made only sparing use of this hypothesis so as to “avoid the character of an act of violence.” Barth then points to the danger of looking to Confirmation to buttress a theology of a “sign” which so many had cheapened. Barth had said that for Calvin the covenant of Baptism could be authenticated and confessed later in life. This remained the European view of the 1940’s. Barth continued “this has been added to the necessity of so-called Confirmation—‘the ratification of the baptismal covenant.’ One cannot deny that infant-baptism calls aloud for such a completion and supplementing. Schleiermacher says with simple truth ‘Infant Baptism is a complete Baptism only when the profession of faith which comes after further instruction is regarded as the act which consummates it.’” Barth acknowledged Schleiermacher’s arguments resulted in Confirmation becoming “a half-sacrament.”

Schleiermacher’s position aside, Barth raises obvious concerns. If one is baptized and then has to make a decision and a confession, where does this leave us? More to the point, where does it leave Baptism? Barth’s dialectic points to a deficient doctrine of baptism.\(^5\) Baptismal doctrine begins with the understanding that Baptism is in itself a full sacrament, meeting its goal only in our death and its completion finally at the eschaton. Luther and Calvin had stressed the role of parents in pedobaptism as they engaged in polemical arguments with the Anabaptists over the efficacy of the Sacrament. Barth raised concerns about the line of reasoning which Luther and Calvin used in this regard. Yet, rather than becoming distracted over the role of parents and sponsors, a strong baptismal theology speaks of the daily dying and rising as one continually lives out the paschal mystery.

\(^{50}\) Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, 45-47.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 48-9.
Between Baptism and the “last day” one daily affirms and lives out one’s Baptism. Confirmation ritualizes what is a daily experience.

Two years to the day after Barth’s 1943 lecture, the War in Europe ended. Not even Barth could have conceived the scale of the mass murder by Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini. The perpetuation of total war in Europe and around the globe stood in absolute contradiction to the Baptismal covenant which Barth had illustrated among the four leaders. Thus, as Barth began his demythologizing of Baptism in *Church Dogmatics IV.4*, many in Europe had cheapened the grace of the very sign under which they had been received into the body of Christ. In the fragment of *CD IV.4*, Barth asks again, “Is not infant Baptism only half Baptism?” Yet, conversely, Barth never hypothetically asks, “Is adult Baptism a full Baptism?” We might wish to have asked Barth, “Is anything which God does ever half, or less than full?” Despite his own questions about infant Baptism, it is important to note that Barth never goes so far in his dialectical argument as to suggest that infant Baptism is invalid, so as to require (re)baptism. As in his 1943 lecture, Barth is concerned with a strict reliance upon infant Baptism:

> Infant baptism does in fact need a supplemental rite . . . . What if . . . with all due deference to the reasons advanced for it, there is again no express desire or confession on the part of the supposedly Christian young person? In half baptism, those who were Christianized without their own will or knowledge were baptized . . . . Nevertheless, there are good reasons for the modern increase in hesitation to hold a true confirmation with confession and vows.\(^{52}\)

Barth’s “hesitation to hold a true confirmation” arises again from Schleiermacher’s Rationalist insistence that infant Baptism is complete only in Confirmation. For Barth a “true confirmation” comes as one consents, affirms, and pledges the covenant one made in Baptism. Yet such a necessity casts serious doubts upon baptizing the youngest. Again Barth

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\(^{52}\) Barth, *CD*, 188-89.
shows that one should not try to make a case for infant Baptism by relying upon Confirmation. Among Christian traditions there are those who will only Baptize those who can speak for themselves while there remain traditions which permit pedobaptism. Among those from both camps who are influenced by Barth’s theology, George Hunsinger would say: “If all major traditions and especially those committed to believers’ Baptism could agree that infant Baptism is not impermissible . . ., it would be a great advance beyond the point where we are stuck ecumenically right now.”\(^53\) Barth was even willing to concede that among the youngest who were Baptized we see most clearly God’s grace at work made clear, “the more boisterously many of the infant candidates behave at the ceremony, to the dismay of the ministers and the others who take part.” Barth also noted an inconsistency among denominations who baptized young children when he said, “. . . it is hard to see why, if this is a good reason for infant Baptism, the admission of infants to the Lord’s Supper may not be required too.”\(^54\) Mark Searle would concur: “Far from barring children from the font, the chrism, and the altar, the Church should welcome their participation in the sacraments as a reminder both of the catholicity of the Church and of the fact that, no matter how informed or committed we might be as adults, when we take part in the sacramental liturgies of the Church we are taking part in more than we know.”\(^55\) We will explore this very point in our next chapter.

Travis McMaken has made a significant contribution toward ecumenical convergence on Barth’s views on pedobaptism by examining \(CD\) IV/3, where Barth makes extensive use


\(^{54}\) Barth, *CD*, 190.

of Dienst (service) in its generic sense.\textsuperscript{56} McMaken suggests that for Barth, Dienst likely entailed both worship and service in the world, which are inseparable, lest “the Church atrophies when cut off from mission.” For Barth “Mission is doxology and doxology is aimed at mission.”\textsuperscript{57} For Calvin, our election by God is dubious if through ungratefulness we deny the truth of the resurrection which grants new life and salvation. In the Institutes Calvin had denoted two baptismal goals: 1) to “serve our faith before God. 2) to “serve our confession before men.”\textsuperscript{58} For McMaken, Barth believed that Calvin had overemphasized the first goal at the expense of the second, but Barth overcompensated by overemphasizing “our faith before others” at the expense of “our faith exhibited before God.”\textsuperscript{59} The price of the reversal was that Barth seemingly lacks a robust sense of service in the liturgy of public worship before God. What McMaken seeks to do in his work is to restore a proper balance in Barth’s “mature theology.”

As noted in his 1943 lecture, Barth clearly lamented that churches had so accepted expedient, promiscuous and clinical Baptisms that they had failed to help the baptized to connect their Baptism to the Church’s primary mission of dienst as both doxology and service in the world. Such “cheap grace” among many of Europe’s Christians was certainly identified by Dietrich Bonhoeffer before the Second World War in The Cost of Discipleship:

> It is true, of course, that we have paid the doctrine of pure grace divine honors unparalleled in Christendom, in fact we have exalted that doctrine to the position of God himself. . . . the collapse of the organized Church is only the inevitable


\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 283.


\textsuperscript{59} McMaken, The Sign of the Gospel, 285.
consequence of our policy of making grace available to all at too low a cost . . . we baptized, confirmed, and absolved a whole nation unasked and without condition.\textsuperscript{60}

Bonhoeffer’s admonition had been that his own denomination (Lutheran) had left the following of Christ “to legalists, . . . and enthusiasts–and all this for the sake of grace.”\textsuperscript{61} A truncated and deficient theology espousing the cheap grace which Bonhoeffer lamented too easily turns to Confirmation for support. Yet, recovery of a richer theology of Baptism rooted in costly grace of Christ’s self-sacrifice understands that Christ has given the church Baptism and commands that the Church baptize. What should a recovered theology of baptism include? How can Barth’s understanding of dienst be lived out in Baptism?

### 7.9 Baptismal Living

Thomas Marsh has suggested that Baptism is a “sacrament of faith in a double sense. . . . first because the celebration of the sacrament is an expression of the faith of the church. The church here is expressing its very being, its life in Christ, and this is an expression of its faith. Likewise the subjects’ reception of the sacrament is an expression of their faith.”\textsuperscript{62} This is why we celebrate Baptism within the community which receives the newly baptized. Yet, Baptism as it is commanded is more than a sacrament. It is also an ordinance. We are commanded to Baptize. Yet the command is efficacious because through it we receive a promised entrance into a new life or salvation, as we are saved by God’s grace.\textsuperscript{63} The Church

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 57-58.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Marsh, \textit{Gift of Community: Baptism and Confirmation}, 198.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Gordon T. Smith, \textit{Transforming Conversion: Rethinking the Language and Contours of ChristianInitiation} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 139.
\end{itemize}
as sacrament with Christ as primary Sacrament means that Baptism is initiation into the body of Christ and into her díenst of doxology and service to the world.

7.9.1 Discipleship

In Matthew 28 we see that the primary activity commanded is disciplemaking in which the baptizing, teaching and the going are parts of the very disciplemaking as commanded. This is why Bonhoeffer understood Baptism as including catechesis. Properly understood, Baptism necessitates catechesis, whether part of the recovery of the ancient catechumenate or catechesis for the parents, sponsors and congregations in preparation for all Baptisms. Catechesis should be both specific to age and involve a lifelong process into which one is invited by the very sacrament of Baptism itself. The field of childhood development has taught us that many adolescents begin to form formal operations of idealism so characteristic of their age. Often they are able to imagine things as they might wish them to be. They are able to often envision a more perfect world, congregation or family. Such an adolescent idealism more often than not fails to meet reality. We will explore the implications of this feature more as we discuss Confirmation itself.

The Church should expect that parents or guardians taking responsibility for the rearing of the child be themselves active participants in the worshiping community which receives the child. Unbaptized parents may be simultaneously received through the catechumenate leading to a Baptism at the same liturgy as their children. Rooted in the Scriptures and patterns of the ancient Church (which we examined in Chapter 3), we see that the entire process of Christian initiation is guided by the Holy Spirit. We are baptized and

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64 Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, 58.

joined to the ontological Trinity. As the church is a sacrament with Christ as primary sacrament, the *ecclesia* in its proper sense is a sacrament to the world as she continues in its mission pointing to the Kingdom of God. Further, as a sacrament to the world she remains a visible sign of the mystery which she shares as the bride of Christ. This bride of Christ is called through the Holy Spirit, joined to Christ to the glory of the Father and to the mission of the economic Trinity. Through one Baptism received only once the baptized one is initiated into the Church and into her work of the economic Trinity. Baptism once affirms the sufficiency of God’s grace. The fathers of the Church were led to struggle against Donatism and to call for one Baptism. This one Baptism was prefigured by the sacramental rock offered to the children of Israel. As the children of Israel were led by the presence of God in the cloud, so we too are led to the waters of Baptism and Christ the living water which become for us water in the wilderness. The sacramental rock becomes the sign that Christ goes before us, nourishing us. By the Holy Spirit we are invited to come to the waters of Baptism in which we are regenerated, refreshed, and sustained. Baptism sacramentalizes our conversion into Christ just as it anchors us in the faith.

Whether or not candidates can speak for themselves, the Church to which the baptismal candidates are joined makes renunciations, promises, and confesses the faith of the Church in the ancient Baptismal Creed of Jerusalem (Apostles’ Creed). Thus we may say “[w]e baptize infants as if they were adults, addressing them with questions, words, and promises that their parents, sponsors, and congregation are to help them know and believe as they grow in years. We baptize adults as if they were infants, washing them and clothing them with God’s love in Christ.”66 Regardless of age, Baptism is not something which we do

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for ourselves. Instead, Baptism is something which, as our own Lord modeled in Matthew, remains an act which is done to us, with implications our whole life long.

Being joined to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we receive the sacraments and the Word so that all may be strengthened and prepared for service in the world. The church is always called to worship and is sent out to serve. This twofold sense of mission or dienst is the dual role into which we are called through Baptism (which we will examine more closely below). The symbol of the baptismal candle reminds us, with the whole Church, that Christ is the lumen gentium, and that the baptized are sent out into the world in mission to reflect that light. Baptism is no mere punctiliar event in our lives. It is part of the process of Christian initiation. Pannenberg has noted that once Confirmation became a second sacrament, distinctions began to be made between the ministries of the baptized as opposed to the ministries of confirmed members of the Church.\footnote{Wolfhart Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology}, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 397.} We will explore those distinctions and correctives in our next Chapter.

\section*{7.9.2 Experiencing the Faith Community}

While Barth may have seemed tepid concerning infant Baptism, Joseph Mangina makes some significant points regarding Barth’s understanding of the liturgy which may be of help here. Barth’s mature theology made important connections between his theology and worship. Specifically, he spoke of the Lord’s Prayer which the faithful offer in doxology both corporately and personally.\footnote{Joseph L. Mangina, “The Stranger as Sacrament: Karl Barth and the Ethics of Ecclesial Practice,” \textit{International Journal of Systematic Theology} 1, no. 3 (1999): 328, citing CD IV/3, 883.} In Barth’s view, as we have noted, \textit{Gottesdienst} could never be disconnected from dienst in the world. Barth’s understanding of this connection between the Church’s liturgy in worship and service in the world is significant as it relates to how we
conduct catechesis in preparation for Baptism. Barth’s perspective is relevant in our pre-
baptismal catechesis among the parents of the youngest among us, whose parents or
guardians bring them to God’s house. This is also a relevant perspective for older persons,
who through their presence in the community are led to a point when they may ask, “What is
to prevent me from being Baptized?” Regardless of age, the Father receives candidates into
the body of His Son through the Holy Spirit. In faithfulness we receive adults and children
into a community which is actively engaged in Gottesdienst and dienst to the world. Since
Baptism is not a punctiliar event but is lived out with ongoing catechesis, worship, and
service prior to and after Baptism, the baptizing community lives out its Baptism continually.
Pre-baptismal catechesis should indeed prepare candidates, sponsors, and families, and
remind them of the connection between Gottesdienst and dienst to the world.

