

**The sacrament of Confirmation in Roman Catholic tradition: a history of  
interpretations and a proposal for integration**

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## **DEDICATION**

To Lucia De Roth, who passed from this life to beatitude on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012, and to her parents Egon and Liz. Lucia's earthly life was a *pugna* of just a few short hours. We who love her cannot help but wish that she had been spared to walk with us and fight alongside us awhile longer. *Ora pro nobis*, little Saint.

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## ABSTRACT

The sacrament of Confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church, a rite now most commonly administered in adolescence, was originally conferred (as is documented from the second century on) at the same time as Baptism, even in the case of infants. Even today Confirmation remains closely associated with Baptism in the case of adults in the Roman Church, and in the case of all initiates in the Eastern Christian Churches. Confirmation, which normally consists of an anointing, or a hand-laying, or both, either by a bishop or a personal representative of the bishop, has thus long been closely associated with Baptism but considered distinct from it. What is its meaning and purpose in the Roman Catholic sacramental economy, and how does it relate to Baptism, which is universally seen by Christians as the primordial sacramental rite, the *ianua* or entry point for sacramental life in the Church? What is supposed to be the difference, for the Catholic tradition, between a confirmed and an unconfirmed Catholic?

Confirmation, some theologians say, is the sacrament in search of a theology. Some theologians write it off as no more than the misguided evolution of what was originally a very different liturgical practice; others fear that *any* theology of Confirmation is an implicit devaluing of Baptism since it implies that something is still missing once one has been baptized; others still embrace it enthusiastically as a pastorally useful rite of adolescent catechesis.

In this dissertation I survey accounts of the meaning and purpose of the sacrament of Confirmation from its obscure beginnings to the present day, studying the use that has been made of patristic evidence and the theologies elaborated in the mediaeval, Tridentine and contemporary eras. With help from Aquinas, the Council of Trent, Herbert McCabe and Benedikt Mohelník among others, I propose that the way to integrate the theologies of Confirmation is to recognize that each sacrament fulfills a multitude of functions, in furtherance of some distinctive – but not exclusive – overarching purpose. In the case of Confirmation, I argue that its overarching purpose, which integrates the rich spectrum of functions I will have enumerated, is that of making the baptized into persuasive witnesses and reasons for hope, with the duty and capacity to witness to Christ through their participation in the Holy Spirit visibly sent upon them in Confirmation, as at Pentecost.

## RÉSUMÉ

Le sacrement de la confirmation dans l'Église catholique, un rite qui est souvent célébré au cours de l'adolescence, était, au début de l'Église, plus étroitement lié au baptême (même dans le cas des enfants) – fait auquel on trouve des témoins à partir du deuxième siècle. Même aujourd'hui, l'Église romaine célèbre la confirmation en même temps que le baptême dans le cas des adultes, comme les Églises orientales font pour tout catéchumène, même pour les enfants. La confirmation est constituée, normalement, d'une onction ou d'une imposition de mains par l'évêque ou par son représentant; on voit qu'une tradition de longue date associe la confirmation au baptême tout en les distinguant. Quels sont le sens et le but de la confirmation dans l'économie sacramentelle catholique et comment est-elle liée au baptême, vu que le baptême est universellement compris par les chrétiens comme porte d'entrée de tous les sacrements? Enfin, quelle différence la tradition catholique fait-elle entre un chrétien confirmé et celui qui ne l'est pas?

Certains théologiens ne se posent plus cette question, car ils sont de l'avis que la confirmation est le sacrement à la recherche d'une théologie. D'autres prétendent qu'elle est un rite qui a évolué de façon exagérée à partir des origines très modestes. D'autres encore ont peur que toute théologie de la confirmation soit implicitement une minimisation du baptême, car à leur avis, on ne peut attribuer des effets à l'un sans les enlever de l'autre. Et plusieurs sont enthousiastes pour les possibilités catéchistiques de la confirmation, comprise comme rite de passage pour les adolescents.

Dans cette dissertation je fais d'abord un survol des interprétations de la confirmation à partir de ses origines plutôt obscures jusqu'à nos jours, à partir de l'emploi qui a été fait dernièrement des écrits patristiques ainsi que les théologies élaborées pendant le Moyen Âge et les temps modernes, en passant par le concile de Trente. Avec l'aide de Thomas d'Aquin, Trente, Herbert McCabe et Benedikt Mohelník entre autres, je soutiens que la façon d'intégrer les diverses théologies de la confirmation c'est de reconnaître que chacun des sacrements réalise une multitude de fonctions au service d'un but distinctif, mais non pas exclusif. Dans le cas de la confirmation, je conclus que son but primaire, le but qui joue un rôle intégrant pour la riche gamme de fonctions que j'énumère, est celui de transformer chaque baptisé en témoin convaincant et en motif de l'espérance, ayant le devoir et le pouvoir de témoigner au Christ grâce à sa participation à l'Esprit Saint, envoyé visiblement à la confirmation comme à la Pentecôte.

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I have been immensely blessed by the privilege of preparing many children and young adults for Baptism and Confirmation, an opportunity I owe above all to Fr. Robert Clark, a good pastor and dear friend, who invited me to take on this service at the Newman Centre of McGill University starting in 2002, and at St. Thomas à Becket Parish (Pierrefonds QC) in 2008-2009. I have continued in this capacity at the Newman Centre to this day, thanks to the kind ongoing welcome of another dear friend, Mr. Nathan Gibbard, director of the Centre.

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I wish to thank my many dear friends for their patience and long-suffering, but above all their love and encouragement.

The initial idea for this dissertation arose from an innocent-sounding question asked by Mr. Loren Lugosch during his own preparation for Confirmation at Easter 2012: "What is the difference between a confirmed and an unconfirmed Catholic?" I have since had many occasions to thank Mr. Lugosch for his question, and hope he will now find it more satisfactorily answered than it was at the time he asked it.

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The author of the *Imitation of Christ* would famously rather have felt compunction than to have known the definition of it. It seems to me that best of all is to have both. At any rate, I have been privileged not only to come to know a little more about the definition of Confirmation, but to witness what it meant or will mean in the lives of my eight dear godchildren. I am grateful for these enchanting youngsters and their families, with whose lives the sacraments of initiation have

permitted mine to intersect in a privileged way: Susanna, Zoë, Julian, Lukas, Nathaniel, Joshua, Henri, and Joaquin.

*O Lord Jesus Christ, You embrace children with the arms of Your mercy, and make them living members of Your Church; Give them grace, I pray You, to stand fast in Your faith, to obey Your word, and to abide in Your love; that, being made strong by Your Holy Spirit they may resist temptation, and may rejoice in the life that now is, and dwell with You in the life to come; through Your merits, O merciful Saviour, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever.*

### **Note on Translations**

Except where otherwise indicated, all translations from Latin, French, Spanish and Italian are my own. All quotations from Scripture, unless otherwise indicated, are from the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible (RSV)*, copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AA</i>	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i>
<i>AC</i>	<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>
<i>AG</i>	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
<i>AT</i>	<i>Apostolic Tradition</i>
<i>CCC</i>	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
<i>CIC</i>	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici (Code of Canon Law, Caparros et al., 1993)</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>Didascalia Apostolorum</i>
<i>DCN</i>	<i>Divinae Consortium Naturae</i>
<i>LG</i>	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
<i>OE</i>	<i>Orientalium Ecclesiarum</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina (Migne)</i>
<i>RSV</i>	<i>Revised Standard Version</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>
<i>SD</i>	<i>Sententiae Divinitatis</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>



## INTRODUCTION

*“I wish I could write you a satisfactory letter on the subject of Confirmation...I will say what strikes me, but it will be difficult to come to the point in a page or two, and I am but partially informed on the subject.”*

–Letter of John Henry Newman to Mrs. John Mozley, June 4, 1837 (Newman, 1891, p. 233)

Christian sacramental theology is a vast and varied discipline, vast even if one limits one’s attention to just one or another of the several Christian traditions. Within the Roman Catholic tradition, any one of the sacraments similarly provides ample material for a lifetime of scholarly enquiry. I have prescinded from a consideration of the sacraments in general – *de sacramentis in genere*, as this rubric of enquiry was denoted in many mediaeval summas – and have chosen to explore specifically the sacrament of Confirmation in Roman Catholic tradition. Attention to the liturgical history and evolution of what came to be known as Confirmation or Chrismation, to the way the physical rites emerged and changed, has likewise generated a substantial literature, including quite a number of recent doctoral projects. I have prescinded from that aspect of the sacrament as well, in order to focus on a problem that is at once more manageable in scope, and notably underexplored: namely, the problem of what Confirmation means and what difference it makes, from the perspective of Roman Catholic tradition. This meaning is not isolated from the physical rites that embody, express, communicate, and shape it, but it is a proper matter for exploration, apart from such liturgical puzzles and problems as remain to be solved.

Confirmation has sometimes been said by Roman Catholic commentators and others to be the sacrament in search of a theology<sup>1</sup>, a position expressed with great skill and concision by Paul Turner (Turner, 1987) who points out that we must always specify which Confirmation we are enquiring into. Even if we confine ourselves only to Confirmation in the Roman Catholic tradition, we must ask: Do we mean the Confirmation that immediately follows the Baptism of an adult catechumen? Or do we mean the Confirmation conferred upon a baptized adult from another Christian tradition when he or she chooses to come into communion with Rome? Or are we looking into the Confirmation of Catholic pre-teens and adolescents that can look so much like a bar mitzvah or quinceañera – culturally at least, if not theologically? There are, Turner points out, several kinds of Confirmation available for us to explore all at once, synchronically.

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase or a variation on its theme appears in, among others, Anciaux (1954), Carra de Vaux Saint-Cyr (1961), Connolly (1963), Bausch (1983), Marsh (1984), O’Neill (1991), Fourez (1991), Henrici (1998), Hill (1998), Morrill (2000), Tanner (2006), Mitchell (in Carr, 2007), and Van Slyke (2011). Van Slyke cites the recurring trope, but does not agree that a theology of the sacrament is elusive.

On top of this synchronic diversity one must confront the diachronic diversity of explanations that have been offered through the centuries as well: is Confirmation a completion of Baptism, a moment of ecclesial maturity, a conferral of strength for battle, a commissioning to the lay apostolate, a celebration of what the Holy Spirit has done, an adolescent profession of faith, an outpouring of seven gifts? Perplexity is the order of the day, not necessarily because too little has been written about the sacrament, but rather too much. Perplexity arises here from apparent eclecticism and variety. Hence the inaccurate assumption, implied or explicit, in many current treatments of Confirmation, that we are not really dealing here with one sacrament, with one rite, and that it is pointless to try to salvage any unity of meaning.

My starting-point in embarking upon this exploration is one that is irenic rather than polemical: my working hypothesis is that Confirmation has not in fact lacked a clear unified meaning in the Roman Catholic tradition so much as it has lacked an articulation of the common thread that links and unites the synchronic and diachronic diversities of the rite, a common meaning to which the faithful and theologians have instinctively given utterance in a variety of expressions.

In developing this hypothesis in my dissertation, I attempt two things primarily:

First, I catalogue as thoroughly as possible the various views of the sacrament of Confirmation that may be found in writings that are representative of, and in some cases authoritative for, Roman Catholic tradition.

Second, I strive to determine whether most or even all of those views can be integrated into a single model of what Confirmation is all about, and I strive to determine what such a unified model might look like. I find this integration in the five functions that I ascribe to Confirmation, all of which are oriented to a single overarching purpose.

Before I can proceed to sketch an integrated model, it is of course necessary to ascertain what views have in fact been held by Catholic theologians, and what fixed reference points have been established by conciliar and papal documents. The historical data are the straw I need to make bricks to build an integrated model. To achieve that goal, the only way to proceed is the sheer labour of sifting through the literature of eighteen centuries. Hence, while the first three chapters of my dissertation are, in a sense, prolegomena for the fourth chapter, those first chapters are also a lasting contribution in themselves. Thus, for example, another theologian might mine those very same chapters and come, conceivably, to a quite different locus of

integration or disintegration, a quite different vision of Confirmation, from the one that I present; but in any language that I am familiar with, he or she will not find a more complete cross-section of Confirmation theologies, from the second century to the present, than the one that I assemble here. I am especially interested to present a wide selection of authors from the period before the Council of Trent because Confirmation theology in the mediaeval period has been underexplored, despite its diversity of views, partly because of caricatural and pejorative views of that era, such as the vacuity alleged by recent critics as varied as Dix<sup>2</sup> and Quinn.

In the process of assembling this *catena aurea*, I try to offer an appreciation of some distinctive achievements in each era. Thus, in chapter 1, I present the protean use of the liturgical customs documented in the patristic era, used to such disparate effect by modern theologians. A word is in order here about the method I use in that chapter. There I rely quite a bit on secondary literature, a move dictated by my decision to focus on meaning over rite; in the patristic era, in many instances, to assume that a given text is a description of Confirmation properly so-called would be begging the question. Many liturgical historians would find it anachronistic to use the word “Confirmation” to refer to what, at this point in history, they are only willing to call an anointing or hand-laying. In order to avoid taking too much for granted about these open questions, I choose instead, in chapter 1, to read the implications of many patristic documents through the lens of theologians who did explicitly have Confirmation in mind when assessing those documents. In any event, there is an intriguing diversity in the patristic era, diversity both of rite and of meaning, and it would be fascinating to see a theologian today continue and expand Fisher’s project (see Fisher, 1978), appraising the implications of the patristic evidence given an assumption that what they are describing is properly an instance of Confirmation. For example, if one were to assume that the Syriac pre-baptismal anointings were Confirmation, what would one make of the inverted order of initiation? What might it mean to be confirmed before Baptism?

In chapter 2, I review the Confirmation theology of mediaeval Latin theologians until the Council of Trent. This period saw the magisterial tradition of Confirmation reach maturity; it included the first examples of episcopal and conciliar teaching about the rite, the first use of the word “Confirmation,” the emergence of a clear affirmation of seven sacraments including Confirmation, and the appearance of several key themes and even phrases (especially in the

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<sup>2</sup> Even so serious a critic of the mediaeval view as Lampe considers Dix’s presentation of that view to be seriously inadequate: see Lampe, 1967, p. xviii.

Pseudo-Isidorean *Decretals*, in Rabanus, and in Lombard) that would become *leitmotifs* in subsequent theologies. The mediaeval period also saw the elaboration of a Confirmation theology by the major scholastics like Aquinas and Bonaventure, and the canonization by Florence and Trent of certain non-negotiable premises in the Church's interpretation of the sacrament. I catalogue these views so extensively, in part, to see whether there are valuable insights that have been overlooked in the sometimes deliberate neglect of the period, a period which manifests a variety, an originality, and a sensitivity that it is not often credited with, and which certainly goes beyond a mere parroting of Pseudo-Melchiades.<sup>3</sup>

In chapter 3, I note both the strengths and weaknesses of modern interpretations of Confirmation, occasioned in many instances by attentiveness to contemporary pastoral and cultural concerns. While it covers about five hundred years, from the Council of Trent to the present, the bulk of the section is devoted to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Already in the early to middle of the twentieth century, we can see two trends emerging in Roman Catholic theologies of Confirmation: on the one hand, a renewed appreciation of Aquinas that holds to his interpretation but approaches his work directly, rather than through the lens of subsequent commentators; and on the other hand, an approach that is animated by the dawning Catholic Action movement, the re-discovery of the lay vocation and the lay apostolate. For the latter movement, Confirmation often appears clearly as a sacrament of Catholic Action, even “lay ordination”. Then, following the Second Vatican Council, the new possibility of revising the Catholic liturgy inspired a generation of liturgists to speculate and theorize about the form that Confirmation might take; this resulted, in 1971, in the promulgation of a reformed Rite of Christian Initiation, but this has not dissuaded subsequent liturgists from continuing to propose new and different ways of doing things. Once the liturgy was understood to be so readily changeable, the changes did not end with a once-for-all reform, especially when the meaning of

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<sup>3</sup> The Pseudo-Isidorean *Decretals*, a collection of canons and commentaries on canons, includes texts attributed by the compiler to one Pope Melchiades. This raises at least two problems, which have stimulated a great deal of discussion in the context of theologies of Confirmation. First, the Bishop of Rome who has sometimes been called Melchiades (who is said to have served in the See of Rome from 311 to 314) was probably actually named Miltiades: this has provoked some authors to go so far as to say that “Melchiades never existed” (see, for instance, Revel, 2006, p. 60). (In contrast, the *Oxford Dictionary of Popes* in its entry on Miltiades deals with the dilemma with a simple non-committal parenthesis: “Miltiades (Melchiades), St: (2 July 311–10 Jan. 314)” (Kelly and Walsh, eds., 2010)). Second, the remarks attributed to Melchiades actually come from a Pentecost sermon that is generally considered to have been given by Faustus, bishop of Riez, though that sermon has also been mistakenly attributed to Eusebius. Faustus's words were destined to be influential, however, when they were taken up by Lombard on the strength of their apparent papal pedigree. Thus the Pseudo-Isidorean *Decretals* include an influential text eventually traced to Pseudo-Eusebius, whom we believe to have been Faustus, misidentified as Melchiades. See Van Buchem, 1967, for further details.

the rite was understood through the work of liturgical theologians such as Kavanagh for whom Confirmation has no effect beyond the psychological effect of the ritual on the individual and community. This view does not deny the working of Providence, but it operates as though the sacraments were at best hopeful prayers, rather than real encounters, comforting and challenging, with the living God upon whose presence and activity in the sacraments the Church confidently and fearfully counts. This approach to liturgical theology does not have the last word, however, as chapter 3 also shows a recent revival of appreciation of the long-standing traditions of the Church, including the Fathers of the Church, Aquinas, and the other scholastics.

All of these discoveries are valuable, but they are ancillary to my chief goal, which is to arrive at an integration of the models of Confirmation that have been embraced or proposed by theologians in successive ages of the Christian Church. To that end, in the fourth chapter, I summarize the *status quaestionis* with respect to the various circumstances surrounding Confirmation: the proper minister of it, the materials and formulas that constitute the most suitable rite whereby to celebrate it, and the proper subject of the sacrament. In this section I also tackle the problem of summarizing Confirmation's effects as posited by the authors I spent so many pages exploring. I distill from each period, and especially from the mediaeval and modern eras, some of the general categories into which their interpretations may be sorted. In other words, after having catalogued the views of each period, I identify the major recurring interpretations and I classify certain ones together according to similar themes. This quest for common themes is an important phase in the eventual task of integrating interpretations.

Integration is that irenic goal that I alluded to earlier, and it is the second major purpose of my dissertation. When the various views of Confirmation that have been held or proposed in the Catholic tradition are catalogued, it is clear that to a very large extent they sort quite neatly into a handful of general themes or categories. While I acknowledge that the approach I propose, of thinking of the sacraments in terms of "functions" and "purpose", is a somewhat novel one, and one that must still be adequately tested, nonetheless the effects most commonly ascribed to Confirmation down the centuries do fit quite naturally into a taxonomy predicated on several functions, while the idea of a single purpose, to which all those functions tend, fulfills the integrating role that I seek. Moreover, this approach allows the diverse interpretations of Confirmation to be placed in conversation with one another, without requiring the thorny matters of sacramental character and sacramental causality to be antecedently solved one way or

another. It is essential, for my purposes, to adopt a method that allows robust realist conceptions of sacramental causality to stand on their own terms alongside interpretations that posit no causality more emphatic than a pedagogical or hortatory one, though I make it clear that I consider a strong model of sacramental causality to be required by the Roman Catholic tradition; assuming a multiplicity of “functions” allows for this coexistence, provided that one places greater weight on what the various interpreters affirm, than on what they may deny.

The five functions into which I sort the great majority of views of Confirmation across the centuries are 1) teaching, 2) ratifying, 3) instituting and constituting, 4) commissioning, and 5) equipping. I select these five simply because they adequately include most of the views documented from the Middle Ages to the present, while lending themselves to an eventual integration; they are precise and exacting enough to help isolate interpretations that are true outliers with few resonances in the tradition as a whole, while broad enough to capture common elements in the respective interpretations and effectively sort them. The single purpose to which those five functions tend is that of making the confirmand into a persuasive witness. It will be noted that none of the five functions is necessarily exclusive to Confirmation; other sacraments serve a teaching or pedagogical function, serve a ratifying function, and so forth. Nor does every particular instance of Confirmation embody all five functions; any given act of confirming need only embody one function. Both the integration and the distinctive defining identity of Confirmation are provided by that single purpose that the functions serve.

A further foundation for integration is to be found in the strongly pneumatological themes that I identify as sources for the Church’s instinct to confirm after Baptism – namely, in the Western Church’s embrace of the *filioque*, and the two missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit as manifested at the river Jordan or Mount Tabor, and in the upper room at Pentecost.

While it is not strictly the purpose of my dissertation to broach the more pragmatic question of what these conclusions mean for the pastoral practice of the Church, the current state of Confirmation practice in the Roman communion is so much at odds with the sacrament’s meaning that I consider it important at least to sketch some avenues for reform. For example, and most seriously, there is simply no good reason for the widespread practice of conferring Confirmation years after a child has begun receiving the Eucharist. More controversially perhaps, I maintain that there is no compelling reason to warrant delaying Confirmation for years beyond Baptism, especially if this also means that admission to the Holy Eucharist will be delayed,

although I acknowledge that there are some pastoral and symbolical advantages of a rite tied to the age of reason or maturity. These are, I think, outweighed by the reasons in favour of keeping Baptism and Confirmation united. Hence my proposal that Confirmation should be conferred at the same time as Baptism in the case of infants and adults alike; a proposal that is all the more poignant given that it is the ancient practice of the Eastern Christian churches with whose sacramental theology the Roman Church's ought, by and large, to align.

If we limit our attention to what most of the various interpretations of Confirmation have affirmed, and bracket out what they deny, we will find that they are diverse expressions of a single Pentecostal *prise-de-conscience*, not redundant or superfluous in their diversity, but complementary – an insight available with certainty only once we have taken the time and labour to document what the many voices of the tradition have in fact affirmed about this sacrament. Its overarching purpose in the Roman Catholic sacramental economy, integrating the rich and varied spectrum of functions that eighteen centuries of theological reflection have refracted, is that of making the baptized into persuasive witnesses and reasons for hope, with the duty and capacity to witness to Christ through their participation in the Holy Spirit visibly sent upon them in Confirmation, as at Pentecost.

### **Note on vocabulary**

The following terms will recur frequently in these pages. For greater clarity, I provide working definitions here:

*Ablution*: a water-bath, whether by pouring or immersion, in the context of the baptismal liturgy, usually accompanied by some formula of words.

*Anointing*: the ritual use of oil (especially that particular oil called chrism or *myron*) in the context of the baptismal liturgy, poured out or traced in a particular pattern (*e.g.* a sign of the Cross). A synonym is “chrismation” (lower-case).

*Chrismation*: see “Anointing” and “Confirmation”.

*Confirmation*: when capitalized, this will refer to the sacrament of Confirmation as the Roman Catholic Church now understands it; when lower-case, it will usually reflect a term used by the ancient authors themselves, and will sometimes bear a certain ambiguity: it is not always clear whether this or that author means *confirmatio* as the act of *confirmare*, ratifying or strengthening, in a more general sense, or whether it has already come to have a technical

sacramental sense. I use “Chrismation” (capitalized) to refer to the sacrament that corresponds to Confirmation in most of the Eastern Christian churches. Naturally, in quotes from other authors I will retain their own capitalizations. The adjective “confirmational” will always be lower-case.

*Consignation*: the tracing of a sign, usually cruciform, on the forehead or another part of the initiate’s body, whether that sign is traced using oil, or without any additional material.



## Chapter 1

### THE USE OF PATRISTIC TESTIMONY FROM THE FIRST FIVE CENTURIES IN RECENT INTERPRETATIONS OF CONFIRMATION

In this chapter, I will review some major recent interpretations of patristic testimony concerning the Christian initiation rite that became Confirmation, with particular attention to interpretations in the Roman Catholic tradition. I will not dwell at length, in the present section, on ambiguities, controversies or other problems as they arise in connection with patristic treatments of Christian initiation, but I will simply note issues that will warrant further attention. This will therefore not be an exhaustive history of the evolution of the rites of Christian initiation; that ground has already been amply worked over by many authors (to whom I am much indebted for my own understanding of this evolution)<sup>4</sup>, each of whom has brought different assumptions to his or her investigations, and arrived at different conclusions about the origins, nature and purpose of Confirmation. Neither will I be attempting to resolve disputed issues concerning the authorship, dating and definitive text of early Christian documents, questions that lie beyond the scope of this project, and my competence. Finally, this is not an enquiry into the liturgical evolution *per se* of Confirmation rites. Instead, this historical sketch and my selection of examples will be guided chiefly by the goal of identifying outstanding problems arising from recent interpretations of early Christian writing on what has become Confirmation. This has significant implications for my approach in this chapter: I am taking as a premise that, whether it was called “Confirmation” or not, it is at least plausible that the early Church had some kind of rite similar in form and function to the sacrament of Confirmation or Chrismation in the modern Church. Taking this as a premise allows me to advance my goal of cataloguing and comparing the various interpretations of this institution over the course of the Church’s history. However, while this is plausible, there is enough disagreement among specialists of the period that I cannot simply take for granted that Confirmation existed throughout the patristic era. If I attempted to solve this puzzle, however, before proceeding with my thesis, it would in fact be a very different dissertation, one for which I am not qualified, and I would never get around to the task at hand.

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<sup>4</sup> These include Joseph Coppens (1925), Joseph l’Écuyer (1958), G.W.H. Lampe (1967), Thomas Marsh (1960; 1962; 1972a; 1972b; 1973), Eugene Finnegan (1970 and 2011), Louis Ligier (1973), J.D.C. Fisher (1978), Maxwell Johnson (1999), Dominic E. Serra (2000 and 2005), Jean-Philippe Revel (2006), and Michael P. Whitehouse (2008).

Nor would it be acceptable simply to omit this period from my survey, given the significant body of scholars who do think that Confirmation under other names was part of the early Church. Hence my approach of reading primary patristic sources through the lens of secondary literature: this allows me to consider what the patristic era said about Confirmation from the point of view of those scholars who have concluded that it does have something to say, without presuming to settle the question of whether it does in fact say something. I might put it this way: Assuming that Confirmation (not by that name, perhaps, but with something of its form and function) is primitive in the Church, what does the patristic era contribute to my inventory of views on Confirmation?

To help ensure that no ostensible example of Confirmation or of a nascent form of Confirmation is omitted, I will be working, at first, with a very broad definition of the rite, a definition that is intended to capture all of the historic practices that have been (however controversially) identified by theologians as examples of Confirmation. This definition will need to be refined and corrected when, in chapter 4, I confront the problem of interpretations and attempt to define what Confirmation means for the Church. For now, however, I will provisionally define Confirmation as a *peribaptismal rite, consisting of anointing or imposition of hands under episcopal authority, that supplements Baptism by imparting some gift*.

This definition includes each of the principal elements in the taxonomy of sacraments familiar to scholastic theology: matter, form, subject, minister, and effects.

- “Peribaptismal”: this neologism conveys the fact that Confirmation is both distinct from Baptism but closely associated with it (temporally, spatially, or teleologically), and it allows for the possibility that a relevant rite may either precede Baptism, or follow it. The subject is therefore one who is baptized, or who will very soon be.
- “Anointing or imposition of hands”: a variety of gestures have been identified as constituting the fundamental action of Confirmation (see, *e.g.*, the document establishing the modern Roman reform of the Confirmation rite, *Divinae Consortium Naturae* (Paul VI, 1971), which posits anointing as the “essence” of the rite, while acknowledging the historic importance of imposition of hands in Christian initiation).
- “Episcopal authority”: a recurring theme in Christian initiation, as we shall see, is that the rites identified as Confirmation are either performed by the bishop in person, or employ chrism consecrated by the Patriarch or another bishop.

- “Imparting a gift”: Confirmation has been variously described as perfecting Baptism, conferring the Holy Spirit (anew, or for the first time), giving strength for struggles, and bestowing a sevenfold gift, among other effects; the words pronounced during the rite have varied over the centuries, and have included emphatically pneumatic formulas as well as Trinitarian invocations. Pending a more precise identification of the effects of Confirmation, this deliberately vague description of principal effects will allow me to collect the broadest possible variety of putative Confirmation rites.

I must say a word about my intention to look in ancient Roman, Syrian, North African and other documents for evidence of themes that arise from a modern and Roman Catholic notion of the sacraments in general, and of Confirmation in particular. Paul Bradshaw cautions that one must avoid asking simply “what the early church did” (implying that there was once a monolithic and uniform “early church,” a position he denies) rather than asking about more precisely about the practices of specific regions and specific eras (Bradshaw, 2002a, p. x); he also warns against anachronistically interpolating modern concerns into ancient sources.<sup>5</sup> Ancient sources must indeed be read in their own context and with attention to the circumstances and intentions of their authors; but a judicious assessment of documents in themselves and in their own proper context is the historian’s task, and a consciously contemporary reflection on the implications of those documents is the theologian’s. I shall develop this point further in the fourth chapter.

I will group treatments of Confirmation in this period according to several broad themes:

1. Descriptions of Christian initiation without reference to a peribaptismal rite;
2. References to a pre-baptismal rite, but not to a post-baptismal rite;
3. References to a post-baptismal rite.

### **Descriptions of Christian Initiation Without Reference to a Peribaptismal Rite**

There is no reference to a rite that might be described as Confirmation in Christian writings from the New Testament until at least the writings of Irenaeus in the late second century, and probably even later, until Tertullian in the early third century. As Geoffrey Lampe remarked in *The Seal of the Spirit*:

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<sup>5</sup> L.S. Thornton urges a similar caution: “if we insist upon attributing to the fathers our modern habits of thought, we are certain to misunderstand them” (Thornton, 1954, p. 191).

When we have made all due allowance for the unreliability of the *argumentum ex silentio* drawn from a scanty literature containing no major theological work, it remains true that the absence of any clear allusion to the practices of unction or consignation, or to any connection of the baptismal ‘seal’ with these ceremonies, in the orthodox writers of the period from the New Testament to Irenaeus is a fact to which we must attach considerable importance (Lampe, 1967, p. 129).

Solá complains that “*primis saeculis testimonia sunt obscuriora*” (Solá, 1956, p. 196) and Kenan Osborne states categorically that “data for the last half of the 1st century and entire 2nd century” – a period that includes such valuable texts as the *Didache*, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, *II Clement*, Justin Martyr, and Melito – “are negative on the question of a second rite after the baptismal water-bath (Osborne, 1987, p. 120)”. Fisher, less emphatically, calls this silence “the fog of uncertainty” (Fisher, 1978, p. 2) but admits that “the Apostolic Fathers yield no firm evidence” (p. 3).

Fisher believes that there is nonetheless evidence to show that the authors in this period may have known of peribaptismal rites. Referring to section 86 of Justin’s *Dialogue* (mid-second century), Fisher observes: “It is highly significant that in a passage where he certainly had baptism in mind, Justin should at once pass to the subject of anointing” (p. 19). Fisher also considers various attempts to explain the absence of peribaptismal rites in Justin and concludes that “it can be argued persuasively, if not conclusively, that Justin’s account of baptism [in his *First Apology*] contains some omissions, although it is only in the light of evidence from elsewhere that it can be maintained that the items omitted included hand-laying and anointing for the imparting of the Holy Spirit” (pp. 13-14). Fisher posits nothing more decisive than the mere *possibility* that Justin may have known about, but deliberately omitted mention of, post-baptismal initiatory rites, concluding that it “must always remain an open question” (p. 21). Jean-Philippe Revel, in contrast, denies any such thing. His conclusion is more convincing on this point than Fisher’s:

As we see, St Justin passes directly from baptism (ablution) to the Eucharist, with no room for any kind of intervening rite, whether anointing, hand-laying or anything else. Moreover, his description is much too detailed for us to suppose that he could have left these kinds of rites to

one side as secondary (something that, in any case, they never were in the eyes of the ancients). There is no way to get around the silence of St Justin (Revel, 2006, p. 370).<sup>6</sup>

Lampe does not simply conclude that writers of the first two centuries make no mention of Confirmation or of anything like it; he also contends that many of them positively attribute to Baptism the effects that some later traditions attributed to Confirmation, such as “sealing” and the imparting of the Holy Spirit, and that this entails that an eventual pneumatic view of Confirmation will prove to be gratuitous and superfluous. Citing the *Shepherd* of Hermas, the *Acts of Thecla* and the *Acts of Paul* from the mid- to late-first century, for instance, Lampe emphasizes their use of the language of “sealing” in connection with Baptism; and in reference to Justin’s *First Apology* (29,1) Lampe affirms that for Justin, water-baptism is a baptism *with* the Holy Spirit. Fisher demurs, saying of the era in general: “Evidently baptism, the seal, and the reception of the Holy Spirit are interrelated. But the writers do not say that the Holy Spirit is imparted by the acts of baptism itself” (Fisher, 1978, p. 4).

Before we move on to writers later in the era under consideration, we should note that in the remarks just quoted we can see patterns that distinguish two major modern approaches to the question of Confirmation:

- Lampe, who in Bradshaw’s words argued that “in New Testament times the gift of the Spirit had been mediated through baptism in water alone and that all other external signs of the external coming of the Spirit were later developments” (Bradshaw, 2002a, p. 149), tends to focus on evidence that Baptism alone was sufficient in the early church, that it fulfilled the purposes later attributed to Confirmation, and that peribaptismal rites are a later development that are of secondary importance.
- Fisher, who held (in an influential tradition of twentieth-century Anglican writers that included Mason, Puller, and Dix) a more robust view of Confirmation as a distinct rite that imparts the Holy Spirit, was hesitant to content himself with flatly describing the early Fathers as “silent” on the question of Confirmation, and posits the possibility that their silence was a conscious omission. Either way, however, it is

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<sup>6</sup> *On le voit, saint Justin passe directement du baptême (ablution) à l’eucharistie, sans aucune place pour un rite intermédiaire quel qu’il soit, onction, imposition des mains ou un autre rite. Or, sa description est beaucoup trop minutieuse pour que nous puissions songer qu’il aurait laissé de côté de tels rites parce que secondaires (ce que d’ailleurs ils n’ont jamais été aux yeux des anciens). Il n’y a aucun moyen de contourner d’une manière ou d’une autre le silence de saint Justin.*

incontrovertible that there is no clear mention of Confirmation at least as late as Justin Martyr.

Fisher (presenting an argument that had been advanced, apparently independently, by T. Marsh in 1972 (Marsh, 1972b, pp. 325-6)) makes a case that a post-baptismal anointing may have existed in the church of Sinope in the first half of the second century: He argues that since (according to Tertullian, in *Adversus Marcionem*) the Marcionite rite of initiation included a post-baptismal anointing that was held to confer the Holy Spirit, and that since Marcion was unlikely (on the grounds of his distrust of the material world) to have innovated the use of a material substance in the rites of initiation, he is likely to have borrowed this feature from the rites he had previously been familiar with in Sinope. Fisher describes this case as “persuasive, if not incontrovertible” (Fisher, 1978, p. 11). It is certainly suggestive, but in the absence of any further corroboration it is not possible to cite this as positive evidence for a peribaptismal rite in the second century.

The situation becomes more ambiguous towards the latter half of the second century; there are several remarks that can be read as evidence for a post-baptismal anointing, or that can alternatively be classed merely as figurative language. Theophilus of Antioch, writing in *Ad Autolyicum* in the second half of the second century, puns on the name “Christian” (1:12) to emphasize that Christians are the “anointed ones” who are “useful”. Opinion varies as to whether Theophilus meant that Christians are literally anointed, or instead was alluding to a metaphorical anointing: Fisher argues that on balance it makes more sense to read the statement as referring to a physical anointing (Fisher, 1978, p. 28), while Lampe contends that even if a literal initiatory anointing is meant, it did not constitute or mediate a “seal” nor convey the gift of the Holy Spirit (Lampe, 1967, p. 114). Revel concurs with elements in both perspectives, pointing out that the examples Theophilus provides (of everyday objects, like ships and doorposts, that are anointed), are only pertinent if Christians too are literally, physically anointed; an argument that Marsh also made, and convincingly supplemented with the observation that Theophilus explicitly flags the one instance where he knows that he is referring to a *figurative* anointing (Marsh, 1972b, p. 326). Revel concedes that it does not follow that the physical anointing they received was post-baptismal, and he concludes on the strength of other Syrian examples that it was in fact almost certainly pre-baptismal (Revel, 2006, pp. 367, 456). Revel also cannot agree that the anointing was considered to impart the Holy Spirit; another meaning is suggested by

Marsh who argued that Theophilus in fact expresses the earliest and most basic meaning of anointing as a Christian initiatory rite, namely, participation in the anointedness of Christ – not, in Marsh’s reading, a pneumatic meaning at all. For these reasons, on Lampe’s reading, but even on Marsh’s and Revel’s which concede much that is plausible in Fisher, Theophilus cannot be cited as a certain witness to a pneumatic anointing.

I cannot proceed further without noting Marsh and Lampe’s pivotal but seriously flawed assumption that an anointing could entail (or symbolize) participation in Christ’s messiahship without thereby entailing (or symbolizing) the work and presence of the Holy Spirit. This mechanistic division of the work of the persons of the Holy Trinity into watertight compartments, such that a messianic rite is not (and by definition cannot be) a pneumatic rite, will crop up again and again in certain writers who have addressed Confirmation, and is the source of much theological confusion on the part of those authors. I must demur at the outset from this dubious Trinitarian doctrine which believes that “messianic” and “pneumatic”, or “Christological” and “pneumatological”, are mutually exclusive categories.

Irenaeus, writing in the second half of the second century, is particularly tantalizing: in one place he sounds unfamiliar with any kind of post-baptismal anointing in the Church (*Adversus Haereses* 1:14:2, eds. Roberts and Donaldson, where he describes the distinctive Marcosian Gnostic initiation practice: “After this they anoint the initiated person with balsam; for they assert that this unguent is a type of that sweet odour which is above all things”); on the other hand, a later reference (3:9:3) refers to the anointing of Jesus by the Spirit, and concludes: “Therefore did the Spirit of God descend upon Him, [the Spirit] of Him who had promised by the prophets that He would anoint Him, so that we, receiving from the abundance of His unction, might be saved. Such, then, [is the witness] of Matthew.” Lampe considers the reference to be purely metaphorical (Lampe, 1967, p. 119).<sup>7</sup> In yet another place (4:38:2), Irenaeus refers to the biblical imposition of hands that conveys the Holy Spirit, but Revel contends (Revel, 2006, p. 372), with Lampe (p. 120), that it is strictly a reference to Acts (see Appendix I for the relevant texts), contrary to those (such as Crehan, 1953, p. 276) who argue that the whole passage is germane to *contemporary* initiatory practice, and bears witness to a *contemporary* initiatory hand-

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<sup>7</sup> Though Irenaeus was not allergic to sacramental realism: “For our bodies have received unity among themselves,” he writes in *Adversus Haereses* 1:17:2, “by means of that laver which leads to incorruption; but our souls, by means of the Spirit. Wherefore both are necessary...”



laying.<sup>8</sup> Fisher concludes that “either hand-laying and unction existed as integral parts of the rite of baptism with no very clear line of demarcation between them and baptism itself, or else confirmation did not exist at all in the churches known to Irenaeus” (Fisher, 1978, p. 25). Revel sides with the latter option, writing “This silence seems to amount to an absence that corroborates, by quite different means, the absence already noted in St Justin and implicit in the second-century authors in general” (Revel, 2006, p. 376).<sup>9</sup> Making a useful and plausible distinction that we shall return to in later chapters, L.S. Thornton concludes:

Whatever form the rites of initiation took in the practice of St Irenaeus, he clearly found no difficulty in accepting St Luke’s testimony to the effect that the Holy Spirit was given through the apostolic laying on of hands. Whether he thought of this as a mode of confirmation or not he was certainly not possessed by the notion that the Spirit is given for initiation *solely* through the waters of baptism (Thornton, 1954, p. 189, emphasis mine).