In Barth’s uncompleted dialectical CD IV.4 on reconciliation, he probed the polarities
surrounding baptismal implications and the efficacy of infant Baptism. It is clear from the
lecture in 1943 that the ritual dishonesty and wholesale Baptism of children who never before
or after attended the services of God’s house were at the root of Barth’s concerns. Two
successive World Wars, barely twenty years apart, cast into stark relief the high cost of a
weak baptismal theology and practice. The Church had failed to see any serious connections
between Baptism, discipleship and initiation into the Church’s mission of worship and
service. We are only left to wonder how Barth through, his dialectical method, might have
completed the loop in reconciliation through Baptism.

7.9.3 Personal Growth in Faith
Living one’s baptismal faith means actively practicing the dienst of the Church by actively
confessing the faith. To confess the faith means professing the one in whom one believes.
Rationalism taught people in the West to think that it was possible to profess something which they did not believe. Yet, the Apostle Paul has reminded us that “if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.” (Romans 10:9-10) Through the Holy Spirit, profession of the Christian faith compels us to live out the Christian mission in the world. The work of the Holy Spirit would counter the false claim of rationalism, establishing in truth that we are led not only to confess with the lips, as Paul would remind us, but we are enabled to live out that confession in our daily baptismal ministry. Barth himself spoke of the practice of the Church’s confession in the Church’s liturgy which awakens faith and calls us to dein st in the world:

the necessary summons to confession is concretely given by the existence of others, who according to their confession in the world, are likewise caught up in the act of faith by the existence of the Christian community. It is not on the basis of his own discovery and private revelation, but by the mediatorial ministry of the community which is itself in the school of the prophets and apostles, that a man comes under the awakening power of the Holy Spirit and therefore to faith.69

As we consider the indivisible connection between the Church’s liturgy and the life of her members in the world, a critique of the observations of Romanus Cessario are instructive. For his part, Cessario contends that SC led to a loss of the serious study of sacramentology as a discipline separated from systematics, liturgical studies, or liturgical theology in seminaries of the Roman Catholic Church. Especially in the US, although exceptions could be found in ecclesiastical faculties in Rome, sacramentology is now taught within the larger discipline of liturgical studies or liturgical theology. Cessario explains that early drafts of SC discussed sacraments before discussing glorifying God. Cessario argues, based upon his own reading

69 Barth, CD, 778.
and interpretation of what Aquinas had termed as the “necessity” of the sacraments that Aquinas makes Cessario’s case for the study of the study of sacraments as a separate discipline.⁷⁰

On the contrary, I would contend that one of the great gifts of the SC as it was promulgated is that sacraments are discussed as a part of the liturgy, which becomes the means of addressing the primary locus of the church. The Church is never more the Church than when it is gathered around Word and sacrament in the liturgy. Separating sacramentology from the liturgy where one receives these means of grace is to fail to recognize that the sacraments are God’s self-giving for and to us as God’s people. The Εκκlesia properly understood is the people of God gathered for the liturgy in which she glorifies the one in whose name she has gathered, and where the Word becomes truly the Word. There she receives the sacraments. Through these means of grace the Church is strengthened for mission in the world. Aquinas himself spoke of “Necessity of the Sacraments in Four Articles” in Part III of the Summa.⁷¹ St. Thomas himself remained a part of the community which gathered for the daily office and daily Mass. His understanding of the sacraments, properly understood, should never be separated from the liturgy in his own daily life any more than we can separate the sacraments which we receive from the liturgies of the church today.

In a world obsessed with self-constructed identities, the Sacraments allow us to hear how the one in whose name we gather identifies us. As Peter Berger noted, when speaking of how we are socialized individually and by significant others, “[i]t is possible to sum up the

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dialectic formation of identity by saying that the individual becomes that which he [sic] is addressed as by others.”

In baptism we belong to Christ and become ourselves christs. In our rejection of sin prior to being washed, we are rejecting any other claim upon us. In the washing in water we are joined to Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection to new life. We are manumitted from slavery to sin. In the ritual act of handlaying after the washing we are adopted as sons and daughters of Christ. In the chrismation we are anointed into the threefold ministry of Christ, and in the consignation we receive the promise and indelible character of Christ. Thus the community receives us and invites us into its ministry of dienst.

Darrell Guder suggests that a conversion among congregations may be necessary to recover the sense in which “the ancient sense of the conclusion of public worship as the sending out of God’s people (ita missa est, go, you are sent) would be translated into the concrete forms of congregational life. Our concept of ‘active church member’ would, of course, have to change.” Guder suggests that to accomplish this, congregations would have to maintain more accountability for its mature members and those who can speak for themselves, taking more seriously how the church in its ongoing catechesis trains its members for a missionary vocation.

Only in this way could the church be envisioned as a place in which its members were gathered, built up in the body of Christ, and sent out to serve.

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7.9.4 Confirmation as a Buttress: Consequences

Barth recognized the dangers of the Church utilizing Confirmation as a buttress for a deficient baptismal theology. In a more recent example, at the close of the last century, the proposed full Communion agreement, *Following Our Shepherd to Full Communion*, was under consideration by both the Moravian Church in America and the ELCA. The proposal raised concerns among some Moravians who perceived differences in sacramental understanding between the two church bodies. Moravian clergy who expressed the greatest concern in this area found something both problematic and missing in the ELCA’s sacramental understanding. The problem hinged on the understanding among Lutherans in the ELCA and their view that baptismal regeneration made all of the baptized members of the Church. The part which was thought to be missing in the ELCA’s baptismal rite was an explicit commitment on the part of the parents that the child would be brought to the Church for a later commitment, i.e. Confirmation. Because the Moravian clergy who expressed this concern were suggesting that Baptism was not regeneration in the Johannine sense, this implied that their baptismal theology was deficient. For them, real membership came only at the point of commitment through Confirmation, which was further seen as a necessity to which parents should commit at Baptism. This suggested that Confirmation was needed to buttress Baptism.

Over the course of the succeeding months baptismal theology became a matter of internal contention within the Northern and Southern provinces of the Moravian Church. Pastor Bob Sawyer, President of the Provincial Elder’s Conference of the Southern Province wrote a pastoral letter in an attempt to clarify what the Moravian faithful might say about

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their theology of Baptism. Among other things, the letter stated, “We recognize that infant baptism is not ‘regenerational baptism’ though what God is doing toward rebirth (regeneration) is not to be dismissed. It is described in Jesus conversation with Nicodemus in John 3 . . .”75

Sawyer in paraphrasing Zinzendorf, had severely truncated what Zinzendorf had actually said. We noted in Chapter 4 that Zinzendorf was concerned in his Discourses with maintaining Luther’s Augustinian distinction between the external Word and visible sign. Also Zinzendorf wanted to maintain the Reformer’s antireductionist position by maintaining that the Sacraments do not function ex opere operato. For Zinzendorf regeneration is not accomplished in the washing but is accomplished when the water is joined with the Holy Spirit, which proceeds for all time from the wounds of Christ. In other words, Baptism is regenerational, just not ex opera operato. While Following the Good Shepherd was approved by both Moravians and the ELCA, the controversy sparked over Baptism pointed to the need for clarity in baptismal theology so as not to inappropriately view Confirmation as a necessary support or buttress.

7.9.5 Important Elements of this Sacrament of Memory

Having established which parts constitute a sound baptismal theology, and which dangers are to be avoided, what constitutes some elements of a proper understanding of Confirmation?

We return to where we began in this chapter. Confirmation, to be ritually honest involves a sense in which the Ekklesia as the body of Christ is called, gathered and enlightened by the work of the Holy Spirit. In this “second yes” we ritually affirm that in our Baptism, it is Christ who clings to us and, with God’s help, we seek intentionally to cling to Christ. Mary

Hughes has suggested four important emphases of Confirmation: 1) experiencing the faith community. 2) living a life of discipleship. 3) knowing and understanding the faith (i.e. subjective faith). 4) personal growth in faith. I would submit that, at a minimum, one who is seeking the sacrament of Confirmation in the church needs to be able to demonstrate intentionality directed toward these four emphases in order to prevent it from becoming ritually dishonest. Since we have already examined three of the areas specifically under baptismal living, we will turn to address the fourth of these.

7.9.6 Subjective Faith
As noted earlier, Barth emphasizes the Church’s need for confession. The Reformers understood that faith, properly understood, is that which trusts the promise. Yet, such objective faith in God is active faith. Barth declares that “the possibility of God consists in the fact that man – eye of a needle or not – is enabled to participate not just passively but actively in God’s grace as one who may and will and can be set to work.” According to Mangina, for Barth, “If faith is not a form of knowledge, it is hard to see how one can avoid the inference that faith finally does construct its own object, tailoring God to its own needs. Barth sought to restore the cognitive dimension of faith precisely in order to resist the Feuerbachian reductions of modern theology.” In the 19th century Ludwig Feuerbach had sought to reduce God’s presence to a philosophy of feeling as human beings looked to something other than themselves in which to place ultimate trust. Feuerbach reduced subjective faith to nothing more than a projection of feelings articulated into systems of

77 Barth, CD, 6.
theological belief.\textsuperscript{79} Barth sought to counter this perception, countering in his \textit{Church Dogmatics} that the subjective and the objective needed to be reversed.

In other words, the Holy Spirit draws us into the \textit{ekklesia} and we are then initiated into the \textit{ekklesia} through Holy Baptism. One comes to a subjective faith through the objective experience with God. In the life of the community we encounter the one who calls us by name and makes us his own. Immersed in the means of grace, connecting our objective faith to subjective experience, we are led to participate in the Church’s \textit{dienst}. Mangina further notes “The experience of the Christian subject will be shaped by its object, the God who makes himself known to faith. Or to turn it around, God discloses himself to faith in ways that engage the whole person (\textit{den ganzen Menschen}), including cognitive, experiential, and all other capacities.”\textsuperscript{80} Objective faith, which precedes subjective faith, is what Anselm of Canterbury meant by “\textit{fides quaerens intellectum},” (“\textit{faith seeking understanding}”).\textsuperscript{81}

Objective faith comes in the encounter with the God who calls us by name and gathers us around Word, table and font. Through the Church, which is a sacrament, Christ has mediated his presence that we may encounter the “Other” (i.e. Christ himself) in whom we put our ultimate trust. Out of our objective faith in this “Other,” we articulate and confess the faith. Yet, we also seek to know the story of the one who calls us. In that narrative, as attested and witnessed by the whole communion of saints in the Church triumphant with fellow sojourners in the Church militant, we cling to a narrative and belief in the one for whom the Church is gathered and whose Holy Spirit equips us for service in the world.


\textsuperscript{80} Mangina, \textit{Karl Barth on the Christian Life}, 19.

\textsuperscript{81} Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, \textit{Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms} (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 52.
The Carolingians, for example, had recognized that in Christianizing and baptizing whole populations, there were many who came to the Church without knowing the story. Many then, as in the present time, clung to a redeemer who was merely seen as a creature of the one who had called them by name. In this distorted view, many held to an utterly deficient christology with sacraments mediated by a redeemer who had been created and mediated by the Father. Since there was a time when they believed that their redeemer was not, those who clung to such a savior as this were like the Norse who admired the stories of the hero Sigurd. To counter this, Carolingian reformers sought to improve catechesis and insist upon a more thorough articulation of the faith of the Church by the faithful. As we noted in Chapter 3, this was why subscription to the Quicunque Vult was mandated by the Carolingians. To cling to an Arian form of subjective faith was utterly deficient and threatened to infect whole Church; the faithful would have placed ultimate trust to save in one who was little more than a hero. Bishops needed to take greater charge of ensuring that catechesis was improved within their dioceses. A sacrament of episcopal handlaying and second chrismation was mandated to ensure that bishops took catechesis seriously. With the Synod of Lambeth, Confirmation ensured that before children came to the sacrament of the altar, they had rejected the practical Arianism of their parents. Honest profession of the subjective faith of the community was considered paramount.

Baptism calls us to lifelong catechesis through a variety of schools in the Church: catechism ministry, Sunday Church School, Vacation Bible School, Church Camp experiences, etc. These schools too are extensions of the Church’s ministry and are lifelong ministries in the Church. Learning in classroom settings, self-paced individualized learning involving a mentor, home-based learning, retreat and camp experiences, along with
presentation and instruction are all methodologies of this catechesis, broadly understood. In the latter area, we often fail to see that those who lead catechetical instruction in the home or through mentoring often learn as much, if not more, than those whom they are directing. Mentoring also helps catechetical instruction become relevant for many who are in adulthood and helps congregations connect to the importance of catechesis being a life-long activity and an essential role as part of the Christian discipleship into which we have been received in Baptism. Too often we in the West perceive catechesis as a purely didactic exercise, without appreciating that at its root meaning, catechesis means to be taught orally in interrogatory form. This assumes dialogue and conversation.

Confirmation has long been viewed as a rite of adolescence. Many congregations are examining lowering the age at which young people are confirmed. As we shall see in the next chapter, a variety of models in congregations may be necessary. Such varying models for younger people under the age of 11 or 12 may necessitate a discussion of themes from the catechisms. Older teens may find the catechisms themselves a valuable learning resource as they are invited into serious theological reflection.82

Ritual honesty compels us to promote practices in which confirmands are engaged prior to, during, and following Confirmation. This is part of baptismal living until the goal of Baptism is reached in mortal death. Worship, catechesis, and service in the world are part of the Church’s ministry into which one is initiated at Baptism. Confirmands are often told that Confirmation per se is not graduation. Yet our expectations and practices often convey the opposite. We often see adolescents only in worship and at service projects, in catechesis and in other schools of the Church as our catechetical programs mandate. The ELCA has

affirmed that “Young Christians should not be isolated from the ministry of the rest of the congregation, the confirmands are called to lifelong learning and worship, identity, mission, discipleship, and vocation.”

The idea that Confirmation is not all about catechism classes is, for some, a startling notion. Among Protestants, especially Lutherans, catechism classes were part of the pastoral duties for clergy. Luther’s *Small Catechism*, which was originally part of the daily household instruction by the head of the household, very quickly shifted in the years after the Reformation to the local congregation. One seminary educator recalls having heard exasperated parents and grandparents say “Confirmation! I just don’t recognize it anymore. What happened to all the memory work in the Bible study that I used to do?” Confirmation often has been strictly understood as classes which involved only extensive memory work. A challenge remains in our postmodern Church culture to make connections between objective faith and subjective faith. Members need more than ever to be able to affirm publically that faith through a sacrament of memory, making connections to the promises God. Making such connections and maintaining ritual honesty means that congregations may need to reconsider perceptions about Confirmation. Confirmation is a ministry of the whole congregation. As with Baptism, catechesis is involved. Yet Baptism is an initiation into a worshiping, catechizing, serving community. Confirmation as a sacrament of memory permits us to ritualize the memory of Baptism and calls us again to a commitment to enter more deeply into the *dienst* of the Church.

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7.10 Conversion

As we consider Confirmation, we need to recognize also that there are those who undergo a demonstrable conversion experience. For some, this is what leads them to the waters of life which sacramentalizes conversion. In other cases, some may have been baptized for years and may well also have been confirmed, only to undergo a transformation later in life. They may or may not be active in a worshiping community prior to conversion. German Martinez points out that conversion is at the very heart of the entire initiatory process. It was Jesus’ proclamation and preaching which called for a *metanoia* or turning around. Jesus’ own preaching stresses a radical change in one’s heart.\(^85\) Any understanding of Confirmation as a part of the initiatory process needs to acknowledge this reality. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit and we often need a rite which sacramentalizes the Spirit’s continuing work in the lives of the baptized.

Conversion experiences during the “Second Great Awakening” often involved an individual’s interior change. Paul Markham has critiqued this understanding and suggests that such conversions may become suspect if the internal transformation is not also at the same time accompanied by a transformation of attitude and behavior, since at the heart of the Christian faith is a process of “becoming.”\(^86\) Because it is Christ who clings to us, we continue to grow in the faith through the Holy Spirit which remains active in our lives, sanctifying and moving us to undergo a necessary *metanoia* which will enable us to live within and in accordance to the will of God, until the day of Jesus Christ.


Bernard Lonergan has recognized that there exists in human beings what he calls “intellectual conversion.” To explain this, he utilizes Plato’s allegory of the cave. While chained, all one sees are shadows projected onto the wall of the cave. Once freed, one witnesses the objects and people which had cast the images on the cave’s wall. Through intellectual conversion one moves: “ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem” (“out of the shadows and phantasms into the truth”). Lonergan also recognized two other types of conversion: moral and religious—both requiring what he called perspectivism. Perspectivism suggests a movement beyond relativism as one seeks to obtain a more complex sense of the truth. Perspectivism requires one to set aside biases and systems of origin in order to appreciate differing perceptions held by others in a different time and place from one’s own.

Lonergan notes that the Eastern Church has stressed experience while Semitic religion, typified by the prophets, stresses monotheism through their proclamation. Conversely, the Church in the West has focused historically upon transcendence through the liturgy, through religious life and religious orders, and through the life of congregations. As a result, the Western church has focused more upon theory, dogma, and theology, as well as juridical structures which ensure oversight. These theories and structures, integral to the Western Church’s sense of meaning, have historically been used to link the transcendent experiences to the world, which base its understanding in meaning. Therefore especially in the West, religious and moral conversion has become coupled with intellectual conversion. The resulting unintended consequence of the focus of the Western Church means that belief in the

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God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has become set against the God of philosophers and theologians.  

Lonergan’s analysis of Semitic Religion, the Church of the East, and the Church of the West suggests that among Western Christians the chasm between the world and the Church becomes all the more difficult to bridge. Lonergan’s observations are exacerbated in a postmodern world where many might well say, “I believe in God but I have difficulty with organized religion.” On the other side of the chasm from this postmodern view remains the Church where, as Lonergan suggests, the God whom we worship and those whom we are called to enjoin in the liturgy of the Church in the worship of this God, take place within the liturgy which has been informed by a long tradition of theology and dogma. What Lonergan recognized as moral conversion is necessary for the people of God to faithfully engage the world. Many in the world coming to the Church also require a religious conversion. In postmodernity, in addition to moral conversion and religious conversion, more than ever, a level of “intellectual conversion” is required along with the other two kinds of conversion.

Donald Gelpi, in his work on conversion notes that before Lonergan’s death Lonergan had acknowledged that the fourth category of “affective conversion” needed to be added to the list. Gelpi suggests that moral conversion involves two distinct and yet interrelated forms of conversion, namely personal moral conversion and socio-political conversion. Personal moral conversion involves interpersonal rights and responsibilities, while socio-political conversion involves public morality as it relates to concerns for the common good. Common good in this sense considers benefits enjoyed by the entire social order and all members of society who contribute to these common goods and benefits. This  

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offers us five types of conversion: affective, intellectual, personal moral, socio-political, and religious. Lonergan had suggested that conversion is not restricted to religious contexts, but could take place within secular contexts as well, as in the case of affective conversion which is concerned with the promotion of personal and emotional health.\textsuperscript{89}

Personal moral conversion involves a change in one’s attitude and is illustrated by Gelpi by an experience from his upbringing in the Deep American South. His Jesuit high school teachers challenged him and his fellow students through “personal moral conversion” to confront the culturally accepted forms of societal racism. Socio-political conversion, on the other hand, involves how one is moved to make changes within larger institutional structures, such as the government, economy, class structure or even church institutions. Within socio-political conversion one measures one’s decisions by a sense of the common good. Thus, both forms of conversion are interrelated.\textsuperscript{90} Confirmation, if one is not already confirmed, or an affirmation of Baptism, if one is already confirmed, can help to ritualize one’s own affective, intellectual, personal moral, socio-political, or religious conversions.

7.11 Conclusions

Confirmation serves to sacramentalize or ritualize a transformation or the conversions in one’s life as one is guided by the Holy Spirit. We need to maintain a robust doctrine of Baptism, including intentional ecumenical liturgical sensitivity with catholicity, lest Confirmation become viewed as the second half of a sacrament, a buttress supporting a weak understanding of Baptism. Ritually, to maintain such robustness, Protestants should reexamine the use of consecrated chrism in Baptism that the richness and catholicity of being


\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 31.
both washed and anointed conveys. Baptism reaches its final goal in our mortal death and is completed only in bodily resurrection on the last day. Thus, Confirmation may be properly understood as a sacrament of initiation. However, to be ritually honest, Confirmation involves those who are participants in baptismal living, involving liturgy, service and continual catechesis. Immersion in the church’s liturgy and life means that we must not isolate our youngest in the ministries of “children’s church.” Baptism initiates one as a member of Christ’s holy catholic Church and therefore one should be invited to fully participate in her life and ministry. Redundant chrismation in Confirmation can suggest that the washing and anointing in Baptism were not adequate, yet, through Confirmation we affirm the promises made in Baptism, as the Holy Spirit serves to strengthen us in our affirmation.
Chapter 8
Confirmation: Toward a More Coherent Theology and Practice

8.1 Presuppositions for a Sacrament of Memory

As we continue to consider some of the practical dimensions of Confirmation, it may help to review and summarize the findings accumulated so far in this study—to remember and articulate more explicitly the presuppositions, practices and meanings aimed at our renewed theology and practice of Confirmation—in order now to address the perennial pastoral question of the appropriate age of candidates. We begin this chapter with the presupposition that Confirmation is a Sacrament of initiation. It is a sacrament because the Church is a sacrament with Christ as primary sacrament. As we have argued, Confirmation neither completes Baptism nor serves to bolster a deficient theology of Baptism itself, but is part of a process, marked by a rite of handlaying which may be presided over by a presbyter.

As a part of the rite, the confirmand rejects sin and confesses with the Church the Western baptismal Creed. The rite permits the confirmand to publicly recall and affirm her or his Baptism along with the entire congregation. For this reason we may understand Confirmation as a sacrament of memory. Holy Communion, Penance, and indeed all sacraments, are sacraments which are linked to and thus recall Baptism. Confirmation, however, derives its whole raison d'être from being the sacrament which recalls to memory the baptismal covenant. The rite should thus include handlaying with prayer, through which we may say the Holy Spirit is at work to strengthen the confirmand that she or he may continue to live in the covenant God made with them in Holy Baptism. The handlaying is itself a sacrament of the Paraclete promised in the night of our Lord’s betrayal and poured out by our resurrected Lord continually. The handlaying should be offered without
chrismation, although it is appropriate that the sign of the cross be made by the presider at the handlaying prayer. Under our proposal, one would have been chrismated at Baptism using chrism which was blessed by bishops or ones who serve in the role of episcopi. The rite of Confirmation ritualizes one’s active participation in a worshiping community in which all are strengthened through their participation through Word and Sacrament in the means of grace. Consequently, the rite also is part of life-long catechesis and involvement in the Church’s ministry and mission in the world.

One of the great contributions of Dei Verbum was that the Holy Spirit was understood as guiding the Magisterium, which is itself a servant of the twin sources of Scripture and Tradition.¹ Both Protestants and Roman Catholics can agree that Scripture may serve as corrective to Tradition, even while the value of Tradition is not discounted. This is why we began this study with a survey of Scripture texts to help inform our understanding of Confirmation (see Chapter 2). In our Scriptural survey we noted that it was very difficult to find any text that lent scriptural, much less a dominical, warrant to a practice of handlaying separated from Baptism. The only text in our survey which would appear to support a handlaying removed by some period of time from Baptism is 2 Timothy 1. In our survey of the texts that have informed Confirmation theology, we examined texts in four categories: 1) the Holy Spirit, 2) gesture of handlaying, 3) anointing with oil and marking, 4) profession of faith.

From the texts we determined that Holy Scripture testifies to the fact that God’s Holy Spirit was active in creation, in the work of salvation history, and is continually poured out in the life of the church. The Holy Spirit has consecrated the baptismal waters from our Lord’s

¹ Frederick M. Jelly OP, “Tradition as the Development of Dogma According to Yves Congar,” in The Quadrilolog, 203.
own pierced side. We were reminded of the handlaying used in the adoption stories of Genesis and as it was used among the Samaritans after Baptism to receive a people who were viewed by the Jews as syncretists into the Christian faith. We saw the numerous images of anointing used in the Hebrew Scriptures and how chrismation at Baptism signifies the threefold offices of prophet, priest, and king, as well as the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit of Isaiah 11.

We were reminded by Joshua that before we can confess the one who has called us by name, we are compelled to make a deliberate choice to reject false gods, and to turn to confess the one who has led our ancestors in the faith. We were reminded in Jeremiah and Nehemiah of our need to (re)affirm the covenant God has made with us. In (re)affirming the covenant, we come to truly deepen our “knowing” of the one who has made covenant with us. As disciples of Christ we are called to see the teachings and ministry of Jesus through the lens of the cross. As we affirm that charge of discipleship, and as we see the teachings of Jesus through the lens of the cross, we are enabled to become faithful cross bearers in our discipleship. From the Fourth Gospel we are reminded that it is God who has called us through his Holy Spirit into Christ. It is by God’s Holy Spirit that we are strengthened and enabled to keep even the teachings that are hard. In Titus we are reminded that our Baptism is in the Spirit, but that the Spirit continues its work, in the ongoing work to strengthen us in the faith. II Clement commends us to affirm the covenant enabling us to keep our Baptism undefiled. While many of the Scriptural images we examined are connected to Baptism, in Confirmation as a sacrament of memory they serve as equally important reminders of the Scriptural and theological content of Confirmation.
8.2 Multiple Patterns

When considering the appropriate age for Confirmation, we must acknowledge that common ways of thinking with respect to the role of congregations may need adjustment. For too long the rite of Confirmation has been perceived as a rite directed toward what the confirmands are doing. The rite is often perceived as something involving primarily the confirmands, their families, and the clergy. Yet, first and foremost, Confirmation is an ongoing activity of God through the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit works in and through the church, the church herself as sacrament with Christ as primary sacrament serves as the agent, fortifying and confirming her members. As we saw in the last chapter, the rite of Confirmation ritualizes a process which is taking place within the whole community of believers. This suggests that congregations need to understand themselves to be confirming communities or agents of Confirmation.