Irenaeus does assert that the Holy Spirit is received at Baptism, albeit not solely there; see, for instance, *Adversus Haereses* 3:17:2, where (anticipating an image that we will see again in Augustine) Irenaeus draws a parallel between the Spirit and water, specifically the water that consolidates dough:

Wherefore also the Lord promised to send the Comforter, who should join us to God. For as a compacted lump of dough cannot be formed of dry wheat without fluid matter, nor can a loaf possess unity, so, in like manner, neither could we, being many, be made one in Christ Jesus without the water from heaven (Irenaeus, 1885, eds. Roberts and Donaldson).

Moreover, though Irenaeus’ testimony as to contemporary initiatory practice must be interpreted only tentatively, he provides us with a rich pneumatology vital in correcting flawed approaches to the work of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. As we shall see, for instance, much of the ink that has been spilled about Confirmation was spilled because various authors have been determined to identify the *one* moment when the Holy Spirit is received by new Christians. Irenaeus reminds us that the Spirit is received not once but again and again, as often as humanity needs the Spirit –

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<sup>8</sup> Crehan’s reading is puzzling, as the passage does not pertain to contemporary initiatory practice at all.

<sup>9</sup> *Ce silence semble bien équivoir à une absence qui viendrait corroborer, par de tout autres voies, celle relevée déjà chez saint Justin et sous-entendue par l’ensemble des auteurs des deux premiers siècles.*



who is Lord and giver of life – and is properly disposed to receiving that Spirit; not just in some ostensibly exclusive or proper pneumatic context but every time the Christian repudiates sin, is exorcised against the enemy, professes faith in Christ, or addresses the Father in faithful prayer:

...he who is truly spiritual will...[acknowledge] also at all times the same Spirit of God, although He has been poured out upon us after a new fashion in these last times, [knowing that He descends] even from the creation of the world to its end upon the human race simply as such, from whom those who believe God and follow His word receive that salvation which flows from Him. Those, on the other hand, who depart from Him, and despise His precepts, and by their deeds bring dishonour on Him who made them, and by their opinions blaspheme Him who nourishes them, heap up against themselves most righteous judgment (*Adversus Haereses* 4:33:15 - Irenaeus, 1885, eds. Roberts and Donaldson).<sup>10</sup>

Clement of Alexandria, writing in the late second century, is even more difficult to parse on the question of peribaptismal rites. In *Stromateis* (2:3), for example, he clearly distinguishes between Baptism and what he calls “the blessed seal,” without providing further details about what the “seal” consists of; in several other places, as Fisher documents (Fisher, 1978, pp. 61-65), Clement refers rather obliquely to oil and anointing, none of which conclusively illustrates a post-baptismal unction. It is clearer that Clement’s scanty references to imposition of hands do not refer specifically to peribaptismal rites. Hence Fisher’s conclusion: “On balance it seems probable that the Alexandrian rite in Clement’s time included an unction with which the gift of the Holy Spirit was associated. The evidence for a hand-laying at baptism is more problematical. (p. 65).” Lampe’s assessment is skeptical on the matter of anointing:

Certainly [Clement] nowhere suggests that any form of unction is the outward gift and seal of the Holy Spirit, despite the fact that he speaks metaphorically of the ‘unction of the Holy Spirit’ and of the Christian as a sharer in the anointing of Christ which symbolized his death...As for a rite of laying on of hands, there is no hint in Clement’s writings of any use of such a practice in connection with Baptism...(Lampe, 1967, p. 157).

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<sup>10</sup> Briggman (2012) is a particularly valuable resource for further study of Irenaeus’ pneumatology.

In sum, there is no positive evidence for any peribaptismal rite of Christian initiation at least up to the time of Irenaeus in the late second century, while the evidence for such rites in Irenaeus, Theophilus and Clement is suggestive but inconclusive.<sup>11</sup> Most recent theologians have not explicitly cited this silence as a problem, but some implications of it are suggested by Fisher's efforts (on this point, unconvincing) to provide the widest possible scope for arguing that a version of Confirmation existed even in the first centuries. His efforts are consistent with an expectation that reasonably arises from a classic sacramental model of Confirmation: the expectation that some form of it existed in the apostolic era, and was transmitted through successive generations. (Paul Haffner illustrates this expectation when he describes the denial of such apostolic origin and transmission as typical of early-twentieth-century Modernism, (Haffner, 1999, p. 76), and thus a departure from the received or established view of the Roman Catholic Church.)

### **References to a Pre-baptismal Rite, but Not to a Post-baptismal Rite**

As I will be discussing examples drawn from the Syrian church in this section, I will make Maxwell Johnson's words my own to clarify where my focus lies: for the purposes of this section, "it is enough to speak of early "Syrian" rites in general without specifying whether they belong more properly to either East or West Syria" (Johnson, 1999, p. 35). These distinctions are important in their place, but not germane to my concerns here.

Fisher's summation of the situation in Syria after the second century – as documented, for example, in the work of Theodoret of Cyrus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and above all John Chrysostom – provides an apt introduction to this class of examples, all drawn from the church in that region, and to the problems that they pose:

There is...clear evidence that in the third and following four centuries there were in use in Syria initiatory rites which had an anointing before baptism but neither anointing nor hand-laying between the baptism and the ensuing eucharist. This prompted Raes to ask 'Où se trouve la Confirmation dans le rite Syro-Oriental?' and Thompson to say that the pre-baptismal unction in the Syrian rites was really the unction of confirmation, and Green to

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<sup>11</sup> In contrast to this general agreement that, whether it is merely an omission or outright evidence of absence, the Apostolic Fathers were silent concerning peribaptismal rites, Alastair Logan has argued (Logan, 1998) that the *Didache* and the Epistles of Ignatius (and the later Syrian *Apostolic Constitutions*) hint at the existence of a postbaptismal anointing in the churches they describe. His case is, however, highly conjectural and has been convincingly rebutted by Joseph Mueller (Mueller, 2006).

declare that the Antiochene rite did not have confirmation in an unusual place but lacked it altogether (Fisher, 1978, p. 83; see Thompson (1914), Raes (1956), and Green (1962)).

Fisher, writing in 1978, adds that, “Much of the evidence which has to be studied before these questions can be answered has been set out by Connolly [*The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, Cambridge 1909], Maclean [*Confirmation or the Laying on of Hands*, London 1934], and Duncan [*Baptism in the Demonstrations of Aphraates the Persian Sage*, Washington 1945]” (p. 83). The questions have not since become easier to study: today we should have to add Sladden (1972), Winkler (1978), Spinks (1986), Brock (1972; 1977; 1979) and Varghese (2004) to the roster.

Susan Myers has argued (Myers, 2001) that early Syrian Christian initiation practices may present yet another perplexity: She claims that “as the evidence in the Acts of Thomas suggests, oil was sometimes the only initiatory element in early Syriac-speaking Christianity; water, at an early stage in the east Syrian tradition, was absent or optional” (p. 170). Not only did Christian initiation in Syria at times depart from what was typical in other regions as far as the order of rites is concerned, but Myers contends that it may occasionally have completely omitted the water-bath that was elsewhere considered *sine qua non*, though she concedes (p. 150) that “most scholars assume that the anointing occurs in addition to the immersion in water.”<sup>12</sup> Winkler explains the Syrian practice, whereby “the anointing, and not the immersion in the water, forms the central part of baptism in the early Syriac sources,” in this way, referring to Mark 1:9-12 (see Appendix I): “The description of Christ’s baptism culminates in the appearance of the dove and the divine voice. This event, and not the actual descent into the water, is emphasized” by the Synoptic writers (Winkler, 1978, p. 72). Even if we concentrate on those accounts that do explicitly include a water-bath, the typical Syrian initiation rite is distinguished by a unique pattern of peribaptismal anointings.

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<sup>12</sup> Alistair Stewart-Sykes counters that, “for this community [described in *Didascalia Apostolorum*] at any rate, we can discount the suggestion of Myers that in some Syrian communities the anointing was primary and the baptism in water secondary”, given the centrality of the water-bath in that document (Stewart-Sykes, 2009, p. 74). Myers may constitute an example here of the curiously pedestrian approach to texts that one can find in many liturgical historians, who sometime extrapolate from word order alone, or from the omission of an overt affirmation of some feature or another of the ritual, basic features of the rituals they are attempting to describe. In their shared desire to let the texts speak for themselves and their fear of letting present-day theological and liturgical concerns dictate their reading of the texts, they are sometimes reduced to drawing extravagant conclusions from scanty literal evidence where more could be taken for granted. In Myers’ case, for instance, it would not be immoderate to assume that the author of the *Acts of Thomas* knew of an initiation rite using water, such as we find throughout the Christian church, even if the text alone does not explicitly mention it.

Two features of Syrian initiatory practice are especially relevant to our concerns here. First, the evidence indicates that Syrian initiation did not usually include a postbaptismal anointing or other rite between Baptism and Eucharist, and did sometimes include prebaptismal anointings, which departs from the practices that we shall note in the churches of Rome, Jerusalem, and North Africa. This is especially interesting since (as Myers' words above suggest, and as Winkler has argued) unction is of particularly weighty significance in Syrian initiation. Second, as Fisher remarks, "there is very clear evidence that Chrysostom associated the giving of the Holy Spirit with the imposition of the officiant's hand during the act of baptizing" (Fisher, 1978, p. 107). Hand-laying during Baptism is, in the strict sense, distinct from the water-bath proper, but temporally and spatially coincides so closely with it that it may be difficult to distinguish the effects attributed to one from the effects attributed to the other by authors in the early Syrian context – if indeed they make such a distinction.

I shall briefly consider in turn some major Syrian documents that describe initiation, and the evidence they provide concerning Confirmation. I am indebted to Walsh (2001) throughout this chapter for additional biographical details concerning the authors under consideration.

### ***Didascalia Apostolorum* (mid-third century)**

After reviewing *Didascalia Apostolorum* [*DA*]'s description of the rites of initiation, Fisher concludes that "it seems reasonably certain that the Didascaliast knew only one unction in initiation, and that before baptism" (p. 91). Revel sees two prebaptismal anointings, "one of the forehead done by the pontiff himself, the other of the entire body" (2006, p. 444).<sup>13</sup> Stewart-Sykes conveys the ambiguity in *DA* with his summary: "first the mark (rušm'a) is made upon the head by the celebrant and subsequently the whole body is anointed; in the case of women this is usually performed by another woman, preferably a deaconess" (Stewart-Sykes, 2009, pp. 74-75). In other words, the first "mark" or "sealing" is not obviously an anointing, while the subsequent step is clearly so.<sup>14</sup>

Lampe finds a conferral of the Holy Spirit in *DA* – in the prebaptismal anointing (see p. 188) and also in hand-laying:

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<sup>13</sup> "...l'une sur le front faite par le pontife lui-même, l'autre sur tout le corps." Fisher also notes Ysebaert's conclusion (Ysebaert, 1962, pp. 312, 360) that *DA* refers to two anointings, one preceding and one after Baptism, but points out that this is "not the most natural interpretation" of the Didascaliast's words, an assessment that I share.

<sup>14</sup> I have included the relevant passages in Appendix II.

the effectual sign of the reception of the Spirit in the case of a restored penitent is the laying on of the hand, this sign is said to be equivalent to Baptism, and it is implied that it is through the imposition of the hand... that the new convert, no less than the penitent, receives the Holy Spirit (Lampe, 1967, p. 187).

Winkler sees the “leitmotiv” in the anointing described by *DA* as a messianic and kingly motif “linked with that of the Israelitic priest-king” (Winkler, 1978, p. 66), a conclusion supported by Stewart-Sykes (2009, p. 75). This opens up a new avenue for interpretation: Syrian pre-baptismal anointing may not (or not always) have the explicit pneumatic significance that is typical of modern Confirmation in the Catholic Church, but if it has a messianic or royal significance (as Winkler maintains) then it does not follow that this significance is *ipso facto* a clear proof that the Syrian rite was nothing like Confirmation; rather, a messianic and royal anointing, if it is true to its forebears in the Hebrew scriptures (*e.g.* the anointing of the priests in Exodus 30:30, or of Saul in I Samuel 10:1-12, both of which texts I have included in Appendix I), must in fact be deeply pneumatological and may therefore qualify as a type of Confirmation. In other words, looking for Confirmation in the Syrian rite may distract us from a very different but still meaningful significance in the rite; but it is more likely that focusing on the messianic and royal theme *as though* it precluded a pneumatic purpose is a false dichotomy, an unwarranted positing of mutual exclusivity.<sup>15</sup> Consider Dumbrell’s description of the priestly role: “The anointing of Israel’s priests and kings indicated their special relationship to Yahweh. The basic function of Israel’s priesthood under the leadership of the high priest was to keep Israel holy, to decide what was clean and unclean, to keep Israel from everything that could defile, and to atone for Israel when defilement had occurred” (Dumbrell, 2002, pp. 44-45). One would be hard-pressed to explain how these roles – of fostering, among the people, that holiness that is an image of Yahweh’s holiness, “visible as glory” (p. 47) – can be envisioned *without* positing the guidance and life of the Spirit. To be priest or king in Israel is a pneumatically-vivified, a Spirit-animated vocation.

Johnson concurs with Winkler’s reading of the place of prebaptismal anointing in *DA*:

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<sup>15</sup> See, for an example of such a categorical dichotomy, A. Kavanagh’s use of the Syrian testimony: “The prebaptismal anointing in East Syria, as G. Winkler has pointed out, is never called “seal” (*hatma*) but “sign” or “mark” (*rushma*), and its significance is messianic *rather than* covenantal...The East Syrian *rushma* is *clearly not* confirmation, despite Dix’s assertion...” (Kavanagh, 1988, p. 72, note 6, emphasis mine).

Theologically and ritually, it is this liturgical act [prebaptismal anointing of the candidate's head], interpreted messianically in relationship to the anointing of priests and kings in ancient Israel and accompanied by the citation of Psalm 2:7 (the textual variant of Luke 3:22 in the account of Jesus' own baptism in the Jordan), which receives the primary emphasis within the overall initiation rite (Johnson, 1999, p. 43).

Also notable is the Didascaliast's robust and emphatic pneumatology, illustrated by his impatience in chapter 26 with various superstitious customs:

...If you possess the Holy Spirit, your observances are pointless and your customs are pointless. But if the Holy Spirit is not in you, how can you do anything righteous? The Holy Spirit is always present with those who possess it, even with those who have long neglected it. But should the Holy Spirit be absent for even a single day an unclean spirit will rapidly move in, as the Lord says (Stewart-Sykes, 2009, p. 252).

### ***Acts of Thomas***

Winkler summarizes the baptismal accounts provided by the *Acts of Thomas* (also called the *Acts of Judas Thomas*)<sup>16</sup>, and notes that this document does not mention any postbaptismal anointing, while two prebaptismal anointings – of the head and of the whole body – are alluded to in various places throughout. Lampe, who describes the prayers in the *Acts* as “extraordinarily obscure and hard to interpret,” believed that “they present us with another example of the common Syrian idea that the bestowal of the Spirit is to be associated with a pre-baptismal unction, such as we have already encountered in the Didascalia” (Lampe, 1967, p. 188). The various strata of these prayers accompanying the anointings illustrate, in Winkler's view, a “shift from the leitmotiv centered around the Messiah to the healing aspect of the anointing (Winkler, 1978, p. 66, emphasis mine) – without, however, suppressing the pneumatological significance of the unction. Lampe considered that the view found in the Acts of a pre-baptismal anointing bestowing the Spirit was “widespread in the third and fourth centuries”, finding examples of it (following Connolly) in “the *Acts of the Sons of Zebedee*, the *Vita Rabbulae*, Ephrem, the homily on Constantine's baptism falsely ascribed to Ephrem, Aphraates, Narsai, and the *Apostolic Constitutions*” (Lampe, 1967, p. 188).

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<sup>16</sup> I have included these accounts in Appendix II.

### **Ephrem (c. 306 - 373)**

Based on the order in which the Syrian poet and deacon Ephrem consistently refers to the rites of initiation in his hymns on Epiphany, Fisher concluded that he was familiar with an initiation sequence consisting of a pre-baptismal anointing, Baptism, and finally, Eucharist (Fisher, 1978, p. 94). As Revel argues, the third hymn provides especially clear evidence that unction preceded the water-bath (Revel, 2006, p. 458): the opening line of the hymn exults, “Christ and chrism are conjoined; the secret with the visible is mingled: the chrism anoints visibly, Christ seals secretly, the lambs newborn and spiritual, the prize of His twofold victory; for He engendered it of the chrism, and He gave it birth of the water” (Ephrem, 1898, p. 269). Winkler and Revel cite other references in Ephrem that are more germane to our interests here: In his *De fide* (82,10) Ephrem describes how the baptized “strip and put on oil (*mēšhā*), as a symbol of Christ (*m<sup>e</sup>sihā*)” which incidentally suggests that the anointing may follow the water-bath, and in *De virginitate* (VII, 6) he writes “the hidden seal of the Spirit is imprinted by oil on the bodies of those who are anointed in baptism.”

As for the significance of the anointings in Ephrem, Lampe observes that Ephrem

ascribes to unction the eschatological function of the Christian seal: it conveys a distinguishing “character” which marks off Christ’s people; it is the “oleo obsignatio,” which turns men from wolves into Christ’s sheep. It must, however, be observed that...it is hard to say whether Ephrem ascribes the virtue of the seal primarily to the anointing or to the signing with the Cross (p. 281).

Revel concludes more emphatically, on this point, that the pre-baptismal unctions in Ephrem are in fact replete with unmistakable meaning:

the rites of anointing often provide a forum for major developments that manifest their (properly sacramental) importance, their (very rich) meaning, going from healing and the forgiveness of sins all the way to consecration, kingly and priestly anointing and above all participation in the anointing of Christ and his renewal;...the gift of the Spirit, often



associated with baptism as a whole and especially with the baptismal waters, is also related often enough to this pre-baptismal anointing (Revel, 2006, p. 462).<sup>17</sup>

### **Aphraates [Aphrahat] (first half of the fourth century)**

Aphraates, the Syriac ascetic dubbed “the Persian Sage,” does not explicitly describe any peribaptismal anointing, but some remarks he makes about the use of oil can be interpreted as such, without providing further clarity about the placement of this anointing with respect to Baptism (Fisher, 1978, p. 96), nor about its significance. See for instance, his Demonstration 23, *On the Grapecluster*, where Aphraates seems to compare Christ to an olive tree and states that “through [the olive tree] the anointed ones are perfected: priests, kings and prophets” (Lehto, 2010, p. 486). As already mentioned, Lampe cited Aphraates as an illustration of the Syrian model of pre-baptismal unction bestowing the Spirit; Revel cites the same passage, namely Aphraates’ Demonstration 12, *On the Passover*, n. 13, which Revel cites as “la tradition du sceau et le baptême”; Revel notes that M.J. Pierre translates “de l’onction” rather than “du sceau” (Revel, 2006, p. 464; see note 6). Lehto (2010, p. 289) similarly renders the pertinent sentence as “this is what is required:...to administer the anointing oil as well as baptism in the proper way.” This evidence provides sparse insight into peribaptismal anointing, but Aphraates does incidentally affirm a link between imposition of hands and conferring of the Holy Spirit, though not in a baptismal context (Revel, p. 465; Ligier, 1973, p. 225, note 27).

### ***Apostolic Constitutions [AC] (c. 375)***

Bradshaw, Johnson and Philips (Bradshaw, 2002b, p. 9) present *AC* as a “reworking” and “weaving together” of “several older sources, chief of which are...the *Didascalia Apostolorum*...the *Didache*...and the *Apostolic Tradition*.” They add that “it is generally agreed that it was written in Syria, and probably in Antioch, between 375 and 380.” *AC* describes a rite of initiation featuring two anointings, one before the baptismal water-bath and one following it. The *post-baptismal* anointing may be an addition intended to bring Syrian practice into line with Jerusalem, while the *pre-baptismal* anointing retains the meaning it has in *DA*. Fisher points out that

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<sup>17</sup> [Les rites d'onction] donn[ent] très souvent lieu à d'amples développements qui en manifestent l'importance, proprement sacramentelle, [leur] signification, très riche, allant de la guérison et du pardon des péchés, jusqu'à la consécration, l'onction royale et sacerdotale et surtout la participation à l'onction du Christ et sa rénovation;...le don de l'Esprit, fréquemment associé à l'ensemble du baptême et particulièrement aux eaux baptismales, est aussi assez souvent mis en relation avec cette onction prébaptismale.



it is with the first and not the second anointing that the gift of the Holy Spirit is conjoined [see AC VII, 22, 2 and III, 17, 1]: and there is no explicit statement that the Holy Spirit is given in baptism itself (Fisher, 1978, p. 101).

Lampe's reading lends some support to Fisher's latter conclusion: *AC*

appear[s] to suggest at one point [VII, 44, 3] that water-baptism in itself is equivalent only to a physical purification, though elsewhere [VII, 22, 3, where water alone is said to be sufficient for Baptism when oil is unavailable] this is contradicted (Lampe, 1967, p. 209; see also p. 216).<sup>18</sup>

The latter section of *AC* also affirms that Baptism is distinguished from mere water-immersion alone by the presence of a rite of hand-laying. As for the meaning of the anointing, Lampe adds that “the Apostolic Constitutions...maintain that [the anointing] is a seal of the Covenants entered into at Baptism; but this is a very different conception of the seal from that of the mark singling out the elect for salvation” (p. 282, referencing *AC* VII, 22, 2).

### **John Chrysostom (c. 349 - 407)**

In baptismal instructions probably delivered around 390 CE (edited by Papadopoulos-Kerameus in 1909 and Wenger in 1957<sup>19</sup>) John Chrysostom describes<sup>20</sup> an anointing and consignation with oil that follows the candidate's renunciation of Satan and precedes the water-bath. The prolific Syrian bishop of Constantinople presents the anointing as a mark that will drive away the evil one's gaze and prepare one for combat against him. Fisher rebuts the contention that this anointing was an exorcism: “The purpose of the unction is not to effect the initial expulsion of Satan, which is accomplished in the exorcism, but to equip the convert with the spiritual resources with which to resist Satan successfully in the future” (p. 105; for his entire argument, see pp. 103-106). Dominic Serra, more persuasively, uses the phrase “prophylactically exorcistic” (Serra, 2005, p. 337) to express the connection of this anointing *both*

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<sup>18</sup> Of course, it may not be prudent to conclude too hastily from extreme cases – *e.g.*, from the way rites are celebrated *in extremis*, or when the usual elements for a liturgical rite are unobtainable. By definition these situations may entail exceptions to rules that are otherwise readily acknowledged.

<sup>19</sup> The happy story of the discovery of these manuscripts is told in the introduction to the Ancient Christian Writers edition of the *Baptismal Instructions* (Chrysostom, 1963, pp. 6-18).

<sup>20</sup> I have included an excerpt from Chrysostom's *Second Instruction* in the Appendix.

with exorcism, *and* its directedness to future combat (as opposed to aversion of present threats). Fisher finds it difficult to maintain that the anointing described by Chrysostom is seen as a conferral of the Holy Spirit. While, as Fisher shows, Chrysostom posited some action or presence of the Holy Spirit in the chrism, he does not find these explicit enough to warrant the conclusion that the Holy Spirit was imparted by the unction itself (p. 107), though of course this requires one to explain how one might be “equipped with spiritual resources to resist Satan” without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Chrysostom did affirm in several places that the Holy Spirit is conferred in Baptism: Lampe brings to our attention *Homily 24 on the Gospel of John* (para. 2) and *Homily 40 on the Acts of the Apostles* (para. 2) where he argues that Chrysostom “explains more fully the essential link between water-baptism and the gift of the Spirit” and “maintains that the Spirit is bestowed in Baptism” (Lampe, 1967, p. 201). Fisher admits that a case can be made that, for Chrysostom, the entire baptismal liturgy, and not just one element of it, confers the Holy Spirit, which would help to explain the difficulty of arranging all of Chrysostom’s comments into an orderly theology of the effects of the sacraments (p. 107). Fisher, however, insists that “Chrysostom associated the giving of the Spirit” specifically with the “imposition of the officiant’s hand during the act of baptizing...which symbolized and effected that giving of the Holy Spirit which was imparted to our Lord at his baptism” (pp. 107, 108).

Marsh agrees (Marsh, 1972b, p. 324, n. 19), citing Chrysostom’s *Second Instruction*, no. 25, which reads: “it is at this moment [when the priest makes the initiate “go down into the sacred waters”] that, through the words and the hand of the priest, the Holy Spirit descends upon you” (John Chrysostom, 1963, p. 52).<sup>21</sup>

It may be that the prebaptismal anointing or anointings described by Chrysostom are a red herring for the purposes of our quest, if it is the case that the hand-laying during the water-bath has a much more manifest pneumatic significance than do the unctions. The anointing is more than an exorcism, it is true, but it is not clearly seen as a conferral of the Holy Spirit, except in the sense already mentioned: one *cannot* combat the enemy of one’s soul without the Holy Spirit. Revel observes that Chrysostom “à aucun moment...ne fait allusion au don de l’Esprit à propos

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<sup>21</sup> However, Chrysostom immediately proceeds to describe the threefold immersion of Baptism as a “preparation” to “receive the descent of the Spirit” (pp. 52-53), of which a very literal reading would be that the Spirit is received at two distinct moments in the ablution – just as his repeated description of the consignation a couple of paragraphs earlier could lead the literal-minded reader to conclude that there were three anointings before the ablution!

de ces onctions prébaptismales” (Revel, 2006, p. 442). In contrast, the hand-laying (which is, of course, the gesture in Acts associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit – see Appendix I) does have, for Chrysostom, the pneumatic meaning that interests us here. Bradshaw cautions that

[Joseph] Ysebaert and Joseph L’Écuyer...interpreted John Chrysostom’s reference to the bishop’s imposition of the hand on baptismal candidates during their immersion...as meaning that the two sacraments of baptism and confirmation were being conveyed at the same time. This interpretation, however, has not been accepted by other scholars, especially in the light of other passages in Chrysostom’s writings which suggest rather that the Holy Spirit was seen as being as present in the whole baptismal action (Bradshaw, 2002a, p. 147).

This is not a definitive refutation, given the difficulty of identifying with precision any uniform understanding in Chrysostom of the action of the Holy Spirit in initiation.

Lampe explains that in Chrysostom’s reading of Acts 8:39, “although the Ethiopian received no imposition of hands, he yet obtained the gift of the Holy Spirit” (p. 226; see also p. 67, note 3. The reference is to Chrysostom’s *Homily 19 on the Acts of the Apostles*, para. 2). Lampe argues further that the gift of the Spirit in Baptism is not always explicitly tied to hand-laying: “In the ‘laver’, [Chrysostom] declares, the Christian has become a king, a priest, and a prophet; he has been made ενθους [perfect] and sealed; for, just as a σφραγίς [seal] is laid upon soldiers, so is the Spirit upon the faithful” (pp. 238-239, citing Chrysostom, *Homily 3 on Second Corinthians*, para. 7). Further, “the seal of the Spirit corresponds to circumcision and it is made available in the ‘laver’” (p. 245, citing Chrysostom *Homily 2 on Ephesians*, para. 2).<sup>22</sup>

With the caution he showed in the case of Justin Martyr, Fisher is loath to conclude categorically that Chrysostom knew of no postbaptismal anointing; however, given the silence of Chrysostom about any such rite, it is reasonable to assume that he knew of no anointing between Baptism and Eucharist; and as Revel argues (Revel, 2006, pp. 438-440) the fact that the Eucharist is explicitly described as following immediately upon emergence from the baptismal water-bath constitutes positive evidence against such an anointing in Chrysostom: “It is clear that, if St John

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<sup>22</sup> Ligier (1973, pp. 167-172) makes reference to a separate hand-laying described by Chrysostom in his third baptismal catechesis, a hand-laying that took place on Good Friday and immediately followed a prayer that the Holy Spirit might bless the candidates for Baptism.

Chrysostom does not speak of post-baptismal rites, it is because they did not exist in Antioch at that time.”<sup>23</sup>

In sum, a consensus widely shared among recent writers who have explored Chrysostom’s testimony is that Christian initiation in his context included one or more pre-baptismal anointings, but not a post-baptismal unction; that the anointings built on the preceding exorcism by equipping the candidate to do battle with Satan, but somehow, for all that prophylactically exorcistic function, did not have a pneumatic meaning; and that initiation also included a hand-laying in the midst of the water-bath, that was likely directly associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Winkler argues that this last theme is an important shift in the Syrian understanding:

During Chrysostom’s time...the reinterpretation of the anointing before baptism is already well underway. Hence he removes our leitmotiv [of priestly and kingly consecration] from...the anointing...and transfers it, together with the gift of the Spirit, to the immersion into the water at the baptism proper (Winkler, 1978, in Johnson, 1995, p. 73).

### **Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350 - 428)**

Theodore, a contemporary and friend of Chrysostom, creates another puzzle in the fraught matter of disentangling the details of early Syrian initiation. In his homilies on Baptism, the bishop of Mopsuestia (in Cilicia, in the south of what is now Turkey) clearly describes both a prebaptismal anointing, and a postbaptismal consignation that may be an anointing as well.<sup>24</sup> At each stage – anointing, water-bath and postbaptismal sealing – he posits more or less clearly a gift of the Holy Spirit. Fisher’s reading of Theodore on the post-baptismal sealing, which in Fisher’s opinion “Western Christians of today would regard as Confirmation,” is that he

evidently regarded the rite of initiation as an organic whole in which the Holy Spirit was present and bestowed himself throughout...Baptism and the seal are so far one that together they constitute the sacramental birth of baptism (Fisher, 1978, p. 117).

Lampe also attributes to Theodore the view that “at the same time as we receive Baptism, which typifies the death and resurrection of Christ, we obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Lampe,

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<sup>23</sup> *Il est évident que, si saint Jean Chrysostome n’en parle pas, c’est que les rites postbaptismaux n’existait pas à Antioche à cette époque.*

<sup>24</sup> The relevant excerpts are included in the Appendix.

1967, p. 202), but argues further in a very different vein (following W. de Fries) that “Theodore does not ascribe the gift of the Spirit to a post-baptismal unction” and indeed that no such unction is mentioned – “his language about anointing...is not to be taken literally (p. 202, note 4).” Curiously, Lampe contradicts this reading when he notes a little further on that

Theodore of Mopsuestia compares the stages in the Christian’s reception of the Spirit with the experience of Jesus. Our regeneration by the Spirit is effected in the water of Baptism...the subsequent unction with chrism corresponds to the descent of the Dove (p. 299).

Revel agrees that Theodore is speaking metaphorically here, but points out that Theodore’s testimony is still anomalous inasmuch as, uniquely among the Syrian writers, he describes a postbaptismal consignation (even if it is not an unction) that (in Revel’s reading) confers the Holy Spirit (2006, p. 472).

The evidence from Theodore demands an explanation because the weight of other Syrian writers, particularly Narsai, Ephrem and Chrysostom, favours only one peribaptismal anointing, and that, preceding the water-bath. Several explanations have been proposed besides Lampe and Revel’s view, just cited, that the use of the word “anointing” in connection with the postbaptismal consignation in Theodore is merely figurative: Yarnold, *e.g.*, hypothesizes that it represents a later development of the liturgy; Sebastian Brock (1977, p. 179) notes that “Theodore knows three anointings, although it is disputed whether the description of the post-baptismal one belongs to the original text or not.” We may conclude with some assurance that, whether he attests to the existence of a post-baptismal unction or not, Theodore certainly contributes evidence of a Syrian pre-baptismal anointing and attributes the gift of the Holy Spirit to the baptismal complex of rites, but not exclusively to any one element of it. Theodore’s presentation of the Trinity is helpful to explore his theology of initiation here, for he categorically corrects those who attempt to ascribe certain functions only to each of the Divine Persons:

We do not name Father as one cause, and the Son as another cause, and the Holy Spirit as another cause still, but because these three form the one cause from which we expect the delight in the benefits which are looked for in baptism, we rightly make use of one invocation

only with which we name the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Theodore, trans. Mingana, 1933, p. 61).

### **Theodoret of Cyrus [or Cyrillus] (c. 393 - before 466)**

Like his contemporary Chrysostom, Theodoret's description of the rites of initiation strongly implies that there was an important anointing preceding Baptism, but none after. Fisher maintains that Theodoret "believed that the Holy Spirit was received both in baptism and in the unction which preceded it" (Fisher, 1978, p. 119), referring to Theodoret's *Hæreticarum fabularum compendium*, 5:18 and his commentary on the Song of Songs.<sup>25</sup> He also cites evidence that this bishop of Cyrus considered the officiant's hand-laying during the baptismal water-bath to be an instrument of conferring the Holy Spirit, as Lampe also notes: Theodoret, in his commentary on Hebrews, "says that converts receive the grace of the Spirit through the ἱερατικῆς χειρός [priestly hand]" (p. 227).

Lampe provides his own translation of Theodoret's words (in his Song of Songs commentary) that "the baptized 'receive as a royal seal the unction of the πνευματικόν μύρον [spiritual chrism]<sup>26</sup> which symbolizes the unseen grace of the Holy Spirit'" (Lampe, 1967, p. 282, also p. 218).

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<sup>25</sup> I have included these texts, as translated by G.M. Cope and A.J. Mason respectively, in the Appendix.

<sup>26</sup> Winkler has shown that a subtlety of terminology must be noted in early Syrian initiation:

In the oldest East Syrian and Armenian documents, the oil for the prebaptismal anointing is called "(olive) oil," or "(olive) oil of anointing," or "holy (olive) oil," never myron. This anointing before baptism is regularly called "mark" or "sign" (Syriac: rušmā) in the Syriac sources. When the Syriac Church eventually adopted an anointing after baptism, it was referred to as "seal" (ḥatmā) (Winkler, 1978, p. 63).

Brock had offered a similar observation, with a caution, not long before Winkler:

In the earliest [Syrian] texts on baptism, of the 3rd-4th century, the pre-baptismal anointing is regularly called the rushma, "mark", occasionally tabca, "imprint", but very rarely (if ever) hatma, "seal"; the oil used is invariably referred to as meshha "(olive) oil", and never as myron. Unfortunately great confusion has been introduced into most discussions of the subject by the use of utterly misleading translations of rushma as "seal" instead of "mark, sign", meshha as "myron" or "chrism", instead of "oil", etc. (Brock, 1977, p. 180).

When *AC* makes the first references to postbaptismal anointing in the Syrian Church, it refers to "the oil used at the prebaptismal anointing ... [as] "(olive) oil" or "holy oil," whereas the oil that is applied after baptism is always designated as myron" (Winkler, 1978, p. 64). In Chrysostom, however, even the oil used for prebaptismal anointing is sometimes called *myron*, and Cyril of Jerusalem calls it "exorcised oil." Winkler asks whether the change in terminology reflects an evolution in meaning; first, she notes the messianic and royal themes in the Syrian pattern of anointing:

One simply cannot overlook the striking structural resemblance between the divine nomination of the priest-kings in the old covenant and the Christian prebaptismal anointing: the prophet instructs the newly appointed king before his

## **Narsai (fl. 457-503)**

Fisher summarizes the implications of Homilies 21 and 22 of Narsai's *Liturgical Homilies* for a history of peribaptismal rites in these words: "Narsai, in common with other Syrian authorities believed that there was a giving of the Holy Spirit in baptism and also in the unction which preceded it" (p. 99). Homily 22 describes a lengthy prebaptismal anointing of the candidate for baptism, including anointing of the whole body, and an anointing and consignation of the forehead; this "stamp," the homily continues, "drives out iniquity and gives the Spirit." Brock (1977, p. 179) concurs that "Narsai knows only a single pre-baptismal anointing." In Homily 21 we read that "the heat of the Spirit...purges the rust of body and soul" in the baptismal water. Narsai, in short, describes an initiation rite featuring a Spirit-conferring anointing and consignation with oil, followed by a water-bath in which the Spirit is said to be at work. No mention is made of any anointing after the water-bath. "À la fin du V<sup>e</sup> siècle, Narsai témoigne toujours d'une tradition qui ne connaît d'unction que prébaptismale, tout en lui reconnaissant une valeur pleinement sacramentelle" (Revel, 2006, p. 467).

Lampe concluded that "a good deal more importance is attributed [by Narsai] to the anointing than we normally find in the orthodox Fathers" (p. 282); it would be more accurate to say that Narsai has a more developed view of the significance of anointing than most other Fathers, but that he shares with the Syrian tradition in general a sustained and vivid attention to the prebaptismal unction.

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anointing (see the catechetical instructions of the baptizandus); the prophet anoints the head of the king; in connection with the anointing, the Spirit descends upon the king (p. 68).

Winkler goes on:

From these indications in Scripture [Winkler is referring to accounts of Jesus' baptism] and in the early writings of Syria and Armenia, one can assume that the descent of the dove at Christ's baptism is the visible manifestation of the Spirit's presence, and that with the divine voice, "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on you," Jesus is anointed and invested as the Messiah-King (p. 70).

Winkler explains that with time the "independent" place and meaning of the prebaptismal anointing "became attached to the previous rites, namely, renunciation and exorcism," while the *leitmotiv* that had originally characterized the anointing – "conferring of the Spirit...with its association of the royal and sacerdotal anointing" – was, by Chrysostom's time, attached to the baptismal water-immersion, and by the end of the fourth century, to the (newly adopted) postbaptismal anointing (p. 73). She sums up her view of the shift in meaning:

The anointing before the immersion, which once formed the very center of the Syriac rites of initiation, became subordinated to the basic cleansing aspect of preparation, losing at the same time its original meaning as true initiation into the messianic kingship. The baptismal font, once seen as womb and also referred to as Jordan, changes now in West Syria and Palestine into sepulcher and grave; the immersion becomes the imitation of Christ's burial and resurrection (p. 80).



In addition to these examples from the Syrian context, it is possible that there were contemporaneous Egyptian instances of prebaptismal anointing, though it is only a possibility. Citing the evidence provided by word order in a few passages from the Alexandrians, Clement, Origen, and Didymus the Blind, Johnson notes that “it is quite possible that prior to the mid fourth century there was only a *prebaptismal* anointing in Egypt, similar to the initiation practices of the early Syrian tradition” (Johnson, 1999, pp. 58, 118).

To summarize what we have seen so far, evidence concerning rites of initiation in Syria in the first few centuries of the patristic era indicates that Baptism was typically preceded by anointing, sometimes included hand-laying, and was generally not followed by any anointing prior to the reception of the Eucharist. The prebaptismal anointing followed the renunciation of Satan (*apotaxis*) and profession of faith in Christ (*syntaxis*), and in some cases was described in terms that suggest a conferral of the Holy Spirit. It was not typical of the Syrian context to posit a gift of the Holy Spirit at one particular moment in the process of initiation, but instead to attribute this gift to the complex of rites as a whole or to several components of it; we have seen hints in a couple of places that the hand-laying imparts such a gift. Dix (1948) is one of the most-cited examples of a school of thought that interprets Syrian prebaptismal anointing as Confirmation; Bradshaw (2002a, p. 147) calls this an “ingenious theory”, which is no more than a polite insinuation (unsubstantiated by evidence) that the theory in question is merely interesting, but unsubstantiated by evidence. Dix’s reading certainly raises serious questions – for instance, what can it mean to posit a gift of the Spirit *prior to* the new life that begins with Baptism? – but Bradshaw’s demurral consists of no such perceptive questions, only of a brusque dismissal.

What was distinctive and explicit in the Syrian context, at first, was to attribute to the anointing a priestly and kingly significance. Johnson notes:

So significant is this prebaptismal anointing in the early Syrian tradition that its Syriac term, *rushma*, translated correctly as “sign” or “mark” [Lampe had rendered it as “seal”], becomes the way to refer to the whole of Christian initiation. To be initiated into Christ, then, is to be assimilated by the Holy Spirit into the life pattern of the anointed one...himself; to be a “Christian” is to be, literally, an “anointed one” (Johnson, 1999, p. 47).

This interpretation faded with time as the “prophylactic and apotropaic” (Winkler) themes of the anointing grew in prominence; we shall see that even in the West Syrian context, a



postbaptismal anointing similar to that which obtained elsewhere in the Church would eventually arise (*cf.* Cyril of Jerusalem), though in the East Syrian rites “a postbaptismal anointing does not...enter...until the mid-seventh-century liturgical reforms of patriarch Isho’yabh III” (Johnson, 1999, p. 113). It is more difficult to generalize concerning the Syrian views of the gift of the Holy Spirit, since in the early Syriac documents the bestowal of the Holy Spirit is not consistently ascribed to any one component of initiation, nor does it seem to be the case that the Syrian authors understood the gift of the Spirit to be something that could be meaningfully attributed to one rite or moment only.

Where the Spirit was said to be imparted during Baptism, we have seen that some writers associate this gift with hand-laying during the water-bath. Lampe, whose work focused on the theme of “seal,” remarked that this notion can plausibly be seen as yet another distinct component of the process of initiation: for example, “In the [AC], where the gift of the Spirit is associated with the unction administered before Baptism, the ‘seal’ is nevertheless held to be imparted in the consignation which takes place after the Baptism proper is over” (Lampe, 1967, p. 266). To try to account for the distinctive pre-baptismal anointing, Lampe observes that it is possible that

the bestowal of the Spirit in the primitive Church was not necessarily linked with Baptism, and that the Pauline doctrine of grace implied that an activity of the Spirit was operative upon the convert before his sacramental incorporation into Christ. [The Pauline Epistles] are not evidence for a pre-baptismal Confirmation in apostolic times, though the Syrian rite may possibly have been developed later on the basis of such a doctrine of the pre-baptismal activity of the Spirit; but the evidence of Theodore of Mopsuestia is against this (p. 91).

Serra, seeking points of similarity between Syrian initiation and the Western pattern that eventually evolved, frames the Syrian dynamic in terms of the renunciation of Satan and profession of faith that are the turning points of initiation:

The ancient Syrian pattern appears to be the following: catechumenal preparation leading to an *apotaxis/syntaxis*, the anointing (signing) of the forehead introducing the new believer into the messianic reign of Christ, the water bath, the eucharist (Serra, 2005, p. 339).

Revel gives insufficient attention to the connection between hand-laying and conferring the Spirit in the Syrian context, but otherwise he summarizes well and forcefully the overall evidence from this region:

There can be no doubt concerning the continuity and coherence of a liturgical tradition that, from the second to the sixth centuries, knows nothing of a post-baptismal anointing and passes directly from ablution to the Eucharist, but places great emphasis on a pre-baptismal anointing – an anointing that is often associated with the Spirit while remaining an anointing for the struggle against Satan and for the strength of confessing the faith (Revel, 2006, p. 468).<sup>27</sup>

Investigation into the peribaptismal rites in the early Syrian church continues, and many questions remain open to dispute; here I tentatively conclude that, while Syrian peribaptismal rites include hand-laying that is considered to impart the Spirit, and a prebaptismal anointing that is seen as the equivalent of the Spirit's descent on Jesus in the form of a dove in Mark 1, it is not clear that these were episcopally administered or involved episcopally-consecrated chrism.

Since, as Winkler has shown, the anointing originally had a strong priestly and royal consecratory meaning, one may ask (always on the tentative assumption that the anointing may be Confirmation) whether it is sufficient that a rite be considered to confer the Holy Spirit for it to be deemed Confirmation, whether or not this pneumatic significance is eclipsed by a distinct, overarching purpose (in this case, priestly and kingly).<sup>28</sup> Or is it the case that Syrian prebaptismal anointing in fact provides a valuable insight into what it really means to receive the Holy Spirit, precisely by positing an effect like that experienced by Jesus in the Jordan? Finally, a possibility raised by the presence of a pneumatic hand-laying in the midst of the water-baptism proper is that, for my purposes, the anointings are a red herring, and that the real contender (in the Syrian context) for the title of Confirmation, if there is one, is that very hand-laying.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Aucun doute n'est possible quant à la continuité et à la cohérence d'une tradition liturgique qui, du IIe au VIe siècle, ignore tout d'une onction postbaptismale, passe sans intermédiaire de l'ablution à l'eucharistie mais donne un grand relief à l'onction prébaptismale, fréquemment liée à l'Esprit, tout en étant une onction pour la lutte contre Satan et la force de la confession de foi.*

<sup>28</sup> Indeed, as I have already pointed out in several places, to posit a dichotomy between the “priestly” and “kingly” on the one hand, and the “pneumatic” on the other, betrays a pigeonholed understanding of the Spirit that is at odds with the vision of the Hebrew Scriptures.

<sup>29</sup> Bradshaw (2002, pp. 147-149) catalogues a number of other intriguing approaches to the Syrian evidence: “[Thomas] Thompson [1914] and Joseph Coppens [1925] simply noted the difference in structure [between Syrian and Western initiation rites] without offering an explanation for it...F.E. Brightman [1918]...believed that the

## References to a Post-baptismal Rite

This category describes what will eventually encompass all streams of Christian initiation in the patristic era, once the silence of the first centuries is broken and the distinctive prebaptismal consecrations of Syria gives way to a uniform practice of postbaptismal anointing. My focus here will be to sketch briefly the major early examples of postbaptismal rites that have been widely interpreted as forerunners or early instances of Confirmation and as instances of transition to the more uniform, Church-wide practice that characterized the Middle Ages and the modern era.

### **Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225)**

This pivotal Carthaginian Latin theologian explicitly describes peribaptismal hand-laying and anointing. None of his references discussed here, but for an allusion in *De pudicitia*, are found in works that are considered clearly Montanist. As the earliest unmistakable references to peribaptismal rites that may be examples or forerunners of Confirmation, I quote them in full:

The flesh is washed that the soul might be cleansed, the flesh is anointed that the soul might be consecrated, the flesh is signed that the soul might be protected, the hand-laying overshadows the flesh that the soul might be illuminated, the flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ that the soul might be fattened on God (*De resurrectione mortuorum*, 8, in Tertullian, 1954, p. 931).<sup>30</sup>

In this passage Tertullian is enumerating the steps undertaken by the Christian in initiation; after the baptismal ablution and before the Eucharist he lists unction, consignation and hand-laying. In his treatise *De baptismo* (chapters 6, 7 and 8), Tertullian seems to deny that the Holy Spirit is given through the water of Baptism, attributing the pneumatic effect instead to a hand-laying that follows a postbaptismal anointing (though he also perplexingly affirms that just as the bodies are thus “purified” and “blessed” after Baptism, so at the same time are the baptismal waters from which they have just emerged):

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Syrians had ‘apparently transformed what elsewhere was an exorcism into the unction of Confirmation’...” E.C. Ratcliff, on Bradshaw’s reading, initially [1946] tried to marginalize the significance of evidence from the “remote and isolated” Syrian church, but eventually [1965] concluded that “the Syrian anointing was ‘not a confirmation or completion, but an inception; the giving of the Spirit is the beginning of initiation’.” H. Benedict Green [1962] and E.C. Whitaker [1961], Bradshaw affirms, “argued that the prebaptismal unction in the Syrian documents was intended to be exorcistic, just as it was in Western sources.”

<sup>30</sup> “*Sed et caro abluatur ut anima emaculetur ; caro unguatur ut anima consecretur ; caro signatur ut [et] anima muniatur ; caro manus inpositione adumbratur, ut [et] anima spiritu inluminetur ; caro corpore et sanguine Christi uescitur, ut et anima de deo saginetur.*”

Not that the Holy Spirit follows from the water, but in the water purified by the angel we are prepared for the Holy Spirit. Here too a type has preceded. Just as John the forerunner of the Lord prepared his way, in the same way in baptism the angel goes before the Holy Spirit to make the way straight...Then emerging from the washing, we are anointed with blessed anointing according to that primitive custom by which, ever since Aaron was anointed by Moses, they are anointed for priesthood with oil from a horn...That is why you are called “christus” [*or*: “That is why you are called ‘Christians’”; *or*: “That is why he is called ‘christus’”], from the ‘chrism’ which is the ‘anointing’...So for us the anointing which runs down over our flesh brings spiritual profit...Then the hand is imposed for a blessing, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit...then the Most Holy Spirit descends readily from the Father upon the purified and blessed bodies and on the waters of baptism as if revisiting his ancient seat.<sup>31</sup>

If we confine our attention to these two passages, we may plausibly conclude with Fisher that “Tertullian’s initiatory rite consisted in baptism in water, anointing, consignation and hand-laying, the purpose of the last act being to confer the Holy Spirit” (Fisher, 1978, p. 33). (Since Tertullian reserved the celebration of Baptism to the bishop, it goes without saying that the rites we are discussing here are conferred by the “bishop and his delegates” (Lampe, 1967, p. 160).)<sup>32</sup> Fisher thus concedes that the anointing did not, for Tertullian, confer the Holy Spirit in a direct way, though Fisher elsewhere (p. 31) nuances this conclusion somewhat, seemingly to provide the widest possible scope for finding early examples of pneumatic peribaptismal anointing. Lampe agrees that Tertullian’s anointing does not confer the Spirit, but he reads the North African differently when it comes to the conferral of the Spirit in the water-bath proper. This is as consistent with Lampe’s overall purpose as Fisher’s reading is consistent with his. Lampe refers to

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<sup>31</sup> *Non quod in aqua spiritum sanctum consequimur, sed in aqua emundati sub angelo spiritui sancto praeparatur. Hic quoque figura praecessit. Sicut enim Ioannes antepaercursor domini fuit praeparans vias eius, ita et angelus baptismi arbiter superuenturo spiritui sancto vias dirigit abolitione delictorum... Exinde egressi de lavacro perungimur benedicta unctione de pristina disciplina qua ungui oleo de cornu in sacerdotium solebant, ex quo Aaron a Moyse unctus est. Unde christus dicitur a chrismate quod est unctio...in nobis carnaliter currit unctio sed spiritaliter proficit... Dehinc manus imponitur per benedictionem advocans et invitans spiritum sanctum...tunc ille sanctissimus spiritus super emundata et benedicta corpora libens a patre descendit superque baptismi aquas tanquam pristinam sedem recognoscens conquiescit* (Tertullian, 1964, pp. 14-18). Fisher shows that several variant readings are possible in section 7, where “unde christus dicitur” may be read as either “unde christi dicti” or “unde christiani dicti”; depending on the reading one chooses, Tertullian may be affirming that either the High Priest or Christians are said to be “anointed.” Fisher argues that in the latter case chrismation causes the anointed to become “members of Christ’s priestly body” (Fisher, 1978, p. 31). See also Evans’ commentary on the passage (Tertullian, 1964, p. 70).

<sup>32</sup> Revel brings Tertullian’s *De praescriptione haereticorum* (26) to our attention; there the North African also enumerates a rite of milk and honey among the repertoire of initiatory acts. (Revel, 2006, p. 106).

Tertullian's *De pudicitia* (para. 9) as well as to the opening chapters of *De baptismo* to conclude that for Tertullian, "the seal of the Spirit is given in the 'laver', that is, water-baptism" (Lampe, 1967, p. 159). Alistair Stewart-Sykes has little patience with Lampe's treatment of Tertullian:

Whereas there is no question that Tertullian intends to describe a continuous ritual of initiation, he is very clear that the descent of the Spirit does not take place in baptismal water but through the laying of a hand; thus he does not plant the seed of such an idea but gives it explicit statement...Though [Lampe] does not actually misrepresent Tertullian, he determines in the end that Tertullian is confused about the role that the Spirit plays in water baptism. It may perhaps have been more theologically satisfying were Tertullian confused, but he is not confused: he is entirely clear. He does not ascribe a role to the Spirit in water-baptism but sees the gift of the Spirit deriving from the hand-laying...It seems that Lampe ...[is] responding less to Tertullian than to the use made of Tertullian's writings by Mason and Dix (2001b, pp. 138-139).

Marsh does not spare Tertullian from the charge of confusion but sees its roots in the evolution of the theology of the Spirit:

Tertullian has now both asserted two gifts of the Spirit in Christian initiation, in baptism and in the imposition of hand, and denied that he has asserted this, maintaining that the Spirit is given only in the imposition of hand. He has not, in fact, avoided contradiction, but his dilemma is revealing for the state of the question at this time (Marsh, 1973, p. 129).

Dix (1946, p. 14), attempting to resolve this paradox, had argued: "For Tertullian *all this together* [water-bath, anointing, and hand-laying] is *baptismum*, and it is not the water but 'the seal' which imparts the Spirit. But the whole rite is one, and its minister is the Bishop." Burkhard Neunheuser shares this reading of the Carthaginian: the "*religionem* of water" Tertullian refers to in chapter 9 of *De baptismo*, for Neunheuser,

includes water-bath, anointing, and laying on of hands, to which the following effects are ascribed: forgiveness of sins, priestly anointing, and descent of the Holy Spirit. But these effects take place in such a manner that they form together a unity. This unity is summed up as "baptismus", "aqua" and so forth (Neunheuser, 1964, p. 86).

Neunheuser concludes a little further on that Tertullian's denial that the Spirit is received in the water-bath is either "in opposition to all other tradition" or else an "exaggerated" statement of the mutual complementarity of the water-bath and the hand-laying as "stages" in the "imparting of the Spirit" (p. 89). For Lampe, the pneumatic significance of hand-laying in initiation as described by Tertullian is most likely either an innovation outright or a re-interpretation of an existing gesture, re-interpreted to reflect a reading of the pneumatic hand-laying in Acts (1967, p. 161); Revel expresses a similar conclusion, and makes an important distinction between kinds of continuity, one that we will return to later:

It can no longer be said, as it is commonly said, that post-baptismal hand-laying is the *continuation* of the apostolic gesture. At most it is the *reprise*, rediscovery or restoration of it. Between the Acts of the Apostles and the year 200, there is a century and a half hiatus during which it would seem that baptismal ablution sufficed both as a sacrament for the forgiveness of sins and as a sacrament of the gift of the Spirit. Thus the problem of Confirmation's origins is made rather more complex (Revel, 2006, 493).<sup>33</sup>

Lampe and Revel both suggest, as we have seen, that Tertullian's pneumatic hand-laying may be a re-purposing of an existing ritual *impositio manuum*. Stewart-Sykes provides an example of one such original rite: he argues that "Tertullian frequently uses the image of manumission to explain the work of Christ" (2001b, p. 141) and that "the purpose of the rite of hand-laying was to establish a relationship of *clientela* between the newly initiated and the bishop" (p. 129). *Clientela* designates specifically the new relationship established by manumission between a slave and a former master. Some of the rituals of manumission involved a ritual slap or blow (*alapa*) or a "laying-on, and a taking-off, of a hand" (p. 143) and Stewart-Sykes suggests that a similar rite may have been incorporated into the rites of Christian initiation to express the freedom of the Christian, one that nonetheless entails (as with the *clientela* rapport) an ongoing relationship, especially one where the initiate – having, perhaps, abandoned a profession that was not

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<sup>33</sup> *On ne peut plus dire, comme on le fait couramment, que l'imposition des mains postbaptismale est la continuation du geste apostolique. Tout au plus elle est la reprise, la redécouverte ou la restauration. Entre les Actes des Apôtres et l'an 200, il y a hiatus d'environ un siècle et demi pendant lequel il semble bien qu'on se soit contenté de l'ablution baptismale à la fois comme sacrement du pardon des péchés et comme sacrement du don de l'Esprit. Voilà qui rend singulièrement plus complexe le problème des origines de la confirmation.*

acceptable for a Christian – now depended on the “patronage” of the Church for his survival (see p. 147).<sup>34</sup>

Bradshaw (2002a, p. 59) draws our attention to another feature of Tertullian’s evidence that he thinks should interest us, namely the contrast it offers with the Syrian initiation we have just seen: whereas the Syrian model was “Christological”, patterned on “Christ’s baptism in the Jordan”, Tertullian bears witness to a “soteriological” character, modeled on Christ’s “passage from death to life.” Bradshaw here stands as another example of a theologian who posits an illicit distinction – in this case, between the “Christological” and the “soteriological,” as though Jesus carried a selection of clear, distinct and non-overlapping portfolios.

Tertullian’s descriptions of Christian initiation are ambiguous enough that the reader who seeks evidence in his writing for a Spirit-conferring peribaptismal rite can find it in the imposition of hands; the reader who seeks a solemn peribaptismal anointing will find that too; one interested in discovering a flat denial that the baptismal water-bath *per se* confers the Spirit will not be disappointed; whereas one who wishes to nuance that flat denial with the suggestion that the Spirit is at work in the baptismal waters after all, will likewise find material. Does this polyvalence reflect Tertullian’s confusion or imprecision, or are we asking the wrong questions as we attempt to understand how he perceived the rites of initiation?

### ***Apostolic Tradition*<sup>35</sup> [AT] (c. 215 – c. 350?)**

An Ethiopic version (from a fifteenth century manuscript) of the document now referred to as *Apostolic Tradition* was first published in recent times by Henry Tattam in 1848. It is an example of a “church order” – a type of document prescribing the administration of certain liturgical and ecclesiastical matters. Several other versions of the same text were published in the same period – Sahidic Coptic (from an eleventh-century manuscript), Bohairic Coptic (made from the Sahidic, nineteenth century), and Latin (from the fifth-century “Verona Palimpsest”<sup>36</sup>). Subsequently, a fourteenth-century manuscript of an Arabic version (also made from a Sahidic version) was also found. The original Greek of the *AT* is lost. For some time, the document was identified as the

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<sup>34</sup> Stewart-Sykes states that the rite “very rapidly...became associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit” (p. 147) but his account of how this occurred – an identification of the Spirit as a *beneficium* conferred by the bishop (p. 144) needs further development.

<sup>35</sup> I am heavily indebted, for this survey of the provenance of *Apostolic Tradition* and its modern re-discovery, to the work of Bradshaw *et al.* (2002), Johnson (2006), and Stewart-Sykes (2001a).

<sup>36</sup> Paul Turner describes the Verona palimpsest as “eighth century,” which appears to be an error. (Turner, 1995, p. 252).



“Egyptian Church Order” but, as Bradshaw, Johnson and Philips explain in their recent commentary on the work (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2002, p. 2): “Since [the early twentieth century] it has been universally accepted that this document is the original source of the other church orders from which it was formerly presumed to derive.” They add that, while “the majority of scholars have supported the position that it does originate from Rome and is the genuine work of Hippolytus, written in the early third century,” nonetheless “the questions of its identity, authorship, date and provenance cannot...be considered definitively settled.”<sup>37</sup> Bradshaw *et al.* themselves – following arguments spelled out at greater length by Bradshaw in a *festschrift* in honour of Aidan Kavanagh (Bradshaw, 1996, pp. 3-17) – consider the work to be:

an aggregation of material from different sources, quite possibly arising from different geographical regions and probably from different historical periods, from perhaps as early as the mid-second century to as late as the mid-fourth...[They] thus think it unlikely that it represents the practice of any single Christian community (p. 14).

Alistair Stewart-Sykes maintains a dissenting view. His commentary (2001a) seeks to maintain

the traditional view, though in a somewhat different form from that in which it has been held in the past. It continues to hold that *Apostolic Tradition* is Roman, and broadly that it is third century in date but, rather than seeing it as the work of one person, Hippolytus, it suggests that Hippolytus is only the last in a series of figures who “wrote” *Apostolic Tradition*, which is the product of a community produced over a number of years (Stewart-Sykes, 2001a, p. 11).

Stewart-Sykes concludes that the text “in its current form dates from the third century at a time around 235.” In contrast, Maxwell Johnson concludes that among recent scholars, “this document which has exercised considerable influence on twentieth-century ritual revision in the Roman Catholic Church and beyond can no longer so confidently be claimed as either Roman, Hippolytan, or early third century” (Johnson, 2006, p. 35). John Baldovin is such a scholar, concluding that *AT* “does not represent the state of affairs in the Church at Rome in the

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<sup>37</sup> As Bradshaw had already stressed some years earlier (see Bradshaw, 1996, pp. 3, 17), the work of M. Metzger has been particularly important in calling into question the earlier consensus as to Hippolytan authorship.



early-third century...[and that] there is a very real possibility that the *Apostolic Tradition* describes liturgies that never existed” (Baldovin, 2003, p. 542).

Despite differences among the versions of the *AT*, it is possible to distill from them a fairly uniform account of a Christian initiation rite. All existing versions agree that the baptismal water-bath is preceded by an exorcism and a sealing or signing, and that the bishop breathes upon the catechumens before they spend the night in vigil (*AT* 20; Bradshaw *et al.*, 2002, pp. 104-107). Chapter 21 of *AT* (Bradshaw *et al.*, pp. 112-124) describes the baptism and subsequent rites: immediately before the ablution, a presbyter is to anoint each candidate with the “oil of exorcism” while the candidate renounces Satan; following the water-bath, a presbyter anoints the baptizand with “oil of thanksgiving,” (the Latin version calls it “that oil which was sanctified”) that had been blessed by the bishop, while saying “I anoint you with holy oil.” (The Bohairic version adds “in the name of Jesus Christ”). After this the newly baptized are led into the church where the bishop lays hands on them and prays. There is a slight difference in this prayer as recorded in the Verona manuscript compared with the other (sometimes collectively called the “oriental”) versions; the Bohairic, Arabic and Ethiopic texts indicate that the bishop (whilst imposing a hand or hands on them) prays that the newly-baptized, having been made worthy of second birth and forgiveness of sins, might be further made “worthy to be filled with the Holy Spirit.” He also asks that God might send grace upon the newly-baptized so that they might serve God according to God’s will. In the Latin version, the bishop refers to the “laver of regeneration of the Holy Spirit” through which the newly-baptized are made worthy to receive the forgiveness of sins, and asks God to send grace on them so that they might serve God according to God’s will.

The difference between the versions is slight in this section but must be noted, for it has been the subject of much discussion. The Latin version of the prayer does not ask that the newly-baptized might be *made worthy* to receive the Holy Spirit; it mentions the Holy Spirit only in connection with *something already accomplished*, namely the baptismal ablution, the “laver of regeneration of the Holy Spirit.” This can certainly be read as affirming that the Holy Spirit was at work in the ablution, that the Holy Spirit effected the regeneration, though it does not explicitly or clearly state that the Holy Spirit was (or, for that matter, will be) “received” – though it would be absurd to claim that the Spirit could be at work “regenerating” a person without being “received” by that person! Maxwell Johnson perpetrates just such an absurdity, distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and grace, when he notes that

no one reading the Latin text of [AT] 21's postchrismational structure would automatically conclude that either the handlaying prayer or the episcopal anointing is about what [Pope Innocent I, in a letter to Decentius] calls the giving 'of the Spirit, the Paraclete.' Rather, the Latin version of the episcopal prayer for the imposition of hands on the neophyte is a prayer not for the gift of the Holy Spirit but for *grace*. And the operating assumption in this prayer is that the gift of the Spirit is not subsequent to baptism but already given in and connected to the water rite itself (Johnson, 1996, p. 19).

The four versions converge once again after this point, describing a further anointing by the bishop – he pours or applies oil of thanksgiving (“sanctified oil”, in the Latin) on the heads of the newly-baptized, while saying “I anoint you with holy oil” in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Finally, the bishop gives the newly-baptized a kiss and “signs” or “seals” the forehead of each person – only the Arabic specifies that this consignation is an “anointing”, while the others do not explicitly describe the consignation as a continuation (or additional instance) of anointing – saying “The Lord be with you.” The liturgy described by the several versions of *AT* continues thence to the celebration of the Eucharist.

To recap, *AT* describes a number of rites that make up the baptismal liturgy: while there are several anointings and other rites, of particular interest to us here is the episcopal imposition of hands, accompanied (in all accounts but the Latin, the earliest of the extant versions) by a reference to an eventual reception of the Holy Spirit, followed immediately by an anointing in the name of the Trinity, and a final consignation and kiss. There is thus an abundance of peribaptismal, episcopally-performed rites in *AT* 21; none is clearly *directly* associated with a gift of the Holy Spirit (unless we count the implication in the Latin version that the Holy Spirit had been at work on the laver of regeneration), but four rites may be read as indirectly associated with some gift of the Spirit: the bishop's prayer that the baptizands might be worthy to receive the Spirit is (a) said while imposing hands, and is immediately followed by (b) a last anointing, (c) a consignation and (d) a kiss. The gift of the Spirit for which the candidates are to be made worthy in the later versions of *AT* may thus be a reference to a reception attributed to those rites, or to the Eucharist which they were shortly to receive for the first time, or to some other later moment when the Spirit was considered to be received. Even within the broad definition of Confirmation that I am employing in this chapter, it does not appear at first glance that *AT* describes

Confirmation, but there is room for conjecture if one is willing to find it there, and room for evasion if one is willing not to. As I will show, Stewart-Sykes is correct and pertinent in his observation that:

Much of the debate concerning the text of [the bishop's prayer in *AT* 21] is fuelled by the assumption that the origin of the western rite, which came to be called confirmation, is to be found here...Much of the debate is in any event fruitless, as there is no actual epiklesis of the Holy Spirit in the prayer here, for the prayer that the newly-baptized may be worthy to receive the Spirit is not an invocation of the Spirit on the candidates but is a prayer that the candidates may merit being filled with the Spirit at a later point... (Stewart-Sykes, 2001a, pp. 122-123)<sup>38</sup>.

Dom Gregory Dix, whose brief 1946 lecture on Confirmation has been very influential – cited respectfully, even in cases of profound disagreement, by virtually all recent authorities on Christian initiation – refers extensively to *AT*. In his description of the rite found in *AT*, he reminds the reader of

that anointing by the Presbyter with chrism immediately after the Candidate left the font. This is done on the head by a Presbyter with chrism episcopally blessed. If everything which follows here – the whole 'sealing' by the Bishop – were to be omitted, this chrismation by the Presbyter would still, on the later Eastern theory, be 'Confirmation' itself" (Dix, 1946, pp. 12-13).

Dix's comment is carefully balanced: Inverted commas around the word Confirmation make it clear that he is aware that the word itself, and possibly the very notion, are an interpolation from his later perspective, and not a native feature of the document under consideration; but he demonstrates that an ancient rite may satisfy a set of criteria established by a modern reader and thus with some accuracy be described as the equivalent of Confirmation. We shall return to Dix's general approach to the problem of Confirmation later on.

Dix's use of *AT* 21 does not mention the variations that distinguish the Verona text from the other versions; he does not acknowledge that the Latin *AT* refers only to a prior gift of the

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<sup>38</sup> Boniface Luykx, whose remarks are perceptive and helpful, misses this important subtlety; summarizing the rites described in *AT*, he writes "the bishop completes the initiation by the imposition of hands with the invocation of the Holy Spirit" (Luykx, 1959, p. 335).

Spirit, not to any subsequent gift. In his critical edition of *AT* (Dix, 1937, p. 38), he simply describes the Latin version as ‘corrupt here.’ Lampe (1967, pp. 139-140) disagrees that the text is corrupt, but he gives the benefit of the doubt to Dix’s position (which was also that of Bernard Botte, who despite initial disagreement came to agree with Dix (Botte, 1958, p. 7) and proposed a specific hypothesis as to how it might have become corrupt (Botte, 1963, p. 53)). Lampe suggests one way in which a copyist’s error might have caused the original Latin text to become corrupt, and thus differ from other versions; but he ultimately finds such a hypothesis unconvincing.

This discussion is of importance to us here because it has continued to capture the interest of students of Confirmation: in 1978 Fisher returned to the fray (Fisher, 1978, pp. 53-55), and presented a new series of arguments to defend the claim that the Latin version of the bishop’s prayer in *AT* 21 originally agreed with other versions in anticipating a subsequent gift of the Holy Spirit. This move more easily allows the student of Confirmation to cite *AT* as an ancient witness to Christian initiation that featured a peribaptismal episcopal rite conferring the Holy Spirit.<sup>39</sup> While Bradshaw *et al.*, in their commentary on *AT* (2002, pp. 127-128), note that recent scholarship has favoured the integrity of the Latin text as we possess it, Anthony Gelston (1988) has proposed yet another possibility: that the Latin *and* the other versions are corrupt, and that originally they all included *two* references to the Spirit: a first reference to the Spirit being received in the laver of regeneration, and a second reference to some other subsequent reception. Jean-Philippe Revel concluded recently that the scholarly consensus is still to agree with Dix that the Verona version is a scribal error: “l’ensemble des auteurs s’accorde à considérer cette omission comme un accident graphique et à la corriger d’après les autres témoins” (Revel, 2006, p. 113). Like Ligier (1973, pp. 96-97) he concludes that B. Botte’s reconstruction (1963) of the process by which an originally epiclestic prayer became corrupt in extant Latin versions is the most reasonable. Stewart-Sykes also concurs:

Certainly it is true, had the [oriental] versions not existed, we would not suspect the Latin version but the unanimity of their witness and the relative ease with which the divergence can be explained conspire against Lampe, who can only account for the other versions on the

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<sup>39</sup> That this is in fact Fisher’s rationale is shown by his contention that, if a work “which purported to record a tradition received from the apostles” described certain rites of initiation, these must be substantially earlier than the date of the document’s publication (see Fisher, 1978, p. 55). He does not entertain the possibility that the writer’s criteria for what constitutes a tradition received from the Apostles may be insufficiently exigent to demonstrate the relative antiquity of the tradition.

grounds that they have been deliberately altered. But there is no reason why this should have taken place, as the post-baptismal gift of the Holy Spirit is not associated with episcopal handlaying in eastern rites as it is in western, but with the postbaptismal chrismation... Botte's rendition is to be accepted in that it needs no special pleading, takes account of all the evidence, and is easily explained (Stewart-Sykes, 2001a, pp. 116-117).

While Baldovin rejects Stewart-Sykes' case in support of the oriental versions of *AT* 21 (Baldovin, 2003, p. 533), he does so only by accusing that reading of being an "anachronistic" importing of a later eastern perspective, and he does not acknowledge or rebut any of the concrete data presented by the country parson. The jury is still out on the comparative merits of the Latin and oriental versions of *AT* 21, a question that plays a central role in determining the exact nature of the initiatory rites it describes, and the assessment of whether they illustrate the concrete practice of any real community.

Thomas Marsh provides another illustration of the possible implications of a pneumatic and epicletic reading of the bishop's hand-laying prayer: he considers that *AT* "shows a striking similarity to [the account of Christian initiation] found in Acts, Chapters 8 and 19"<sup>40</sup> and concludes that

this cannot be accidental and this Roman rite has to be regarded as a direct descendant of the ritual of initiation practiced by the early Church. We meet here again the same two basic references attached to the same rites, the christological reference of baptism and the pneumatological reference of the imposition of hands (Marsh, 1984, p. 125).

This reading, of course, relies on the oriental versions of *AT*, which lend themselves to such an interpretation more readily than the version from the Verona palimpsest.<sup>41</sup>

Note the competing theologies that are at work in these variant readings of *AT*: Dix and Fisher are inclined to favour the non-Latin versions which can be more easily read as attributing the gift of the Spirit to some event subsequent to water-baptism, while Lampe defends the Latin

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendix I for these texts.

<sup>41</sup> Marsh does not allude, in his 1984 work, to the controversy surrounding *AT*'s references to a gift of the Holy Spirit, but he is aware of it (see Marsh, 1962, p. 185, n. 4). In the earlier work, Marsh suggests that *AT* does not feature a double anointing but a single anointing that has been divided for practical reasons "between priest and bishop" (Marsh, 1962, p. 186); eventually, again for pragmatic reasons, this anointing was combined with a consignation to form the modern rite used in Confirmation. It is intriguing, in light of what we are about to see in Kavanagh, to note that in 1962 Marsh describes the consignation as "a concluding rite and dismissal" (p. 189).

text as the most original, a reading that supports his own emphasis on Baptism and de-emphasis of Confirmation. If, on the other hand, Gelston's hypothesis is correct, the authors of *AT* must have held a pneumatology that permitted the positing of multiple "receivings" of the Spirit.<sup>42</sup>

While Revel, as we have seen, favours the more epicletic oriental versions of the bishop's hand-laying prayer in *AT* 21, he does not dwell extensively on the significance of, or controversy surrounding, the gift of the Holy Spirit in *AT*. He insists instead on the unity of the rites of "Christian initiation": for him the chief importance of *AT* for an enquiry into Christian initiation is that it establishes a precedent for conferring Baptism, the pneumatic postbaptismal hand-laying, and the Eucharist, *together*, and it supports his position that these "do not take on their full meaning" ("*ne prennet tout leur sens*") except in the context of a unified, common celebration (Revel, 2006, pp. 117ff.).

An important alternative interpretation of *AT* 21 has been provided by the late Aidan Kavanagh (1984; 1988; 1989; Turner 1995), who (one hopes tongue-in-cheek) compared his proposal to what Einstein did for Newtonian physics (1988, p. 65). Kavanagh's view evolved over time: he held in 1978 that "the bishop's 'confirmation prayer' in the earliest version we have of it, the Verona palimpsest translation into Latin of Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition*, was an epiclesis of the Holy Spirit." Ten years later he had arrived at his very different hypothesis, namely, that the prayer and its attendant rites formed a "liturgical structure... [that] was technically known as a dismissal, a *missa*, and...[that] the structure we know today as 'confirmation' originated here" (Kavanagh, 1988, pp. ix-x).<sup>43</sup>

Kavanagh's argument begins with a consideration of the significance of hand-laying in *AT*. Kavanagh states that "given the patterned and disciplined use of prayer and hand-laying in... [*AT* 18-19] it may be possible to see in this usage an early stage in the development of a policy of liturgical "sealing" (*sphragis* in Greek, *signaculum* in Latin)." He speculates that the imposition of hands on catechumens in *AT* 18-19 "represents an early instance of the Christian instinct to 'seal'

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<sup>42</sup> Stewart-Sykes (2001b, p. 148) makes a similar point: "Lampe...prefers the Latin text on the grounds that it tends to exclude a pneumatic interpretation of the bishop's action and...Dix...prefers the readings of the oriental witnesses here on the grounds that a pneumatic hand-laying by the bishop is implied." This illustrates G. Kretschmar's observation that "Even contributions to historical research, especially far-reaching theories, are in most cases intended to clear up some contemporary problem, to explain, justify or alter the Church's practice of worship, or at least to deepen the theology of worship" (Kretschmar, 1995, p. 11).

<sup>43</sup> We shall return to Kavanagh in greater detail later on, and to his contention that "we have never had an adequate grasp of the rite's origins in light of its liturgical evidence as distinct from what the interpretations of theologians suggest, at various times, its meaning might be" (p. x). For now I shall limit myself to a consideration of his use of *AT*.

a unit of worshipful activity by a final address to God in prayer and by physical contact with the presiding minister” (pp. 7-8). Kavanagh does not adduce any evidence that such an instinct exists. As Turner summarizes Kavanagh’s strategy in finding a *missa* in *AT* 18-19: “since Hippolytus is familiar with the [*missa*] structure, it is possible he will apply it to other circumstances” (Turner, 1995, p. 239). Kavanagh further cites, from other sources, examples of episcopal hand-layings that served as *missae*, as rites of dismissal: these are documented in the *Canons of Laodicea* (in which a valedictory hand-laying is clearly conferred on the penitents, though not so clearly on catechumens); in Egeria’s late fourth-century account, *Itinerarium Egeriae*, of morning, midday and evening prayer in Jerusalem that included dismissals of all the faithful; and in Augustine’s *Sermon* 49 and *Epistle* 149, which refer to dismissals of catechumens and penitents respectively.<sup>44</sup> Kavanagh notes (p. 16) that the term *missa* “usually” refers to a rite meant for “catechumens and the faithful,” whereas penitents are given a “blessing.” Kavanagh summarizes his evidence thus far:

We have seen that the original purpose of the *missa* structure of prayer and hand laying appears from *AT* 18-19 and Egeria to have been formally to seal and terminate a specific unit of public instruction or worship. After such a conclusion the assembly of worshipers dispersed into the other activities of daily life or, as Egeria makes clear, redeployed itself into another synaxis which followed closely on the first (pp. 27-28).<sup>45</sup>

After brief references to dismissals described by Augustine and Cassian (which, as Turner will point out (Turner, 1995, pp. 243-244), do not advance Kavanagh’s argument), Kavanagh adds additional examples of “dismissals” taken from monastic and penitential contexts (Kavanagh, 1988, pp. 14-32). As these do not concern episcopal dismissals of the newly-baptized prior to the Eucharist, it is not evident that they buttress Kavanagh’s contentions.

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<sup>44</sup> Kavanagh also cites the *Apostolic Constitutions* as evidence, but since he *deduces* the presence there of an episcopal hand-laying dismissal on the basis on evidence from Egeria, it can hardly be counted as additional positive evidence for such a rite!

<sup>45</sup> What Kavanagh has demonstrated thus far, in fact, is not that the hand-laying in *AT* was a “seal”; he does not even define what it might mean for the *impositio manuum* to be a “seal”, and then he assumes it rather than showing it – see Kavanagh, 1988, p. 39, where the assumption is simply taken up again. That it is a “termination” may be granted, especially when it is a termination so loosely defined that it can either mean that the assembly departs outright, or simply goes on to other activities (“redeploy[s] itself into another synaxis”). In other words, Kavanagh has demonstrated, so far, that hand-laying in *AT* may have been a rite that wrapped up one portion of the liturgical proceedings, and preceded another. This is plausible, but trivial, and is compatible with attributing other meanings to the rite that marks the transition. The sign of peace in the contemporary Roman liturgy, for example, fits this description; it is certainly no dismissal.