In some places this may represent a dramatic shift in thinking. There are numerous barriers which may prevent a congregation from perceiving itself as a confirming community. Norma Everist Cook has noted several such obstacles. I would submit that the most glaring of these are, 1) Confirmation is an incontestable right of all baptized members, regardless of one’s participation and commitment. 2) Confirmation is understood as secondary “fire insurance” coverage—that is, while we may understand Baptism as primary, Confirmation is often seen to offer a “just in case” to “make sure we’re saved” Sacrament of the Church.¹ Such sentiments affect how congregations may think about the timing of Confirmation, as parishioners may be directed by their own sense of entitlement, fairness, or even their own anxieties, leading to ritual dishonesty. Parents or extended family may

operate out of these motivations; even leaders in congregations may share such popular perceptions.

However, we need to remember that the Sacrament of Confirmation does not effect salvation, since salvation rests in the promises of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus promised the continued outpouring of the Paraclete. Confirmation as a sacrament of memory with prayer for strengthening through the Paraclete Spirit is a rite which ritualizes the ongoing work of the Spirit. The rite also ritualizes a life being lived out in and among a worshiping community which itself is called, gathered, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

The confirming itself is the Holy Spirit at work through the Church’s whole ministry of Confirmation. In the rite itself, Confirmation is a Sacrament which, through handlaying and tracing the cross by the presider, we are reminded of the gift of the Paraclete Spirit poured out by Jesus in John 20. It is the Holy Spirit which Jesus promises his disciples in the “farewell discourse” of John 14-17. In Baptism, the handlaying, chrismation, and consignatio are both pneumatological and christological. We are implanted by the Holy Spirit in the Church, turned from sin and death as we renounce allegiance to the devil, sin, and all that separates us from God. We profess the faith, which is both our subjective faith and which speaks objectively of the one to whom we are being joined. In our profession we answer the question Jesus had of his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” While we are joining to the object of our faith, who is the Christ of our confession, we are also professing by clinging to the faith which the Church confesses. And therein we affirm that we seek, with the help of the Holy Spirit to cling to this Christ who has revealed himself to us. We cling not to another creature, or to a mere hero. We are clinging to the one who has truly redeemed us.
The Christ whom we confess as God is himself a sign of God’s own self-giving in his having been sent into the world.

The relationship of the Baptismal rite to the Confirmation rite with respect to what follows or precedes Confirmation says a lot about how one understands Confirmation itself. Due to the numerous situations found throughout the world, and even within Roman Catholicism, the ordering of the three Sacraments varies greatly. The Second Vatican Council had re-envisioned Confirmation as a part of recovery of the broader sacraments of initiation. This broadened both the way the rite was understood and practiced. Turner has suggested there are seven models as to how the sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated:

1) Christian Initiation of Adults. Confirmation immediately follows the Baptism of adult catechumens.
2) Chrismation. The Eastern rites chrismate (confirm) all new members, including infants, immediately after Baptism.
3) Protestant-Anglican Churches. Many churches of the Reformation [as well as Methodist, Lutheran] and the Anglicans offer Confirmation to their members.
4) Full Communion of the Roman Catholic Church. [Roman] Catholics confirm new members who were previously baptized in another church.
5) Confirmation of children. Children baptized as infants celebrate Confirmation at a later age.
6) Adolescent Confirmation. A growing movement around the world suggests that teenage years are more appropriate than childhood years for the Confirmation of those baptized as infants.
7) Persons in Danger of Death: An abbreviated rite of Confirmation is provided for the dying who were never confirmed throughout their life.3

Within each of these seven models there can be different orderings of the first three Sacraments. In the first model which Turner describes, after being confirmed, often by a parish priest (unless the bishop is able to be present for the Mass), adult neophytes receive their first Eucharist at that mass. The Sacraments in this model follow the pattern of the ancient church, namely, one first receives Baptism then chrismation followed by Eucharist. The same pattern is followed in number 2 among Catholics in Eastern rites. However, since

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3 Turner, Confirmation: The Baby in Solomon's Court, xi.
the candidates for these three sacraments are often infants, Eastern Rite Catholics remain the only part of the Roman Catholic Church in which infants Commune.

Many Protestants follow the pattern in number 3. However many denominations have begun lowering the age at which one is received for first Communion. As early as 1964 the Diocese of Central New York began experimenting with the admission of children to the Eucharist prior to Confirmation. Among other Protestant denominations, policies often permit congregations to receive baptized children at communion who are not confirmed, but congregational polity may dictate differing local customs. It would also be fair to say that among Lutherans, the age of first Communion varies widely from congregation to congregation. In all but one of the Lutheran Churches of Africa which are part of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), children are confirmed and then receive Holy Communion, often at the service at which they were confirmed. The appropriateness of offering the Eucharist to all the baptized is a topic which we will address below.

Many of the same dilemmas that exist among Protestants also exist among Roman Catholics. In some cases, older children are confirmed and at the same liturgy local custom may dictate that younger children are confirmed. Paul Turner points out that in Mexico there is the custom of Confirmation of infants at the same mass at which they are baptized. Unique to Mexico, this originated in the colonial period when missionary efforts to evangelize were

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5 Several denominations also permit the communion of baptized children and denominationally support BEM’s call to permit baptized children to commune, but in many denominations local congregations have the authority to make the decision regarding reception.

6 The ELCA and ELCIC are members of the LWF. Both churches officially permit the communing of baptized children before Confirmation, but the age of admission varies from congregation to congregation. Neither the LCMS nor the recently formed NALC are members of the LWF.

conducted on a wide scale. Historically, due to the fears of infant mortality, many bishops in Mexico had opted to allow for both Baptism and Confirmation in infancy. Sometimes those of Mexican descent travel to Mexico for the Baptism and Confirmation of their children, where extended family members can be present for both at the same Mass. This, however, is not the common pattern in Latin and Central America or in the Southwestern US. In that region the traditional pattern of Confirmation of those in their teens tends to be more common. And even among immigrants from Mexico, many prefer the pattern observed in the U.S.\(^8\) In addition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) permits that when adults are being received from Protestant denominations, their baptized children may be confirmed with their parents if the children are of the age prescribed as catechetical age by that diocese.\(^9\)

### 8.3 Confirmation as a Rite for Adolescence

Among many Lutheran denominations, especially members of the LWF, and indeed for many Protestants, Confirmation does not confer a status different from the membership of all the baptized.\(^10\) However, certain denominations constitutionally or canonically recognize that among confirmed members there are certain privileges which may not be extended to baptized non-confirmed members. Confirmed members often may serve in congregational leadership roles, such as holding office on the session, board of elders, Congregation Council or other form of congregational governance or Board of Directors. In many denominations confirmed membership permits one to be a voting member in the congregation.

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\(^8\) Turner, *Confirmation: The Baby in Solomon's Court*, 113-14.

\(^9\) Ibid., 62.

\(^10\) Margaret A. Krych, “The Theology of Confirmation,” 94.
In the Catechism of the Catholic Church and under canon law in continuity with the Second Vatican Council, one is incorporated into the “faithful” and the people of God through Baptism. One who remains in a state of grace and who belongs to the Christian faithful is eligible to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. At Confirmation in the Catholic Church one is counted among the laity. The laity, which does not include the clergy, is permitted to seek Holy Orders. Also one who is counted among the laity may serve as an acolyte, and may under certain circumstances be asked to serve as a lector, a minister of the Word, or one who offers the liturgical prayers. One among the laity may even be permitted to baptize in certain circumstances or to serve as a distributor of Holy Communion.\textsuperscript{11}

While the Second Vatican Council continued its reforming work, Cardinal Lercaro, in an audience with Pope Paul VI on June 20, 1966, brought to the Holy Father a statement concerning the age for Confirmation. Lercaro later reported that the Pope gave two directives concerning Confirmation. First, Confirmation is to be “regarded as a sacrament of adolescence,” which should be offered preferably after the young person has completed schooling and is preparing to enter subsequent life. Secondly, the Bishop is to remain the ordinary minister of the sacrament.\textsuperscript{12} As we noted in Chapter 7, Canon 882 in the code of Canon law, specifies that the Bishop is the ordinary Minister of Confirmation, and further stipulates under what conditions a priest may preside at the rite in the bishop’s absence.

In 1966 matters as to the ordering of the sacraments of initiation were made even more confusing as Pope Paul VI attempted to implement new directives while at the same time the Second Vatican Council was making reforms in the Sacraments of Initiation. By the


mid 1960’s many of the Canons on Confirmation from centuries before still presumed that one was baptized and Confirmed before receiving first Communion. Yet, the practice for over a century in Catholicism had been Baptism, first Communion at the “age of reason,” followed by Confirmation. This made for much confusion. As a compromise, the Pope established that while there should be no age requirement for Confirmation, neither should there be any variation in the ordering of the sacraments which had been the pattern for Roman Catholics for more than a century.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB now the USCCB) has as one of its purviews the setting of the age of Confirmation. The NCCB attempted to address the question of a national age, first in 1972 in response to the publication of the new order for Confirmation. The Committee on Pastoral Research and Practices offered five possible ages for Confirmation: 1) prior to First Communion, 2) around sixth grade; 3) adolescence; 4) entrance to adulthood, and 5) during adulthood. After receiving its report the NCCB decided not to adopt an age different from the one stated in the Rite of Confirmation (the age set by the diocesan bishop). The result was that any bishop was permitted to set a later age as normative within his own diocese. Turner adds that the proposal passed by majority vote. In 1984 the bishops again considered the question of the proper age for Confirmation due to the flexibility permitted in canon law. Again the bishops were unable to determine an age for Confirmation. Prevailing catechetical theory suggests that people learn better as they reflect upon the experiences they encounter. These theorists would encourage mystagogical reflection as well as teaching to better foster spiritual growth and offer instruction in the faith.\(^\text{13}\) In the end, Confirmation is often viewed as a rite of adolescence. In Roman

Catholicism the age of Confirmation varies widely from diocese to diocese and may include those who have attained the age of discretion to those in the 11th grade.\(^\text{14}\)

### 8.5 Implications of All the Variations

What immediately becomes apparent as one examines all of the models offered by Turner is how many variations there are even within a given model. Yet, it also reveals why it is such a challenge for the Church to develop a coherent systematic theology with respect to Confirmation. If one is Baptized, then Confirmed, and finally receives Communion, one may be following the ancient Church’s pattern for the rites, but this depends upon how close in succession each of the rites are observed. Moreover, Confirmation would be seen very differently if the sacraments of initiation are received in close succession. In the case of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS), for example, the fact that there is a significant period of time between Baptism and Confirmation suggests that Confirmation prepares one to receive the Eucharist. It also means, because of the pattern which is observed, that Confirmation is often understood as the completion of a period of catechetical study and examination by the congregation’s elders—i.e., a “graduation.” Further, Repp encourages congregations in his denomination to consider allowing Confirmands to receive their First Communion at the same worship service during which they are confirmed.

Repp has argued that since the Confirmation and Eucharist are so closely related, celebrating the two on the same day will help young people see that the “Lord’s Supper, not

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\(^\text{14}\) In the Roman Catholic Church if one has never received the sacrament of Confirmation and is dying, the anointing rite for the sick and dying may be used in conjunction with the Sacrament of Confirmation. Oils for the sick are used for the former, while the chrism would be used for the latter, even as part of an amalgamated rite. If the dying person has not been baptized, a priest may baptize, confirm, and then commune the person. If no bishop is available, the priest may conduct all three of the rites. If no priest is available, a deacon may celebrate all of the rites with the exception of Confirmation. However, the deacon is permitted to chrismate making the sign of the cross on the crown of the head. If the deacon is unavailable, a lay Eucharistic minister may baptize and then offer viaticum. If none of these are available anyone may baptize. Ibid., 140-43.
Confirmation, is the real climax of the day.”\textsuperscript{15} However, when first Communion follows so closely after Confirmation, it is hard to gain a sense of the sacraments as each being sacraments of initiation. On the other hand, it could be argued that one in fact is being initiated in this case into communing membership.