In his subsequent chapter, Kavanagh draws out the implications of his hypothesis for a reading of *AT* 21.<sup>46</sup> In that chapter, it will be recalled, the baptizands receive anointing and ablution and then come before the bishop for the hand-laying, prayer, anointing, signing, and kiss of peace, after which they proceed with the Eucharist. Kavanagh points out that this likely involved movement from one part of the building (“discreetly enclosed” on account of baptism by full immersion that required nudity) to another – from enclosure, to public visibility in that part of the building where the Eucharist took place. Kavanagh notes (on the strength of the Verona text, which as we have seen is less obviously epicletic than the other versions) that the prayer of the bishop at this point was not an epiclesis of the Holy Spirit (p. 46).<sup>47</sup> He contends that the hand-laying and anointing by the bishop “refers back” to their baptismal ablution and is done “in memory of their baptismal unction” (p. 51)<sup>48</sup> and he describes this gesture as a *missa*, a “releasing” of “the washed, forgiven and anointed into the priestly, because messianic, ministry of the whole Church to God’s will, consummated in the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the strengthening of the faith in truth at the eucharistic oblation...” (p. 51). Kavanagh does not explain why the candidates who have just been baptized and anointed and who have left the font would need to

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<sup>46</sup> Kavanagh does not merely lay out evidence for a particular interpretation of *AT* 21; before he gets to that point he dismisses even attempts to find something like Confirmation intimated there. As examples of what he considers defective assumptions and method, he cites Dix, Fisher, and Marsh, and “Byzantines, Armenians, Syrians” (who, in his words, and with his scare quotes, “discover that their postbaptismal chrismations are ‘confirmation’”), (Kavanagh, 1988, p. 41). Kavanagh’s position is further revealed by his digression, while ostensibly enquiring into the structure of *AT* 21, into a denunciation of “scholars [who] search for confirmation in...early liturgies and patristic sources” and of “Latin theologians [who] find in confirmation a supplying of graces, an increase in baptismal grace, and a delayed, even separate, gift or set of gifts of the Holy Spirit beyond baptism” (*ibid.*). This (to him apparently deplorable) “state of affairs results at least in part from relying on theological interpretations and the history of doctrine to define the questions, and thus to determine the answers, rather than on an analysis of the liturgical structures of confirmation for which we have some hard evidence” (p. 42). Kavanagh consequently issues a disclaimer, in terms arising from a theological method he set out in his book *On Liturgical Theology* (1992): “our primary purpose is not to reconcile later theological interpretations of confirmation with its origins, much less to depend on the history of doctrine to reveal those origins. It is instead to pursue the structural analyst’s question of *what* it is that gets interpreted later in a discourse of the second order” (*ibid.*). Kavanagh, then, in a work devoted to enquiring into the history of Confirmation and its reform, spends several chapters discussing the meaning of rituals that he emphatically maintains are *not* Confirmation – a move that makes sense only if he considers that any later meaning of Confirmation must retain the same meaning as the rites from which it sprang, however misguidedly, or is illicit if that meaning is not present originally. By Kavanagh’s reasoning, the present nautical custom of saluting the quarterdeck – a gesture of respect intended by many sailors as an acknowledgement of the ship’s distinguished history, of its fallen crew, and of its officers’ authority – is nothing but a farce because it does not retain the original purpose of that gesture, which was most likely to reverence the Graeco-Roman deities housed in the quarterdecks of ships in the ancient world. Kavanagh’s view leaves no room for a gesture to be retained if it is re-interpreted.

<sup>47</sup> At this point in his text, Kavanagh simply begins describing the bishop’s hand-laying in *AT* 21 as a *missa*. In other words, he nowhere proves it to be so; he suggests it, and then treats the suggested state of affairs as an established fact. He thus replaces, by fiat, any attempt at a confirmational reading of *AT* 21, with his own *missa* model, which he uses as an established fact that must be dislodged by any rival account.

<sup>48</sup> It will be recalled that the events thus ostensibly “memorialized” occurred only minutes before. Perhaps memories were shorter in the ancient world.



be “released” into the Eucharist, nor why this “release” entails (as even the Latin version of *AT* 21 records) an additional anointing, and a prayer for grace.

Kavanagh’s hypothesis is fourfold. First, that *AT* 21 does not describe Confirmation, and that any attempt to make it do so is an illicit interpolation of “interpretive-theological” concerns into what should be strictly a liturgical and historical enquiry; second, that the non-confirmational character of *AT* 21 is corroborated by positive evidence that it is instead a *missa*;<sup>49</sup> third, that what became “Confirmation” in the West is really nothing but an evolution of this *missa* (which originally resembled the messianic anointings that typified Syrian initiation, anointings that should also not be considered Confirmation); and fourth, that only rites that began life as *missae* can properly be described as Confirmation. Therefore “what some Eastern churches have come to call ‘confirmation’ in their baptismal liturgies is in fact not a rite of confirmation at all because no underlying *missa* is in evidence” (p. 65). In other words, Kavanagh argues that it is a mistake to look for “Confirmation” in *AT* 21 because it is a mistake to look for Confirmation *anywhere*, except in the practices that eventually *evolved from AT* 21; Confirmation is thus not to be defined above all, for Kavanagh, as a conferral of the Holy Spirit, or a perfection of baptism,<sup>50</sup> but is to be defined as a rite that gradually evolved from a misunderstanding of the baptismal *missa* in *AT* 21 (a misunderstanding that arose, in Kavanagh’s view, from a fifth-century pneumaticizing of the “episcopal hegemony in performing the *missa*” (p. 67)). Such a view contradicts claims of an apostolic origin for Confirmation and excludes a pneumatic conception of the rite itself, except as an arbitrary redefinition of it. Echoing Kavanagh’s conclusion that “confirmation should not be made too much over”, sacramental theologian Bernard Cooke starkly observes that

if [Kavanagh’s] historical reconstruction is accurate...it renders futile much of the attempt to explain the sacrament of confirmation as a conferring of the Spirit, or as an anointing for active discipleship, or as a strengthening for mature battle with the forces of evil, or as a confession of faith on the threshold of adult Christian life (Cooke, 1989, p. 186).

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<sup>49</sup> The word *missa* is not used in *AT*, despite Kavanagh’s insistence on interpolating it there, and his warrant for using the phrase is the precedent supplied by Egeria more than a century and a half later.

<sup>50</sup> He seems willing, however, to accept that an eventual redefinition may be entirely legitimate: “I claim that ‘confirmation’ is not in *AT* but...the liturgical elements peculiarly associated with bishops...are there and will later be pneumaticized for good and sufficient reasons” (Turner, 1995, p. 257). This is at odds with his vehement dismissal elsewhere of robustly pneumatic interpretations of Confirmation, such as we saw above.

Kavanagh's reading and use of *AT* 21 have not gone uncriticized. Stewart-Sykes agrees with him that "the post-baptismal rites of the *Traditio apostolica* indeed have the structure of a *missa*" but points out, apropos of Kavanagh's conclusion that a pneumatic interpretation of these rites is a later development, that Tertullian posits an explicitly pneumatic episcopal hand-laying around the same time (Stewart-Sykes, 2001b, p. 148). Moreover, Tertullian describes a rite performed very near the baptismal font, not in the further-removed location suggested by *AT*; this makes it unlikely that Tertullian's rite, at least, has anything like the character of a dismissal, and thus a precedent exists for something resembling Confirmation that is not accounted for by Kavanagh's hypothesis.

Paul Turner's criticism of Kavanagh, besides the evidence from Tertullian that he also cites, is more fundamental. He points out (Turner, 1995, pp. 238-258) that the ostensible precedent that Kavanagh cites from *AT* 18-19 concerns a hand-laying conferred by a layperson; if *AT* 18-19 really does describe a *missa*, it thus also establishes that a layperson can perform it, a state of affairs seriously at odds with Kavanagh's hypothesis. He also notes, as I have done, that the *Canons of Laodicea* do not clearly state that a hand-laying is conferred at all on catechumens; nor do they clearly state that the hand-laying that is conferred on penitents is done by the bishop. Finally, Kavanagh's reference to Egeria is pertinent insofar as Egeria does describe a variety of episcopal dismissals by hand-laying; but as Turner insists, a notable exception to this pattern is her description of baptism, where no such dismissal is to be found. Turner points out other flaws in Kavanagh's vision of the episcopal blessing on the newly-arrived baptizands: as he drily remarks, "Entrance is an unusual moment for a dismissal" (Turner, 1995, p. 253). Other instances of *missae* – all of which "postdate [*AT*] sometimes by centuries" (p. 253) – do not feature the oil that takes so prominent a place in the post-baptismal rites of *AT*, nor do they normally provide the text of the bishop's accompanying prayer.

Turner, for his part, explains the postbaptismal events in *AT* as either "the first public gesture of ratification for the bishop and the faithful who did not witness the pouring of [baptismal] water" (p. 255) or (if the Latin version of *AT* is corrupt and the bishop's prayer was in fact epiclesis) as a "postbaptismal, episcopal, epiclesis handlaying." In the latter eventuality, it is appropriate to speak of "Confirmation", however anachronistic the expression may be.

Though it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, an adequate discussion of *Apostolic Tradition* must take into account the substantial controversies concerning its dating and

provenance. If, for instance, the earliest extant versions of AT reflect the state of a living, evolving document as it existed in the fourth century, these may not be representative of initiatory practice at an earlier stage in the text's development, *e.g.* around the year 215 that has been commonly assigned to it. In that case, whatever may be *AT*'s value as a witness to fourth-century Roman practice, it does not vie with Tertullian as the earliest instance of something clearly resembling Confirmation – even if we do not concede Kavanagh's argument (on grounds quite distinct from dating, of course) against reading *AT* 21's postbaptismal rites as proto-Confirmation.

I have devoted a disproportionate amount of space to *Apostolic Tradition* because of its importance as one of the earliest and clearest examples of Confirmation, or at least of what would become Confirmation; and also because so many disparate schools of thought make energetic use of it to further pastoral and theological agendas. As John Baldovin aptly notes, “the catechumenal and baptismal rites found in *Apostolic Tradition* (nos. 15-21) are of special importance because they have been used to argue the validity of contemporary sacramental/liturgical practices on the basis of their origin in the third-century Roman Church” (Baldovin, 2003, p. 532). As Baldovin remarks, “the Roman Catholic catechumenate would never have taken its present shape without the framework provided by Hippolytus” (p. 521). Dix and Fisher find Confirmation present and fully-formed in *AT* – a third- or at the very least fourth-century witness to the rite – and confidently argue for the authenticity of the epicletic oriental versions of the bishop's hand-laying prayer. Marsh and Revel come to a similar conclusion, but without acknowledging the various considerations in favour of the different versions of *AT* 21. Stewart-Sykes prefers the oriental versions, but notes that even they do not describe an epiclesis, strictly speaking; however, he adds that *AT* envisions the prayed-for reception of the Holy Spirit “perhaps in [candidates'] reception of the eucharistic gifts, but more probably in the subsequent episcopal unction” (Stewart-Sykes, 2001b, p. 123). Lampe and Johnson impatiently deny that *AT*'s postbaptismal hand-laying and anointing are anything like Confirmation. Turner provisionally accepts the legitimacy of *both* the Dix-Fisher interpretation and the Lampe-Johnson reading, the final verdict to be contingent upon whether the Latin or the oriental version of the bishop's prayer is to be preferred. Kavanagh agrees, in effect, with Lampe and Johnson, but on the novel grounds that *AT* 21 describes a *missa* and therefore cannot be describing Confirmation; and (extending the reach of his argument in a radical vein) Kavanagh contends that false readings of *AT* generally arise from the use of an “interpretive-theological” method rather than a “structural” and “liturgical” method. On the

basis of the latter method he concludes that while *AT* 21 certainly does not describe Confirmation, it does describe what would later *become* Confirmation (through a combination of plain misunderstanding, and what he calls “good and sufficient” pneumaticizing); and that therefore the only real “Confirmation” is the rite that evolved from *AT* 21. Consequently, no matter how similar a Byzantine theology of Chrismation might be to a given Roman theology of Confirmation, Kavanagh denies *a priori* that the two can be equivalent. For him, the meaning of a rite does not trump the structure of a rite; instead the structure of a rite dictates its identity more than its meaning does.

All of these approaches share one major unproven assumption: namely, that if *AT* describes Confirmation, or the origins of what became Confirmation, then the shape and theology of Confirmation today should be significantly influenced by the shape and theology it had in *AT*: If *AT* describes a unified rite of initiation, then initiation today should be conferred in a unified rite; if *AT* describes a thoroughly pneumatic rite, then we are on safer ground positing a thoroughly pneumatic model of Confirmation today; if *AT* provides no direct warrant for a separate postbaptismal rite of anointing or hand-laying, then it was a misstep for the mediaeval Church to proceed in such a direction. Even Kavanagh’s hypothesis fits this template, as we have seen: he argues that since Confirmation evolved purely and simply out of the *missa* that he finds in *AT*, it is illegitimate for it to occupy a more elaborate role even today.

In chapter 4 I will argue against Kavanagh’s twofold claim (Turner, 1995, p. 258; Kavanagh, 1988, p. 117) that the law of prayer founds the law of belief not vice versa, which he contrasts with Prosper of Aquitaine (Kavanagh, 1989, p. 19), and that a pneumatic interpretation of Confirmation derogates from the meaning of Baptism.

### **Origen (c. 185 – c. 254)**

Fisher concludes his survey of Origen’s statements about peribaptismal rites thus: “While it is certain that Origen knew of [a baptismal] anointing which at least in some measure related to the giving of the Holy Spirit, there is no positive proof that he knew of a hand-laying at baptism” (Fisher, 1978, p. 70). The latter conclusion arises from two remarks in book I, chapter 3 of the Alexandrian priest and martyr’s *On First Principles* which affirm that the Holy Spirit was conferred after Baptism by the imposition of the Apostles’ hands; whether or not the apostolic precedent

subtended contemporary initiatory practice is uncertain for Fisher, hence the absence of “positive proof.” This is what Origen wrote there about baptismal hand-laying:

...in the Acts of the Apostles ‘through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given’ in baptism (*On First Principles*, I:3:2 - Origen, 1973, p. 30).

...the Holy Spirit...creates for himself a new people and ‘renews the face of the earth’, when through the grace of the Spirit men ‘put off the old man with his doings’ and begin ‘to walk in newness of life’...[T]he Holy Spirit...will dwell not in all men, nor in those who are flesh, but in those whose ‘earth has been renewed’. Finally, it was for this reason that the Holy Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands after the grace and renewal of baptism (*On First Principles*, I:3:7 – Origen, 1973, p. 36).

That Origen was familiar with a peribaptismal anointing is, if not certain, at least very likely: Origen appears to refer in several places to an anointing conferred during or immediately after the baptismal water-bath. (An example of such a passage, from Origen’s *Homilies on Leviticus*, along with other pertinent texts from Origen, is provided in the Appendix). Fisher considers that Origen held that the Spirit was conferred in Baptism – but Fisher deliberately defines “Baptism” broadly enough to encompass the water-bath *and* the anointing; his preoccupation is always to steer a course between “reduc[ing] baptism itself to a mere water-bath from which the Spirit [is] absent” and “[associating]...the imparting of the Spirit [so much] with baptism itself that the ensuing anointing becomes deprived of any sacramental significance” (Fisher, 1978, p. 69).

Lampe admits that Origen saw a connection between the post-baptismal anointing and the gift of the Holy Spirit, but he maintains that the unction only *symbolizes* the antecedent gift of the Holy Spirit through water-baptism, or even of the gift of the Spirit that is “obtained by making the response of faith to the preaching of the Gospel” (Lampe, 1967, p. 164; see also p. 167). Lampe perceives something clearly present in the passages cited by Fisher but not brought out by him with any detail: namely, that for Origen the gift of the Holy Spirit is not an inevitable concomitant of Baptism but that it is possible to be baptized and yet not receive the Spirit if one’s disposition is obliquitous. “...[I]n the Holy Scriptures,” Origen writes in his third homily on Numbers, “I find that some catechumens were worthy to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and others who had received baptism were unworthy of the grace of the Holy Spirit” (Origen, trans.

Scheck, 2009). Lampe is so averse to ascribing a pneumatic function to anything other than the water-bath that he resorts to denying the undeniable: “We must not infer from [Origen’s] reference [in his *Commentary on Romans*] to ‘Baptism in visible waters and visible chrism’ that he really thinks of Baptism as a sacrament administered in oil as well as water” (Lampe, 1967, p. 166; for the relevant passage, see Origen, trans. Scheck, 2001, pp. 354-355, which I have also included in the Appendix). It is difficult to see what else Origen could have meant except visible chrism.

Revel is interested in Origen’s testimony chiefly because it demonstrates that a post-baptismal anointing existed in third-century Alexandria, but he is not concerned to ascertain its pneumatic function.

### **Cyprian (c. 200 – 258)**

Cyprian’s descriptions of Christian initiation are not expressed with ambiguity; the challenge of interpreting him is, instead, to reconcile a number of his very clear affirmations that appear to diverge. This leads Lampe to rather strong language about Cyprian: he calls Cyprian’s thinking “muddled” (Lampe, 1967, p. 170), cites him as an example of “confusion of thought” and “uneasy synthesis” (p. 119), and accuses him of “twist[ing] the sense of John 3:5” (p. 186).

Cyprian writes often of the imposition of hands, particularly with reference to the reconciliation of heretics; in several places (*viz.* his *Epistulae* 69, 72-74 (Cyprian, 1996)), the Carthaginian bishop accepts that those baptized outside the Church must have hands laid on them upon being received into the Church, but argued from the rationale for that hand-laying that they also required a “new” Baptism (which for him was not new at all, but a first true Baptism). He argues that an imposition of hands is both necessary, and inadequate on its own, because heretics could no more have received the Holy Spirit outside the Church than they could receive a true Baptism. Cyprian rejects the expedient of receiving heretics by hand-laying only, and not through a new Baptism, except in the case of those who had been baptized in the Catholic Church before adhering to heretical bodies and then returning to the Catholic community; he reasons that if the Spirit had not already been received through hand-laying, it follows that the heretical Baptism had not effected a real rebirth either: either both Baptism and hand-laying were effective outside the Church, or neither was. Cyprian thus clearly affirms that the Holy Spirit is conferred through the imposition of hands, and because the latter’s distinct

effect is to cause the person to be “born again” (*Epistula* 74:7)<sup>51</sup>, Fisher understands Cyprian to deny that the Spirit is received in the water-bath: a person is born again through water baptism but receives the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hands. This attempt to distinguish between some baptismal rebirth on the one hand, and a radically distinct receiving of the Holy Spirit on the other, is (as I have had occasion to note) a very dubious move. One cannot be reborn without the Holy Spirit. Indeed, in other places (e.g. *Epistula* 63:8), Cyprian also affirms that the Holy Spirit is received in Baptism as well; Fisher resolves this quandary by understanding Cyprian to mean by “Baptism” the entire rite of initiation, including water-ablution and hand-laying. Thus distinct elements in the complex of initiation rites have distinct effects, in Fisher’s reading, and the fact that Cyprian refers to all of this as “Baptism” simply underscores for Fisher what an aberration it is for later ages to have separated one unified rite into its several component parts. In Fisher’s reading of Cyprian, water-ablution somehow “creates a temple for God: it is a spiritual rebirth” without involving the presence of the Spirit, whereas “hand-laying in initiation was for the imparting of the Spirit” (Fisher, 1978, p. 41)<sup>52</sup>. Lampe maintains the contrary position: “It is by means of Baptism that the Holy Spirit is bestowed, and there can be no doubt that the word *baptisma* in this context means ‘Baptism’ in the ordinary sense of the word, and not a complex rite” (Lampe, 1967, p. 171). In *Epistula* 63:8, where Cyprian explicitly affirms that the Spirit is received in Baptism, he adds that it is a Baptism of “saving water” (*salutaris aquae*), which strongly supports Lampe’s reading. This is where Lampe’s charge of “confusion” and “yielding to pressure” arises: Cyprian is also “influenced” by the passages in Acts where the bestowal of the Spirit appears confined to hand-laying (p. 170) and by the “accepted, and in Africa, at any rate, traditional, interpretation of Acts 8:17, and ascribes the gift of the Spirit to the laying on of hands” (p. 174). Rather than imputing muddled thinking to the Carthaginian, it would be more accurate and far more economical to say simply that Cyprian held that the Spirit is received in (water-)Baptism *and* in the laying-on of hands – provided they are conferred by and in the Catholic Church.

### **Hilary (c. 315 - c. 367)**

In his *Commentarius in Matthaem* (2, 6) [PL 9, 927], Hilary writes:

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<sup>51</sup> He makes a similar point in his *Epistula* 73.

<sup>52</sup> Cyprian also speaks of a post-baptismal anointing; in his *Epistula* 70, he says that the baptizand is to be anointed “so that after receiving the chrism...he can be God’s anointed.” This has not normally been read as a forerunner or early instance of Confirmation, as no pneumatic significance is attributed to it.



After the washing in water, the Holy Spirit flies down upon us from the gates of Heaven, and we are covered with the anointing of heavenly glory, and we are made adopted sons of God by the fatherly voice; for the truth has prefigured, in these things themselves, an image of the sacrament which is disposed of the same way for us.<sup>53</sup>

Further on (19, 3) [PL 9, 1024] the bishop of Poitiers in Gaul wrote of the children blessed by Jesus in Matthew's Gospel whom "the Lord says were not to be forbidden, because of such is the kingdom of heaven. For the bestowal and gift of the Holy Spirit was to be vouchsafed to the Gentiles, without the work of the Law, by means of the laying on of the hand and prayer."<sup>54</sup>

Fisher concludes "Evidently Hilary...knew an initiatory rite in which baptism in water was followed by an unction which symbolized the gift of the Holy Spirit" and "attests...a hand-laying after baptism" with a similar pneumatic purpose (Fisher, 1978, pp. 55-56). Marsh likewise cites Hilary (among others) in support of his general observation that the Gallican baptismal liturgy of the fourth and fifth centuries consisted of "ablution, post-baptismal anointing, washing of the feet, [and] imposition of hand" (Marsh, 1962, p. 199).

Lampe admits that Hilary's testimony is consistent with "a common line of patristic interpretation" that "emphasizes the 'distinct actions' of our Lord's Baptism and of His reception of the Spirit on His emergence from the water, and maintains that their separation in time corresponds to the distinction between Baptism and the subsequent Confirmation" (Lampe, 1967, p. 42). Though Lampe is usually inclined to find the strongest possible evidence that a given patristic author held that the Spirit is conferred in Baptism, and indeed in the case of Hilary asserts that he is "quite clear in his implication that the Spirit is given in Baptism" (pp. 198-199, citing Hilary's commentary on Psalm 64), he cites Hilary's words from the *Commentarius in Matthaem* to show that Hilary "implies a theory" that "the sacrament of the Spirit is not Baptism but something else" (p. 216) and indeed considers that the giving of the Spirit by means of hand-laying is one of the "chief features of the New Covenant" (p. 224).

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<sup>53</sup> "post aquae lavacrum, et de coelestibus portis sanctum in nos Spiritum involare, et coelestis nos gloriae unctione perfundi, et paternae vocis adoptione Dei filios fieri; cum ita dispositi in nos sacramenti imaginem ipsis rerum effectibus veritas praefiguraverit."

<sup>54</sup> "Quos Dominus ait non oportere prohiberi, quia talium sit regnum coelorum: munus enim et donum Spiritus sancti per impositionem manus et precationem, cessante legis opere, erat gentibus largiendum." This translation is from Fisher (*loc. cit.*).



### **Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 317 - 386)<sup>55</sup>**

The *Mystagogic Catecheses (MC)* attributed to Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, describe two peribaptismal anointings, one preceding the water-bath and one following. The passage is one of the most frequently cited by theologians of Confirmation and Chrismation, even in very brief treatments of it, including Bellarmine (1858), Anciaux (1954, p. 11), Coniades (1981) and many others. Fisher notes (Fisher, 1978, p. 77) that the pre-baptismal anointing had both an exorcistic and christic significance, driving out “the invisible powers of the wicked one” and also causing the anointed to become “sharers in Jesus Christ.” The post-baptismal anointing, described in *MC* 3, is done with “holy chrism” to which Cyril ascribes a kind of Real Presence – a claim that seems audacious, but is quite explicit in the text. Yarnold has translated this passage as follows:

Beware of imagining that this is ordinary ointment. For just as after the invocation of the Holy Spirit the bread of the Eucharist is no longer ordinary bread but the body of Christ, so too with the invocation this holy *muron* is no longer ordinary or, so to say, common ointment, but Christ’s grace which imparts to us his own divinity through the presence of the Holy Spirit. To symbolize this truth you are anointed on your forehead and on your other senses. Your body is anointed with visible *muron*, while your soul is sanctified by the life-giving Spirit (Yarnold, 2000, p. 177).

Alluding to Christ’s baptism in the Jordan, Cyril writes

So too when you came up from the holy waters of the font your anointing took place, the sacramental sign of the anointing which Christ received. This anointing is the Holy Spirit, concerning whom blessed Isaiah spoke in the person of Christ in his prophecy concerning him: ‘The Holy Spirit has come upon me; that is why he has anointed me and sent me to announce the good news to the poor’ (Is 61.1) (Yarnold, 2000, p. 176).

Carra de Vaux Saint-Cyr reads Cyril’s treatment as an analogy between Christ’s struggle in the desert and the struggles of Christians: he proposes that Cyril’s doctrine is the “equivalent” of saying that Confirmation makes one a witness and an Apostle (Carra de Vaux Saint-Cyr, 1961, p. 35) and that its effects include strength.

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<sup>55</sup> The authorship of the works attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem is disputed; see Ligier, 1973, p. 67, note 64; Lampe, 1967, p. 238, note 3. Here I will simply refer to the author as Cyril.

In contrast, Fisher uses the testimony of Cyril to advance a favourite theme – the importance of maintaining (or, if need be, restoring) the unity of rites of initiation:

Cyril saw the rite of initiation as a drama, a dramatic representation of the scene at the Jordan. When baptism and chrismation are seen...as a drama, the time factor ceases to have the importance that it has for some modern minds – that is to say, the fact that baptism in water and anointing with chrism, while conveying graces which are theologically inseparable, were not administered simultaneously is irrelevant. It is still possible to claim that the baptismal gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred by chrismation after baptism in water without implying any disintegration of doctrine, provided, of course, that there is no interval of time between the two acts (Fisher, 1978, pp. 78-79).

### **Council of Elvira (c. 305), Pacian, and Optatus**

Both Fisher and Revel mention the Council of Elvira, and Pacian of Barcelona (died c. 390) together as witnesses to Spanish practice in the fourth century. Canons 11, 37, 38 and 77 of the Council of Elvira (see *Patrologia Latina* [PL] 84, 306) prescribe baptismal disciplines: they testify to the urgency and necessity of Baptism for the Spanish church, as they exhort the seriously ill to be baptized as soon as possible, by a deacon or layman if necessary (*e.g.* if required to do so by distance). This suffices, in the Council's view, for salvation; but as soon as possible, the Council urges those so baptized to receive the perfection of their Baptism by the imposition of the bishop's hand. The canons do not spell out what the perfection consisted of, and whether a distinct grace was felt to be imparted by the episcopal hand-laying; Lampe observes that

there is no mention of the gift of the Spirit. The emphasis seems to lie rather upon the importance of enabling the candidate to receive the completion of his initiation at the hands of the bishop with whom otherwise he would not be brought into contact on his entry into the Church (Lampe, 1967, p. 226).

Alexander Ganoczy argues in a similar vein, that for Elvira the bishop's involvement is motivated by a desire to underscore the importance of the believer's incorporation and integration into the Church:

The Synod of Elvira points in the same direction as the Samaria account in Acts: the highest ecclesial authority is responsible for the proper functioning of the initiation process, has authority to supervise it and – if nothing stands in the way – to bless it. What is here evident is the great seriousness with which the primitive Church approached the catechumenate: baptism should be well prepared and followed up, and it must lead into a developing faith-life which is supported by the faith community and supervised by the bishop (Ganoczy, 1984, p. 80).

A few decades later, Pacian of Barcelona observed bluntly in his *De baptismo* (6:4) :

None of this can be accomplished except by the sacrament [*sacramento*] of the washing, the anointing and the bishop. Indeed, sins are cleansed by the washing, the Holy Spirit is infused from on high by the anointing, the one and the other are obtained [*inpetrantur*] by the hand and the mouth of the bishop and thus the whole man is reborn and renewed in Christ.<sup>56</sup>

Pacian argues, in other words, that the bishop's role is not merely seemly and advisable, but indispensable. In his first letter to Simpronian (6:2-4) [Pacian, 1995, pp. 166ff.], Pacian develops this point further. There he argues that either the Apostles transmitted all their prerogatives to the bishops – including the power of remitting sins, which is his main focus in this letter – or they transmitted none of them. Among the powers of the Apostles that he implies were passed on to the bishops is “*Spiritum sanctum dare*,” “giving the Holy Spirit”, and “*lauacri et chrismatis potestas*,” “the power of the washing and anointing.” In the light of his remarks just cited, it is reasonable to equate the “power of giving the Holy Spirit” with the “power of anointing.”

Pacian's contemporary and fellow-Iberian, Optatus of Miletus, in his *De Schismate Donatistarum* (4, 7) [PL 11, 1039-1040] compares Christian initiation to the stages of Jesus's Baptism. Lampe (Lampe, 1967, p. 227), Fisher (Fisher, 1978, p. 49), de Menthière (de Menthière, 1998, pp. 30-31) and Revel (Revel, 2006, pp. 181-183) point out the diversity of initiatory rites alluded to in Optatus' brief remarks: water-baptism, anointing (anticipated by what he calls the “spiritual oil”, the descent, in chapter 1 of Mark, of the Spirit in the form of a dove), and hand-laying (foreshadowed, for Optatus, by the voice of the Father heard at the Jordan). Lampe,

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<sup>56</sup> “*Haec autem compleri alias nequeunt, nisi lauacri et chrismatis et antistitis sacramento. Lauacro enim peccata purgantur, chrismate Sanctus Spiritus superfunditur ; utraque uero ista manu et ore antistitis inpetrantur. Atque ita totus homo renascitur et innouatur in Christo*” (Pacian, 1995, pp. 158, 160).

Fisher, and Revel all note that the hand-laying is not explicitly pneumatic in Optatus; Lampe suggests that Optatus' conception of it was probably closer to its original significance as a gesture of fellowship, and notes that the pneumatic role has been taken over by consignation with chrism, though Revel underlines Optatus' silence concerning any sort of consignation.

In sum, the Council of Elvira bears witness to an episcopal prerogative in completing baptism, while Pacian and Optatus (*pace* Lampe and Ganoczy) clarify that in their day this post-baptismal episcopal ministration consisted of an anointing that conferred the Holy Spirit.<sup>57</sup> Revel notes how dramatically Pacian's account of the bishop's role has become epicletic, as compared with the sparser "perfecting" role ascribed to him by Elvira.

### **The Cappadocians (mid- to late-fourth century)**

J.-P. Revel makes more extensive use of the Cappadocians in his discussion of Confirmation than most other recent interpreters. He notes one passage from Basil (330 - 379) that is relevant to this enquiry: *On the Holy Spirit* (27:66). Here Basil enumerates several peribaptismal rites: "we bless the water of baptism and the oil of the chrism in addition to the very one who is to be baptized" (Basil, 2011, trans. Hildebrand, pp. 104-105). As Revel remarks (Revel, 2006, p. 325), it is difficult to know from this statement whether the blessing and implied anointing of the catechumen precedes or follows the water-bath, whether the blessing of the catechumen involves a hand-laying, and whether that hand-laying includes an epicletic prayer. Revel presumes that the rites that bishop Basil knew in Caesarea were similar to those known to John Chrysostom in Antioch; that the blessing of the catechumen, if it involved a hand-laying, was most likely conferred in the midst of the baptismal immersion, and that the anointing was most likely conferred before the baptismal water-bath.

Basil's work includes another potential reference to a peribaptismal rite; in his sermon *On Fasting*, he comments on Jesus' exhortations related to fasting:

"Anoint thine head, and wash thy face." This sentence summons you to mysteries. One who has been anointed has received unction; he who has been washed has been cleansed. Apply

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<sup>57</sup> Pacian points out that the bishop's "hand and mouth" make the laver and anointing available, which is not the same as positing explicitly an episcopal hand-laying like the one envisioned by Elvira. We can anticipate here the serio-comical dilemma that has recurrently afflicted discussions of the rite of Confirmation: since the bishop normally uses his hand, or at least a digit, to anoint the confirmand, does every anointing not *ipso facto* constitute a kind of hand-laying?

this injunction to your inner members. Wash your soul clean of sins. Have your head anointed with holy oil, so that you might become a partaker of Christ, and approach the fast in this spirit.

As is so often the case with the patristic testimony we have seen, it is not clear that Basil intends here to refer to a physical ritual anointing, still less to a peribaptismal and pneumatic one. Where Basil is unmistakable, however, is in providing a corrective to mechanistic and narrow pneumatologies that suppose the Spirit to be conferred only once and only in arbitrarily explicit pneumatic rites. Again, as we saw in Irenaeus, Basil presents the Holy Spirit as Lord and giver of life, present and at work wherever and as often as Father and Son are at work. For example:

...sins against God and against the Holy Spirit are the same thing. And so you should have learned the unity and indivisibility in every work of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. When God works differences of operations, and the Lord works the differences of ministries, the Holy Spirit is present, freely arranging the distribution of gifts according to each man's worth...You would learn the communion of the Spirit with the Father and the Son also from what was created in the beginning, for the pure, intelligent, and other-worldly powers both are and are called holy because they have acquired holiness as a gift given to them by the Holy Spirit (*On the Holy Spirit* 16:37-38, Basil, 2011, trans. Hildebrand, pp. 69-70).

What of the other Cappadocians? Revel cites (p. 325) a reference made by Gregory of Nyssa (*ca.* 340 - after 394) in his *Sermon on the Ascension* to a rite featuring the "oil of the Spirit"; while it is true that it is impossible to know from the context exactly when this rite took place, it is pertinent for our purposes that some unction known to Gregory may have been thought to impart the Holy Spirit. In his *Sermon for the Day of the Lights*, the bishop of Nyssa writes that:

The bread again is at first common bread, but when the sacramental action consecrates it, it is called, and becomes, the Body of Christ. So with the sacramental oil; so with the wine: though before the benediction they are of little value, each of them, after the sanctification bestowed by the Spirit, has its several operation (Gregory of Nyssa, 1892, p. 519).

This remark does not specify the nature of that “operation” of the Spirit-sanctified oil, but comes hard on the heels of affirmations that associate the work of the Spirit only with the baptismal water-bath, not with any other rite. One last relevant passage from Gregory of Nyssa is found in his treatise against the followers of Macedonius *On the Holy Spirit*:

If, then, the Father is King, and the Only-begotten is King, and the Holy Ghost is the Kingship, one and the same definition of Kingship must prevail throughout this Trinity, and the thought of “unction” conveys the hidden meaning that there is no interval of separation between the Son and the Holy Spirit. For as between the body’s surface and the liquid of the oil nothing intervening can be detected, either in reason or in perception, so inseparable is the union of the Spirit with the Son; and the result is that whosoever is to touch the Son by faith must needs first encounter the oil [μύρον] in the very act of touching; there is not a part of Him devoid of the Holy Spirit (Gregory of Nyssa, 1892, p. 321).

Revel concludes from this that some rite of anointing was known to Gregory that involved an anointing of the whole body prior to the baptismal ablution, and that “signified” the gift of the Spirit (Revel, 2006, p. 326). This passage is clearly very troubling to Lampe, who describes it as a “very extreme statement of the necessity of chrismation” and laments that “there could be no more striking indication of the confusion into which the liturgical and theological developments of the age of the Fathers had reduced the doctrine of the reception of the Spirit in relation to conversion and Baptism” (Lampe, 1967, p. 217). Lampe finds this confusion in what he calls Gregory’s reversal of the New Testament teaching; where the New Testament affirms that we “possess” the Spirit through faith in Christ, Lampe believes, Gregory of Nyssa claims that we come to faith in Christ through the “external” anointing that “symbolizes and effects” the gift of the Spirit. Lampe’s misstep is to posit a mutual exclusivity between the two.

Finally, Revel considers Gregory of Nazianzus (*ca.* 330 – 390). This Gregory’s work, especially his *Oration 40 on Holy Baptism* (Gregory Nazianzen, 1894, pp. 360-377), includes several references to peribaptismal rites (including to lighted candles and white garments) and a number of allusions that may refer to physical anointing and possibly a consignation but it is impossible from this to ascertain with certainty the details of the initiatory rites known to him. The Nazianzen bishop makes an intriguing and germane remark about the work of the Holy Spirit in his *Oration 31 On the Holy Spirit* (pp. 318-328): defending the divinity of the Spirit, Gregory

enumerates the titles of the Holy Spirit and writes that the Spirit “perfect[s] so as even to anticipate Baptism, yet after Baptism to be sought as a separate gift” (p.327). Revel notes that this provides no information about a rite of any kind, but it is certainly relevant to our concerns here to find yet another clear statement that the Holy Spirit may be given in a separate gift after Baptism.

### **Ambrose (c. 339 - 397)**

In his *De sacramentis* and *De mysteriis* (Ambrose, 1990) Ambrose records contemporary initiatory practices in Milan (including a unique peribaptismal rite, namely the *pedilavium* or foot-washing, conferred on all the newly-baptized). In each of these texts one or more peribaptismal rites is of interest to us: *De sacramentis* (2, 24) describes an anointing (with what Ambrose names *myron*, and translates as *unguentem* – see *De sacramentis* (3, 1)) immediately following water-baptism, and an accompanying prayer to God who has “brought the candidate to new life through water and the Holy Spirit” and who “anoints” the candidate to “eternal life”. Here, the conferral of the Holy Spirit is an effect of Baptism, while the anointing is significant, but its meaning is not pneumatic. *De mysteriis* (30) explains its significance: “that you may be made a chosen generation, priestly, precious; for we are all anointed with spiritual grace to the kingdom of God and the priesthood.”<sup>58</sup> Further on in *De sacramentis* (3, 8-9), Ambrose refers to an “infusion,” at the “priest’s invocation” of the Holy Spirit,<sup>59</sup> of the Spirit’s seven “virtues” (*virtutes*)<sup>60</sup> – an infusion

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<sup>58</sup> “*ut fias ‘electum genus’, sacerdotale, praetiosum; omnes enim in regnum Dei et in sacerdotium unguimur gratia spiritali*”

<sup>59</sup> “*quando ad invocationem sacerdotis spiritus sanctus infunditur*”

<sup>60</sup> We saw this allusion earlier in Cyril. The reference, which became a standard feature of later theologies of Confirmation, is to Isaiah:

“And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” (Isaiah 11:2, *RSV*).

Some commentators on Scripture have also linked the theme of the sevenfold ministry of the Spirit with several references to “seven spirits” in the book of Revelation; see for instance, Harrington (1993, p. 85). See also Mangina, who writes apropos of Rev. 5:6:

In a famous prophecy in the book of Isaiah, we are told that a future king, the “shoot of Jesse,” will be endowed by God’s Spirit with a set of extraordinary gifts. In the Septuagint version of the passage, seven such gifts are named: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:2-3). Here John would have found further confirmation of the Spirit’s sevenfold character. The Spirit is the seven eyes of God, the seven burning lamps, the seven gifts poured out on Messiah whose rule extends over all the earth. Seven in Revelation is the number of completeness or plentitude. The sevenfoldness of the Spirit binds his identity to God and to Christ and symbolizes both the diversity of his gifts and their unrestricted scope (Mangina, 2010, p. 44).



that he calls “*spiritale signaculum*,” “spiritual sealing.” *De mysteriis* (42) also refers to a “sealing” that imparts the Holy Spirit<sup>61</sup>. Though G. Austin, for example, confidently describes the “spiritual seal” as a “consignation” (Austin, 1985, p. 24), Maxwell Johnson (Johnson, 1996, p. 25) cites Pamela Jackson’s caution that “we simply do not know ‘what ritual action – if any – accompanied the bishop’s prayer’.” At this point in our enquiry it piques one’s curiosity to encounter a peribaptismal invocation and conferral of the Holy Spirit to which any number of gestures, or none, might be associated; Johnson notes that the pneumatic prayer “appears to correspond structurally to the post-chrismational episcopal hand-laying prayer of [47] 21 and which parallels the language of this prayer in the later Roman rite” (Johnson, 1996, p. 26). Adding to the obscurity of this allusion is the fact that subsequent Milanese practice retained the anointing, but not any trace of Ambrose’s *spiritale signaculum*.<sup>62</sup> Johnson’s conclusion is that Ambrose’s spiritual seal is a “developmental stage in what will ultimately become the final form” of the Roman rite, and that therefore if any ritual action was associated with the seal it was a hand-laying (p. 29).

Lampe characteristically downplays peribaptismal rites altogether in favour of the laver proper. He writes:

we cannot be certain that Ambrose is concerned to ascribe this ‘confirmation’ and endowment with the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit to the ‘laver’ of Baptism. Nevertheless, the context shows that, even though he may well have the entire rite of initiation in mind, it is the actual Baptism [*i.e.* the water-bath] which dominates the whole and gives it its general character (Lampe, 1967, p. 241).

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Irenaeus refers to the same passage in Isaiah in connection with the “seven heavens” that surround this world:

But the earth is encompassed by seven heavens, in which dwell Powers and Angels and Archangels, giving homage to the Almighty God who created all things, not as to one having need of anything, but lest they too be idle and useless and accursed. Therefore the Spirit of God in His indwelling is manifold, and is enumerated by the prophet Isaias in seven charismata resting on the Son of God, that is, the Word, in His coming as man. For he says: *the spirit of God shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of fortitude, <the spirit of knowledge> and of godliness; the spirit of the fear of God shall fill him*. Hence the first heaven from the top, which encloses the others, is wisdom; and the one after it, that of understanding; but the third is that of counsel, and the fourth, counting from the top downwards, that of fortitude, and the fifth, that of knowledge, and the sixth, that of godliness; and the seventh, this firmament of ours, full of the fear of this Spirit, who lights up the heavens. For after this pattern Moses received the seven-branched candlestick always burning in the sanctuary; since it was on the pattern of the heavens that he received the liturgy, as the Word says to him: *Thou shalt do according to all the pattern of what thou hast seen on the mount* (Irenaeus, trans. Smith, 1952, p.53).

<sup>61</sup> Another noteworthy feature of *De mysteriis* (42) is the first use of the word “confirmation” in connection with a peribaptismal rite: “*confirmavit te Christus Dominus*.” This point is made by Fisher (1965, p. 160), who argues that *confirmare* here means to seal, ratify, or complete.

<sup>62</sup> “It would seem [based on the testimony of Pseudo-Maximus of Turin]...that in North Italy in the sixth century consignation and the invocation for the sevenfold Spirit had disappeared and the initiation liturgy consisted of ablution, post-baptismal anointing and the washing of feet” (Marsh, 1962, p. 199).



Kavanagh notes that the *signaculum* is “tied to the postbaptismal anointing with *myron*” but considers it “impossible to say with certainty” what liturgy, if any, was associated with it – quite likely not even a hand-laying or anointing (Kavanagh, 1988, p. 55). Fisher, however, citing Srawley, considers that the spiritual seal of *De sacramentis* 3 is a consignation, most likely with chrism, since in *De sacramentis* 6 Ambrose refers to a signing with the cross as a “seal,” and twice mentions “signing” and “anointing” together (Fisher, 1978, p. 57). Marsh, like Austin as we saw above, assumes rather than proving that the *signaculum* is a consignation (Marsh, 1962, p. 198). Revel agrees that is a consignation, based on the same reasoning as Fisher; but his case is stronger as he also cites Ambrose’ treatise *De Spiritu Sancto* (I, vi, 79) to support this view: there Ambrose writes most pertinently: “we are signed by the Spirit so that we might possess his splendour, his image and his grace, and that is certainly a spiritual seal (*spiritale signaculum*). Though we are signed in the body, it is even truer that we are signed in the heart, that the Holy Spirit might express in us a likeness of the heavenly image.”<sup>63</sup> In contrast to Fisher, however, Revel considers it unlikely that the consignation was done with chrism (Revel, 2006, pp. 203-204).

### **Augustine (354 – 430)**

Jean-Philippe Revel has demonstrated that, while Augustine has left no *liturgical* treatise on Baptism, he makes abundant passing references to Christian initiation in addition to his important *doctrinal* treatises on Baptism. From Revel’s reading of this *corpus* we can confidently generalize that Augustine bears witness to rites of anointing and of hand-laying in Christian initiation, though not of consignation (see Revel, 2006, pp. 183-194); while Augustine frequently refers to *apostolic* hand-laying as the vehicle par excellence of conferring the Spirit, it is not always clear that he considers that this is also true of the Church of his day. In his *Tractatus in Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos* 6:10 (Augustine, 1961, p. 299), he writes of a contemporary hand-laying that was meant to confer the Spirit; he observes that the most striking consequence of this conferral in his day was charity, and not any longer the gift of tongues (see Revel, 2006, p. 185); a point also made in his *Sermo* 269 [PL 38, 1234-1237]. That sermon, and the others Augustine wrote on the subject of Pentecost against the Donatists, are a rich source for an understanding of Augustine’s

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<sup>63</sup> “*Ita etiam Spiritu signamur, ut splendorem atque imaginem ejus et gratiam tenere possimus: quod est utique spiritale signaculum. Nam etsi specie signamur in corpore, veritate tamen in corde signamur; ut Spiritus sanctus exprimat in nobis imaginis coelestis effigiem.*”

pneumatology and the connection he perceived between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the stages and rites of Christian initiation.<sup>64</sup>

As he has done with other patristic authors, Fisher affirms that Augustine considered the Holy Spirit to be imparted by Baptism only in the very broad sense of that word – *i.e.* if we understand “Baptism” to mean the whole complex of initiatory rites, and not just the laver or water-bath.<sup>65</sup> It is clear in several places that the bishop of Hippo does indeed consider that the Spirit is conferred by a post-baptismal hand-laying – *e.g.* *De baptismo*, 3:16:21 [PL 43, 148], or *Contra epistolam Parmeniani* 2:15:34 [PL 43, 76] which Lampe cites apropos of his observation that “it is true that Augustine speaks as though the gift of the Spirit were usually conveyed by the laying on of hands” (Lampe, 1967, p. 229); other passages show that Augustine considered chrismation to have this pneumatic purpose, *e.g.* *Tractatus in Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos* 3:5 (Augustine, 1961, p. 195).<sup>66</sup> Elsewhere (*e.g.* *Epistola* 187:8:26) [PL 33, 841] he also ascribes this conferral to “Baptism” *tout court*, and it is with those examples that Fisher’s distinctive hypothesis is concerned. Fisher is driven to this expedient by his reluctance either to conclude that Augustine’s thinking was confused and that he did not have a clear idea of when the Spirit was conferred, or else to conclude that Augustine accepted the possibility of multiple conferrals of the Spirit. If the Spirit is conferred only once, and Augustine states that the Spirit is conferred in the hand-laying but also in “Baptism,” then (for Fisher) “Baptism” must be defined so as to encompass hand-laying.

Lampe, in his remarks on Augustine’s notion of Baptism, and specifically on *Sermo* 71 [PL 38, 445-467], expresses a concern that is shared by many interpreters of Confirmation – a concern that helps account for many of Lampe’s own interpretive choices as well as those of later commentators:

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<sup>64</sup> Revel cites one particular passage from Augustine (*Sermon* 266) [PL 38, 1225-1229] which has been much cited (*e.g.* by Galtier, L’Écuyer and Coppens) in support of hand-laying for the gift of the Spirit: Augustine writes that the Holy Spirit has never come to anyone save by the imposition of hands, but Revel cautions that the context does not allow an application beyond the era of the Apostles.

<sup>65</sup> This approach is not unique to Fisher; it is also found in Dix (who refers to the initiation rites as a whole as “Baptisma”) and in de Menthière, who writes of the water-bath, anointing and hand-laying: “C’est à cet ensemble que l’on donne, par métonymie, le nom de baptême. On désigne la totalité de la célébration par le nom de l’un de ses rites. Un peu comme les chrétiens de nos jours appellent l’eucharistie “la messe”...ou encore comme on appelle communément “confession” le sacrement de réconciliation” (De Menthière, 1998, p. 25).

<sup>66</sup> Augustine writes : “*unctio spiritalis ipse Spiritus Sanctus est, cujus sacramentum est in unctione visibili.* ”

Augustine...suggests a conception of partial and fuller bestowals of the Spirit – a dangerous idea, which tends to encourage the notion of quantitatively measured ‘portions’ of an impersonal Spirit (Lampe, 1967, p. 210).

In another place Augustine both endorses and qualifies a post-baptismal pneumatic rite: in *De baptismo* (3,16) [PL 43, 149] he remarks “The laying of hands is not like Baptism, that cannot be repeated. For what is it but a prayer over a man?”<sup>67</sup> This question suggests a simple solution to the supposed puzzle of Augustine’s views on the gift of the Holy Spirit: if Augustine held that a prayer for the Holy Spirit may be repeated, then he must have held that the Holy Spirit can be “received” more than once. And in that case, there really is no major difficulty in understanding the diversity of his views just cited: he may well have considered that the Holy Spirit is received in Baptism, *and* at the post-baptismal hand-laying, *and* (potentially) as often as we pray for the Spirit to come. Neunheuser (1964, p. 131) suggests simply that Augustine may well have understood this hand-laying to be what we call Confirmation, but that he did not consider it unrepeatable, “in contrast to the Roman Church.” Bellarmine thought that what Augustine meant here was not Confirmation but the reconciliatory hand-laying bestowed on penitent heretics. As we shall see in a later chapter, these modest alternatives to thinking of Augustine as confused may help cut the Gordian knot of the theology of Confirmation even today.

### **Jerome (c. 340 – 420)**

Jerome is a lightning rod for rival theories of Confirmation, largely on the strength of one passage in his *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi* (also known as *Dialogus contra Luciferanos*):

I do not deny that it is the custom of the Churches, with respect to those who have been baptized by presbyters and deacons and who live far from the larger towns, for the bishop to run around [*excurrat*], and to invoke the Holy Spirit upon them by the imposition of hands...If a bishop imposes his hands, he imposes them on those who have been baptized in right faith, and who have believed that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three persons and one substance...But if you ask at this point, “How it is that one baptized in the Church does not receive the Holy Spirit – whom we assert is given in true baptism – except by the hands of the bishop?” I would inform you that the authority for this observance comes from the fact

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<sup>67</sup> “*Manus autem impositio non sicut Baptismus repeti non potest. Quid est enim aliud nisi oratio super hominem?*”

that after the ascension of the Lord, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. We find the same done in many places, for the honour of the priesthood [*sacerdotii*] rather than from the demands of the law. Otherwise, if the Holy Spirit is poured out only at the prayer of the bishop, then those people are to be lamented who live in lonely dwellings, or forts, or remote locations, and who are baptized by presbyters and deacons, but fall asleep before the visit of the bishop. The Church's welfare hangs on the dignity of the high priest, and if no exclusive [*exsors*] and outstanding powers are attributed to him, there will be caused as many schisms in the churches as there are priests. This is how it comes to be that it is that, without chrismation [*sine chrismate*] and the bishop's permission, no presbyter or deacon has the right to baptize. And yet we know that, in case of necessity, a layman may do so, and frequently does.<sup>68</sup>

Jerome affirms that the Holy Spirit is conferred in Baptism, apart from the imposition of hands, though his language implies that, even in the case of presbyteral or diaconal Baptism, the chrismation (along with the bishop's mandate) is an essential feature of the rite; while his language concerning bishops is sardonic, he does not deny the apostolic precedent for and significance of their hand-laying. Revel sees here what he calls Jerome's "tendency to minimize the episcopacy to the point of distinguishing it from the presbyterate only from the point of view of dignity" (Revel, 2006, p. 43) – what Lampe describes as his "'presbyterian' axe to grind" (Lampe, 1967, p. 198) – and accounts for Jerome's concession of the episcopal prerogative as a solicitude for ecclesial unity. Revel dismisses Jerome's position as an extreme solution (to which Tertullian's position is the similarly dismissed opposite view) to the problem of understanding the New Testament's teaching on baptism in "water and the Spirit"; but Lampe notes that, for all his characteristic bluster, Jerome was attempting to grapple with a relatively new situation for the Church:

it was only when the bishop had ceased to administer Baptism regularly that the question arose who was the proper minister of Baptism, chrismation, and the imposition of hands, [a

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<sup>68</sup> "Non quidem abnuo hanc esse Ecclesiarum consuetudinem ut ad eos, qui longe a maioribus urbibus per presbyteros et diaconos baptizati sunt, episcopus ob inuocationem Spiritus Sancti manum impositorum excurrat. Sed quale est ut Ecclesiae leges ad haeresim transferas et Virginis tuae integritatem per meretricum lupanaria partiaris. Episcopus si imponit manum, eis imponit qui in recta fide baptizati sunt, qui in Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto tres personas unam substantiam crediderunt... Quod si hoc loco quaeris quare in Ecclesia baptizatus nisi per manus episcopi non accipiat Spiritum Sanctum, quem nos asserimus in uero baptismate tribui, disce hanc obseruationem ex ea auctoritate descendere quod post ascensum Domini Spiritus Sanctus ad Apostolos descendit. Et multis locis idem factitatum reperimus, ob honorem potius sacerdotii quam ob legem necessitatis. Alioquin, si ad episcopi tantum imprecationem Spiritus Sanctus defluit, lugendi sunt qui in lectulis aut in castellis et remotioribus locis per presbyteros et diaconos baptizati, ante dormierunt quam ab episcopis inuiserentur. Ecclesiae salus in summi sacerdotis dignitate pendet. Cui si non exsors quaedam et ab omnibus eminens detur potestas, tot in Ecclesiis efficiuntur schismata quot sacerdotes. Inde adeo uenit ut, sine chrismate et episcopi iussione, neque presbyter neque diaconus ius habeant baptizandi. Quod frequenter, si tamen necessitas cogit, scimus etiam laicis licere" (Jerome, 2000, pp. 27-28).

question that] received different answers in different parts of the Church (Lampe, 1967, p. 198).

As Lampe complained of Dix, Jerome's views are not well-viewed by advocates of a more robustly pneumatic account of Confirmation: Fisher, who normally gives a thorough airing even to views at odds with his thesis, merely notes the Dalmatian ascetic's words and moves on with scant comment (Fisher, 1978, p. 127). In contrast, Kavanagh reads a great deal into Jerome's words and suggests that they are a conscious protest against the contemporary "depneumaticizing" of water-baptism (Kavanagh, 1988, p. 110).

### **Pope Innocent I (*fl. c. 416*)**

Pope Innocent I's letter to Decentius of March 19, 416 (Cabié, 1973), written towards the end of his episcopate and life, is universally accepted by recent commentators as an epochal moment in the history of Confirmation. In chapter 3 he writes:

Concerning the consignation of infants, it is clear that this should not be done by any but the bishop. For presbyters, although they are priests, have not attained the highest rank of the pontificate. The right of bishops alone to seal and to deliver the Spirit the Paraclete is proved not only by the custom of the Church, but also by that reading in the Acts of the Apostles which tells how Peter and John were directed to deliver the Holy Spirit to people who were already baptized. For it is permissible for presbyters, either in the absence of the bishop, or when they baptize in his presence, to anoint the baptized with chrism, but only with such as has been consecrated by the bishop: and even then they are not to sign the brow with that oil, for this is reserved to bishops alone when they deliver the Paraclete Spirit.<sup>69</sup>

Thus in Innocent's letter we find an explicit equivalency posited between the gift of the Spirit in Acts, and the gift of the Spirit conferred by the post-baptismal episcopal anointing with chrism; and a statement that, even when presbyters celebrate this particular rite, they must do so in a manner that acknowledges the apostolic/episcopal prerogative – using episcopally-consecrated chrism, and restricting themselves to a gesture visibly and intentionally different from the bishop's. As Lampe remarked in connection with Jerome, this kind of affirmation is only pertinent

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<sup>69</sup> The English translation is that provided by Whitaker, 1970, pp. 229-30. See my Appendix I for the texts from Acts.

once the relatively novel situation arose where bishops frequently were unable to be directly involved in each Baptism. While the Gallican practice was to remain rather different from this for some time – presbyteral anointing being the norm, rather than the exception, albeit using episcopally-consecrated chrism – Innocent’s letter both describes contemporary practice in Rome, and (though he could not have known it) anticipates the peribaptismal practice that would eventually become universal in the West, following the Carolingian reforms.

Lampe’s assessment of the letter is not enthusiastic: he describes the reference to Acts as a “supposed warrant for what is almost certainly...an unscriptural practice” (Lampe, 1967, p. 217) and laments that the letter “did little to resolve the confusion into which the doctrine of the relation of the gift of the Spirit to Christian initiation had fallen, or to elucidate the problems of the proper matter of its sacramental sign and the Scriptural authority which that sign could claim” (p. 218).

Fisher notes in pneumatological terms the continuity from Pentecost to the apostolic ministry in the Acts of the Apostles, up to Innocent’s day (and, as will become clear as he develops his theme, to Fisher’s own day and ours): “The gift of the Spirit conferred at the chrismation by the bishop is the same gift of the Spirit that was conferred at Samaria by St Peter and St John by the imposition of their hands with prayer, and also the same gift of the Spirit which the apostles themselves had received at Pentecost” (Fisher, 1978, pp. 60-61). He continues:

If it was this gift of the Spirit that the candidates received at the chrismation after baptism, it nevertheless does not follow that they had in no sense received the Holy Spirit before this. The Holy Spirit had been invoked upon the water in which they had been baptized; and it was through him that they received regeneration and remission of sins...[This] is not what is meant when it is said that the candidates receive the Holy Spirit at the chrismation...[T]he sealing with chrism is a sacramental act in which there is an objective giving of the Holy Spirit (p. 61).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Revel notes another minor development attested by Innocent: the merging of consignation and anointing into one single rite (see Revel, 2006, p. 164).

## Council of Orange (441)

The second canon of the Council of Orange provides a description of contemporary peribaptismal rites in Gaul.<sup>71</sup> E.C. Whitaker translated it as follows:

No minister who has the office of baptizing shall begin without chrism: for that it was agreed among us that there shall be one chrismation [in baptism]. When anyone for any reason does not receive chrism in baptism, the bishop [*sacerdos*] shall be advised of this at confirmation [*in confirmatione*]. For chrism can only confer its blessing once [*quoslibet chrismatis ipsius nonnisi una benedictione est*]: and we say this not to any man's prejudice, but that the repetition of chrismation should not be thought necessary (Whitaker, 1970, p. 228).

From it we can distill some details of these rites:

- Water-baptism was immediately to be followed by a chrismation. Clergy were to ensure that they had chrism with them when performing baptisms, as they were normally the ones to chrismate. While the bishop could later make up for any missing chrismation, this was not the preferred arrangement.
- Chrismation was to be conferred only once because the unspecified “blessing” of chrismation could only be received once.
- At some point after the water-baptism, the bishop was to carry out a step that was referred to as “*confirmatio*”, possibly on all those who had been baptized, or else only on those who had been baptized but not anointed.

From this we may hypothesize that, in fifth-century Gaul, chrismation was unrepeatable, that it was by default a presbyteral rite, but that it was always to be followed by an episcopal “confirmation,” which exceptionally included chrismation when this had been omitted. The canons do not explain the theological or doctrinal significance of either the post-baptismal chrismation or the episcopal confirmation, nor do they make clear what rite or gesture was deployed by way of “confirmation.” Fisher summarizes the import of the second canon in this way:

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<sup>71</sup> Fisher (1978, p. 162, note 10), who describes the canons as “difficult to interpret,” provides a bibliography of attempts to interpret them. Winkler (in Johnson, 1995, p. 211) provides substantially the same bibliography.

The bishops at Orange clearly intended to maintain the Gallican custom of a single chrismation in initiation. Their action had the effect of securing that the one chrismation would always be administered at baptism, and not at the subsequent confirmation, which thereby became a simple act of hand-laying with prayer. Hence baptism, even when administered in the absence of a bishop, was not a simple rite of baptism in water but was always accompanied by an act of chrismation performed by the baptizing presbyter. Although the bishops at Orange were determined that chrismation should not be repeated, they were equally determined that it should not be omitted from baptism (Fisher, 1978, p. 130).

Elsewhere Fisher observes that the term “confirmation” had a literal application in this case:

*Confirmatio* is not yet a technical term, because, if it had been, it would have been used in the preceding canon also, where, however, the expression “to be sealed with chrism and a blessing” (*cum chrismate et benedictione consignari*) is used instead; and secondly, it is used in the sense of “completion,” seeing that the intention of the canon is that the bishop shall supply what is lacking from initiations performed in haste in his absence (Fisher, 1965, p. 161).

Winkler hypothesizes that *confirmatio* is indeed a technical term here, and that it may denote a post-baptismal anointing, with or without a hand-laying:

I find no compelling reason...why the possibility of an allusion to the anointing after baptism should be *a priori* excluded from consideration. It may well be that postbaptismal anointing is meant, and not laying on of the hand. This anointing may or may not have included a laying on of the hand, but I do not believe that the rites included a laying on of the hand *distinct* from the anointing (in Johnson, 1995, p. 214).

For our purposes it would be of interest to know what the “blessing” of chrismation consisted in; the text does not enlighten us on this score, and indeed Winkler writes that one possible reading of the phrase is that the chrism itself could only be blessed once, rather than that the baptizand could only be blessed once with chrism (in Johnson, 1995, p. 213).



### **Maximus of Turin (late fourth - early fifth century)**

Maximus is especially interesting because he makes vivid use of a trope that will become standard in mediaeval writing about Christian initiation<sup>72</sup>; in his third *Tractatus de Baptismo* (PL 57, 775-779) the bishop of Turin compares the first post-baptismal anointing of a new Christian to certain anointings described in the Hebrew Scriptures – of Moses, and Aaron, and of priests and kings – alluded to in the Greek Scriptures in I Peter (“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light,” I Peter 2:9, *RSV*). By this first anointing the Lord “confers priestly and royal dignity on the baptized” and anticipates the future priestly and regal glory of the Christian.<sup>73</sup>

### **Leo the Great (bishop of Rome from 440; d. 461)**

In his *Epistola* 159 (7) to Nicetas of Aquileia (PL 54, 1139), Pope Leo uses the increasingly familiar expression “confirmation” to name, as we might expect, a post-baptismal pneumatic rite of hand-laying, but the context is different from what we have seen so far, and it seems certain that he intended *confirmare* in a broad rather than a technical sense (thus, *e.g.*, Fisher, 1965, p. 161). Leo is not discussing ordinary initiation here, but the reconciliation of heretics. The pontiff is concerned that Baptism should not be repeated when a heretic is reconciled with the Church – there is, he reminds the reader, but “one Lord, one faith, one Baptism”. Instead, they are “to be confirmed only through the invocation of the Holy Spirit by the laying-on of hands.”<sup>74</sup> The very intriguing implication of this policy, since Leo does not distinguish among heretics of different communities, is that while Baptism is not to be repeated even if initially conferred by heretics, Confirmation (which is, similarly, normally unrepeatable) should not even be considered to have been done in the first place unless it is done by orthodox clergy. This is the “sanctification of the Spirit” that eludes heretics and that must be supplied upon their reception.

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<sup>72</sup> Also notable is the fact that Maximus has left no description of a Confirmation rite; moreover, in this passage Maximus overtly posits the action of the Holy Spirit in the baptismal waters, as Lampe affirms (1967, p. 207).

<sup>73</sup> This was an important and regularly recurring theme in patristic accounts of initiation: the priestly and royal signification of the first, presbyteral post-baptismal unction evokes the rich Syrian tradition of messianic pre-baptismal anointings, and remains a part of the reformed Roman rite of initiation *except* when Baptism and Confirmation are celebrated together – a change that has understandably chagrined some contemporary commentators.

<sup>74</sup> “...*sola invocatione Spiritus sancti per impositionem manuum confirmandi sunt...*”

Lampe sees a further significance in Leo's words: evidence of a "distinction between the conferring of particular endowments of the Spirit through the laying on of hands and the initial gift of possession of the Spirit in Baptism" (Lampe, 1967, p. 230).

### **Faustus of Riez (c. 400 – c. 490)**

The story of how Faustus' Pentecost sermon – if indeed it is his<sup>75</sup> – came to influence mediaeval theology so substantially has been told many times.<sup>76</sup>

In his sermon for Pentecost – commented in detail by Van Buchem, who established a critical edition of the sermon, and dated it to between 451 and 470 (Van Buchem, 1967, p. 113) – the English-born Gallican Faustus is concerned to demonstrate that the bishop's hand-laying (now well and truly separated, for practical reasons, from the rite of water-baptism) is not a superfluous or dispensable rite, but that it has some valuable purpose and effect distinct from Baptism. Van Buchem sees Faustus' theological and historical importance in the fact that his is "the first text that explicitly provides an independent interpretation of the post-baptismal *confirmatio* rite as compared with the *baptisma*" (p. 85).

Fisher adduces five reasons why Faustus' sermon is noteworthy:

1. like Van Buchem, he describes it as the first attempt to craft a theology of Confirmation considered apart from Baptism ("based upon a disintegrated rite" is Fisher's phrase (1978, p. 134));
2. it is with Faustus that we may begin to speak of "Confirmation" without anachronism;
3. Faustus testifies to the Gallican rite of episcopal hand-laying without anointing, in contrast to the Roman rite which replaced it and that featured two anointings;
4. Faustus uses distinct words to mean "to confirm" and "to strengthen," notable given the later tendency to describe the effect of Confirmation as a "strengthening";
5. The eccentric path by which it became influential in the Middle Ages is a consequence both of its papal misattribution and of the pastoral circumstances it envisions, similar to those that obtained in the mediaeval West (see Fisher, 1978, pp. 134-136).

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<sup>75</sup> Van Buchem, as mentioned *supra*, argued for a Faustan authorship, and this has been generally accepted. In this dissertation I am assuming Faustan authorship. Paul Turner suggests that the influential little sermon's history of misattribution ("Pseudo-Melchiodorus", "Pseudo-Eusebius") may not be over, in his acknowledgements at the beginning of a work on Confirmation (2006, p. ix), where he thanks, among others, "(Pseudo-?)Faustus of Riez, who confused."

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Finnegan (1970 and 2011) and Fisher (1978, pp. 135ff.).

Given the influence that the abbot and bishop's sermon was destined to have, one problem must detain us. Finnegan (1970, pp. 501ff.), following Van Buchem (1967), argues that Faustus held a semi-Pelagian anthropology, and that this influenced his view of Confirmation; Finnegan implies that such a view of Confirmation is defective, or at least suspect. Faustus' semi-Pelagianism is widely accepted and I will not dispute it here. That his presumed semi-Pelagianism influenced his understanding of Confirmation and that it did so in such a way as to render that understanding defective is much less certain; Finnegan (1970)'s evidence supporting this contention is little more than a disapproval of Faustus' "moralizing" tone, and of his position that Confirmation provides aid in living a good life and resisting evil. Such a position is not inseparable from a Pelagian anthropology or taxonomy of grace. That the Pentecost sermon is not obviously at odds with orthodoxy is shown precisely by the readiness with which some of its assertions were embraced by many mediaeval theologians. Faustus' interpretation of Confirmation, and those further interpretations which are inspired by it, must be assessed in due course on their own theological merits, not dismissed with an *ad hominem* wave of the hand.

What did Faustus maintain was the effect of Confirmation? *Robur*, certainly, but better still we can say that for Faustus it results in a more general growth, of which one important feature is strength. In Confirmation we are given "increase in grace" to walk amid the perils of this world, we are "hardened " for battle, and we are "given strength."<sup>77</sup>

Faustus considers the effect that the Holy Spirit has on those who receive him. Citing Christ's promise to send upon the Apostles the "spirit of truth" (John 16:13), Faustus observes from the example of the Holy Spirit's descent on the Apostles that the hearts of the faithful upon whom the Spirit is poured are "made greater in prudence and constancy."<sup>78</sup> Faustus posits a robust pneumatic account of the effects of Confirmation that is complementary to the redemptive effects of Baptism: we who are redeemed by Christ are "enlightened, built up, taught, instructed and fulfilled" so that we might hear the voice of the same Spirit say "I will give you understanding and I will instruct you in the way you must walk."<sup>79</sup> A recurring theme in Faustus' account is the intellectual dimension of flourishing as a Christian; he does not only speak of traits like strength

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<sup>77</sup> [...] in confirmatione augmentum praestat ad gratiam, quia in hoc mundo tota aetate uicturis inter invisibiles hostes et pericula gradiendum est. In baptismo regeneramur ad uitam, post baptismum confirmamur ad pugnam. In baptismo abluimur post baptismum roboramur. (All Latin quotations from Faustus are from Van Buchem's text).

<sup>78</sup> Vides quia cum spiritus sanctus infunditur, cor fidele ad prudentiam et constantiam dilatatur.

<sup>79</sup> [...] per Christum redimimur, per spiritum uero sanctum dono sapientiae spiritalis illuminamur, aedificamur, erudimur, instrumur, consummamur, ut illam sancti spiritus uocem audire possimus: "Intellectum dabo tibi et instruam te in uia hac qua ingredieris".

and persistence for the *pugnam*, but also the various qualities needed to see clearly, discern rightly, and desire and choose the right in the trials and perplexities of life, gifts that he also associates with the work of the Holy Spirit.

Faustus resorts to military imagery in this homily – comparing baptism to a soldier enlisting, for instance, while Confirmation corresponds to the soldier’s being equipped and instructed in the use of weapons – but it is not the only theme. No sooner is the image of the new recruit introduced than another, less martial one is substituted, that of the Holy Spirit as the guardian, comforter, and tutor of the soul.<sup>80</sup> Faustus frames the importance of Confirmation principally in terms of human improvement and perfection, which has led some critics to dismiss him as Semi-Pelagian, but it is clear that for Faustus the Christian does not instruct or sanctify himself – it is the Holy Spirit who equips, trains, watches over, fosters and strengthens the Christian for her challenges in the world. Confirmation, in Faustus’ account, is best explained in terms of its impact on the Christian’s actions rather than on her being (as distinct from Baptism, which Faustus presents as transformative of one’s very being); but his tone is not moralizing at all. He turns repeatedly and appositely, in this short sermon, to Scripture, bringing to bear references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. These references focus on the elevation and sanctification of specific faculties – intellect, discernment, prudence, constancy, strength – but Faustus presents this elevation as the proper object of Christian hope since Christ promised the Spirit for precisely that transformation of ordinary human nature.

### **Denys [Pseudo-Dionysius](early 6<sup>th</sup> century)**

Denys is of interest to us here especially because of his elaborate theology of the chrism – the myrrh or myron – in chapter IV of his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (*Eccl. Hier.*), but also on account of his brief description of a post-baptismal chrismation in chapter II. First he describes the rite itself:

The Priests then [after the triple baptismal water-bath] take him, and entrust him to the Sponsor and guide of his introduction. And when they, in conjunction with him, have cast over the initiated appropriate clothing, they lead him again to the Hierarch, who, when he has sealed the man with

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<sup>80</sup> *Sicut exigit militaris ordo ut cum imperator quemcumque in militem receperit numerum, non solum signet receptum sed etiam armis competentibus instruat pugnatorem, ita in baptizato benedictio illa munitio est. Dedisti militem, da et adiumenta militiae. Numquid prodest si quisquam parentum magnam paruulo conferat facultatem nisi providere studeat et tutorem? Ita parachytus regeneratorum in Christo custos et consolator et tutor est.*

the most Divinely operating myrrh, pronounces him to be henceforward partaker of the most Divinely initiating Eucharist (*Ecl. Hier.*, chapter II; Parker, 1894, p. 56).

Next Denys explains the benefits conferred by this chrismation:

But the most perfecting unction of the myrrh makes the man who has been perfected of good odour, for the holy perfection of the Divine birth unifies those who have been perfected to the supremely Divine Spirit. Now the spiritual indwelling which makes perfect, and of a good savour, as being unutterable, I leave to the spiritual consciousness of those who are deemed worthy of the sacred and deifying participation of the Holy Spirit within their mind (*Ecl. Hier.*, chapter II; Parker, 1894, p. 60).

In isolation it may be tempting to see this as a description of what we call Confirmation – a post-baptismal anointing, preceding (and permitting one to accede to) the Eucharist, to which anointing a pneumatic effect, a “perfecting” by the “Divine Spirit,” is attributed. As we have seen so often in the patristic period in many different regions, however, Denys leaves a certain ambiguity: the candidate is anointed several times before Baptism (including a “triple sacred sealing” by the bishop – Campbell, 1981, p. 26; see note 56 for references in explanation of this anointing); the chrismation he describes is unmistakably distinct from the water-bath, but is nonetheless closely associated to it (even physically); he attributes certain significant effects to it, but it is not perfectly clear what those effects are as distinct from those predicated of Baptism.

Denys’s remarks on post-baptismal rites are remarkable for the significance he attaches to the myron (in all its uses); in chapter IV he reflects at length on the properties of the myron, the appropriateness of its being consecrated by the bishop specifically, the seemliness of veiling it, and the angelic beings he considers to be standing around it, as it is consecrated and stored reverently for veneration and use.

Hence the teaching of the sacred symbols places the Seraphin [*sic*] near the Divine Myrrh, when it is being consecrated, recognizing and describing the Christ as unchanged, in our complete incarnation amongst us in the truth of our nature. And what is still more Divine, it uses the Divine Myrrh for the perfecting of every religious function, distinctly shewing, according to the Divine saying, the sanctified Sanctifier as always the same in Himself throughout the whole course of his Divine beneficence. Wherefore the completing gift and grace of the Divine regeneration is

completed in the Divine perfecting of the Myrrh... the perfecting unction of the Myrrh gives to him who has been initiated in the most sacred initiation of the birth in God, the indwelling of the supremely Divine Spirit... (*Ecl. Hier.*, chapter IV; Parker, 1894, p. 76).

### **John the Deacon (c. 500)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Epistola ad Senarium* [PL 59, 406].

Nothing is known of this John; Spinks (2006, p. 109) suggests that he may have been the future Pope John I. The portion of John's letter that is of greatest interest to us begins with this question: is it harmful in any way for a baptized person to die without having been anointed with chrism and blessed by the bishop?<sup>81</sup> This is a very practical way of framing the more abstract problem – what does Confirmation add to Baptism, and what is its relationship to Baptism? John seems to suggest that Confirmation relates to Baptism the way that subsequent growth builds on birth; extant versions of his letter are incomplete, so we do not know how exactly he would have answered his own question. It seems likely that the point he was making is that, while birth is the necessary condition for all subsequent stages of life, and further growth is not essential to become a human being *per se* (for the infant is already such), still it is a normal and desirable thing for someone not merely to be born but to develop her potential. If we apply the image to Christian initiation, John seems to have been saying that Baptism is necessary for life and Confirmation is not, but is still useful and desirable. This is speculation, since his explicit answer does not survive, but it is difficult to see what other point would have been advanced by his analogy of infancy.

Johnson (1999, p. 165) translates all of John's letter except for this final passage dealing with post-baptismal chrismation and hand-laying, a passage which he paraphrases by affirming that "everything necessary was given in Baptism". This is slightly misleading: John certainly appears to be on the verge of making just such an assertion, but at the same time the most reasonable rationale for comparing the baptized Christian to an infant is that, just as maturity does not add to the infant's humanity but is still a real movement toward some fulfillment of that humanity, post-baptismal chrismation and hand-laying do not add to the fundamental identity of the baptized Christian *qua* Christian but nonetheless are a development of the powers and possibilities inherent in the Christian. One who dies without Baptism is no less Christian, no less redeemed, and thus no definitive harm is done – just as an infant who dies is not less human than

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<sup>81</sup> *Si baptizatus sine chrismatis unctione ac benedictione pontificis ex hac vita migraverit, utrum ei obsit aliquid, an non?*

an adult who is able to grow to maturity before death. This sentiment – if indeed it is accurate to see it as the tenor of John’s original argument – will be echoed in several centuries’ time by Sicardus of Cremona who pithily remarked that “one star may differ from another in its brightness”.

### **Conclusion to chapter 1**

With the close of the fifth century and turn of the sixth I will end this first chapter. The first five centuries are interesting for our enquiry because, in their sometimes inchoate hints of pneumatic peribaptismal rites, they have been so widely used to such divergent effect by recent interpreters of Confirmation; whereas the seventh century on (as we shall see) saw the evolution of a robust theology of Confirmation, largely influenced by the work of the fifth-century Faustus. The intervening two centuries or so are of great interest liturgically; these are the centuries of rituals and sacramentaries, of detailed records of varied initiatory rites, though not of profound reflection on the significance of those ceremonies. In this period, for example, we find divergence between the Gallican and the Roman initiatory practice: the Roman practice reserved the post-baptismal chrismation to the bishop (resulting in greater and greater delays between Baptism and Confirmation, as the faithful waited for the bishop or his deputy to make his rounds), where the Gallican custom jealously maintained the post-baptismal anointing with episcopally-consecrated chrism, but omitted any other direct involvement of the bishop in initiation. While the practices differ rather significantly, they share the conviction that post-baptismal chrismation has a purpose and effect, associated with the bishop’s ministry, that is distinct from Baptism.<sup>82</sup> The history of these developments, and of their giving way to the liturgical uniformity that Charlemagne gradually inculcated in the West, deserve and have been given abundant attention.

In this chapter I have provided, not a comprehensive catalogue of patristic writing on Christian initiation, but a representative selection that includes all of the crucial passages cited in present-day controversies about Confirmation. We have seen three major categories of patristic testimony concerning peribaptismal rites – those that make no clear reference to any such rite, those that make reference to pre-baptismal rites, and those that make reference to post-baptismal rites. We have seen also the use made of this testimony by recent interpreters of Confirmation:

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<sup>82</sup> The Gallican practice used the word “confirmation” to describe the bishop’s early role of personally ratifying the baptism and chrismation of each Christian; as the bishop’s personal role subsided, so did the word confirmation in the Gallican context, not to re-appear until the Roman rite prevailed.



here, too, there is diversity. Dix, Thornton, and Fisher look closely into the testimony and find evidence that the Fathers knew a rite that conferred the Spirit in contradistinction to the baptismal water-bath, and argue from this that the Church today should confirm with a conviction of its pneumatic function, but ideally only in conjunction with the baptismal rite. Lampe looks closely at the same testimony, finds that only the baptismal water-bath was considered to confer the Spirit, and his research influenced a radical change in the official theology and practice of the Church of England, diminishing the strongly sacramental interpretation of Confirmation favoured by Thornton and company. Kavanagh discounts *a priori* the authority of that testimony except as a witness to the way specific liturgical gestures arose. Both Quinn and Turner dispute Kavanagh's historical conclusions, each for his own reasons, but share his theological interpretation and agree that Confirmation has become an overgrown rite that ought to be no more than one more anointing in the complex of baptismal rites. Marsh, Ligier, and Revel are aware in detail of the patristic testimony, and of the ambiguities and controversies that make it difficult to generalize about that testimony, but consider those controversies to be ancillary to a more fundamental question, what Marsh called "the problem of Pentecost, of the sacramental continuation of Pentecost in the post-baptismal rite of the Spirit" (Marsh, 1972b, p. 335): they are aware of the evolution of early Christian initiatory rites and have interesting things to say about how hand-laying, anointing, and episcopal hegemony took on varying kinds and degrees of importance in what became Confirmation, but see a more profound perennial theological issue for the Church, the problem of Pentecost. Finally, an important group of interpreters of Confirmation – Walsh, O'Neill, Haffner, Mohelník and others – focuses mainly on mediaeval rather than patristic treatments of the question, above all on Aquinas and the Schoolmen: the new era of writing about Christian initiation that began with Pope Innocent's letter to Decentius. This is the period that we shall consider next.