8.6 Adults Being Confirmed

For the person who is received into the Roman Catholic Church in adulthood, the rites may offer a unique perspective as she or he receives Holy Communion for the first time in a Catholic Church following Confirmation. In this circumstance, it is far easier to see the sequence of the sacraments functioning as sacraments of initiation. From a Roman Catholic perspective, those who are received into the Roman Catholic Church from other “ecclesial communities” often raise new ritual concerns amid the uniqueness of their initiation process. Many of the candidates for reception who witness catechumens being signed into the book and receiving the imposition of the sign of the cross in the catechumenal rites may become envious. Some express wishing they had not yet been baptized so they might experience the rich rites found in the catechumenate. There is often the temptation, despite rubrics to the contrary, to blend catechumenal classes with those who are candidates for reception. Another issue among candidates themselves can be differing levels of church experience. Some may feel reasonably comfortable with the Bible, while others are practically Biblically illiterate.

Turner shares his concern regarding blending the rites of the catechumenate with the reception of adult members from other traditions. He is particularly concerned about receiving adults into the church who have already been baptized, and at the same liturgy receiving catechumens through the sacrament of Holy Baptism. He is not alone in this

\textsuperscript{15} Repp, Confirmation in the Lutheran Church, 226.
concern, nor in the uneasiness over the blending of these two rites at the vigil of Easter, as it conveys precisely the wrong message on the Feast of the Resurrection.\textsuperscript{16} Max Johnson has put it this way:

Let's stop receiving “converts” at the Easter Vigil so that the Easter Vigil and the Lenten catechumenate itself can function properly in relationship to baptismal preparation and renewal in a way consistent with its origins and with the primary intent of its modern restoration. In so doing let's all take seriously the preference of the \textit{National Statutes} in order that any and all ecumenical confusion about baptism be avoided. Quite simply, there is neither historical precedent for the reception/confirmation of baptized Christians from other traditions at \textit{Easter}, nor any sound \textit{theological} reasons why such \textit{should} take place. If anything, the theology of baptism itself mitigates against such a practice and it is baptismal theology—not convenience and not some vague notion of inclusivity—that must shape pastoral practice at this point.\textsuperscript{17}

Despite Johnson and Turner’s concern in this model, the sequence of the rites become the same for both catechumens and candidates. In both cases Baptism and Confirmation precede first Communion. However, matters are confused when affirmers are confirmed so as to be received into the Roman Catholic Church at the same liturgy when adults are baptized. As Johnson suggests, the catechumenate is the time for baptismal preparation. Those who are candidates awaiting the rite of reception are seeking to faithfully live out the covenant God made with them in Baptism and to enter into a period of considering their Christian vocations in the world. Turner has proposed that the same considerations for the celebration of the reception of new members should be given as are given to any other rite celebrated by the Church. When couples are prepared to get married, weddings take place. Priests are ordained when they are ready. The sick are anointed when they are ready. Further he suggests when other Christians become Roman Catholic; they do so when they are ready.

\textsuperscript{16} Turner, \textit{When Other Christians Become Catholic}, 157-60.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 160.
The liturgical calendar offers numerous suitable occasions for receiving those who have not previously been in communion with the Bishop of Rome.\(^\text{18}\)

Turner's advice might be well heeded by Protestants as well. While one is not prohibited from receiving Communion if one has not already been received into that denomination, candidates who have been unchurched for years and who enter Protestant congregations have very different needs than catechumens. The concerns which Turner and Johnson raise cautioning against the blending of rites for catechumens and candidates is one which might be carefully considered by both Protestants and Roman Catholics.

When adults are to be Baptized, it may be helpful to follow a pattern in which they publicly affirm their Baptism at a service some weeks following the Baptismal rite. This has the benefit of permitting some period for participation in the Baptismal ministry of the congregation. The period between their Baptism and such a Confirmation rite may be shaped by a period of mystagogical reflection. Then, at the service at which neophytes affirm their baptism, they may be invited to share the ministry which they have discerned that they are prepared to enter as part of their baptismal living. Thus, it enables both neophyte and the congregation to better see catechesis as not ending with Baptism but as a lifelong pattern. Further, the period of mystagogical reflection enables the baptized to reflect anew upon the experience of having received the Eucharist. Finally the time of mystagogy allows them to reflect more specifically upon their Baptism as lived out in worship, catechesis, and mission in the world.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 161.
8.7 When to Offer First Communion

The various sequences and patterns of the rites certainly make a huge difference with respect to what the rites convey theologically. When the pattern is Baptism, Confirmation, then first Communion, Confirmation may be seen as rite of transition preparing one to receive the Eucharist. When the rite of Confirmation is observed after some time has passed since Baptism, the rite of Confirmation comes to be inevitably seen as “completing Baptism.” It can also suggest that the Confirmand is now worthy to receive Eucharist because she or he has earned it after so long a time of waiting. This further perpetuates the notion that Confirmation is a “right and privilege” and that the Sacrament of the Altar is a “right and privilege” of Confirmation.

When one is baptized, receives first Communion and is then confirmed, the sequence of rites conveys a completely different theology. The first Communion may become, as Aquinas saw it, “nourishment” which sustains a baptized person until the day of her or his Confirmation. Confirmation may not be seen as a rite of initiation so much as a rite marking the transition from one station to another, or one age to another. As we saw in Chapter 3, Aquinas stated, “Nourishment both precedes growth, as its cause; and follows it, as maintaining the perfection of size and power in man. Consequently, the Eucharist can be placed before Confirmation, as Dionysius places it (Eccl. Hier. iii, iv), and can be placed after it, as the Master does (iv, 2,8).”¹⁹ The Synod of Lambeth mandated that first Communion follow first Penance and Confirmation. This was the pattern which Protestants inherited from the Medieval Church. However, as noted in Chapter 4, in the middle of the 19th century, many countries, with the exception of Spain, came to adopt a French custom of

confirming at the age of 12 after a child had received her or his first Communion. While Rome at first opposed the practice, popular piety took hold. The new custom had the effect of reversing the order of the sacraments and returning to the order as suggested as permissible by Thomas Aquinas. As David Power has noted, participation in the hope of glory and in Christ’s sacred mysteries cannot take place apart from being nourished at the table of our Lord’s body and blood.\(^{20}\) Nevertheless, delays in Confirmation often did have the effect of providing more time for catechetical instruction prior to Confirmation.\(^{21}\)

As noted in Chapter 2, the Epistle writer of the First Letter of John certainly echoes the pneumatology of the Fourth Evangelist. In I John 5:6, however, the order of the substances which flow from Jesus’ side are reversed: the writer speaks of water, then the blood; and, further, that the Spirit is that which makes this testimony true. Interpreted sacramentally, this passage seems to support the later instruction in Didache 9:5 that no one comes to the Eucharist except by way of Baptism. Similarly, the Parable of the wedding guest found without the wedding garment in Matthew 22:11-14 may well caution against receiving one at the Eucharist who has not been first clothed in the wedding garment of Baptism, in anticipation of the bridegroom’s return. Such texts suggest that one receives the Sacrament of the Altar by having been joined and initiated into Christ, and may caution the Church against what often goes for “radical welcome” or the free reception of those who have not been baptized to the sacrament of the Eucharist. One is initiated as a disciple through Baptism. In the Supper our Lord as host invites disciples to his supper. As noted in Chapter 4, even Stoddard’s use of the phrase “converting ordinance” was a phrase connected with the First Great Awakening, and referred to one who was already baptized. While John


\(^{21}\) Marsh, Gift of Community: Baptism and Confirmation, 136.
Wesley utilized the phrase in the midst of his reforms, he too was referring to those who were baptized and in need of conversion. In neither case was the phrase “converting ordinance” an argument for receiving the unbaptized at the Lord’s Table.

In the second chapter we looked at Mark 10 and its parallels in Matthew 19:14 and Luke 18:15 where Jesus blesses children. These texts have been used especially by the Reformers as they sought Scriptural texts which supported the Baptism of infants amid the pressures exerted by the Anabaptists. We argued that these texts should above all give the Church great pause as she reflects upon the admission of children to the sacraments of initiation. If the church is to take seriously that she μὴ κολύσετε τὰ βρέφη, then her members need to ask that if they practice pedobaptism are they being disingenuous if we do not also receive τὰ βρέφη who are baptized to the Sacrament of the Altar. It is worth recalling also that in the West the custom of denying those who had been baptized and chrismated from the altar came in 13th century when it was argued that the Church could admit the youngest to the waters of life without also admitting them to the Table.

There should be no reason, therefore, to bar the baptized from the altar. Children are not expected to wait to be fed, nor are they denied solid food, until after they have learned the etiquette of sitting at the table. Children would starve without being nourished. Instead, we feed children first with mother’s milk, and then they are seated at a chair at the table. Even at the table they receive ground and pureed food, since they lack teeth, but then enjoy solid food. All the while, children are being nourished and are developing the skills and knowledge of table manners. By receiving those who have been baptized (even our youngest baptized members) at the altar, we nourish them and feed them (as Aquinas had suggested) toward the day when they will receive the sacrament of Confirmation.
In summary, those who are not baptized, or those Protestants, who regularly attend the Mass in Roman Catholic Church, should be invited to enter into the catechesis or the separate track of the catechumenate for those preparing for Baptism and Communion. Eastern Catholics follow the pattern of Baptism, including chrismation, and then Eucharist. In the West, Protestants and Roman Catholics should follow the same pattern of the Sacraments of initiation as a norm—Baptism with conjointly consecrated chrism, Eucharist, and then Confirmation by a presbyter (as a sacrament of memory). Following this pattern, Confirmation can be seen as a sacrament of initiation, which completes the process of initiation, but does not complete baptism.

8.8 Reception by Way of Confirmation

Paul Turner notes that among the rites of Confirmation used by Protestant denominations, those of Anglicans and Lutherans in North American share many similarities, yet historically the Anglican rite contained a distinctive characteristic. In ages past, if one wanted to become an Anglican from any denomination, Confirmation by a bishop was required. At the time of the first publication of Turner's *Confirmation: The Baby in King Solomon’s Court*, many of the Full Communion Agreements between American and Canadian Anglicans were still being clarified and, in some cases, yet to be ratified. Today the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) under *Called to Common Mission* (CCM), and the Canadian Anglicans and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) under *The Waterloo Declaration* (WD) are in a Full Communion agreement. Both traditions see in each other mutually recognized ministries, common understandings of the gospel, and each other’s sacraments. There is also a full

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interchangeability of ministries. WD committed the two denominations: “to receive one another's lay members, when moving from one church to the other with the same status (baptized/communicant/confirmed) which they held in their first church.” 23 The Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations of the ECUSA stated that Canon I.17.1(c) was adjusted by the General Convention to direct that Lutherans were to be received as members of the Episcopal Church through reception and not through Confirmation. 24 This latter document is important since Episcopalians entered into Full Communion with the Moravian Church of America, and the United Methodist Church (UMC). As we noted in Chapter 4, in 2012 a Full Communion Agreement was ratified between the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME), African Union Methodist Protestant Church (AUMP), Union American Methodist Episcopal Church (UAME) and the UMC. A Full Communion Agreement for many years has existed between the United Church of Christ (UCC), and the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA). The ELCA has Full Communion Agreements not only with the ECUSA, but also with the UCC, PCUSA, the Moravian Church in America, and the UMC. In addition, the ELCA has a Covenant relationship with the AMEZ, which carries with it mutual recognition of Sacraments and ministries with the possibility for joint and interchangeability of ministries. All of these agreements mean that the relevant denominations may receive members from other congregations utilizing the rite of “Affirmation of Baptism” or


“Reaffirmation of Baptism” without needing to re-confirm members coming from other churches.

While joining an LCMS congregation from another denomination will require Confirmation before one is admitted to the Sacrament of the Altar, transfer among most Protestant denominations who use a rite of Confirmation requires only an Affirmation or Reaffirmation of Baptism for those seeking to join, and certainly for those who are already communing. With rare exceptions, therefore, among Protestants, even those who transfer between denominations, Confirmation only need be celebrated once.

Philip H. Pfatteicher, in his discussion of the “Affirmation of Baptism” rite in the *LBW* states, “Confirmation neither implies joining the church nor overshadows baptism. It is an affirmation of Baptism, a way of saying ‘yes’ to Baptism. It is not therefore an unrepeatable, once-for-all act but something that can be done at several points in one’s life.”²⁵ Pfatteicher is in some ways blurring the distinctions between Affirmation of Baptism in its numerous uses and Confirmation itself which is a specific usage of the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism. At the time of Pfatteicher’s writing, the ELCA had not been formed and there were not Full Communion Agreements, which ended requirements for the (re)Confirmation of members moving from one denomination to another. Thus, in light of more recent ecumenical developments, there is no reason for repeated Confirmations among Lutherans or other Protestants.

In summary, almost as a general rule, Confirmation for most Protestants should be as it is for Roman Catholics. Confirmation need not be repeated. However, Affirmation of Baptism may be used, as the need to mark transitions in one’s life makes it appropriate.