## Chapter 2

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF A ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY OF CONFIRMATION IN THE MEDIAEVAL PERIOD

In this chapter I will survey accounts of Confirmation in Roman Catholic theology in the mediaeval period, beginning in the sixth century, up until the Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century. This period differs especially from the patristic period that we explored in the last chapter by the very fact that here it is possible to speak of a theology of Confirmation *per se* without further qualification. In the previous chapter, we had to take into account significant regional differences of rite and theology, and frequently were obliged to proceed cautiously since not only the name but the very existence of Confirmation was imperfectly, or not at all, in evidence. This chapter investigates a period and a region in which a different situation emerged and eventually prevailed: In contrast to that *diversity* of views among the Fathers which has supported such varied conclusions concerning Confirmation – consider the very disparate ideas of Confirmation one would get from Irenaeus, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, and Jerome respectively, and the divergent reading of those Fathers by Fisher and Lampe – we shall find that many things about the sacrament are taken for granted by Latin authors in this period. In Isidore of Seville, for instance, we will see a clear statement of the rite, name, effect and minister of the second sacrament of initiation – one of the earliest such clear affirmations.

Eventually, this period was distinguished from the preceding one by other features as well. For instance, liturgical variety in the West gradually gave way to greater uniformity, especially following Charlemagne's reforms<sup>83</sup>; this process is documented, *e.g.*, by Finnegan (1970 and 2011), Milner (1971), Johnson (1999) and Whitehouse (2008). Also, towards the end of the mediaeval period several of the most crucial parameters for Roman Catholic theologies of the sacrament were defined. These parameters are threefold: the Council of Florence's solemn definition that there are seven sacraments, Confirmation being one of them, that it bestows the

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<sup>83</sup> The influence of Charlemagne on the development of Confirmation practices must not be exaggerated: As Heugel has shown (2003, p. 128ff.), "the Merovingians did practice episcopal confirmation, and...despite the significant attention paid to confirmation by Carolingian reformers, their confirmation procedures were actually in continuity with traditional Frankish episcopal values and practices."

Holy Spirit, and finally that it confers an abiding character and is therefore unrepeatable. These definitions were repeated and confirmed by Trent.

Every Western theologian during this period, until the Reformation, who expressed an opinion on the matter affirmed the existence of a post-baptismal episcopal rite, having some distinct and robust effect that set it apart from water-baptism. Hand-laying with, without, or incorporated within a consignation with anointing, are the usual actions by which the sacrament is conferred. In all cases, the very word “confirmation” was used for the rite; this word had evolved from a tentative and ambiguous expression to a definite and indeed technical term as early as 439 when the Council of Riez referred to the “confirming” of neophytes (see Whitehouse, 2008, p. 344), though *confirmare* continued to be used (as we shall see) in a non-technical sense, to describe any process or act of strengthening or “firming” (see, for example, the entry below for John Pagus, p. 113). James Heugel maintains that “by the ninth and tenth centuries [*confirmatio*] would be the name of the rite” (Heugel, 2003, p. 60).

As we shall see in more detail in chapter 3, recent theologies of Confirmation have tended to take one of two approaches to the mediaeval period. Either they practically or deliberately ignore them or dismiss the period altogether, as nothing but a footnote to the doctrine of Faustus (misidentified as Popes Melchiades and Urban) that was transmitted by the Pseudo-Isidorean *Decretals*, and therefore as something to be ignored (a misstep of which even Dix is guilty – 1946, pp. 23-24); or they focus on Thomas Aquinas’ doctrine in the *Summa Theologiae* as definitive, without acknowledging the criticisms that have been leveled against the patristic and mediaeval views of Confirmation that are his foundation and context, and without acknowledging what may be unique or valuable in Scholastic theologians other than Thomas. My purpose in this chapter will be to see what insights into Confirmation arose during the mediaeval period, and how they withstand those criticisms.

The most valuable resources for a comprehensive exploration of mediaeval theologies of Confirmation remain a few works from the mid-twentieth century, especially Gillis (1940), O’Doherty (1949), Lynch (1957, for primary texts, and 1962, for an indispensable survey of these texts and others<sup>84</sup>), Carra de Vaux Saint-Cyr (1961) and Fisher (1965). This chapter will seek to explore those interpretations in greater detail and attain a general appreciation of the

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<sup>84</sup> I am very heavily indebted to Gillis’ 1940 work and especially to Lynch’s 1962 article for the identification of relevant mediaeval voices and sources. Except where otherwise indicated, however, my summary and assessment of these authors’ views on Confirmation, and consequently any defects in this assessment, are my own.

contributions of mediaeval theology to an understanding of Confirmation, particularly its effects or purpose. To paraphrase M. Colish, as cited by P. Rosemann (Rosemann, 2007, p. 9): providing a comprehensive survey of scholastic opinions on all aspects of Confirmation – even if we were to look no further than their respective commentaries on Lombard’s *Sentences* – would be an undertaking for “a large international *équipe* of medievalists with unlimited funding”<sup>85</sup>; what I am attempting in this chapter is a survey of published mediaeval opinions, with particular attention to Confirmation’s “effects,” and I will be noting particularly some unique and subtle points of view as they arise that will help to expand sometimes cartoonishly narrow perceptions of mediaeval theologies of Confirmation (for an example of oversimplification, see *e.g.* N. Mitchell, in Carr, 2007, p. 133).<sup>86</sup> Above all, this survey is intended to shed light on my primary question – what outstanding problems remain in Roman Catholic theologies of Confirmation’s purpose and effects? – and therefore will not address a number of interesting and important questions that are beyond its scope, such as the nature and extent of the influence exerted by one theologian on another, or the history of the distinct “schools” that grew around theologians and communities. These historical questions – which have been explored by Gillis (1940), Carra de Vaux Saint-Cyr (1961), Fisher (1965), Finnegan (1970 and 2011), Rosemann (2007), Leinsle (2010), and Van Nieuwenhove (2012), among others – are beyond the scope of this dissertation, as important as they are. For this reason, though I use critical editions of mediaeval authors whenever they are available, I also include many authors who are as yet still only available in older published versions such as Migne’s *Patrologia Latina*. Ongoing scholarship and criticism as to the authorship and provenance of those texts may modify the Confirmation doctrine found in them, and the identification of a given text with a given author, school or period. My concern, however, is primarily a general survey of the views of Confirmation and the reasons for those views that were circulating in the mediaeval Latin West. In this way, the great majority of mediaeval theologians who wrote on Confirmation will be given a hearing, and any unique contributions will be noted, for the benefit of my overarching goal in this dissertation: to identify and progress toward resolving outstanding problems in the interpretation of Confirmation.

One challenge of investigating Confirmation in the mediaeval period is the extent to which theologians frequently cited earlier authorities verbatim; this creates a temptation for the

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<sup>85</sup> See also Livesey (2002, pp. 1-23) for a glimpse of how monumental this undertaking would be.

<sup>86</sup> I am particularly indebted to two reference works about the Middle Ages, edited by Vauchez (2002) and Bjork (2010) respectively, for many of the biographical details concerning the authors in this chapter.

modern student simply to describe or to categorize together all of the authors who use the same formulas, in part because a long series of similar or identical assertions about Confirmation will make for tedious reading, a pitfall which the present chapter may not entirely escape. On the other hand, a theologian's decisions to use an existing formula, rather than a new one (however slightly modified); to use certain formulas and not others; perhaps to modify part of some of the earlier insights quoted; and on occasion to register disagreement (*e.g.* William of Auvergne on the matter of the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit) – these are all significant decisions and may repay closer attention. Therefore, my method in this chapter will be to note, at least briefly, the gist of as many mediaeval discussions of Confirmation as possible, with greatest attention to their observations about the sacrament's ostensible *effects*.

As was the case in the last chapter, my focus is on the theological meaning explicitly attributed to Confirmation, rather than to the evolution of the *liturgical rite* itself. For this reason I have not devoted space to a discussion of that evolution, a matter that has been explored by Van Buchem (1967), Finnegan (1970 and 2011), Fisher (1965 and 1978), Johnson (1999), Keefe (1981) and Heugel (2003), nor to the mediaeval authors' often detailed considerations of the rationale for using specific liturgical materials, gestures and formulas. (Aquinas, for instance, devotes several paragraphs of his *Sentences* commentary, as does Roland of Cremona of his treatise on the sacraments, to enquiring whether poppy-seed oil or nut oils might be used in lieu of olive oil for confirmational chrismation – perhaps a fairly urgent pastoral challenge in some olive-bereft northern regions, or perhaps merely a thought-experiment.) The reader will already be familiar with the very pragmatic considerations that led to the evolution of Confirmation as a distinct and separate rite from Baptism: namely, delays that were consequent upon the episcopal prerogative to confirm, even after bishops were no longer the ordinary ministers of Baptism, compounded by the growth of the Church which made episcopal visits to local churches increasingly infrequent.<sup>87</sup> My working assumption here is that, when theologians of the Middle Ages provide a *theological* rationale for reserving Confirmation to the bishop (or at least preferring episcopal administration of it when at all possible), that rationale must be addressed on its own merits; only if the ostensible warrant for this rite were immemorial custom *and nothing else*, would it be apropos to object that the custom is not immemorial at all. Otherwise, we subject the interpretation of Confirmation to

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<sup>87</sup> P. de Clerck (1986) provides an excellent brief summary of the history of this “disassociation”, as he calls it; Fisher (1965) provides a more detailed one.

a liturgical historicism – an *a priori* preference for whatever *modus confirmandi* is ostensibly more primitive – which preference is itself a theological position that requires evidence.<sup>88</sup>

As we shall see, the influence of Faustus on mediaeval theology is real, but has been greatly exaggerated by recent interpreters of Confirmation. Many authors hew to a Faustan line in the very broad sense that they posit *robur* as the defining effect of Confirmation, but mediaeval theologies of Confirmation are not monolithic. This period is very instructive because of what the mediaevals agreed on, but also because of what they did not agree on. Every mediaeval author whom I have examined agrees that Confirmation exists (Anselm of Laon comes closest to expressing a real doubt on this point), that it is properly conferred by the bishop, that it adds something to Baptism, and that it is valuable but not essential for salvation. They disagree about the specifics of rite and word (matter and form) that make up the sacrament, about the precise moment when Christ instituted the sacrament – when He promised the Holy Spirit? When He breathed on the disciples? At Pentecost? – about whether and when a simple priest may administer it, and about the benefit that it “adds” to Baptism. Among the several answers to the latter question, we can find in mediaeval authors the following effects asserted:

- the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- strength for struggle (*robur ad pugnam*), of two kinds:
  - against temptation, what I will call the “ascetical” interpretation of *robur ad pugnam*;  
or
  - against the devil or enemies of the faith, what I will call the “military” model of *robur ad pugnam*. This in no way implies an armed struggle – in fact, not a single author whom I have studied suggests that Confirmation ever pertains to armed struggle – but emphasizes a struggle against an *external* foe, as distinct from the devices and desires of one’s own heart.
- strength to witness to Christ (*robur ad praedicandum*);

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<sup>88</sup> This is similar to the historicism that eschews “altars” in favour of “tables,” condemns the transcendent focus of Romanesque or Gothic church architecture and prefers “worship spaces” that resemble warehouses or living rooms, and erases not only the clericalist accretions that have indeed deformed the exercise of ordained ministry, but *any* notion of Orders that warrants the epithet “priest” instead of merely “presbyter”. This historicism evinces a naïve and peculiar conviction that the consciousness of the first century exhausted all that can be truly known of the Church’s liturgical and theological life, and petrifies a twenty-first (or more commonly, twentieth) century Western perception of that consciousness into a deliberate pose of primitivity, like an insect trapped in amber. Such a perspective cannot imagine that the Church could undergo a genuine development in understanding of what is really given in the apostolic sacramental and ecclesial dispensations. Like the Victorian father who thought that only two men in England could really think – himself, and Herbert Spencer – and fretted for his daughters’ salvation, liturgical historicism seems to think that only two centuries really “got” the Gospel: the first, and the twentieth.

- strength for perseverance (*robur ad patiendum*), the ability to stand, where Baptism merely permitted one to rise from the Fall, and
- increase in grace, whereby Confirmation is to Baptism as growth is to birth.

We will also find, in the mediaeval period, intriguing questions that are seldom raised today. Many of the Schoolmen, for instance, ask not only what Confirmation adds to Baptism – a very commonly acknowledged problem today as well (see, for instance, de Menthière (1998), p. 87) – but they ask what distinguishes Confirmation from the Eucharist. If, they ask, the Eucharist “strengthens” the communicant, why is Confirmation necessary or useful, given that the same effect is attributed to it? Another recurring Scholastic question that sounds peculiar to the theologian of today is whether Confirmation may be conferred on one who is not baptized. The question does not really occur to us today as a real pragmatic or pastoral problem; even for the mediaevals it was, of course, more of a thought-experiment than a looming issue; but, having seen the use made by some writers of the Syrian patristic data, it is pertinent to ask whether it is indeed conceivable that Confirmation could be conferred *before* the baptismal water-bath.

An adequate exploration of mediaeval Confirmation doctrine, particularly when we consider the great Scholastics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, also requires a study of their respective accounts of grace and of sacramental causality, and their doctrines of the Holy Spirit and of what it might therefore mean for one to “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Pending a thorough mapping of mediaeval Confirmation doctrines to doctrines of grace, sacramental causality, and pneumatology, my remarks here about mediaeval interpretations are provisional and subject to correction lest I misrepresent or oversimplify their thought.

### **Note on the texts examined in this chapter**

In this chapter I only consider edited works, not unpublished manuscripts. A detailed appraisal of the confirmational theology of omitted texts would be a very useful and valuable exercise.<sup>89</sup> The twenty-first century awaits its own Kilian Lynch to further advance, as he did so dramatically, our knowledge of mediaeval Confirmation practice.

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<sup>89</sup> Among the mediaeval texts that I have not dealt with in this chapter are several mentioned by Gillis (1940): Paganus de Corbolio, *Manducatorglosse* - Gillis (1940, p. 56, n. 35) provides “*Cod. lat. München*, 22288, fol. 86” as the reference; Peter Cantor (d. 1197), *Summa Sententiarum*, ms. in Bibl. Nat. Paris (reference in Gillis, 1940, p. 66, note 75); Robert Courcon (c. 1160 – 1219), *Summa, Cod. Lat. Paris Bibl. nat.* 14524 (s. 14) (reference in Gillis, 1940, p. 66, note 77); Peter of Capua, *IV Libri Sententiarum*, IV, q. 3, a. 3 *Cod. Vat. Lat.* 4296 (reference in Gillis, 1940, p. 59, notes 44



Among the other texts mentioned in this chapter, I have examined all the texts of uncertain authorship included in Lynch (1957). With the exception of *Troyes Bibl. Munic.* 1862 and *Paris bibl. nat. lat.* 3032, which I deal with below, I have not written about them at any length as they repeat the Confirmation doctrine that we find in other authors. Some of the texts affirm *robur ad praedicandum* as the effect of Confirmation, viz., *Escorial Ç IV 2* (which describes the grace of Confirmation as “boldly confessing the name of Christ among unbelievers” (*audacter confiteatur nomen Christi infidelibus* – Lynch, 1957, p. 26)); *Paris bibl. nat. lat.* 10640 (*robur ad confitendum fidem Christi* – p. 75); *Paris bibl. nat. lat.* 3424 (*ad robur fidei quantum ad confirmationem in corde, et quantum ad confessionem liberam in ore* – p. 145). Others affirm more tersely a *robur* without further description, viz., the *Filia Magistri*; or a *robur ad pugnam*, viz., *Assisi Bibl. Comm.* 103 and *Vat. lat.* 782 (which use similar martial imagery), *Naples Bibl. Comm.* F VII 22 (*datur gratia ad pugnam*, p. 51), and *Vat. lat.* 4245 (*chrismatio proprie fit ad robur...robur autem ordinat ad victoriam, et fit ad coronam* – p. 195). Finally, several posit *robur* under both aspects, viz., *Vat. lat.* 691 (*datur...hoc sacramentum ad robur, scil. ut simus idonei pugnare et nomen Christi portare coram regibus* – p. 32) and *Paris bibl. nat. lat.* 8817 which uses an almost identical phrase; and *Brussels Bibl. Royale* 1542. The latter text affirms that Confirmation is necessary “lest we fall back into guilt” (*ut non labatur in culpam*), and provides strength in the battle against vice and temptation (*praestans robur in certamine contra vitia et temptationes*, p. 136), but also to confess faith in Christ crucified (*hoc sacramentum datur in robur confessionis fidei Christi, et maxime quantum ad articulum crucifixionis Christi*, pp. 140-141). *Paris bibl. nat. lat.* 15702 is too brief to categorize it easily according to this schema: it says merely that “confirmation is the strengthening of the baptismal character” (*baptismalis characteris corroboratio* – p. 149).

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and 45). Also “the *Summa of Basle B IX 18*,” one of the manuscripts described by Lynch (1962, p. 76) as either “represent[ing] a verbal or quasi-verbal repetition of their sources...or...so brief as not to merit special attention” (p. 62, n. 219), which Lynch did not include in his 1957 anthology of primary texts. I have likewise not included discussions of John of Treviso (fl. ca. 1230), *Summa in theologia* (*Vat. lat.* 1187 - reference in Lynch, 1962, p. 60); Petrus of Tarantasia [Pierre de Tarentaise, Pope Innocent V] (d. 1276), *Commentary on the Sentences*; Petrus de Trabibus [Peter of Trabes, of Trebes] (late thirteenth century), *Commentary on the Sentences* (reference in Lynch, 1962, p. 251); Humbert of Prully [Humbert de Gendrey, Cistercian abbot of Prulli] (fl. 1298), *Commentary on the Sentences* (reference in Lynch, 1962, p. 266); John Quidort [John of Paris](d. 1306), *Commentary on the Sentences* (reference in Lynch, 1962, p. 268); James of Metz (ca. 1300), *Commentary on the Sentences* (reference in Lynch, 1962, p. 276); Vitalis of Furno [Vital du Four] (d. 1327), *Commentary on the Sentences* (reference in Lynch, 1962, p. 273), and William Peter de Godino [Guillaume Pierre Godin](d. 1336), *Commentary on the Sentences* (reference in Lynch, 1962, p. 265). I had not located a published version of these texts at the time of writing. Finally, I have omitted consideration of four authors whom Lynch (1962) alludes to for the sake of completeness, but whom he does not consider to add materially to the conclusions of other authors: *Commentary on the Sentences* of Hannibaldus de Hannibaldis; *Compendium theologiae veritatis* of Hugh of Strassburg; *IV Sentences* attributed to Romanus of Rome, which Lynch considers to be Hannibaldus’ *Commentary*; and *Commentary* of Matthew of Aquasparta (see Lynch, 1962, pp. 230-233 and 237-250). Neunheuser (1964, p. 214) considers that de Godino and Hannibaldus merely transmit Thomas’ teaching on the sacrament of Baptism and similarly, I assume, on Confirmation.

## Isidore of Seville (570 – 636)

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, book II, chapters 26 and 27 (Lawson (ed.), 1989); *Etymologiarum* (6, 19, 51-54) [PL 82, 256].

Isidore, a scholar and prelate from Carthage in the southeast of what is now Spain, was a prolific author whose work includes canonical legislation, theological reflection, and natural science. Several chapters of book II of Isidore's *De ecclesiasticis officiis* (*De eccl. off.*) are devoted to peribaptismal rites, and two are of particular interest to us here: chapter 26 concerns chrism, and chapter 27 is about "the imposition of hands, or confirmation". The chapter on chrism is especially interesting because it provides a common point of reference between Isidore and many of the authors we have already seen: Isidore looks for the significance of chrism in priestly and royal anointings described in the Hebrew Scriptures, as when Moses anointed Aaron and his sons as priests (Leviticus 8:30), and connects it, as many of the Fathers did, to the anointing that accompanies Baptism. "Therefore, because we are a priestly and royal people," he writes, "we too are anointed after the washing, that we might be known by the name of Christ."<sup>90</sup> For Isidore in the *De eccl. off.*, the principal pneumatic peribaptismal rite is not an anointing, but the episcopal laying-on of hands; in chapter 27 he lays the groundwork for the mediaeval theology of Confirmation by anticipating several recurring mediaeval questions. He states plainly that "the Holy Spirit is given by the bishop through laying-on of hands after Baptism" and that this gesture brings to mind for us what the Apostles did in Acts 8 and 19 (see Appendix I). Immediately following this allusion, Isidore qualifies it with a distinction that we have already seen made by Augustine: "While we are able to receive the Holy Spirit, we cannot give the Holy Spirit – but we can pray to the Lord that he might be given."<sup>91</sup> He clarifies that the bishop is the one best able (*hoc...a quo potissimum fiat*) to make this request,<sup>92</sup> a statement for which his authority is Pope Innocent's letter to Senarius. Thus Isidore seems to attribute the episcopal prerogative of confirming to the particular suitability of the bishop, like the High Priest, for interceding on behalf of the faithful. This view will not be widely embraced by subsequent theologians.

Isidore's discussion of Confirmation in his *Etymologiarum* (*Etym.*) is subtly different from the one just described. For one thing, he has a more developed account of the effect he attributes to

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<sup>90</sup> *Ergo quia genus sacerdotale et regale sumus, ideo post lavacrum unguimur ut Christi nomine censeamur*, (Lawson, 1989, p. 106).

<sup>91</sup> *Spiritum autem sanctum accipere possumus, dare non possumus, sed ut detur Dominum invocamus*. (Lawson, 1989, p. 107).

<sup>92</sup> In his translation of *De eccl. off.*, Thomas Knoebel (2008, p. 112) translates this phrase as "by whom this is done most especially."



the post-baptismal anointing: “Now just as the remission of sins is given in baptism, the sanctification of the spirit is applied by anointing ...What is done in the flesh profits spiritually.”<sup>93</sup> Whatever Isidore may envision as the effect or nature of this “sanctification of the spirit”, he distinguishes it clearly from the post-baptismal hand-laying: “The imposition of hands is done for this reason, that by a blessing the invoked Holy Spirit might be invited.”<sup>94</sup> Note that he again writes “invited” – not “given.” Isidore closes these remarks with an image strongly evocative of Tertullian: bodies having been “purified and blessed,” the invoked Spirit “readily descends from the Father and rests, in a manner of speaking on the baptismal waters, as if recognizing its ancient seat. For we read that in the beginning the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters.”<sup>95</sup>

Isidore posits three moments in initiation: the baptismal water-bath, which remits sins; the post-baptismal anointing, which sanctifies the spirit, confers some kind of spiritual profit, and evokes the priestly and royal blessings of the Hebrew Scriptures; and the laying-on of hands, which invites the Holy Spirit. He finds the source or foundation for the latter rite in the apostolic hand-laying of Acts 8 and 19. His description expresses at once the close association of this rite with Baptism – the invoked Spirit sanctifies the baptismal waters – and its distinctness from it. Like Leidrad, Isidore’s explanation of Confirmation is chiefly about the Holy Spirit who is bestowed thereby, and he does not enumerate more specific effects.

### **Hugh of Rouen (d. 730)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Contra Haereticos* (1, 13) [*PL* 192, 1269 – 1270].

Hugh was a Benedictine monk from Champagne who served as archbishop of Rouen and of Paris, and as abbot of Fontenelle. Like Isidore, Hugh sees the foundation of Confirmation in the Acts of the Apostles, initially in the account of the Pentecost following Christ’s ascension, in Acts 2, though he too later makes reference to the instances of apostolic hand-laying in Acts 8 and 19 (see Appendix I for these biblical texts). Hugh describes the Pentecostal outpouring of the

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<sup>93</sup> *Nam sicut in baptismo peccatorum remissio datur, ita per unctionem sanctificatio spiritus adhibetur...Quae dum carnaliter fit, spiritualiter proficit. (Elym. VI, 19, 51-52).*

<sup>94</sup> *Manus impositio ideo fit, ut per benedictionem advocatus invitetur Spiritus sanctus. (Elym. VI, 19, 54)*

<sup>95</sup> *Tunc enim ille Paracletus, post mundata et benedicta corpora, libens a Patre descendit, et quasi super baptismi aquam, tanquam super pristinam, sedem recognoscens, quiescit. Nam legitur quod in principio aquis superferebatur Spiritus sanctus. (Elym. VI, 19, 54)*

Spirit that transformed the disciples from fearful servants to trusty preachers of God’s word, fearlessly speaking of God’s great deeds.<sup>96</sup>

Hugh makes a direct link between Pentecost and Confirmation: just as Christ “our High Priest” pours out the fullness of the Holy Spirit on those first baptized and sanctified by the Spirit, in the same way the bishops (*ii qui praeeminent officio pontificali*) lay hands on those already regenerate in Baptism, and with prayer and consignation they anoint them with chrism. This imparts the Spirit – Hugh doesn’t suggest the Spirit is merely “invited” – of “wisdom and understanding, ...counsel and fortitude, ...knowledge and piety, ...[and] fear of the Lord,” the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>97</sup> Hugh notes that the sevenfold gifts are not given to those who have yet to be baptized, nor are they given by just anyone, but only to the baptized and by the hand of the bishop alone (*manu sola pontificis*), a fact he associates with the apostolic prerogative of imposing hands. Like Simon Magus (Acts 8), who met his downfall when he sought to purchase the power he saw the Apostles wield, Hugh says that those heretics are similarly lost who interrupt to object that it is empty and superfluous for Christ’s faithful to be confirmed by the bishop after having received holy Baptism.<sup>98</sup> Hugh explains that the usefulness of Confirmation lies not in purification from sin and in sanctification – which are accomplished through Baptism – but in the “divine and unsurpassable” sevenfold gifts. Their purpose is to protect “against the revival of the sinful flesh, against taking the world as an object of delight, and against Satan’s dreadful attacks.”<sup>99</sup> Thus those who are reborn in Christ through Baptism are dressed and armed (*munitus*) through Confirmation.

Hugh’s theology of Confirmation is grounded in Scripture and above all in the first disciples’ experience of the gift of the Holy Spirit, through the Church, after Christ’s ascension – an experience that Hugh describes in terms of the fortifying sevenfold gifts. He uses martial and

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<sup>96</sup> *...et qui arguentem extimuerat ancillam, mox in medium absque timore processerunt loquentes magnalia Dei, cum omni fiducia praedicantes verbum Dei.*

<sup>97</sup> R. Van Nieuwenhove maintains that this sevenfold list of gifts of the Holy Spirit, inspired by Isaiah 11:2, which was eventually a standard element in mediaeval and modern Roman Catholic discussions of Confirmation, first became a common trope through the influence of Gregory the Great (Van Nieuwenhove, 2012, p. 45, note 9). Even earlier, however, Irenaeus alluded to the sevenfold gifts as a manifestation of the Paraclete Spirit (*Against Heresies* III, 17, 3, in Irenaeus, 1885, p. 445): he does not refer to a distinct rite, but the context makes the remarks especially tantalizing for the reader who is looking for evidence of Confirmation in the early Fathers!

<sup>98</sup> *Perditus est itaque Simon Magus cum suis sequacibus, quia donum Dei possidere voluit, pecunia interveniente, ut quod emerat posset aliis vendere. Perdantur et isti qui nunc obloquantur haeretici, dicentes inane et superfluum esse, quod post perceptionem sacri baptismatis confirmantur ab episcopo fideles Christi.*

<sup>99</sup> *Datus est ibi Spiritus sanctus non ad emundationem peccatorum, et sanctificationem, quam in baptismo susceperant, sed ut contra rediiva carnis peccata, contra mundi hujus oblectamenta, contra Satanae dira certamina, acciperent divinam et insuperabilem gratiam septiformem sapientiae, intellectus, consilii, fortitudinis, scientiae, pietatis, timoris Domini.*

ascetical imagery, but it is secondary to the “pneumatic” and Pentecostal reading of Confirmation. Hugh frames Pentecost as an empowerment for witnessing; he is an advocate of the view that Confirmation provides strength for preaching (*robur ad praedicandum*) and strength for the interior struggle (the ascetical model of *robur ad pugnam*).

### **Alcuin (730 – 804)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *De Baptismi Caeremoniis ad Oduinum Presbyterum Epistola* [PL 101, 613-614].

Alcuin was a learned Benedictine monk and deacon from Northumbria who served as director of studies in Charlemagne’s court, drawing heavily on Isidore’s works. In his letter to Oduin, Alcuin describes the Christian initiatory ceremonies that he knew, beginning with the triple baptismal immersion and clothing in white garments, followed by anointing of the head with sacred chrism – the priestly and royal anointing that we have seen before.

Then the newly-initiated is “confirmed,” but in Alcuin’s usage this is accomplished by the body and blood of the Lord (*sic corpore et sanguine Dominico confirmatur*), that the initiate might be a member (*membrum*) of the one who died and rose for him. Last of all (*novissime*) the initiate receives, through an imposition of the high priest’s hands, the sevenfold grace of the Spirit, “that he might be strengthened by the Holy Spirit for preaching to others” (*ut roboretur per Spiritum sanctum ad praedicandum aliis*).<sup>100</sup> Alcuin echoes Isidore’s and Hugh’s language concerning the sevenfold gifts, as well as Faustus’ *robur* imagery, but Alcuin takes *robur* in a direction quite different from Faustus; Faustus envisioned an ascetical *robur ad pugnam* (though not exclusively this), while Alcuin envisions a *robur ad praedicandum*, an accent not found in Faustus. Faustus saw the need for strength with respect to the outside world, to be strong against its temptations; Alcuin also sees the need for strength with respect to the outside world, but he frames it in terms of the need to be strong in proclaiming Christ.

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<sup>100</sup> It would appear that Alcuin was thinking of an initiatory hand-laying that came after Eucharist, not before it as we would expect.

## **Leidrad of Lyons<sup>101</sup> (d. 817)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *De sacramento baptismi* 7 [PL 99, 864]

Leidrad, born in Nuremberg in Bavaria, was appointed to the see of Lyons by Charlemagne in 797 and busied himself with reforms in the diocese, especially with respect to the conduct of divine worship; he remained close to the emperor throughout his life (see de Jong, in Story, 2005 p. 103). Leidrad's remarks on Confirmation, though woven together in part from familiar phrases from Scripture and the Fathers, are particularly interesting. First, he posits both anointing and hand-laying as the typical means of conferring this rite. Like David, whom Leidrad says received the Holy Spirit by anointing, and like the ancient priests and kings of the Hebrew Scriptures, Christians believe that in the Church the Holy Spirit is given by anointing with chrism and the imposition of hands.<sup>102</sup> "Just as sins are remitted in Baptism," he continues, "in the same way the sanctification of the Spirit is conferred through anointing." Only the bishop may confer the Paraclete Spirit by signing the forehead – a fact established not only by the customs of the Church (*consuetudo ecclesiastica*) but by the precedent we find in the Samaritan incident related in Acts 8. Leidrad cites Acts not only to justify the episcopal prerogative, but to ground his reiteration of Augustine's claim that one cannot be properly said to "give" the Spirit. In Acts 8 we read that "Peter and John...came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit" (RSV), from which Leidrad concludes that "it is obvious that we can receive the Holy Spirit, but we cannot give him – [instead] we pray that the Lord might give him." Though this point was made before by Augustine and Isidore, Leidrad develops it further by basing it on a particular reading of Acts.

Leidrad also asks the most pertinent question of all for any theology of Confirmation: since there can be no sanctification or remission of sins in Baptism without the Holy Spirit, what is the need to lay hands further after Baptism (*cur necesse est postea fieri manuum impositionem*)? His answer is simple and clear, though rarely explicitly asserted in the long centuries of commentary on Confirmation from the patristic era to our own, and not without its own perplexities: "It must be understood that the Holy Spirit is given in many ways, not only through Baptism, but also after Baptism."<sup>103</sup> With this bold claim, this strong assertion of the possibility of multiple conferrals of the Spirit, Leidrad is free to reflect further on the manifold effects of the Holy Spirit

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<sup>101</sup> I have opted for the traditional English spelling "Lyons" throughout this work.

<sup>102</sup> ...sicut in Ecclesia credimus per chrismatis unctionem et manus impositionem dari Spiritum sanctum.

<sup>103</sup> Sed sciendum multis modis dari Spiritum sanctum, non solum in baptismo, sed etiam post baptismum.

in the lives of Christian disciples, or the sundry effects of his ostensible manifold bestowals. He writes that Christ breathed on the disciples after the Resurrection, and bid them “Receive the Holy Spirit” that they might forgive or retain the sins of others (John 20:22-23); that the Apostles received the Holy Spirit in order to have the various gifts of that same Spirit, namely, gifts of healing, works of power (*operationem virtutem – i.e., miracles*), prophecy, discernment of spirits, many kinds of languages and their interpretation<sup>104</sup> – to which our author adds “and not only these exalted gifts...but every good work” (*non solum autem ad haec sublimia dona percipienda, sed etiam ad omne opus bonum*). Leidrad ends these remarks by reinforcing his contention that Confirmation is both useful and distinct from Baptism, with a reference from Augustine<sup>105</sup>: “When children are exorcized, it is like when grain is ground into flour; when they are baptized, it is like when the flour is moistened; when they are chrismated, it like when the dough is baked.”<sup>106</sup> Calling this a “beautiful comparison”, Leidrad adds that when the neophytes are “baked with chrism” (*per chrisma coquantur*), they are “enlightened and confirmed by the grace of the Holy Spirit” (*sancti Spiritus gratia illustrentur et confirmentur*).

### **Amalarius of Metz (c. 780 – 850)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Liber officialis*, in *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia* (Hanssens, ed., 1949).

Amalarius, a student of Alcuin, was born in Metz in what is now France, was appointed archbishop of Trier in 811, and served temporarily as administrator of the diocese of Lyons during the exile of Leidrad’s successor Agobard. Amalarius cites the penitent thief of Luke 23:43, to whom Christ promised eternal life, as evidence that the episcopal imposition of hands is not necessary for salvation (Hanssens, 1949, p. 140); he cites Acts 10 to show that it is not necessary to receive the hand-laying even in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit. However, like Sicardus after him, he compares the respective destinies of one who dies without Confirmation and one who dies with it to the difference in brightness between stars:

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<sup>104</sup> These are of course the gifts enumerated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:9-10 as “manifestations” of the Spirit “for the common good” (*RSV*).

<sup>105</sup> As Mason notes (1893, p. 92) there are at least three places where Augustine uses this threefold image of grinding, moistening and baking: sermons 227, 229 and 271. (See, e.g., Muldowney, 1959, pp. 196, 201-202). I have not found any place where Augustine uses precisely the phrase attributed to him by Leidrad.

<sup>106</sup> *Nam quae sit differentia baptismi et chrismatis, beatus Augustinus exponit, dicens: “Quando exorcizantur infantes, velut frumentum moluntur; quando baptizantur, consperguntur; quando chrismantur, coquantur.”*

Is not that difference to be feared, between the one who dies without the imposition of hands and the one who dies having received it? Theirs is like the difference between the brightness of stars; for while (on account of their good works) they are not excluded from the Kingdom of God, still they will not have the place they would have enjoyed, had they received it. I do not deny that a person is able to receive the Holy Spirit without the imposition of hands if the Lord wills to give Him; but one who squanders the imposition of hands through negligence is clearly constrained by apostolic observance, by which the Apostles applied an imposition of hands, and by the present ecclesiastical practice [*cura*] (p. 144).<sup>107</sup>

Amalarius provides a kind of anthology of mediaeval views of Confirmation (with the notable exception of *robur*). Having addressed the problem of Confirmation's necessity, he considers its purpose. It is, as we have just seen, above all a gift of the Holy Spirit, but this gift imparts the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (pp. 144-147), serves as the wedding garment (p. 148), keeps away the destroying angel (p. 149) and makes the Christian more fit to be in God's presence (pp. 148-149). He urges bishops to be assiduous in confirming, and the faithful and pastors to be assiduous in seeking it, that all might be safely within the Lord's flock (p. 150). He does not devote any space to presenting the *robur* model, except insofar as it is implicit in his discussion of fortitude in the context of the sevenfold gifts. With his example of the stars, Amalarius is an early example of what I will call the "*augmentum*" model, the view that Confirmation's principal effect is to *increase* and *intensify* the graces of Baptism.

### **Rabanus Maurus (780 – 856)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *De clericorum institutione* 1:28-30 (Zimpel, 2006, v.1, pp. 196-212).

Rabanus, like Amalarius, was a pupil of Alcuin, and like Alcuin he was a scholar with very wide interests. An administrator as well as a scholar, this Mainz-born Benedictine monk served as abbot of Fulda and archbishop of Mainz. Rabanus' description of the initiatory rites associates the post-baptismal presbyteral chrismation with the descent of the Holy Spirit (in the form of a

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<sup>107</sup> *Timendum est ne illa differentia sit inter illum qui sine impositione manus moritur, et inter illum qui eam accipit, quae est inter stellarum claritudinem, hoc est, quamvis non excludantur a regno Dei propter cetera bona opera, tamen non habeant illum locum quam haberant, si illam acciperant. Non nego posse hominem accipere Spiritum Sanctum sine impositione manus, si eum Dominus dare voluerit, sed eum oppido constringit apostolica observatio, quam exercuerunt per manus impositionem, et cura praesens ecclesiastica, qui per negligentiam perdit manus impositionem.* I am indebted to Heugel (2003, pp. 179-180) for the reference to this passage from Amalarius. I have not used his translation, which contains some inaccuracies.

dove) on Jesus after his baptism, for by the chrismation the Holy Spirit confers heavenly grace (*confert fidelibus caelestis gratiae* – Zimpel, 2006, v.1, p. 200). This is distinct from the rite that comes later: the bishop (*summo sacerdote* – p. 202) bestows the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, by the imposition of hands, that the baptized “might be strengthened by the Holy Spirit for preaching to others” (*ut roboretur per Spiritum sanctum ad praedicandum aliis* – p. 204), that they might be consecrated as the dwelling-place of God, and that the “sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit” might be manifest in her (p. 204). Rabanus unpacks what this *robur ad praedicandum* means: it entails the capacity to proclaim the name of Christ with full voice, boldly and fearlessly. We can note in passing that Rabanus does not hesitate to say that the bishop gives the Holy Spirit outright; he does not proffer the caveat we have seen in Isidore and Leidrad, namely that we cannot give the Spirit but only pray that he might be given, a caveat that we will, in fact, seldom see again in the Middle Ages.

Rabanus addresses a concern that Leidrad had raised, and he develops it further: he sees the twofold chrismation after Baptism as an analogy for the twofold gift of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles.

It is not to be wondered at that a man should be chrismated twice for the receiving of the Holy Spirit, since in the same way the Spirit was given twice to the Apostles - namely, once on earth when the Lord breathed on them after the Resurrection, and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven, and retain, they are retained’; and another time from heaven, when after the Ascension on Pentecost day the Lord came on the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire.<sup>108</sup>

Whether he is struck by some similarity of appearance between a tongue of flame and a human hand, or perhaps is inspired by the use of hands and digits in post-baptismal anointing and hand-laying, Rabanus abruptly passes from Pentecost to describing the Holy Spirit as “the finger of God,” whose “writing is law” (*digito Dei scripta est lex* – p. 206) and who is called *digitus Dei* to signify that his works are the same as the Father and the Son (*ut eius operatoria virtus simul cum patre et filio significetur* – p. 206). “Just as in Baptism, we die and are reborn in Christ,” he concludes, “in the same way we are signed by the Holy Spirit who is the finger of God and a spiritual seal.” It is

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<sup>108</sup> *Nec mirum, si homo bis eodem chrismate ad accipiendum sanctum spiritum ungueatur cum idem spiritus bis sit ipsis apostolis datus, id est in terra semel, quando post resurrectionem suam dominus insufflavit in eos et dixit: “Accipite spiritum sanctum: quorum remiseritis peccata, remittuntur eis, et quorum retinueritis, retenta sunt”; et de caelis semel, quando post ascensionem domini in die pentecostes in linguis igneis super apostolos venit... (p. 204).*



suitable to confer this rite through anointing with olive oil, Rabanus argues, because of the oft-cited precedents of the Hebrew Scriptures (Moses and Aaron, the priests, Saul and David, Solomon and the other kings) but also because of the intrinsic qualities of oil: it gives light when burned, and heals when applied medicinally, and it restores clarity to turbulent water.

Rabanus' identification of the Holy Spirit as a spiritual seal in the context of a discussion of Confirmation foreshadows issues surrounding the sacramental character in centuries to come.

### **Bernold [Bernaldus] of Constance (c. 1054 – 1100)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *De excommunicatis vitandis, de reconciliatione lapsorum et de fontibus iuris ecclesiastici* (Bernold, 2000).

Bernold, born in Schaffhausen in what is now Switzerland, and in later life a Benedictine monk, is a valuable witness to evolving contemporary liturgical practices. He refers to the sacrament of Confirmation in remarks about the reconciliation of heretics and the lapsed. My translation of his remarks:

And indeed, as can be read in the Council of Laodicea, the Eastern Fathers established that not only Arians, but also Novatians, Thessaescaedecatitas[?], and Photinians should be received by anointing with chrism. Nevertheless many Westerns more suitably [*competentius*] receive heretics of this kind without anointing with chrism, lest the sacrament of confirmation seem to them to be repeated (as is the case with baptism which is received multiple times by heretics); the repetition of which sacrament, I say, we must avoid, just as with baptism. Thus blessed Pope Sylvester, with the bishops whom he had gathered together and established by his own authority at the Council of Arles, decreed that those converted from the Arians would not be baptized but would be received by the imposition of hands alone, as long as they had been baptized in the Trinity. The same Sylvester, presiding at the Nicene Council (not in body but by the authority of his legates), in like manner decreed that the Novatians should be received by the laying on of hands. Similarly with blessed Pope Innocent: "We receive the Arians," he says, "and others who have turned to the Lord away from the such pestilences, under the image of penitence and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit." Or again, Leo the Great, writing to Nicetas, bishop of Aquileia: "Those," he says, "who have received baptism from heretics, when they were not baptized previously, are to be confirmed solely by the laying on of the hands with invocation of the Holy Ghost, so that that which nobody accepts from heretics shall be provided by Catholic priests." It must be noted, however, that those [re-?]baptized by heretics are not to be received by the imposition of hands, nor those baptized by



Catholics who subsequently lapse into heresy. For as Blessed Pope Vigilius wrote to Bishop Eleutherius: “Those among the baptized who were re-baptized by Arians are to be reconciled, not by that imposition of hands which works by the invocation of the Holy Spirit, but by that imposition of hands whereby one acquires the fruits of penitence and by which one’s restoration to the communion of saints is achieved.” For in the ancient church-orders, different prayers were assigned to these different kinds of hand-laying. Now some of these are said over those baptized by heretics, asking that the Holy Spirit come down on them; but others are extended to apostates who return, that they may be seen to obtain the grace of reconciliation through their penance.<sup>109</sup>

Bernold seems to refer to two different kinds of hand-laying, one of them for the invocation of the Spirit, presumably part of the Confirmation rite, and another for reconciliation. Only the latter should be used when reconciling the apostates and the lapsed. He quotes Vigilius’ letter affirming that Catholics who had been re-baptized by Arians must not, upon their return, have hands laid on them with an invocation to the Spirit, but should only receive the hand-laying that restores communion with the saints; but a few sentences later he seems to say that those baptized by heretics (as distinct from the lapsed) *can* have hands laid on them with an invocation of Spirit, which contradicts the strict sense of his earlier terms where he cautions against a Spirit-invoking hand-laying for anyone being reconciled to the Church, unless we understand this to be a further reference to re-baptism.

Also pertinent for our enquiry is Bernold’s position that the sacrament of Confirmation administered by the heretics is adequate, and that no further Confirmation should be bestowed upon reconciliation lest the confirmand suppose that she is being confirmed twice. This raises a few questions: Does Bernold’s position contradict, as it would appear to, the present-day position

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<sup>109</sup> *Et orientales quidem patres non solum Arrianos sed etiam Novatianos, Tesserescedecitas et Fotinianos per crismatis unctionem recipiendos statuerunt, sicut in Laodicensi concilio legitur. Multo tamen competentiùs Occidentales huiusmodi hereticos absque crismatis unctione suscipiunt, ne sacramentum confirmationis iterasse videantur; quod illi cum ipso baptismo ab hereticis multociens acceperunt, cuius inquam sacramenti eque ut baptismi iterationem vitare debemus. Hinc beatus Silvester papa cum episcopis Arelatensis concilii sua auctoritate congregati et confirmati decrevit, ut conversi ex Arrianis, si in trinitate baptizati essent, per solam manus impositionem reciperentur, sin autem baptizarentur. Idem quoque in Niceno concilio si non corpore, tamen auctoritate per legatos suos praesidens Novatianos itidem per manus impositionem decrevit recipiendos. Item beatus Innocentius papa: Arrianos, inquit, ceterasque huiusmodi pestes conversos ad Dominum sub imagine penitentiae et spiritus sancti sanctificatione suscipimus. Item Leo magnus scribens Nicetae Aquileiensi episcopo: Hi, inquit, qui baptismum ab hereticis acceperunt, cum baptizati ante non fuissent, sola sancti spiritus invocatione per impositionem manus confirmandi sunt ut quod ab hereticis nemo accipit a catholicis sacerdotibus consequatur. Sciendum autem non per eandem manus impositionem suscipiendos eos, qui apud hereticos baptizati sunt et eos, qui in catholica baptizati postea in heresim prolapsi sunt. Unde beatus Vigilius papa scribens Euthero episcopo: [“]Eorum, inquit, qui baptizati iterum apud Arrianos baptizati sunt, reconciliatio fit non per illam manus impositionem, que per invocationem spiritus sancti operatur, sed per illam, qua penitentiae fructus acquiritur et sanctae communionis restitutio perficitur.[”] Unde et in antiquis libris diversae orationes ad huiusmodi manus impositiones distribuuntur. Nam quae super eos dicuntur, qui ab hereticis baptizati sunt, spiritum sanctum in eos venire petunt, quae autem apostatis redeuntibus impenduntur, gratiam tantum reconciliationis sub penitentia eis impetrare videntur. (Bernold, 2000, pp. 103-104).*

of the Roman Catholic Church (arising from its understanding of the sacrament of Orders) whereby the Confirmation of no other church save the Orthodox is considered valid? What are his grounds for accepting the Confirmation of the heretics? And why is it so important, as he insists, that Christians not be given the impression that they are being confirmed more than once? What value or good, for Bernold, is at stake in Confirmation that depends so much on its non-repeatability? This is a theme that we shall see over and over: mediaeval theologians are insistent that Confirmation must not be repeated, but they rarely offer a reason why this is the case. It is most often presented as a brute but indubitable fact: Confirmation is non-repeatable.

### **Ivo of Chartres (d. 1115)**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *Decretum* (part I) [PL 161, 120ff.]; *Panormia* (book I) [PL 161, 1069ff.].

Ivo was likely a native of Chartres, where he was elected bishop in 1090. Though a number of his sermons and letters are extant, Ivo was above all a canonist, his *Decretum* and *Panormia* being concerned with canonical decrees. They reveal a great deal about the way Confirmation was perceived and administered, though it was not within his purview in these works to develop much of a theology of Confirmation. Among other things, Ivo quotes canonical and conciliar sources to the effect that all the faithful ought to be urged to seek Confirmation (see chapters 253, 256, 259, and 260); that confirmandi should approach the rite having previously confessed and fasted (chapters 254 and 261); and that bishops should be the ones to confirm (a practice Ivo bases on the apostolic precedent in Acts 8 – an important early example of this thoroughly theological rationale for the episcopal prerogative), using consignation on the forehead (with chrism) and the imposition of hands, out in the countryside if necessary (chapters 257, 258, 262, and 263). Ivo goes so far as to say that if anyone but a bishop presumes to confirm, that gesture is empty and of no significance (*si alterum praesumptum fuerit, irritum habeatur et vacuum*) (chapter 115 of *Panormia*); in this respect, Ivo is in the mainstream of Latin writers of the Middle Ages – only gradually did the tradition concede formally that mere presbyters could confirm. In the *Decretum* Ivo mentions the effect of Confirmation in passing: in several places, the effect he posits is simply the “gift (*donum*) of the Holy Spirit” (see chapters 254, 258, and 260) or the

“handing on” of the Paraclete Spirit, as in chapter 263.<sup>110</sup> In chapter 260 he develops in Faustan language, with echoes of the letter of “Urban” found in the *False Decretals*, what this gift means:

We receive the Spirit that we might become spiritual persons, for ‘the unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God’ (I Cor. 2:14), for when the Holy Spirit is poured out, the faithful heart is enlarged in prudence and constancy. We receive the Holy Spirit that we might become wise, able to discern between good and evil, loving the right and rejecting the wrong; that we might repudiate envy and pride, and that we might resist wantonness, various enticements, and foul and unworthy desires. We receive the Holy Spirit that ardent love of eternal glory might be kindled, and that we might be able to raise our minds from earthly to divine and heavenly things.<sup>111</sup>

This ascetical *robur ad pugnam* vision of the Spirit’s work, with its emphasis on his transformation of the Christian’s mind and heart so as to allow her to see and judge and choose clearly, echoes Faustus almost *verbatim*, though the *Decretum* nowhere uses the word *robur* nor Faustus’ martial imagery. In *Panormia* (chapter 118), Ivo does use *robur* – “the Paraclete is transmitted to the baptized by the bishop’s hand-laying, that he might be *strengthened* by the Holy Spirit for preaching” – but his explicit, cited authority is Rabanus, not “Melchiades.”<sup>112</sup>

One new development in Ivo’s presentation of Confirmation is his overt consideration (and rejection) of the possibility of multiple Confirmations. Citing the phenomenon of the faithful

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<sup>110</sup> In chapter 259, he states that through chrismation one becomes part of Christ’s kingdom (*regni Christi participes inveniri*), but this appears to be a reference to the post-baptismal presbyteral anointing. Priests can and must anoint the baptized, but only the bishop anoints the forehead *traditur Paracletum*, as Ivo affirms in several places both in his *Decretum* and his *Panormia*

<sup>111</sup> *De Spiritu accipimus, ut spirituales efficiamur, quia animalis homo non percipit quae sunt Spiritus sancti Dei* (I Cor. II), *quia cum Spiritus sanctus infunditur, cor fidele ad prudentiam et constantiam dilatatur. De Spiritu sancto accipimus, ut sapiamus, inter bonum et malum discernere, justa diligere, injusta respicere, ut invidiae ac superbiae repugnemus, ut luxuriae ac diversis illecebris et foedis indignisque cupiditatibus resistamus. De Spiritu sancto accipimus, ut amore aeternae gloriae et ardore succensi, erigere a terrenis mentem ad superna et divina valeamus.*

<sup>112</sup> At this point I must clarify how I shall refer to the cast of characters appearing in the drama of the Pseudo-Isidorean *Decretals*. Unbeknownst to those mediaevals who referred to the *Decretals*, the author of the texts that the *Decretals* attribute to Pope Melchiades was most likely Faustus; however, it is largely the ostensible papal authority of Melchiades that lent Faustus’ words credibility and influence, and in any case those who cited his words believed in good faith that Melchiades was indeed the author. For these reasons I consider it preferable to refer to Melchiades rather than Faustus when discussing the mediaeval use of the *Decretals*. However, quite apart from the fact that “Melchiades” is a garbling of “Miltiades”, the historical personage sometimes referred to as Melchiades certainly did not write the words attributed to him in the *Decretals*, and consequently I am reluctant to ascribe them to Melchiades *tout court*. In this dissertation I have opted to use the word “Melchiades” between inverted commas, whenever I mean to refer to texts from the *Decretals* that are of Faustan provenance, but were believed for a long time to be from the Roman Pontiff Miltiades *dit* Melchiades (cf. note 3 on p. 4, *supra*).

being confirmed twice, or thrice, or more frequently, he objects (like Bernold) that it must not be repeated. As O’Doherty remarks (1949, p. 5) Ivo does not provide any reason for this unrepeatability, but he is emphatic that it is unrepeatable – a hint of many discussions of sacramental character to come.

Another feature of Ivo’s remarks concerning Confirmation, one that we shall find repeated throughout the mediaeval period, is his question in chapter 255 of the *Decretum: utrum majus sit sacramentum manus impositionis episcoporum, aut baptismus*, whether Confirmation is a “greater” sacrament than baptism. (His reply is that they are closely joined: one sacrament saves one from death, while the other “perfects”). This too echoes Faustus’ treatment.

### **Anselm of Laon (c. 1050 – 1117)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Sententie divine pagine* and *Sententie Anselmi*, in F.P. Bliemetzrieder, ed., *Anselms von Laon systematische sentenzen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1919).

The only reference to Confirmation in Bliemetzrieder’s version of *Sententie divine pagine* is incomplete and provides no useful insight; the reference in *Sententie Anselmi* is exceedingly brief and is not much more helpful but it does feature enigmatic language about Confirmation. In the latter text we read, at the end of a detailed discussion of Baptism, that the anointing of the forehead in the shape of a cross is the fourth baptismal anointing, after anointings of the breast, shoulders and crown of the head (*pectore...scapulis...capite*). This fourth signing with a cross is administered “that [the neophyte] not blush either to do or to suffer, which is perfect charity” (*ut non erubescat tam facere quam pati, quod est caritatis perfecte*, Bliemetzrieder, 1919, p. 114) and it “pertains” (*pertinet*) to the *sacramentum confirmationis* (p. 115). This is followed by lengthy discussions of Penance and Marriage, but there is no further discussion of Confirmation’s form or effect or even a clear explanation of whether the fourth baptismal signing is itself considered by the author to be Confirmation, or if it merely foreshadows it. If it is the former, Anselm seems to relegate Confirmation to a supporting role in the baptismal rite.

### **Bruno of Segni (1047 – 1123)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Tractatus de sacramentis ecclesiae* [PL 165, 1089].

Bruno was a Benedictine monk who served as bishop of Segni in Latium and abbot of Monte Cassino. He describes Confirmation as the sacrament “in which the entire fullness of the mysteries of the Christian religion is fulfilled” (*in qua totius Christianorum religionis mysterii plenitudo completur*). In Confirmation, the Spirit is invited to come and make his home in the soul which he has sanctified, rendering it worthy of being defended and inhabited.<sup>113</sup> Bruno affirms that the Apostles received the Spirit in Baptism, for the forgiveness of sins, for “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5, *RSV*); that they received the Spirit again when the Lord breathed on them (John 20:22) and empowered them to forgive and retain sins; and they received the Spirit yet again on Pentecost, “for the perfection of all virtue and knowledge” (*ad totius virtutis et scientiae perfectionem*). The forehead is consigned with chrism so that the name of Christ might be known openly and publicly, which Bruno sees prefigured in *Revelation*: “Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads” (*Revelation* 14:1, *RSV*). To stand on the Mount with the Lamb, Bruno concludes, is to be perfect; but until they were “anointed”, even the Apostles were not yet upright, not yet perfect, but rather fearful and not yet able to bear openly the name of Christ.<sup>114</sup> For Bruno, then, the Spirit may be received multiple times, and the gift of the Spirit in Confirmation specifically is for the perfection of virtue and knowledge, especially the gift of being able to witness openly to Christ. Bruno’s models are *augmentum* and *robur ad praedicandum*.

Bruno’s language was closely echoed by Geoffrey (Goffridus) of Vendôme (d. 1132) – another Benedictine monk, abbot of Sainte-Trinité monastery in Vendôme, and eventually a cardinal – in his *Opuscula* (8-9) [*PL* 157, 226].

### **Otto of Bamberg (1060/1 – 1139)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Sermo ad Pomeranos* [*PL* 173, 1358].

Otto, chancellor to Henry IV and bishop of Bamberg, is best known for his missionary work in Pomerania, north of the Baltic Sea. In his brief description of the sacrament, Otto offers the pastoral opinion that the faithful should not put off Confirmation (namely, “anointing with chrism on the forehead” – no mention of hand-laying) until old age, since adolescents are more

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<sup>113</sup> *Hic autem ipse Spiritus invitatur ut veniat, et domum ipsam quam sanctificavit, defendere et habitare dignetur.*

<sup>114</sup> *Stare enim, et in monte stare, et cum agno stare perfectorum est. Ipsi enim apostoli, antequam ungerentur, nondum stabant, nondum perfecti erant, adhuc timebant et nondum Christi nomen in fronte gerebant.*

liable to temptation. Otto is confronting a pastoral challenge similar to the one that had previously obtained with respect to Baptism; namely, the tendency of the faithful in an earlier age to put off Baptism until the last possible moment. As one would expect from this warning, he describes its effect on the recipient as an ascetical *robur ad pugnam*, as being fortified with the strengthening of the Holy Spirit, to be armed against all the temptations and wickedness one will have to fight.<sup>115</sup>

### **Honorius of Autun [Augustodunensis] (d. c. 1157)**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *Gemma Animae* (3, 114) [PL 172, 673-674]; *Sacramentarium* (12) [PL 172, 750-752].

Honorius – the name may be a pseudonym – was a prolific scholar with polyvalent interests. In *Gemma Animae*, he writes (chapter 113) that the baptized are signed on the forehead with chrism by the bishop, so as to be “confirmed for the kingdom of God by the sevenfold<sup>116</sup> Spirit” (*per hoc per septiformem spiritum ad regnum Dei confirmantur*). This is familiar enough to us by now, though it is less usual to read a description of the Spirit himself (rather than his gifts) as sevenfold. However, Honorius goes on to offer a new perspective on Confirmation’s effect: he writes that the Confirmation anointing is the wedding garment (*nuptialis vestis*), a reference to Jesus’ parable of the wedding feast in the Gospel of Matthew (see Appendix I). This novelty is striking; the only precedent in earlier theologies of Confirmation is in Amalarius, and it seems to suggest that Confirmation is a necessary sacrament for salvation – a quality normally attributed only to Baptism. This impression is corrected in Honorius’ *Sacramentarium*, however, which also presents an unusually rich interpretation of Confirmation that I shall quote integrally:

If one dies without confirmation, one may still be saved, but without the fullness of grace, that is to say the wedding garment, for by the imposition of hands the bishop confers the Holy Spirit. Through the oil comes virtuous speech, through the balsam sacred doctrine is understood; wisdom concerns life, and knowledge pertains to teaching. Anointing with chrism is relevant to two gifts of the Holy Spirit, namely wisdom and knowledge. Oil pertains to wisdom, balsam (which scatters its fragrance far and wide) pertains to knowledge. These two things, namely doctrine, and the living of it [*operatio*], are among the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Wisdom concerns life, understanding

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<sup>115</sup> ...ut Spiritus sancti corroboracione muniantur, si armentur contra omnes tentaciones et nequitas vitae pugnaturi.

<sup>116</sup> I will be translating the recurring adjective “septiformis” as “sevenfold” throughout this chapter; it is the word G. Silano uses in his translation of Lombard (2010).



concerns doctrine, counsel concerns doctrine, fortitude concerns life, knowledge concerns doctrine, piety concerns life, and fear [of the Lord] concerns both. These are the clothes which the Lord confers on our souls [*menti*] through the imposition of the bishop's hands; without which it is perilous for anyone to enter the king's banquet. It is only permissible for bishops [*pontificibus*] to do this, like the Apostles. Without this sign it is not fitting to present ourselves before God; when the destroyer sees this sign on our foreheads he passes over our homes, for we are not our own, but his whose sign we bear.<sup>117</sup> There is no better place for his cross to be affixed than that place where the high priest affixed the gold leaf engraved with God's ineffable name.<sup>118</sup> This cross is made with the chrism composed of oil and balsam. Through the oil the brightness of charity is obtained, through balsam the fragrance of a good reputation.<sup>119</sup>

Honorius refrains from positing a necessity of receiving Confirmation: one can still be saved without it, and he says only that it is not "fitting" to appear before God without this wedding garment, not that it is impossible. The destroying angel passes over the homes of those with this mark on their foreheads, but Honorius does not state that destruction is the necessary lot of those without it. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit confer a grasp of wholesome doctrine and a wholesome living of that doctrine, and thus fulfill the particular gifts of wisdom and knowledge granted by the oil and balsam. (Honorius seems to conflate hand-laying and chrismation as if they were a single gesture – a conflation that is frequently encountered over the years in treatments of the liturgy of Confirmation, and in efforts to synthesize the primitive hand-laying rite with the subsequent rite of chrismation, *e.g.* by Bellarmine or even Paul VI.) In Honorius' account, Baptism bestows life, while Confirmation aids in the proficiency that develops that life, specifically

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<sup>117</sup> See Exodus 12:12-13 and Ezekiel 9:4-6; the references to the forehead strongly suggests that the author has Ezekiel in mind, but the sparing of homes evokes the Passover in Exodus

<sup>118</sup> See Barker (2003, p. 47): "...the high priest wore the sacred name *yhwh* on his forehead when he was officiating in the temple. This is obscured in the canonical texts, but is quite clear in Philo, who says the high priest wore a golden plate showing a name that only the purified may speak, and 'that Name has four letters'; and in the *Letter of Aristeas*, which reads 'On the front of the hallowed diadem...in holy letters on a leaf of gold [the high priest] wears the name of God'."

<sup>119</sup> *Si sine confirmatione moritur, salvabitur quidem; sed plenam gratiam non consequitur, episcopus per impositionem manus dat Spiritum sanctum, id est nuptialem vestem. Per oleum recta conversatio, per balsamum sancta intelligitur doctrina; sapientia ad vitam, scientia pertinet ad doctrinam. Chrismalis unctio pertinet ad duo dona Spiritus sancti, ad sapientiam scilicet et scientiam. Oleum ad sapientiam, balsamum odorem suum longe lateque spargens ad scientiam pertinet. Haec duo, id est doctrina et operatio sunt in septem donis Spiritus sancti. Sapientia ad vitam, intellectus ad doctrinam, consilium ad doctrinam, fortitudo ad vitam, scientia ad doctrinam, pietas ad vitam, timor ad utrumque. Haec sunt ornamenta vestis quae tribuit Deus menti nostrae per impositionem manus episcopi; sine quibus periculosum est aliquem inveniri in convivio regis. Hoc solis pontificibus licet sicut apostolis. Sine isto signaculo non oportet nos praesentari ante Deum: quod signum videns exterminator in frontibus nostris transit domos nostras, quia non sui sumus, sed ejus, cujus signum portamus. Ipsa crux nullo in loco figitur melius, quam in eo, ubi summus pontifex laminam auream, in qua sculptum erat nomen Dei ineffabile, figebat. Crux cum chrismate fit quod conficitur ex oleo et balsamo. Per oleum nitor charitatis, per balsamum odor bonae notitiae acquiritur.*

by enlightening the mind (through *doctrina*) and guiding the will (through *operatio*). Honorius' description does not use the phrase *robur*, and though it echoes Faustus' attention to the mind's place in the pursuit of holiness, it cannot be read as beholden to "Melchiades" or even influenced by him.

Amalarius and Honorius, and later Praepositinus – the three mediaeval authors who use nuptial language and imagery for Confirmation – are also the three who refer to Confirmation as the mark that fends off the destroying angel. We must presume some dependency of the latter two authors on Amalarius, or perhaps a shared dependency by all three on an earlier author whom I have not yet identified.

### **Robert Pullen [Pulleyn, Paululus, Pullus] (c. 1080 – 1146)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Sententiarum Libri Octo* (5, 22-23) [PL 186, 847].

Robert was an Englishman who taught in both Oxford and Paris and eventually became chancellor to the papal curia in Rome. Robert notes in chapter 22 of his *Sententiarum Libri Octo* – of the many works attributed to him, one of the few to have survived – that Baptism is strictly necessary, that without it children cannot be saved, so much so that nobody can be forbidden to baptize in case of necessity; whereas it is possible for a child to remain unconfirmed without imperiling his salvation (*quippe quo carere possunt absque periculo salutis*). Nonetheless, he continues, Confirmation not only forgives sins but it confirms in goodness, and like an athlete's training, it arms against wickedness; thus children ought to be confirmed to allow their future endeavours to be as great as possible. Citing the Gospel of Mark, Robert argues that the Church says with respect to Confirmation what Jesus said about the children brought to him for a blessing<sup>120</sup>: "Let the children come to me."

In chapter 23, Robert concludes that Confirmation is worthier (*dignior*) than Baptism just as an athlete, one who is trained and in the pink of health, is worthier than one who has merely been cured from a lethal sickness: the one heals, whereas the other fosters health (*hoc namque sanat, illud sanatum vegetat*). He maintains that only bishops can confirm (which they do by imposition of hands) just as was the case in the time of the Apostles. He further offers the observation that,

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<sup>120</sup> "And they were bringing children to him, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, 'Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.' And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them" (Mark 10:13-16, *RSV*).



when it comes to the sacraments, the more difficult it is to procure, the worthier it is but the less necessary it is (*magis est dignum minusque necessarium*); whereas those which can be obtained with the least difficulty are those which are the most necessary to obtain.<sup>121</sup>

### **Hugh of St. Victor (1096? – 1141)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Hugonis de Sancto Victore: De sacramentis Christiane fidei* (ed. Rainer Berndt, Münster: Aschendorff, 2008), book 2, part VII.

Hugh, likely born and educated in Saxony, became an Augustinian canon at the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris. Book 2, part 7 of his *De sacramentis* is devoted to Confirmation. Chapter 1 briefly covers many familiar themes related to chrismation: the royal and priestly significance of anointing in the Hebrew Scriptures and the use of that trope in the Greek Testament<sup>122</sup>; the etymology of the name “Christ”; and the composition of chrism, *viz.* oil and balsam, designating respectively the infusion of grace and the odour of good reputation. In chapter 2 he explains that Confirmation (*confirmatio*) is the name used to denote the imposition of hands with consignation of the forehead and anointing with chrism. Only bishops confer Confirmation, he explains, on account of the sacrament’s Pentecostal significance:

Only bishops, the representatives (*uicariis*) of the Apostles, ought to sign the Christian and hand on the Paraclete Spirit; just as it is read that in the primitive Church only the Apostles were able to impose hands to confer the Holy Spirit.<sup>123</sup>

In chapter 3, Hugh alludes to the effect of Confirmation:

Just as in Baptism one receives the remission of sins, similarly by the imposition of hands the Paraclete Spirit is given; in the one case grace is allotted for the remission of sins, in the other case grace is given by way of confirmation. For what good is it to rise from a fall, if you are not made strong enough to stand?<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> This taxonomy would logically require one to conclude that the Eucharist is less “worthy” than Confirmation, on Robert’s terms. This is a conclusion that I do not think he would have embraced.

<sup>122</sup> Notably in 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...” (*RSV*).

<sup>123</sup> ... *solis episcopis apostolorum uicariis debetur ut christianum consignent et spiritum paraclitum tradant. Sicut in primitiua ecclesia spiritum sanctum per impositionem manuum dandi soli apostoli potestatem habuisse leguntur* (Berndt, 2008, p. 397).

<sup>124</sup> *Quia sicut in baptismo remissio peccatorum accipitur, ita per manus impositionem spiritus paraclitus datur. Illic gratia tribuitur ad peccatorum remissionem, hic gratia datur ad confirmationem. Quid autem prodest si a lapsu erigeris, nisi etiam ad standum confirmeris?* (p. 398).

In chapter 6 Hugh makes further remarks, in passing, about the effect of Confirmation, as he addresses the question of when it should be conferred: he says it should be the “seventh day,” when the Church celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. The seventh day is also fitting, he writes, because there are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>125</sup> Hugh does not make the distinction other authors have made between “giving the Spirit” and “asking that he might be given”; Hugh’s language, if anything, states rather emphatically that the Spirit is *given, handed on* in Confirmation, and not merely prayed for. His vision of Confirmation suggests that the advent of the Holy Spirit imparts some kind of *robur* – a *confirmatio ad standum* – but he neither uses the word *robur* nor does he frame it explicitly as a gift *ad pugnam* or *ad praedicandum*. His *confirmatio* suggests, instead, the image of growth with respect to birth, of maturity with respect to infancy, of development of the life conferred earlier – a maturity that enables one to persevere.

The last point to note about Hugh’s account is that, like Ivo and Bernold, he affirms explicitly in chapter 5 that it makes no sense to repeat it (*ut nulla ratione iteretur*) any more than it would to repeat Baptism, and that if it should happen to occur, such attempts to repeat it must be punished with harsh penalties (*si forte factum fuerit gravi est penitentia plectendum*). Thus, for Hugh, Confirmation is unrepeatable in the same way that Baptism is, though – again like Bernold and Ivo – he does not explain why this should be the case.

### ***School of Magister Simon (c. 1145 – 1160)***

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *Tractatus Magistri Simonis de Sacramentis* and *Tractatus de Septem Sacramentis Ecclesie* in *Maître Simon et son groupe – De Sacramentis* (ed. H. Weisweiler, Louvain, 1937).

In 1937 H. Weisweiler published a critical edition of *Tractatus Magistri Simonis de Sacramentis (De sacr.)* and *Tractatus de Septem Sacramentis Ecclesie (Sept sacr.)* that he dated to the middle of the twelfth century. In *De sacr.* Confirmation is called *inpositione manuum [sic]*; the author affirms that Christ himself instituted it and that it amplifies the effects of Baptism, specifically the effect of being armed by the Holy Spirit to combat spiritual wickedness: *augmentum* and the ascetical *robur ad pugnam*. We are signed on the brow, the most manifest part of the body (as a number of theologians of Confirmation in the period were fond of saying), like soldiers openly bearing the flag of their king, to fight for Christ our king without fear or shame – the military *robur ad*

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<sup>125</sup> As Hugh adds in a poetical vein, “the Holy Spirit visits his host with seven guests.”

*pugnam*.<sup>126</sup> *De sacr.* clearly affirms *robur ad pugnam* as the chief effect of Confirmation, but it is as much a fearless combat in the world – presumably against those seen as enemies of Christ and his church – as it is an ascetical combat against interior faults and temptations. This version of both kinds of *robur ad pugnam* may not be so different from *robur ad praedicandum*, where the goal is to proclaim Christ, to witness to him openly: whether one speaks of “preaching”, or of “fighting” without fear or shame, the strength sought is the same: to be confident, transparent and bold as a follower of Christ even in the face of mockery, hatred or persecution.

The treatment of Confirmation – again called “the imposition of hands” – in *Sept. sacr.* is quite detailed for such a concise text. It uses “sacrament of pugnacity” (*sacramentum pugnancium* [*sic*] – Weisweiller, 1937, p. 88) as synonym for sacrament of imposition of hands, and employs the very curious matchmaker/bridegroom analogy to explain the episcopal prerogative of confirming: *a paranimpho enim, scilicet a sacerdote, nunciatur Ecclesia, in baptismo videlicet; a vero sponso consumatur in manuum impositione* (all *sic*, p. 88) – the priest merely introduces the new Christian into the Church, whereas the bishop, like a bridegroom, “consummates”. Its effect is to prepare the recipient to fight against interior foes (*ad pugnam contra hostem interiorem preparemur*, p. 88) and it confirms (*confirmaretur*) the baptismal routing of the diabolical foe (p. 89).

### ***School of Gilbert of Porrée***

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Sententiae Divinitatis* in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters* (Bernhard Geyer (ed.), Aschendorff: Münster, 1909), pp. 126-128.

The description of Confirmation in *Sententiae Divinitatis* (*SD*), which Geyer dates to around 1146-1147, is very similar to that found in *Tractatus de Septem Sacramentis Ecclesie* (Weisweiller, 1937). *SD* calls the sacrament “Confirmation” in contrast to the expression “imposition of hands” used in *Sept. Sacr.* *SD* affirms that where Baptism supplies the arms with which we might resist the devil, Confirmation gives us the wherewithal to actively go out to meet the devil and fight him (*in sacramento enim baptismi dantur arma quibus diabolo resistamus, in isto dantur quibus ei obviamus et contra ipsum viriliter pugnemus* – Geyer, 1909, p. 126). This is one of the first clear examples of a military *robur ad pugnam* model of Confirmation, one that posits strength to fight an external foe – in this case, the devil. As we shall see, other authors who embrace the military *robur ad pugnam* identify various opponents of Christ as the adversary to be withstood.

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<sup>126</sup> ...*ut vexillo nostri regis evidenter insigniti hostem malignum impugnare et eodem rege nostro Christo auxiliante expugnare nec erubescamus nec paveamus* (Weisweiller, 1937, p. 18).

Another remarkable feature of this Gilbertian text is a particular image used to illustrate the common trope of Confirmation's "dignity": Baptism is more necessary (*magis necessaria*) than Confirmation but Confirmation is worthier (*dignior*), just as active life is more necessary than contemplative life, but the latter is worthier – a sentiment which the author of *SD* ascribes to Jesus on the strength of his words to Martha and Mary in Luke 10.<sup>127</sup>

### **Peter Lombard (c. 1100 – 1160)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Sententiarum* (book IV, *distinctio* vii) [*PL* 192, 855-6].

Jean Longère informs us ("Peter Lombard," in Vauchez, 2002) that Peter, from Lombardy in the north of what is now Italy,

followed the lectures of Otto at Lucca. He frequented the cathedral school of Reims, where he consulted and copied Anselm of Laon's *Glossa ordinaria et interlinearis* and Gilbert of Poitiers's *Glossa media* on the Psalms. Accepted at Saint-Victor in Paris on the recommendation of St Bernard, he followed the courses of Hugh of Saint-Victor.

Lombard's treatment of Confirmation in his watershed *Sentences* is very brief, consisting of five short chapters. The first specifies the form of Confirmation, "namely the words which the bishop says when he signs the baptized on their brows with the sacred chrism" (English translation by G. Silano, 2010, p. 39), though he does not provide the words. The second chapter indicates that in apostolic times, only the Apostles conferred this sacrament, and that therefore in our times only the "highest priests" (p. 39) may do, namely the bishops. Lombard's third chapter explains that the "power of this sacrament is the giving of the Holy Spirit for strengthening" and is given so as to create "full Christians" (pp. 39-40). Chapter 4 raises the curious question that will consequently occupy some of the attention of many later writers, and that we have seen already raised by Robert Pullen and the school of Gilbert of Porrée: namely, whether Confirmation is "more worthy than baptism" (p. 40). Lombard answers that it does indeed seem to be worthier, in

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<sup>127</sup> "Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:39-42, *RSV*).

part because through Confirmation the Holy Spirit's "sevenfold grace" comes into the confirmand "with every fullness of holiness and virtue." Finally, in chapter five, Lombard affirms that (like Baptism and Orders) Confirmation may not be repeated. While he says that to attempt to repeat it is an "injury," he too refrains from explaining why this is the case.

### ***Texts from the school of Abelard***

In 1934 Arthur Landgraf published two texts that he identified with the school of Peter Abelard, namely the *Sententiae Parisienses* (Landgraf's title), which he dates to between 1139 and 1141, and *Ysagoge in Theologiam*, which he dates to between 1148 and 1152 (Landgraf, 1934, pp. xiii-liv). Both treat briefly of Confirmation. The *Sententiae Parisienses* explains that the sacrament is called Confirmation "because in it the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are confirmed and strengthened, that they might be able to resist every single vice" (*quia in eo confirmantur et corroborantur septem donis Spiritus Sancti, ut valeant singulis vitiis resistere* – Landgraf, 1934, p. 40). The brief treatment in *Ysagoge* is nonetheless rather comprehensive: in addition to quoting Rabanus' statements that Confirmation is for *robur ad praedicandum* and for the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit, this text also includes a novel comparison between the Israelites' travails in Exodus, and the rapport between Baptism and Confirmation. Just as the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea, but were not free of enemies in the desert and on the way (*in deserto et via hostes non defuerunt*), similarly Christians, though the devil be drowned by Baptism, must continue to resist the vices that stalk them through the wilderness of life (*sic merso in baptisate diabolo per huius vite desertum incedentibus vi[t]ia resistunt* – p. 196): a *robur ad pugnam* at once military and ascetical, with the devil identified as a source of the vices to be combated.

### **Peter Comestor [Petrus Comestor, Petrus Manducator, Pierre de Troyes] (d. 1178)**

Principal work(s) where Confirmation is discussed: *Historia Libri Actuum Apostolorum*, ch. 40 [PL 198, 1669-1670]; *Sententiae de Sacramentis* (ed. R.M. Martin), appendix to *Maître Simon et son groupe – De Sacramentis* (ed. H. Weisweiler, Louvain, 1937).

Peter, nicknamed the "eater" or "chewer" for the "voracious" reading (see Burrows, in Bjork, 2010) that resulted in his popular book offering a précis of salvation history, was born in Troyes and became a student of Peter Lombard. Chapter 40 of the Manducator's commentary on the Acts of the Apostles deals with apostolic hand-laying in Acts 8, and Simon Magus's efforts

to purchase the Apostles' power. The Troyen affirms the dependency of the rite of Confirmation on this apostolic hand-laying: "because the imposition of hands was reserved to the Apostles, for this reason nowadays it is reserved to their representatives (*vicariis*) only, that is to say the bishops, who lay hands and anoint (*liniunt*) the forehead by way of confirmation, whereby the Holy Spirit is given for strength (*robur*)."

In the *Sententiae de Sacramentis*, which R. M. Martin dates to between 1160 and 1170, Manducator quotes "Urban" and "Melchiades" concerning the obligatory nature and dignity of Confirmation; he explicitly cites Rabanus' martyrial description of its effects – *Paracletus datur baptizato ut roboretur per Spiritum Sanctum ad praedicandum aliis* – and he invokes Augustine to support the conclusion that it may not be repeated, though – like Bernold, Ivo, Hugh, and Lombard – he does not attempt to explain why this is so.

### ***Decretum Gratiani* (mid-12<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>128</sup>**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Decretum Gratiani* (IIIa, *De Consecratione, distinctio v*) in Richter (ed.), 1959.