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Under our proposal for conjoint consecration of chrism for use at Baptism, when one seeks to join the Roman Catholic Church from those Protestant denominations using such chrism, one would not need to be re-chrismated, re-confirmed or reconciled through handlaying. One only need be chrismated at Baptism and confirmed once with handlaying and prayer. This of course is contingent upon a future joint agreement through dialogue, and that at some future point, a Roman Catholic acceptance of a Protestant chrismation at Baptism. Nevertheless, there remain numerous occasions when an affirmation of Baptism by all of the Baptized and an entire congregation may serve to appropriately ritualize transitions in one’s life.

8.9 Conversion

As noted in chapter 7, Baptism also sacramentalizes conversion. Yet among many who may have been Baptized, or who have been confirmed for many years, they may experience or undergo a transformation or conversion experience. In addition, they may or may not be active in the life of a worshiping community prior to their conversion. We need to recognize that transformations and conversion is at the very heart of the entire initiatory process. Jesus’ proclamation and preaching called for a metanoia, a turning around. In the last chapter we established that the Sacraments of Initiation themselves mark five kinds of conversion: affective, intellectual, personal moral, socio-political, and religious. It is important to recognize those turning points in a person’s life and ritualize them. If a person has not been confirmed, these turning points, even in adulthood, may be the appropriate time to consider Confirmation through affirmation of Baptism, prayer and handlaying utilizing a prayer for Confirmation. On the other hand, for those who have been confirmed and who undergo conversion, an affirmation or reaffirmation of Baptism, which does not include the handlaying, accompanied by the retracing of the sign of the cross with the prayer for
Confirmed, is appropriate. In either case, chrism should not be used, since under our proposals one was chrismated with conjointly consecrated chrism at Baptism.

8.10 First Communion, Then Confirmation?

As noted in Chapter 3, the Fourth Lateran Council established that one could not go to first Confession before the “Age of Reason.” The Synod of Lambeth established that one could not commune until one had been confirmed, and one could not be confirmed until offering the first Sacrament of Penance at the “Age of Reason.” Then, as noted in Chapter 4, in 1910 Pope Saint Pius X promulgated the decree *Quam singulari*, which established that at the “age of discretion or the age of reason” (the age of seven) one might participate in the first Sacrament of Penance and then receive the Eucharist. This had the effect of moving the age of Confirmation back. Even though *Quam singulari* did not discuss Confirmation, the shift continued to make the already murky matter of the age appropriateness for Confirmation an even murkier matter. *Quam singulari* was reverting to stages of life as they were understood not only in the second millennium but also in the ancient Latin understanding of childhood development. In short, there is no reason to deny the Sacrament of the Altar to one who is baptized. Communion may be that which nourishes a person in preparation for Confirmation.

8.11 Appropriate Time for Confirmation?

After all we have reviewed and proposed, when is Confirmation appropriate? A few things may be said with some clarity. Confirmation only needs to be celebrated once, although there may be reasons in a person’s life, or in the life of a congregation, to celebrate the “Affirmation of Baptism.” Membership transfers, transfers to a new denomination, a return to the congregation, a conversion which has taken place in one’s life through the Holy Spirit,
or entry into a new Christian vocation may be reasons to observe such an “Affirmation of Baptism.”

Among Eastern Catholics the Sacrament of Confirmation through handlaying and chrismation at the same liturgy as the baptismal washing, is and will remain the norm. As discussed in Chapter 7.6, by ecumenical agreement in the Bari Statement affirms that Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians agree that despite historical differences in the understanding of when the Sacrament of Confirmation takes place, the practice observed by Eastern Christians of Chrismation is recognized as Confirmation by Roman Catholics.26 Therefore among Eastern Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, the norm of Confirmation in infancy should be acknowledged and affirmed by Western Traditions.

Similarly, as noted in Chapter 8.2, among certain heritage groups among Roman Catholics infancy remains the time for Confirmation. Yet among many Western Christians there are those who are led through their congregations by the Holy Spirit to practice the Confirmation of younger children who are beyond infancy in a rite separated from Baptism. This often has found greater appeal among many Protestants and Roman Catholics. Yet, among Western Christians, there may even be reason to wait until the teenage years.

In other cases, adults who have never been baptized may not be led to Confirmation until adulthood, subsequent to their Baptism. Some may seek to be confirmed after having been baptized as part of the catechumenate of adults, then waiting for a period before being confirmed. This is the pattern in the catechumenate utilized by some Protestant denominations. This model permits a period for mystagogical reflection and the ability to actually consider one’s ministry. Among Roman Catholics, Confirmation, whenever it takes place, means that one is properly counted among the laity. Being counted among the laity

26 The Bari Statement, 43.3.
means one is equipped for new ministries in the Church. Among many Protestants, after Confirmation one often assumes some responsibility for voting or serving in congregational governance. Thus, at a practical level, one may see increased opportunities for ministry in congregations. Finally, one who has never been confirmed may receive the sacrament of Confirmation as a part of viaticum.

So when is Confirmation most age appropriate? Part of the answer is found in the messiness of life lived under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That is to say, one comes to Confirmation when the Holy Spirit is ready, and often, for many of us, that defies our own timelines and seems quite messy. Roman, Medieval or modern stages of childhood or adult development are not the factor which determines the timing. Nor is it determined by any inherent “right,” or anxiety for “fire insurance.” Confirming congregations are those who are guided by the Holy Spirit and who confirm baptized members, not according to a set schedule, but according to the discernment of when the Holy Spirit dictates. However, we need to be especially mindful of the need for communal discernment when we speak of being guided by the Holy Spirit, in order to avoid the modernist obsession with individualism. The same precaution applies to assisting candidates for Confirmation in determining the appropriate time for the rite of Confirmation to proceed. As noted in Chapter 8.3, there are many juridical considerations to take into account when considering the level of partition in the life of the Church to which one who is not yet confirmed may be limited. No congregation relishes the notion of having large numbers of octogenarians who have never been confirmed. Therefore, while the Holy Spirit establishes the timeline for Confirmation, it is nevertheless to be encouraged in the context of communal discernment, to maintain the integrity of Christian initiation. Such discernment of the work of the Spirit is the task of
congregations or judicatories who may assist candidates by establishing a normative pattern as to the best age for Confirmation, while maintaining a degree of flexibility which may be dictated by particular circumstances in the life of each candidate.

8.12 Toward a Renewed Theology

As we have noted throughout this dissertation, Confirmation is often regarded as a sacrament in need of a theology. The Ely Report had argued that the Church had rested “too heavily” on Acts 8 and 19 to make a Biblical connection to the rite of Confirmation. J.D.C. Fisher disputed this and contended that the story of handlaying in Samaria in Acts 8 as well as Paul’s handlaying among those who had been baptized by Apollos in Ephesus, offered a solid Scriptural warrant for the handlaying at Confirmation for a bestowal of the Spirit.27.

As suggested in Chapter 2, there are obvious problems with Fisher’s assertion. I have sought to make an original contribution to the theology of Confirmation by suggesting it is not helpful to seek Biblical proof texts to justify Confirmation. Instead, I have proffered that Biblical texts may inform the theology of Confirmation more broadly. To this end, I have suggested that Confirmation is informed by John 20 and the promised Paraclete. I would submit that, contrary to other biblical approaches to the theology of Confirmation, John 20 is much closer to what is being conveyed in Confirmation. Even though in the resurrection appearances in the Fourth Gospel there is no handlaying, per se, handlaying in confirmation serves as the sacramental sign of the outpouring of the Spirit. In Chapter 2, I further suggested that 2 Timothy 1:5-7, where the Apostle seems to commend handlaying to Timothy, may come the closest to giving some direct Scriptural warrant for a handlaying removed from baptism. Nevertheless, beyond the promise of John 20 and the practice

commended in 2 Timothy, there remain definite challenges to the Church developing a common liturgical practice of Confirmation.

8.12.1 Challenges to a Common Rite

Work toward an ecumenically informed, coherent liturgical praxis within the liturgies and rites of the Church has faced new challenges within both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism in recent years. The challenges can best be illustrated by modern efforts to offer common English liturgical texts for Christians in the Western Church.

In 1969 the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET) was formed. Its mission was to serve a group of national associations of ecumenical liturgists in the English-speaking world. Their work has been concerned with developing and promoting common liturgical texts in English and, where possible, to share a common lectionary. The *Book of Common Prayer 1979 BCP 1979*, *The Book of Alternate Services* (BAS) and the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW) utilized the common ICET texts. The ICET was succeeded by the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC) and, in 1988, it published modern language versions of ancient texts of the Christian liturgy. Collectively, the textual translation formed the texts contained in “Prayers We Have in Common,” which was accompanied by introductory notes and commentary under the title *Praying Together*. Both Roman Catholics and various Protestant denominations have utilized particular variants to these ELLC texts.28

With the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) the ELCA joined the UMC, PCUSA and United Church of Canada in utilizing ELLC texts. The *ELW* contains ten musical settings of the Mass, along with the daily office, and other rites in which ELLC texts are employed. In many Lutheran congregations the *ELW* often shares pew space with *With One Voice*,

Hymnal Supplement [1991], published by GIA Publications, or even some copies of the LBW. Increasingly, resources themselves are downloaded in full worship leaflets which contain the entire liturgy.

In many congregations, worship resources are not printed but instead are projected on screens or even on individually held electronic tablets and pads. Celebrate God’s Presence (CGP) used by the United Church of Canada is a resource which, in addition to being in a three ring binder is also available on two CD-ROMs for the printing of liturgies and rites. The disparity between resources using ICET texts and those using ELLC texts only serves to illustrate how little uniformity there exists in the English language translations of liturgical texts across the Western Church. Many of the new resources in use among all but the Anglicans include numerous options and rubrical suggestions, thus illustrating how many Protestants have become liturgically pluralistic.

Many denominations prize the liturgical freedom and indigenous contextually which have been afforded by providing numerous options within liturgical resources. But this freedom does come at a price. Frank Senn, for example, laments this reality noting that prior to the Reformation, while there was no such thing as a common missal for the whole of the western church, missals were produced by dioceses. Thus there was both a greater sense of theological catholicity without strict uniformity across the Church.29

Recently the “Editio Typica Tertia Emendata”30 of the Missale Romanum and the English text of the Missale Romanum (2011) were issued under Pope Benedict XVI. As its name implies Tertia Emendata is a new amended edition of the text which had been

approved in 2000 by Pope John Paul II and had appeared in 2002. The new edition of the English edition of this *Missale Romanum* also contains numerous variants to the ELLC texts which are specific to the Latin rite.\(^{31}\) However, the rubrics in the new *Missale Romanum* go to the other extreme of the *ELW*. While the rubrics in the *ELW* have been criticized for being vague and intentionally designed to allow for local taste and custom (or even allow for the whims of presider),\(^{32}\) the rubrics in the new *Missale Romanum* insist upon strict uniformity.

If we are to take seriously the endeavor of bringing together the scholarship from various Western traditions in order to inform a coherent liturgical praxis on Confirmation, it will be important to be mindful of the recent tendency illustrated by the recent resources of Protestants and Roman Catholics. Theological reflection, as it applies to Confirmation, should involve the principle of catholicity, albeit without undue uniformity in liturgical texts. The recent proclivity of Protestant resources seems to militate against catholicity by appearing to oppose any hint of uniformity. At the same time, the recent edition of the *Missale Romanum* seems to insist upon a strict uniformity as the primary basis for unity. However, our unity is founded in Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit we offer our worship, and in whose name we gather. It is through the presence of Christ that, as a community gathered, we share in the Word and in the breaking of bread and thus experience ecclesial unity.

As it applies to Confirmation, it is through the one in whose name we are gathered, and in whose Triune name we are baptized, that we also are called to remember and are enabled to live out our common Baptism in Confirmation. This abiding principle, which


\(^{32}\) Based on my own observations, discussions with other ELCA clergy and my own liturgical usage and worship planning.
should inform our theology of Confirmation and should inform a coherent liturgical praxis, takes catholicity seriously. Such a liturgical praxis will take equally seriously the liturgical texts, including Biblical citations, Creeds, prayers, and the language of these texts. The placement, use, and translation of such texts need to be done with sensitivity and with integrity. The texts which we use as a part of the rite should be consistent with our theology and share enough commonality in language and shape that they are recognizable to our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ across the Western Church. The language of these texts and our liturgical praxis should reflect our commonly developed theology and inform what we are in fact doing. In this way we can seek to avoid haphazardness or the whims of the local presider or community, thereby maintaining a sense of liturgical catholicity.

Ecumenical dialogue partners often may reach an ecumenical agreement, albeit with differences. Theological nuances which are not Church dividing should be reflected in the rites or liturgy of a given community or among a particular culture which utilizes them. At the same time, sound liturgical praxis, which appreciates catholicity without uniformity, should permit the *charisms* and subtle differences in language to be reflected in the liturgical texts within a given rite. Yet, should ecumenical agreement be reached, with respect to Confirmation, those agreements should be reflected in the rite of Confirmation utilized by Protestant denominations and Roman Catholics alike. With such agreement informing our liturgical praxis, a Roman Catholic should be able to recognize within the prayers and the liturgical actions in a Lutheran congregation celebrating Confirmation, that the Sacrament of Confirmation is taking place. At the same time, a Methodist should be able to recognize in the prayers and liturgical actions of a Confirmation set within a Mass at the local Roman Catholic Church that a person is affirming her or his Baptism.
8.12.2 What We Have Discovered: A Summary

At the risk of repetition, we are at the point in this study where a summary of some of the major findings and implications are in order. From the outset, we began with Scripture because, for both Protestants and Roman Catholics alike, it is Scripture which is our primary source for our theology. Here we discovered that it is very difficult to find any text which lends scriptural warrant, much less a dominical warrant, to a practice of separating handlaying, with or without chrismation, from Baptism. While Hebrews 6 certainly speaks of teachings regarding what would seem to be a postbaptismal handlaying, the text gives us no certainty that there was a delay between the washing and the handlaying in the community concerned. The only text in our survey which would appear to support a handlaying removed by some period of time from Baptism is 2 Timothy 1. What is significant in this case is that, while the author of the letters to Timothy commends the practice of a postbaptismal handlaying, there is no mention of chrismation associated with it. It is evident that practices concerning baptismal rites seem to vary widely throughout the New Testament Church. Nevertheless, in our survey of the texts that have informed Confirmation theology, we examined texts in four categories: 1) the Holy Spirit, 2) gesture of handlaying, 3) anointing with oil and marking, 4) profession of faith. Grouping texts under these headings, we offered exegetical gleanings to help inform a renewed theology and practice of Confirmation.

From the texts, we have determined that Holy Scripture testifies to the fact that the work of God’s Holy Spirit was active in creation, in the work of salvation history, and is continually poured out in the life of the church. The Holy Spirit has consecrated the baptismal waters from our Lord’s own pierced side. The Holy Spirit testifies also to the truth of the gospel against false teaching. We have seen how one’s birthright should not be
trivialized and taken for granted, for this is a birthright which Christians receive as they are washed in the waters of Holy Baptism. Christians are also called as disciples to careful discernment. The Holy Spirit works where and when it pleases, and is at work among God’s people for the sake of their work in Christ. Further, children serve as a sign of the least in the Kingdom. To receive the least is to receive Jesus, and to receive Jesus is to receive the one who sent him.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, we examined handlaying as blessing, adoption, and as a sign of continuity from one generation to the next as well as a sign of continuity in the promises of God made through the ancestors. We saw how handlaying in Matthew functioned both as a blessing and a dismissal from the larger gathering. For Luke-Acts the laying on of hands after Baptism functions to effect one of three things: 1) healing, 2) commissioning for being sent on mission, 3) a call upon the Holy Spirit to correct and bring one from error into truth. The author of Hebrews may be interpreted to suggest that Confirmation, like Baptism, is not repeatable and that the faithful are called to mature in the faith and not always remain concerned with repeating the most rudimentary elements of their catechesis. The author of 2 Timothy suggests that in handlaying one receives the rekindling of the faith. Marking and anointing in the Scriptures, as in the story of Cain, serves to denote who we are and whose we are. As children of God we always remain within the promise. At the same time, we also remain sinful beings who are in need of God’s grace and forgiveness. Such marks themselves are not prophylactic, rather they point to that which the sign signifies, namely that we are God’s own. The practice of chrismation with oil has a long and rich history dating back to the Pentateuch, Wisdom literature, and the prophets.
In light of these rich images and their connections in the New Testament writings, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* commends the churches to consider the rich use of this ancient symbol in baptismal rites. We are reminded that to be anointed is to be and receive the σφραγίς. Such a sign points to the promise which it signifies, and the sign gives assurance that we are prepared for the Day of Judgment leading to redemption at the coming παρουσία. We are also reminded by Joshua that before we can confess the one who has called us by name, we are compelled to choose to reject false gods, and to turn in confessing the one who has led our ancestors in the faith. We are reminded in Jeremiah and Nehemiah of our need to affirm the covenant God has made with us. In so doing we come to truly deepen our “knowing” of the one who has made covenant with us.

As disciples of Christ, we are called to see the teachings and ministry of Jesus through the lens of the cross. As we affirm that charge of discipleship, we are enabled to become faithful cross bearers in our own discipleship. From the Fourth Gospel, we are reminded that it is God who has called us through his Holy Spirit into Christ. It is by God’s Holy Spirit that we are strengthened and enabled to keep even the teachings that are hard. In Titus we are reminded that our Baptism is in the Spirit, and that the Spirit continues its work in the ongoing work to strengthen us in the faith. In 2 Clement we are reminded that affirming the covenant enables us to keep our Baptism undefiled.

In Baptism, we are washed by water and the Word, through which we are connected to the promises of God. We die to sin and are raised to a new life in Christ. In our paschal dying we are reborn. Christ clings to us and we to him as we are covered in the righteousness which belongs to Christ. We are anointed as “christoi.” Through Baptism we have been imparted with his character. We are strengthened and fortified for our participation in the
body of Christ. We have renounced our old master, the devil, and have been manumitted from slavery to sin. We are adopted as sons and daughters with whom God is well pleased, as signified by handlaying. By the consignation we are marked with the cross of Christ. We bear this emblem as do others who now belong to Christ. We are re-clothed in a baptismal garment, which reminds us that we have been clothed in Christ. In receiving a candle we are reminded of our calling to be the *ekklesiasia* in the world. The Church is called, gathered and sent by the Holy Spirit. Yet, we are not the light; we are called to reflect the light, which is Christ, into the world.

Historically, our comprehensive review of early Church and Patristic sources demonstrated that while Confirmation was developed as a redundant episcopal handlaying and chrismation rite amid the Carolingian reforms in an effort to assure that bishops fulfilled their responsibility for teaching, it does not complete Baptism; rather, Confirmation flows out of Baptism. There is, as the Reformers had suggested, an important catechetical component to Confirmation. The ultimate goal of our Baptism is our mortal death, and thus Baptism is complete only in resurrection on the last day. The Church herself is a sacrament, and so Confirmation is a sacrament of memory.

Ecumenical dialogue and collaboration on liturgical texts have lent a great deal of convergence on liturgies of the Church and mutual understandings of ministry and Sacraments. An important contribution of *SC* was to make remembering Baptism a key element of Confirmation rites. In Confirmation there is an affirmation as the confirmand remembers with the whole congregation the baptismal covenant. There is also a place for the presider to offer a prayer over all the confirmands that they might be strengthened and built up by the Holy Spirit through their continued participation in the body of Christ as they live
in the covenant of their Baptism. They are reminded—even God is reminded—in prayer of the promises which God made with the candidate in Holy Baptism. The sign of the cross may be traced as a reminder of the sign which the candidate received in baptism.

However, one need not be re-chrismated in Confirmation. If bishops or those who function as bishops conjointly confect chrism at the Eucharist for use in Baptism, the whole Church may share in the consecrated chrism. For this reason, presbyters may preside at the sacrament of Confirmation and need not re-chrismate confirmands. In this way, a theology of Confirmation flowing out of Baptism should not serve as a buttress to a deficient baptismal theology. Confirmation is a Sacrament of the Church, a sacrament of memory in which the whole community is seen as continually receiving the outpoured Paraclete Spirit. Thus, if we were to point to a primary text which is sacramentalized in Confirmation it could well be John 20, not Acts 8 or 19 as was often suggested by the Carolingians or contemporary sources such as Fisher. The Paraclete, promised by Jesus and poured out as He breathed upon his disciples following his appearance among them after his resurrection, is the continual out-pouring of the Spirit connected to Jesus’ promise in the “farewell discourse” of John 14-17.

Ecclesiologically, Confirmation, properly understood, is a ministry of the whole congregation. It involves catechesis, service and mission in the world, and worship. Since Confirmation is a sign of the outpouring of the Paraclete, it means that the sacrament ritualizes a connection and an active involvement in the two aspects of dienst, as understood by Karl Barth, along with lifelong catechesis. Ritual honesty and commitment to worship by the whole people of God compels us not to exclude children from worship by sending them away to “children’s Church” alternatives. In preparation for Baptism, regardless of age, one
enters a process of catechesis which is a lifelong activity. In many cases this may involve mystagogial catechesis, something which the Church may need to embrace more fully.

We also need to recognize that there are those who experience an inner conversion associated with an outward change in attitude and behavior. We have noted five kinds of conversion: affective, intellectual, personal moral, socio-political, and religious. We need to offer opportunities for those who experience such conversion to affirm their Baptism. If they have not already been confirmed, this may be an invitation to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Otherwise Confirmation, as such, only needs to be received once. However, those who have already been Baptized and Confirmed, and who have experienced conversion or a life transition, or those who are transferring from one congregation to another, or even congregations who wish to corporately affirm Baptism, may do so with an affirmation rite without the Confirmation prayer and handlaying. Due to many of the ecumenical agreements which are in place, those joining another denomination likely do not need to be re-confirmed.33

Under the proposal we have offered, in which chrism for Baptism is conjointly consecrated at the Eucharist by bishops and shared across denominations for use at Baptism, there should not be a need for re-confirmation if one became a Roman Catholic after leaving a Protestant church or denomination. Furthermore, there would be no reason to deny one of any age who is baptized the Eucharist. One comes to the Sacrament of the Altar by way of Baptism, and the Eucharist may be that which nourishes a person in preparation for Confirmation.

33 One exception to this concerns those who join the LCMS from another denomination or Lutheran body.
We also recognized in our study that the answer to the question “At what age is Confirmation most appropriate?” is to be found in the messiness of life lived by the guidance of the Spirit. That is to say, one comes to Confirmation when the Holy Spirit is ready, and for many of us that defies our own timelines. Latin or modern notions of stages of life are not the primary determinant. Finally, we suggested that among the barriers which may prevent congregations from perceiving themselves to be a confirming community are especially those related to popular perceptions of individual rights and/or personal “insurance” against damnation. As far as seasonal and liturgical schedules are concerned, confirming congregations are those who are guided by the Holy Spirit and who confirm baptized members according to the call of the Holy Spirit. Since Confirmation is a sacrament of memory, sacramentalizing the outpouring of the promised Paraclete, it is only appropriate that its timing be itself led by the Holy Spirit’s timetable.

8.12.3 A Proposed Order

From what we have learned in this study I offer the following Proposed Ordo for the purposes of encouraging further ecumenical dialogue:

**A Proposed Rite of Confirmation or Affirmation**

**Introduction**

Presentation of the Confirmands or those making Affirmation

*In order to more clearly convey that Confirmation is a Rite of Christian Initiation (unlike Affirmation), Confirmation and Affirmation should not be celebrated in same service.*

Renunciation (*Possible threelfold form*)

*By the whole congregation.*

Profession of the Faith: The Apostles’ Creed

*By the whole congregation, in interrogatory form.*

For Corporate Affirmation only, move directly to Corporate Affirmation, below.

**for Confirmation only**

Confirmands kneeling

Ambrosian Prayer (for the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit)

*By the whole congregation, with hands outstretched over all confirmands.*

Confirmation Prayer (that God through the gift of the Holy Spirit would confirm)

*By the presider, with handlaying and the sign of the cross (without oil) on each, in turn. (Epiclectic form of prayer is very appropriate)*
This rite provides for either individual affirmation of Baptism to mark the conversion of those who are confirmed, for life transitions, or the reception of new members. The opening portion of the rite permits the presentation of those who are affirming and/or being confirmed. The renunciation is followed by a profession of faith in the interrogatory form of the Creed, recalling Baptism and following the guidance of SC to incorporate the memory of baptism in the Rite for Confirmation. To assist the faithful in baptismal living, all should affirm their baptisms throughout life. In the case of Confirmation, this profession of faith in the presence of the assembly serves as the “second yes” and is reminiscent of the choice to serve the Lord which was asked of the Children of Israel in Joshua 20. In the Creed we confess the one to whom we cling and who clings to us as we profess the subjective faith. We cling to Christ, who is the object of our faith, but we also profess who we believe him to be as Son of the living God and the one who is the very incarnate sign of God’s own self-giving.
The Church is sacrament as the body of Christ, but the Christ whom we confess is the primary sacrament.

The congregation by offering both its profession of faith along with the intent to remain faithful to remaining disciples of Christ, serves to remind us that it is a worshiping community to which we were joined in Holy Baptism and in which we are supported in baptismal living as disciples. This is a community which both worships and is in service (in both senses of *dienst*) through mission in the world, as well as being a catechizing community.

In the Confirmation portion, there is the Ambrosian Prayer community recalling the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit of Isaiah 11 offered by the presider on behalf of the congregation. The congregation may offer outstretched hands as a sign of the community’s blessing and prayer. Having been joined to Christ in Baptism and having received the promises of the Holy Spirit which are understood as his attributes, we receive his character and share in those attributes. In Baptism we are prepared for the prophetic, priestly, and royal ministries of Christ. Then in the Confirmation Prayer, we ask that the Holy Spirit confirm, strengthen and guide the confirmands. The hand of the presider is placed on the head of each confirmand and the prayer is offered over each confirmand separately. The sign of the cross (without chrismation) reminds us of our Baptism and asks that God’s Holy Spirit continue to be active in the lives of the confirmands. A corporate statement of the congregation, celebrating the reception of the confirmands, ritually recognizes that the congregation’s ministry includes being a confirming (strengthening) congregation.

The Corporate Affirmation permits congregations to collectively affirm their baptism. While the use of the asperges for remembering baptism is entirely appropriate with this rite,
it is suggested that retracing of the cross on another’s forehead with water be avoided as it
may easily be confused with a sort of chrismation without oil.

Confirmands may wear a white garment throughout the Confirmation rite from the
beginning of the liturgy. Graduation gowns should be avoided as Confirmation is not
graduation. The white gown worn in Confirmation recalls the baptismal garment in which
one was clothed in the baptism. Stoles for confirmands are not appropriate as they are the
symbol of those ordained to Word and Sacrament, to the diaconate, or to priestly vocation. It
is through Baptism that one is initiated into the body of Christ and joined to the people of
God. A renewed theology and practice of Confirmation compels us to consider carefully
what we are doing in the rite of Confirmation, with due attention to maintaining ritual
honesty as we ritualize and sacramentalize the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.
Chapter 9
Conclusions

Since Confirmation has been viewed by many as a Sacrament (or rite of affirmation) in search of a theology, it was important to begin this study with a Chapter in which we examined Holy Scripture. While Confirmation enjoys no New Testament, much less a dominical, warrant, we found numerous pericopes in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament which have informed and continue to inform postbaptismal handlaying (with or without anointing), and which call the people of God to faithful baptismal living.

In Chapters 3 and 4 we examined a comprehensive range of historical, theological and liturgical texts, ancient and contemporary, giving rise to significant challenges to commonly held presuppositions. I sought in these chapters to offer a more nuanced account of the history of Confirmation, aimed also at providing an important basis for possible future directions in ecumenical dialogue. In the succeeding three chapters, I sought to answer questions raised in Chapter 1, resulting in several key discoveries which offer original contributions for ecumenical consideration:

1) Confirmation can be considered a Sacrament within a broader sacramental economy.

2) The rites of Baptism and Confirmation in various Western traditions demonstrate considerable liturgical and theological convergences, permitting us to affirm both that the Holy Spirit is at work in these rites and, understood within a broader sacramental economy, Confirmation is a Sacrament of the Church.

3) Deficiencies in baptismal theology invariably lead to the view that Confirmation bolsters Baptism. Ecumenical cooperation, inspired by the Second Vatican Council and ecumenical dialogues which followed, have offered fresh perspectives on the nature of the Church, the role of Scripture, and the Sacraments, presenting new ways forward in our common understanding of Confirmation. Properly understood, Confirmation is most appropriately observed as: a) one is moved to affirm their Baptism, in which God’s Holy
Spirit strengthens and firms up the baptized in the faith through the life and ministry of the Church, or b) the Holy Spirit moves us to an affirmation of baptismal faith as a means to celebrate a life transition in the context of the faith of the Church.

Finally, in Chapter 8, “Confirmation: Toward a More Coherent Theology,” a proposed rite for both Confirmation and corporate affirmation of Baptism was put forth, a common liturgical text which seeks to offer catholicity without uniformity. While the ethos of the proposed ordo may reflect the results of the historical, theological and ecclesial biases of its Lutheran author in ways which remain to be examined in the context of further ecumenical dialogue, it is nevertheless intended to respect the distinct pieties and practices among various Western Christian traditions while remaining recognizable among fellow Christians of various traditions.

Other significant findings have also resulted from this study. From the survey of the Scriptures in Chapter 2, we could see that John 20 (and not Acts 2, 8, or 19) offered a better way of understanding the gifts of Confirmation. We encountered rich texts which spoke of adoption and which challenged. We saw in the blessing of children in Mark 10 and its parallels compelling reasons for receiving children and “the least” into the Church and the Sacrament of the altar. Joshua 20 reminded us of the need to renounce false gods and confess and affirm how God has saved us. We saw in 2 Timothy 1:5-7, where the Apostle seems to commend to Timothy handlaying, what may come closest to a direct Scriptural warrant for a handlaying removed from Baptism. We also found in Genesis rich stories of handlaying as adoption, and in Isaiah the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit – which are gifts bestowed to Christ who, in turn, grants them also to us in baptism. Overall, this survey offered original contributions to the way in which Scripture was used to understand the theology and practice of Confirmation.
In the next chapter, in which we undertook a comprehensive examination of the history of Confirmation to the dawn of the Reformation, we examined not only those texts which are considered liturgies, but also theological treatises which informed liturgical practices. As a result, we found evidence of the liturgical actions of handlaying, chrismation or consignation very early in the Patristic period. In some cases we witnessed texts which revealed all three liturgical actions in one source. These texts helped us to appreciate the rich theology of Baptism before a rite of redundant handlaying and chrismation was created in the Carolingian period. We then examined how early theologies were redacted to support the new Sacrament of Confirmation in the West, and I suggested that Confirmation actually developed during the Carolingian Reforms at a time when Arianism remained very strong, even among the baptized. Later in Chapters 6 and 7, I referred back to Chapter 3’s more nuanced understanding of the beginnings of Confirmation, arguing that in a postmodern world we may find ourselves in a similar predicament as the Carolingian reformers. Thus Chapter 3 offered original contributions, based on more recent historical studies, which offer new insights into our historical understandings of when, why and how Confirmation developed.

In Chapter 4 we continued to examine the history of Confirmation from the Reformation to the present, proceeding with attention to how the Reformers from the time of Waldo understood the need to recover the primacy of God’s Word in guiding the Church. We explored the changes in understanding around Confirmation which took place through the succeeding centuries of the Church to the present. Building on the discoveries of both Chapter 3 and 4, I sought to again draw upon newer historical perspectives in order to lead to a better theological understanding of Confirmation.
In Chapter 5 we viewed Confirmation within a broader sacramental economy, concluding with the Second Vatican Council that the Church was a Sacrament with Christ as primary Sacrament. We suggested ways in which some Lutherans, in particular, might appreciate an anthropology from their own heritage, assisting that denomination toward accepting the Church as a Sacrament. Since the Church may be understood as a Sacrament, her worship, Word, and rites may be seen as Sacraments, as can Confirmation. With this in mind, Chapter 6 examined how, within a broader sacramental economy, each tradition’s rites might be considered as a Sacrament, and how in all of them, through prayer, the Holy Spirit is understood by the faithful to be at work. We suggested Confirmation may serve as a Sacrament of memory as we remember our Baptism. It is also a Sacrament through handlaying and prayer, in which we are reminded of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit and the outpouring of the Paraclete in John 20. By linking Confirmation to John 20, the Sacrament as sign of the Paraclete is linked to a dominical promise. In the Baptismal rite, I further suggested that there is ample support in the Church’s tradition which would permit presbyters to use confected chrism for chrismation on the forehead. I argued that mutually confected chrism at Baptism could lead to recognition that in Baptism, chrismation and consignation of the forehead by a Presbyter would bring the neophyte into what Roman Catholics regard as the “Apostolate of the Laity.” Such chrismation therefore might offer a way forward to the reception of Protestants to Full Communion with the Church of Rome. These contributions concerning Confirmation rites could be utilized in ecumenical dialogue, perhaps offering concrete steps forward toward full visible unity.

In Chapter 7, I continued to develop these ideas proposing, for example, that bishops might conjointly consecrate chrism at the Eucharist. Such consecrated chrism might then be
shared with other Full Communion partners for use in chrismation on the forehead by presbyters as a part of Baptism. This would restore a custom of the Patristic period and would therefore be the only time that chrism need be used. There would be no need for redundant chrismation at Confirmation. This could serve “as a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church.” I went on to emphasize that we need to have a sound theology of baptism; Confirmation should not bolster one’s weak baptismal theology. By way of example, we looked at some of the concerns of Karl Barth with respect to infant baptism and ways in which we might reconcile our practice of baptizing infants with Barth. The need for the Church to heed Barth’s call to consider dienst as worship and service to the world was examined. Further, the Church’s need to conduct ongoing catechesis in the lives of the faithful was emphasized. It is in baptism that we are “strengthened,” “fortified” and receive the “character” of Christ. Confirmation is a ministry of the congregation, which is a confirming community. Confirmation is a Sacrament of initiation and this is made especially true for those who experience conversion in their lives. But conversion is not merely an internal experience; it involves external transformation as well. While Confirmation marks the conclusion to initiation, it does not conclude Baptism. Baptism reaches its goal in our death and is completed in our bodily resurrection on the last day.

In Chapter 8, I made an important distinction between occasions for Affirmation of Baptism and Confirmation, which both nevertheless involve an affirmation of faith. Because Confirmation is guided by the Holy Spirit, we should not be limited by stages of childhood development, ancient or modern. Because we are guided by the Holy Spirit we are enabled to resist the pitfalls of putting up barriers toward becoming confirming communities. Confirming communities do not view Confirmation as a right which is granted to all children.
who are baptized, or as that which merely invites one to greater levels of participation in the Church. One is initiated into discipleship in Baptism, thus there is no justifiable reason for denying the baptized reception of Holy Communion. However, as we saw in Didache 9:5, the community is charged with ensuring that no one comes to the Eucharist except by way of baptismal initiation. The Parable of the wedding guest found without the wedding garment in Matthew 22, like the Didache, may well caution against receiving one at the Eucharistic banquet who has not been clothed in the wedding garment of Baptism in anticipation of the bridegroom’s return. Such texts as Didache 9 and Matthew 22 suggest that one receives the Sacrament of the Altar by having been joined and initiated into Christ. It may also caution the Church against what often goes by “radical welcome” or the free reception of those who have not be baptized to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

In the last chapter we considered some practical and pastoral dimensions of a renewed theology and practice of Confirmation. For example, I cautioned that the rite should not involve the use of graduation gowns or stoles. In Confirmation one affirms Baptism as prayers are offered for strengthening and firming up by the Holy Spirit. Confirmation is not graduation; it recognizes that catechesis is a lifelong process. A white gown might be used which resembles a baptismal gown, if the use of a baptismal garment in Baptism is the practice of the congregation. Nevertheless, in such cases, confirmands should enter the worship space clothed in such garments and retain them throughout the liturgy.

Finally, of course, numerous challenges remain in association with such efforts at liturgical and theological renewal and convergence. As has been amply demonstrated, Confirmation as it has been practiced among Western Christians has a very long, complex, and often confusing history. It has been the goal of this thesis to contribute toward a renewed
theology and practice of Confirmation. The next step in the process is for the Church, through ecumenical dialogue, to consider such reflections, insights and proposals as are contained in this study. This work is offered in the sincere hope that such a renewed theology and practice of Confirmation might offer concrete ecumenical steps towards greater catholicity in the Church.
Appendix I Layers of the Redacted _Apostolikā Paradosis_

According to Stewart-Sykes’ reedition theory of the _Apostolikā Paradosis_, _P_ or _Paradosis represented the original material (verses 19-20 and 25-26). To this _El_ or _Elenchus_ representing verses 22-24 was added. Then to these two sources of material, _CN_ or _Contra Noetum_ added verse 21.¹

**P**: ¹ And afterward, when he has come up, [from the baptismal waters] let him be anointed by the presbyter with that oil which was sanctified, saying: I anoint you with the holy oil in the name of Christ.”² And so individually wiping themselves, let them now dress and afterward enter into the church.

**CN**: ²¹ And the Bishop, laying [his] hand on them, invoke saying, “Lord God, who have made them worthy to receive the forgiveness of sins through the laver of regeneration of the Holy Spirit, send on them your grace, that they may serve you according to your will: for to you is the glory, Father and to the Son with the Holy Spirit in the holy Church, both now and to the ages of ages. Amen.”

**El**: ²² Afterward, pouring the sanctified oil from his hand and imposing it on the neophyte’s head, let him say, “I anoint you with holy oil in God, the Father Almighty, and Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit.”

**El**: ²³ And signing [him] on the forehead, let him offer [him] a kiss and say, “the Lord [be] with you.” And let him who has been signed say, “and with your spirit.”

**El**: ²⁴ Let him do thus to each one

**P**: ²⁵ And afterward let them then pray together with all the people, not praying with the faithful until they have carried out all these things.

**P**: ²⁶ And when they have prayed, let them offer the peace with the mouth. ²

¹ Stewart-Sykes, _On the Apostolic Tradition_, 122.

² Translation in Bradshaw et al., _The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary_, 118-20.
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