This work is an anthology of pertinent comments from earlier authors, and as such it stands as a useful concise summary of the chief claims made about Confirmation to that point: Confirmation is administered only once (chapter 8 and 9), by a bishop (ch. 4), to a baptized person who has prepared by confession and fasting (ch. 6 and 7). Its effect is to give or hand on the Paraclete Spirit and the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit (ch. 2 and 5) in order that the faithful might become full Christians (*ut pleni Christiani inveniantur*), with hearts expanded for prudence and constancy (*cor fidele ad prudentiam et constantiam dilatatur*); just as, at the baptismal font, the Holy Spirit bestows fullness of innocence, in Confirmation he fulfills it by an increase of grace (*in confirmatione augmentum pr[a]estat ad gratiam*). By Confirmation we are confirmed for the fight (*confirmamur ad pugnam*) and strengthened (*roboramur*), equipped and trained like reserve forces for the struggles and battles of this world (*confirmatio armat et instruit ad agones mundi huius et pr[o]elia*

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<sup>128</sup> E. Finnegan (1970) provides a concise account of the evolution of Confirmation as recorded in canonical documents. His assessment of their content is rather damning. Referring to the evolution of Gratian's *Decretals*, Finnegan wrote: "Thus the most influential canonical collection of the Middle Ages had no less than six false decrees among the ten found here...It is obvious then which part of the patristic heritage was to be the foundation of medieval theology. None of the works listed here are earlier than the fifth century and behind the papal authority there is nothing other than a semi-pelagian homily. This then is the canonical heritage for the medieval theology of Confirmation" (Finnegan, 1970, p. 585). We have already seen, especially from Isidore, Ivo, Bruno, and Geoffrey, that this does not do justice to the originality, variety and thoughtfulness to be found in mediaeval accounts of Confirmation. This will only become clearer as our survey progresses.

*reservandos*). This account embraces all the major models we have seen so far: the sevenfold gift of the Spirit, *augmentum*, and the three kinds of *robur*.

### **Roland [Orlando] Bandinelli [Pope Alexander III] (1105 – 1181)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Sententiae Rolandi Bandinelli* (in Gietl, 1891, pp. 212-215)

Kelly and Walsh (2010) consider that it is “no longer thought likely” that Bandinelli is the author of the *Sententiae* that carry his name. The *Sententiae Rolandi* affirm that there are two confirmations, the first received on the crown of the head at baptism, the second on the forehead; thus the author is practically using “confirmation” as a synonym for chrismation, though in this place he is only concerned with asking when the second chrismation was instituted, and for what purpose. “Roland” states that it was instituted by the Apostles when they imposed hands on the baptized and invoked the Holy Spirit; one of its principal effects is that we might be stronger in our fight against the devil (*hoc autem efficit, quia in pugnam contra diabolum sumus for[t]iores*). To those who object that this cannot be the case, since a child has no need for such a gift, “Roland” replies that the grace of the Holy Spirit can nonetheless be received by a child and, once she reaches the age of discretion, it will serve to strengthen her in her fight against the devil.

Confirmation is conferred by bishops, “Roland” continues, though not (he clarifies) on account of the fallacious rationale that Confirmation is nobler than Baptism: he testifies that in fact, priests may confirm in case of necessity (*in canonibus inveniatur, quod absente episcopo imminente necessitate, et eo presente et precipiente presb[y]ter potest signare infantes*) and that in the early Church (*primitiva ecclesia*), though no longer today, priests were able to confirm on account of the scarcity of bishops. Since priests can confirm in case of necessity, it must be that “Roland” saw the episcopal prerogative to confirm as a pastoral and pedagogical preference, not a theological necessity; the prerogative must arise from the view that it is suitable for bishops to confirm, rather than from the inability of a simple priest to confirm. Unfortunately, “Roland” does not develop on what this suitability consists of, but it is instructive that he does not tie a priest’s ability to confirm to some formal mandate from the Pope: for Roland, at least, the priestly ability to confirm is exceptional, but is not a kind of temporary episcopal ordination of a presbyter. Rather, it is a power always present but not “fittingly” used except where no other recourse exists.



### **Gandulph of Bologna (fl. c. 1185)**

Principal work(s) where Confirmation is discussed: *Sententiarum libri quatuor*, in de Walter (1924).

The Confirmation doctrine of Gandulph, a pupil of Hugh of St. Victor, is a *catena* of earlier texts. He begins his discussion of Confirmation with the words attributed to “Urban” in the Pseudo-Isidorean *Decretals*, affirming that all the faithful are to receive the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, that they might become full Christians and that their hearts might be enlarged unto prudence and constancy (de Walter, 1924, p. 430), followed by the teaching of “Melchiades” that Confirmation is for an *augmentum ad gratiam* and strengthening *ad pugnam* for the Christian who walks among the *invisibiles hostes* (p. 431). From words attributed to Pseudo-Eusebius, Rabanus, and Stephen, and to councils ostensibly held in Orléans, Tarragona, and Carthage, Gandulph derives the matter, minister (the bishop, in the place of the Apostles), and disposition of the recipient of Confirmation (pp. 432-434).

### **Alan of Lille (1128 – 1203)**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *Contra Haereticos* (1, 66) [PL 210, 369]; *Theologiae Regulae*, reg. CXI and CXIII [PL 210, 680]

Alan was a French Cistercian monk of whom Frassetto remarks that “he came to be known as the *Doctor universalis* because of the range of his learning” (see “Alan of Lille” in Bjork, 2010). Alan’s interpretation of Confirmation in *Contra Haereticos* emerges from his rebuttal of those whom he styles heretics, who diminish (*derogant*) certain sacraments (*sacramentis*), such as Confirmation, Orders and Extreme Unction. These *haeretici* claim that Confirmation has no power (*virtutem*), since nowhere do we read in the Gospels or the rest of the New Testament that Christ or his disciples instituted it.

Alan replies that when Christ breathed upon his disciples (John 20) he conferred on them the Holy Spirit *ad robur* and thereby paved the way (*insinuavit*) for the sacrament of Confirmation. Whatever the benefit (*virtus*) was that the Apostles bestowed by the imposition of hands, is bestowed on the faithful by Confirmation; Alan reiterates a few lines down that the *virtus* conferred is the gift of the Holy Spirit for strength (*donatio Spiritus sancti ad robur*). In his *Theologiae Regulae*, he explains, in a new image, at least one manifestation of this *robur*: Confirmation is the sacrament of hope (as Baptism is of faith, and the Eucharist of charity) because “one who has



been confirmed by the bishop's hands will no longer be shaken from faith by the seduction of heretics."<sup>129</sup> Only the bishops, who are representatives of the Apostles (*apostolorum vicariis*), can confer the sacrament; if anyone else attempts to confer it, it is *irritum habetur et vacuum*, empty and of no significance. He warns that no one who is of age (*adultus et discretus*) can abstain from the sacrament of Confirmation without danger. Finally, Alan joins the growing chorus of mediaeval voices who affirm that Confirmation may not be repeated; his only justification is that it is of such great dignity (*tantae est dignitatis*) that it cannot be repeated. This is an unsatisfactory explanation, since it is a *non sequitur* (why should great dignity imply unrepeatability?) and is contradicted by the powerful counterexample of the eminently repeatable and eminently worthy Eucharist.

### **Pope Innocent III (1160 – 1204)**

*Letter Cum venisset to Archbishop Basil of Tarnovo*, February 25, 1204 (Denzinger, 2012, para. 785, p. 260).

Innocent posits an equivalency between three rites: imposition of hands, anointing of the forehead, and the rite called "Confirmation." All three of these, as the latter name implies, refer to the rite by which "the Holy Spirit is given for increase and strength" – *augmentum*, and *robur* without further detail. Innocent specifies that only bishops should confer this rite because only the Apostles, "whose vicars the bishops are," laid hands for the giving of the Spirit.

### **Odo of Soliaco [Odo of Sully, Eudes de Sully](d. 1208)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Synodicae Constitutiones* (4, 5) [PL 212, 59].

Odo, bishop of Paris from 1196 to 1208, offers five points to summarize the Church's practice of Confirmation: Priests should frequently admonish (*moneant*) the people to have their children confirmed; Confirmation ought to be received after Baptism (it is not entirely clear if the obligation Odo is concerned with is that of receiving Confirmation *tout court*, or that of receiving only after Baptism, though the former seems the more probable); if an adult is confirmed, he should first be shriven (*confiteatur prius*); the laity should be reminded often that they need not wait for the bishop's visit to have their children confirmed, but may bring their children to the bishop, and (in a different vein) they may change the child's name at Confirmation if it seems

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<sup>129</sup> *Confirmatio autem dicitur sacramentum spei, quoniam ideo quis impositione manus episcopi confirmatur, ne amplius per haereticas seductiones a fide moveatur.*

expedient<sup>130</sup>; and finally that priests should not “presume” to confirm, but only bishops – just as only bishops may consecrate virgins, dedicate churches and confer Orders. Like Roland’s remarks above, this presentation of the episcopal prerogative to confirm suggests that priests are intrinsically capable of confirming: they do not require an emergency temporary ordination, as it were, such as might be provided only by a papal mandate. Consecrating virgins and dedicating churches may be tasks most “fittingly” reserved to a bishop, but it is not obvious that they are impossible for a mere presbyter; likewise with Confirmation, provided a link to the Apostles is maintained with episcopally-consecrated chrism.

As Odo’s preoccupation is with matters of practical administration, he has little to say about the institution or ostensible purpose of the sacrament.

### **Praepositinus of Cremona (c. 1150 – 1210)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Tractatus de Officiis: II, De vigilia pasche*, nn. 55-59 (Corbett, 1969, pp. 158-162).

Praepositinus was an Italian who ministered as a priest in Mainz before becoming chancellor of Paris. He makes a remarkable distinction between the two chrismations, of the crown of the head and the forehead. Confirmation, he explains, is carried out by the bishop on the forehead, and it differs from the baptismal chrismation in this way: by the baptismal anointing, the soul is betrothed to Christ (*anima Christo desponsatur*, p. 158), but by Confirmation the soul is provided with a dowry, and enriched (*dotatur et ditatur*). Praepositinus repeats this spousal imagery a few lines down, as if to reaffirm that it captures the essential identity of both Baptism and Confirmation:

Therefore the difference between the first and second anointings is this: in the first, as it is said, the soul is betrothed to God, and in the following one, provided with a dowry and enriched.

Praepositinus uses other images as well: “By Baptism, a wound is healed, whereas by Confirmation, the fullness of grace is conferred” (see p. 158); he asks why there are two initiatory anointings, and his reply is that:

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<sup>130</sup> *Saepe dicatur laicis ne exspectent dio ad confirmandum pueros adventum episcopi, sed ducant eos ad eum, nisi adesse audierint prope; et quod possent nomina mutari pueris, si velint, in confirmatione, aut si visum fuerit expedire.*

the twofold anointing signifies that the Holy Spirit was given twice to the disciples, once on earth to lead to love of neighbour, and another time from heaven to lead to love of God.<sup>131</sup>

Praepositinus sheds additional light on contemporary views of Confirmation when he compares the prayers accompanying the anointings. The priest's prayer at the first, presbyteral anointing is: "Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has regenerated you by water and the Holy Spirit and provided you with the forgiveness of all your sins, anoints you with the chrism of salvation for eternal life."<sup>132</sup>

The bishop prays this prayer over all the confirmandi at the episcopal anointing: "Send forth from heaven your sevenfold Spirit, the Paraclete Spirit, upon them, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, spirit of counsel and knowledge, spirit of knowledge and piety; and fill them with the spirit of fear of you, and sign them with the sign of the holy cross, well-disposed for eternal life."<sup>133</sup> Praepositinus states that the latter prayer is meant to underscore the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that is conferred by Confirmation (*ad notandum plenitudinem donorum Spiritus sancti, qu[a]e in confirmatione conferentur*). He adds, citing Galatians,<sup>134</sup> that "no one has put on Christ who is not attired with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, with which Christ was attired from his conception" (*non enim habet Christum pro indumento qui donis Spiritus sancti, quibus Christus ab ipsa conceptione ornatus fuit, non est ornatus*). Praepositinus then describes how the anointing itself is done individually, with the prayer "In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, peace be with you." Like Amalarius and Honorius, Praepositinus compares the mark on the confirmand's forehead to the saving mark placed on the Hebrews' doorposts at the first Passover.

Praepositinus affirms that the Apostles confirmed, but not with chrismation, rather by the imposition of hands (see Corbett, 1969, p. 162).

In chapters 57 and 58 of his *Tractatus*, Praepositinus discusses the seven gifts at some length, in order of "dignity." He classes wisdom as the "highest and worthiest" (*superiori et digniori*) and fear of the Lord as least; he further categorizes them according to whether they apply to the intellect

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<sup>131</sup> *Duplex quoque unctio significat quod Spiritus sanctus bis datus est discipulis, semel in terra ad dilectionem proximi, semel de c[a]elo ad dilectionem Dei* (Corbett, 1969, p. 159).

<sup>132</sup> *Deus omnipotens, Pater Domini nostri Iesu Christi, qui te regeneravit ex aqua et Spiritu sancto, qui tibi dedit remissionem omnium peccatorum, ipse te liniat chrismate salutis in vitam [a]eternam.* (Corbett, 1969, p. 169).

<sup>133</sup> *Emitte in eum Spiritum tuum septiformem, Paracletum Spiritum, de c[o]elis spiritum sapient[ia]e et intellectus, spiritum consilii et fortitudinis, spiritum scient[ia]e et pietatis; et imple eum spiritu timoris tui, et consigna eum signaculo sanct[ae] crucis, propriat[ius] [propriatus?] in vitam [a]eternam.* (Corbett, 1969, p. 169).

<sup>134</sup> "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ," (Galatians 3:27, *RSV*).

(wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge) or to the affections (fortitude, piety, fear), and (again like Honorius) according to whether they pertain to “doctrine” (*ad doctrinam*) – understanding, counsel, knowledge – or to “life” (*ad vitam*) – wisdom, fortitude, piety – or indeed to both, as in the case of fear.

### **Peter of Poitiers (d. c. 1215?)**

*Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: Sententiarum Libri Quinque* (5, 9) [PL 211, 1241].

Peter was probably a student of Lombard himself and certainly followed his doctrine closely. Like so many other mediaeval writers, he addresses the question of which of the two, Baptism or Confirmation, is “worthier” (*dignius*). He replies that Confirmation appears to be worthier on account of the dignity of its minister (the bishop, or in apostolic times the very Apostles alone), the dignity of its placement (the forehead), the dignity of its timing (after the purification of Baptism), and the greater dignity of its purpose (*ad majus*), namely strength (*ad robur*) – which (he affirms a little further on) is bestowed when the Holy Spirit is given, and entails an increase in virtue (*augmentum virtutem*). To this appearance of greater worth Peter contrasts a different criterion: “To this it must be said that Baptism is better (*melior*), that is, more useful (*utilior*) than Confirmation. But Confirmation is better (*melior*), worthier (*dignior*), and more costly (*pretiosior*). In the same way water is more useful than wine, but wine is worthier and superior (*dignius et excellentius*)”. From this we can conclude that Peter acknowledges, as is universally the case, that Baptism is foundational and necessary in a way that Confirmation is not; but that he deems Confirmation to be a valuable and even indispensable (but not absolutely obligatory) asset for the Christian. For Peter, to omit Confirmation is not in itself a fatal offence, but omitting Confirmation entails forsaking spiritual resources of great value for salvation.

### **John Pagus [Jean LePage] (early 13<sup>th</sup> century)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Commentarius in IV Librum Sententiarum* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 96-97).

Ebbesen (in Marenbon, 2005, p. 271) describes Pagus as a philosopher and “one of the most important masters” in the Paris faculty of arts. In Pagus’ *Sentences* commentary we find for the first time a new thread in discussions of Confirmation: he writes, with reference to Psalm

104,<sup>135</sup> that “bread strengthens man’s heart” (“*Panis cor hominis confirmat*”) and he concludes that the Eucharist is a sacrament of strengthening (*eucharistia est sacramentum confirmationis*). He explains that strengthening (*confirmatio*) is twofold: for the sake of charity (*ad caritatem*), which is served by the sacrament of the Eucharist, and for the sake of forbearance and patience (*ad tolerantiam vel patientiam*), which is served by Confirmation (*confirmatio*) and is conferred in preparation for combat (*quia ministratur ad pugnandum quibus necesse est gratia tolerantiae*).

The *pugnam* imagery, both military and ascetical, is unmistakable in Pagus. Whereas the grace of faith is given in Baptism, for the sake of belief, the grace given in Confirmation is for the sake of combat and struggle (*ad bellandum...ad pugnam*); grace is given to help us in demanding deeds (*actus difficiles*), and in combat against the enemy (*ad pugnandum contra hostes*); in Baptism we become children of God, while in Confirmation we are given the strength (*virtus*) to confess it.

### **Sicardus [Sicard] of Cremona (1155 – 1215)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Mitralis de officiis* (6, 14; 7, 10) (Sarbak (ed.), 2008, pp. 517-518).

Sicardus explains in chapter 6 of his *Mitralis*, which he wrote upon assuming his duties as bishop of Cremona, that the first initiatory anointing, immediately following Baptism, is like a betrothal (*in quo quasi desponsatur*), and it is a conferral of the Holy Spirit as a pledge or down-payment of what is to come (*ei Spiritus sanctus pro arabone tribuitur*). (He does not develop the spousal imagery further, though one may assume that he saw Confirmation as the permanent and complete fulfilment of the baptismal “betrothal”). Sicardus explains that the Church desired, as it expanded and grew in numbers, to make sure that none should die without some chrismation, even if not an episcopal one, and thus it provided for this first presbyteral anointing. The first anointing is but a down-payment, whereas by Confirmation the Holy Spirit is given for strength and the increase of grace (*ad robur et augmentum gratiae*). (Later, in chapter 7, he affirms again that “through Confirmation we receive the Holy Spirit”). Sicardus, providing one of the most memorable and gnomic descriptions of the *augmentum* model of Confirmation, states that while it is possible for a baptized person to be saved without anointing, nonetheless the anointing confers

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<sup>135</sup> “Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man’s heart” (Psalm 104:14-15, *RSV*).

a benefit: “one star differs from another by its brightness”, *i.e.* even among the saved there are gradations of *claritate*.<sup>136</sup>

Sicardus’ account of the prayer that the priest says at the post-baptismal anointing is the same as the one we saw in Praepositinus, while the version he gives of the bishop’s prayer at Confirmation differs somewhat. He finds the origins of Confirmation in the apostolic hand-laying in Acts 8, and cites Augustine’s observation that the disciples did not give the Holy Spirit, but rather prayed that the Spirit might come, and therefore laid hands for this purpose.<sup>137</sup> He also reflects on the meaning of each of the seven gifts, and echoes the remarks of a number of other authors whom we have seen – comparing the bishop’s consignation of the forehead to the Passover mark, as Honorius and Praepositinus do, and to the High Priest’s headgear bearing God’s name, as we saw in Honorius.

### **William of Auxerre (d. 1231)**

Principal work(s) where Confirmation is discussed: *Summa Aurea*, folio CCLVI and CCLVII (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 6-12).

William, archdeacon of the diocese of Beauvais, taught in Paris. In his *Summa Aurea*, which follows the structure of Lombard’s *Sentences*, he specifies the five necessary conditions for Confirmation to be administered: the correct form of words, the intention of the one confirming, the dignity (*i.e.*, office) of the one confirming, the material to be used, and the correct place on the body where the sacrament is to be conferred. William’s discussion of these points returns consistently to the summary he provides of the sacrament in his preamble, a concise affirmation of all three types of *robur*: it is the sacrament of professing openly (*profitentium*), and of combatting the world, the flesh and devils (*mundum, carnem et daemonia*). For example, William expands on the correct form of words by reiterating that the sacrament is meant to confer “strength that we might be fitted to fight and to carry the name of Christ before kings and princes,”<sup>138</sup> and on the significance of anointing the forehead by observing that Confirmation is meant to keep us from blushing (*ne...erubescamur*) at confessing the name of Christ; the Apostle Peter, he notes, had not

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<sup>136</sup> *Verumtamen et sine unctione credimus solo baptismo salvari. Sed stella differt a stella in claritate* (Sarbak, 2008, p. 517).

<sup>137</sup> “*Nullus enim discipulorum*”, *ut ait Augustinus*, “*dedit illis Spiritum sanctum, sed orabant ut veniret in eos, quibus manus imponebant*” (Sarbak, 2008, p. 518).

<sup>138</sup> ...*ad robur ut idonei simus pugnare et portare nomen Christi coram regibus et principibus*.

received the sacrament of Confirmation when he blushed at Christ's name before the serving girl, and denied him.<sup>139</sup>

William sees two gifts of the Holy Spirit given by Christ to his disciples: once ("on earth") when Christ breathed on them (John 20), anticipating the grace given in Baptism; and again ("from heaven"), when the disciples were strengthened at Pentecost by the gift of that Spirit, which signifies the grace of Confirmation. Lest this be seen as superfluous, or lest his reader be perplexed at how each of these sacraments contributes to the making of a "full Christian" (*pleni Christiani*), William distinguishes between two different kinds of "fullness" (*plenitudo*); the "sufficient" (*sufficiantiae*) plenitude given at Baptism, and the "abundant" (*copiae*) plenitude given at Confirmation.

William next considers the question we saw in John Pagus: whether it should not be said that the sacrament of *confirmatio* properly so-called is actually the Eucharist, which strengthens the Christian. He replies that, according to the *magistri*, the Eucharist strengthens only accidentally and as a by-product (*eucharistiae non confirmat nisi per accidens et ex sequenti*), whereas Confirmation strengthens in itself (*proprie et per se*). William himself raises a further problem, that this solution is no solution at all to the objection that two sacraments cannot have the same effect (*duo sacramenta non debent communicare in effectu*); his solution to this dilemma is that the Eucharist does not *always* "confirm": for certain Christians it is more like milk, and for others it is more like bread,<sup>140</sup> depending on how advanced they may be in discipleship. Only those who are "ready" are "confirmed" by the Eucharist, whereas Confirmation *always* strengthens. The claim is a plausible one; the Eucharist, in this view, is the Christian's daily bread. It is the food and medicine adapted by the Divine Physician, whose Body it is, to the state of each communicant. This adaptation may include a gift of strength, for those who need strength. Confirmation, on the other hand, is a once-and-for-all sacrament, imparting a character that is particularly correlated with divine strength, for the sake of Christian mission.

A question that has not been a main preoccupation of earlier writers now occupies William's attention: Is some "character" (*character*<sup>141</sup>) bestowed by Confirmation? For William it is

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<sup>139</sup> See Matthew 26:69-72.

<sup>140</sup> A reference to Paul: "I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it" (1 Corinthians 3:2, *RST*).

<sup>141</sup> Lewis & Short (1879) define the Latin word *character* (from *χαρακτήρ*) as "an instrument for branding or marking" or, usually, "the mark or sign burned or imprinted." The entry for *character* in Niermeyr (1976) gives "brand," "inscription," "sign," "stamp," "counter of an abacus," "feature," and "quality" as English equivalents. William of Auxerre refers to the sacramental character as a "sign" (*signum*), a reflection of the word's origins: as Perrin



sufficient to point out that Confirmation never ceases (*falsum est...quod...desinit esse*), and thus is never repeated, to establish conclusively that, unlike the Eucharist and Penance, it does indeed impart a character. He does not define character, but implicitly considers it a permanent feature that makes repetition superfluous or unseemly.<sup>142</sup>

What is the nature of this character? William writes that, according to the *magistri*, it imparts “vigour” (*strenuitas*) or “aptitude for combat” (*habilitatis ad pugnandum*). This *strenuitas*, he writes, is either a power itself (*virtus*) or some disposition or configuration of powers (*dispositio virtutis*). It cannot be a power (*virtus*), for then the character imparted by Confirmation would be the same as that imparted by Baptism, and one of the rites would therefore be superfluous. From this, William concludes that the character of Confirmation is an “arrangement” or “disposition” (*dispositio*) of the baptismal character: “in the sacrament of Confirmation, no other thing or grace is given than what was given in Baptism, but that which was given in Baptism is confirmed and strengthened.”<sup>143</sup>

One of William’s basic assumptions about the sacraments, that two different sacraments cannot have the same effect, has been widely held among Catholic theologians (see Revel’s references to the issue, 2006) and has had far-reaching repercussions in discussions of the purpose of the sacraments. I shall expand on my disagreement with this assumption in chapter 4.

### **Guy d’Orchelles [Guidonis de Orchellis] (d. c. 1230)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Tractatus de sacramentis ex eius Summa de sacramentis et officiis ecclesiae* (Van den Eynde, 1953, pp. 50-55).

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shows (1998, p. 226ff.), the use of *character* by patristic writers on the sacraments, beginning with Augustine (see his *Contra Epist. Parmeniani*, II, 13, 28), initially denoted the sign or mark as much as the “interior” effect of the rite; Haring (1952) argued that, for Augustine, the locus of sacramental character is the Trinitarian name invoked at Baptism. William’s usage is also an anticipation of *res et sacramentum* in Aquinas: *viz.*, the aspect of the sacrament that both signifies and is signified, the sacrament as “sign and reality”. O’Doherty affirms (1949, p. 64) that “the earliest explicit reference to the impression of a character in Confirmation is found in a manuscript attributed to Master Paganus de Corbolio.” Connolly (1963, p. 6) and Perrin (p. 227), who ascribe a similar priority to Paganus, depend heavily on Galot (1958) for their development of the theme of sacramental character. Galot’s work, the articles by Perrin and Haring, and the works of McCormack (1944), Murphy (1950), Connolly (1963), Foxen (1975), Pabst (1956), Zardoni (1983) and Parisi (1987) are invaluable resources for an understanding of mediaeval and Tridentine interpretations of sacramental character.

<sup>142</sup> For instance, he writes that a sacrament that has a character is not to be repeated (*non enim iterandum est sacramentum cum characterem habeat*, (Lynch, 1957, p. 9)).

<sup>143</sup> *Sed in sacramento confirmationis non datur alia res nec alia gratia quam in baptismo, sed quae data est baptismo confirmatur et roboratur.*



Guy was a canon of Meaux and his work draws upon Peter Comestor, among others. Guy begins his discussion of Confirmation with a reference to three anointings in the life of David (see 1 Kings 16:13, 2 Kings 2:4, and 2 Kings 5:3), which he considers to be an anticipation of three anointings in the lives of Christians: at Baptism, in Confirmation, and finally in Extreme Unction. Guy's interpretation of Confirmation is squarely in the military *robur ad pugnam* tradition:

In confirmation we are armed for the battle against the world, the flesh and the devil. Thus Pope Melchiades: "In Baptism we are regenerated to life, in Confirmation we are strengthened for the battle." For Confirmation equips and trains us for the struggle of this world. Thus while in Baptism the Holy Spirit is given for justification, in Confirmation he is given to us for strength.<sup>144</sup>

Guy continues to ring the changes on the theme of combat, explaining that Confirmation can be defined as "the sacrament given to man for the increase of grace, or given to man for strength."<sup>145</sup>

While the character inscribed (*character impressus*) by Baptism is grace, Guy explains, the character inscribed by Confirmation is greater grace (*maioris gratiae*), which echoes William of Auxerre's opinion.

An especially interesting feature of Guy's treatment is the statement he attributes to Pope Melchiades, to the effect that Baptism and Confirmation are so conjoined that they cannot be separated from one another, nor can one be effected without the other.<sup>146</sup> Guy interprets this to mean that "sacraments are said to be separated when one is received (*suscipitur*) and the other is disregarded (*contemnitur*)." The Melchidean phrase and Guy's interpretation are both notable in light of the teaching of Vatican II which insisted that the rites of initiation were to be revisited in order to re-affirm their close connection: this re-affirmation is not only a *ressourcement* with respect to the patristic era but to the mediaeval sources as well.

### **Stephan Berout [Étienne Berout, Stephanus Bérout] (fl. c. 1230)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Quaestio de numero sacramentorum* (Douay, *Bibl. Munic.* 434, II, f. 54 v. – reference in Lynch, 1962, p. 59; text in Lynch, 1957, pp. 183ff.).

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<sup>144</sup> Guy here cites, as so many others have done, the twofold gift of the Spirit (in John 20 and Acts 2) as a "figure" of the twofold gift of the Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation. He adds a concrete illustration of the Apostle Peter's transformation by the Spirit at Pentecost, namely his steadfast resilience before the high priest in Acts 5:29.

<sup>145</sup> *Confirmatio est sacramentum datum homini ad augmentum gratiae, vel datum homini ad robur.*

<sup>146</sup> "*Ista duo ita coniuncta sunt, – scilicet baptismus et confirmatio, – quod non possunt separari ab invicem, nec unum potest effici sine altero.*"

Stephan embraces the conventional contemporary view that Confirmation is intended for *robur*, but expresses in new terms what the concept of strength means. “In Confirmation, the fullness of virtues is given, the confirmed is dressed in virtues from on high”<sup>147</sup>; “Confirmation makes one strong in the good”<sup>148</sup>; “Confirmation makes one strong and removes fleshliness from the spirit, and extinguishes the embers that remain.”<sup>149</sup>

The form of Confirmation, Stephan contends, was given by Christ when he promised and then sent the Spirit,<sup>150</sup> a clear affirmation of Stephan’s robustly pneumatic view of Confirmation.

### **Alexander of Hales (c. 1185 – 1245)**

Principal work(s) where Confirmation is discussed: *Glossae in IV Librum Sententiarum* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 1-5, 177-210, 230-236, 246-248).

Alexander was an English Franciscan, and was “the first to take as his basic teaching text the *Liber sententiarum* of Peter Lombard” (see Bougerol, “Alexander of Hales” in Vauchez, 2002). An adequate appreciation of Alexander’s thought and his influence on the subject of Confirmation requires us to devote some attention to his doctrine of sacramental character. We saw earlier (in connection with William of Auxerre) how this doctrine evolved initially; but as Connolly (1963, p. 6) writes, “The teaching of Alexander of Hales concerning sacramental character shows a tremendous advance from the theology of earlier thinkers.” Connolly, setting out the case for the authenticity of various works ascribed to Alexander, concludes that “the true Alexander of Hales defined character as ‘*figura spiritualis*’.” This “true” Alexander, Connolly contends, is found in his *Glossa* on Lombard’s *IV Liber*.

Augustine’s authority is capital for the doctrine of sacramental character; Connolly writes (1963, p. 10) that Alexander “makes no attempt to prove the existence of sacramental character from Holy Scripture,” instead appealing “to the authority of St. Augustine’s *De baptismo contra Donatistas*,” where – in Kenny’s view (1958, p. 8) – Augustine “formulated...the doctrine of the seal or character as the sole reason for the initerability of the sacraments of Christian initiation”. On this account, the Church’s practice of refusing to repeat Baptism is the *datum* that required an

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<sup>147</sup> *In confirmatione datur abundantia virtutis; induuntur confirmati virtute ex alto*. He illustrates this theme from several places in Scripture, such as James 1:5 (“God...gives to all men generously,” *RSV*).

<sup>148</sup> *Confirmatio roborat in bono*.

<sup>149</sup> *...confirmatio...fortem facit et a carnalitate separat spiritum, et reprimit reliquias fomitis*. This theme too he illustrates from Scripture, including Isaiah 10:16 and 2 Corinthians 5:4.

<sup>150</sup> See John 16:7-14, and, of course, Acts 2.

explanation, an explanation supplied by the doctrine of character; the doctrine arose from the praxis rather than explicitly informing it. On Haring's reading (Haring, 1952), Augustine elaborated his notion of character as a consequence of his concern lest God's power or sovereignty be undermined: the baptized Christian, even if baptized by schismatics, has been claimed in the name of the Holy Trinity and has thus unfurled the King's banner, so to speak. Any subsequent attempt to baptize would imply that that banner had been furled, which Augustine could not accept.

Connolly points out (1963, p. 11) that while Alexander does not directly address the question of whether a character exists in Confirmation, he implicitly affirms it by rejecting Denys' model of character on the grounds that it is not "applicable to the character bestowed by Confirmation".<sup>151</sup>

What is "character", for Alexander? Connolly calls Alexander's definition the "Magistral Definition":

Character is an intelligible figure, configuring the created trinity [*i.e.*, memory, intellect and will] to the Uncreated [Trinity], created by the sacramental word of faith in the Trinity, for the distinguishing of the faithful according to their state.<sup>152</sup>

Connolly explains (p. 12) that the "mission" of sacramental character "is to distinguish" – *ad discernendum*. This "distinguishing role" along with character's "indelibility," are its "chief properties" (p. 16). The "remote efficient cause" of the "created character received by Christians" is the Holy Trinity, while the respective sacraments that impart character are the "dispositive" causes – *i.e.* they "dispose" the soul to be graced – and Christ is the "proximate efficient cause" (p. 13). Character entails a "similitude" to Christ (p. 13); through Confirmation, one is "mark[ed]...as ready to fight boldly for the faith" like the Redeemer fighting vigorously on the altar of the cross ("*pugnans fortiter in ara crucis*", p. 13), or as Connolly explains further on (p. 23), "one is strengthened to confess the faith." The "seat" of character for Alexander, Connolly explains (1963, pp. 15-16), is the intellect or "cognitive power" (which includes "intellect and

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<sup>151</sup> Connolly adds his voice to the chorus of those who consider that Confirmation is in some degree in search of a theology: For Alexander, he writes (1963, p. 11), "Confirmation character already plays something of a Cinderella-role. And indeed it suffers from comparative neglect with all the Scholastic theologians and right up to modern times".

<sup>152</sup> *Character est figura intelligibilis configurans trinitatem creatam increatae, facta per verbum sacramentale fidei Trinitatis, ad discernendum fidelem in statu suo.*

memory”). The permanence of character in Alexander’s doctrine, and its distinctness from grace, is clear from the fact that “bad dispositions which would prohibit reception of grace do not necessarily impede the bestowal of character. Character achieves an objective consecration or sanctification which can exist despite a lack of subjective sanctity” (Connolly, 1963, p. 16). Connolly notes (p. 14) that Alexander does not explicitly describe the relation of character to grace, and this leaves the student of Confirmation with questions about how the sacramental character, how this configuration to Christ persevering in his trials on the Cross, differentiates the confirmed from the unconfirmed Catholic. It is an intelligible, not a visible figure; intelligible to one who knows that she has been confirmed, and to God; but beyond a psychological influence, what difference does this configuration make, unless it is greater disposition to grace? I suggest that character should be understood as an answer to the question “who” rather than “what” or “how”; character is not in itself a gift of grace but refers to a specific identity – the identity of the baptized, of the confirmed, of the ordained. This identity is correlated with certain tasks, graces, and abilities. Because this man has a priestly character in virtue of ordination, he has duties and powers that are associated with his identity as servant *in persona Christi capitis*. Because that child is an adopted child and heir in virtue of Baptism, grafted onto the Vine, she is blessed with the graces and charged with the duties that are correlated with that identity. Because this person has received the Spirit of Pentecost by an apostolic hand-laying, her identity is that of a full Christian, and with that identity is correlated an array of tasks and graces: witnessing, defending, sanctifying daily life, all of which demand *robur* and *augmentum*. Character is not so much a cause of grace nor a psychological reality, as a symptom or synonym of a sacramentally-conferred *identity* that entails particular duties and therefore certain graces and powers. In this sense we can agree that character resides in the intellect; in the answer to the thematic and discursive question, “Who is this?”. This is consistent with Haring’s reading of Augustine, referred to above: character is not so much a power or grace as a crucial detail in one’s biography. It is the fact of having been claimed and commissioned, once and for all, in a rite and a formula of words that invokes the Most Holy Trinity.

For Alexander, then, Confirmation imparts a character, a configuration or likeness to Christ, a strengthening (as he makes explicit elsewhere in the *Glossa ad pugnam* and for withstanding evil (*ad tolerantiam mali*), making the faithful soldiers of Christ in the fight against the enemy (*miles Christi...in certamine contra adversarium*).

**Manuscript: Troyes, *Bibliothèque municipale 1862 (after 1238)***<sup>153</sup>

Although Lynch (1962) mentions this text among those he considers brief or repetitive, some aspects of it merit attention. Its doctrine of character, which resembles Alexander's, is more developed than many contemporary texts; in it character is described as a permanent, intelligible figure distinguishing images of God in members of the Church according to their state (*character est figura intelligibilis discretiva imaginis Dei secundum statum membrorum Ecclesiae perpetue existens* – Lynch, 1957, p. 190). Also notable is its description of the effects of Confirmation: it is “not ordered to the removal of sin, but to the growth and increase of grace from which the acquisition of the crown follows” (*confirmatio non ordinatur ad demissionem peccati, sed augmentum et robur gratiae per quam sequitur adeptio coronae* – Lynch, 1957, p. 189).

**Manuscript: Paris, *Bibliothèque nationale, latin 3032 (c. 1240-1245)***<sup>154</sup>

This text is of particular interest because of its insight into the unrepeatability of Confirmation as compared with the repeatability of the Eucharist. Although the Eucharist may be *received* repeatedly by the communicant, this text points out that there is a certain unrepeatability to the Eucharist as well: once consecrated, a given Host cannot be consecrated again: *sicut confirmatus non potest iterum confirmari, sic hostia consecrata non potest iterum consecrari* (Lynch, 1957, p. 47).

**John Moussy [Iohannes de Mouss(e)y] (d. c. 1245)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Commentarius in IV Librum Sententiarum* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 98-100).

The most pertinent section, for us, of Moussy's consideration of Confirmation begins with the question: is it necessary? It would seem not, he replies, since Baptism bestows all gifts and virtues, and therefore implicitly the gift of fortitude, and therefore strength (*robur*). However, the Apostles laid hands on the baptized for the conferring of the Holy Spirit for the sake of strength, which (he implies) demonstrates that Confirmation is not “in vain” (*frustrum*). He agrees, against those who claim that Baptism confers virtues (*virtutes*) while Confirmation bestows gifts (*dona*), that Baptism confers “gifts and virtues and fruits and beatitudes, for the baptized are able to act rightly through gifts and to reject the temptations of evil through virtues, and to delight in the fruits of

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<sup>153</sup> See Lynch (1957, p. xxv) for discussion of the dating of this document.

<sup>154</sup> See Lynch (1957, pp. xxviii-xxix) for discussion of the dating of this codex.

good repelling evil.” The distinction between Baptism and Confirmation is, rather, that the one confers strength sufficiently, for salvation (*sufficiantiae ad salutem*), the other confers it abundantly, against spiteful waylayers (*abundantiae contra malignos insidiatores*): he holds a military *robur ad pugnam* interpretation, and implies that outright combat is proper to the confirmed.

The novel spousal imagery we saw in writings from the School of Magister Simon appears also in Moussy’s discussion of the fitting minister and age of Confirmation: “The bridegroom consummates what the matchmaker<sup>155</sup> has initiated” (*Consummatum est per sponsum quod initiatum est per paranympum*), which for Moussy makes it fitting that like marriage, Confirmation should be associated with maturity, and should be conferred at the hands of the nobler minister, *i.e.* the bishop.

#### **Guerric of Saint Quentin (d. 1245)**

Principal work(s) where Confirmation is discussed: *Quaestiones de sacramentis* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 21-25, 211-215).

Little is known of Guerric except that he was one of the first Dominican masters at Paris. Guerric asks four questions about Confirmation: 1) Whether grace for strength is given in Confirmation, and in what way (*quomodo*) it may be said to be given for strength; 2) whether some other grace is given through Confirmation than was given in Baptism; 3) in what way a character is inscribed in Confirmation “and the two others” (*in duobus aliis*), *i.e.* Orders and Baptism, and 4) why Christ was not confirmed though he was baptized? The first three are especially pertinent to our enquiry.

To the first question, after a thorough discussion of opposing viewpoints and ancillary considerations, Guerric concludes that the strength given in Confirmation is for the outward confession of faith (*robur ad confessionem exteriorem*), for preaching (*ad praedicandum*) and thus not merely for the avoidance of evil but the doing of good (*ad agendum bonum, non ad declinandum malum*): in terms of the categories we have been using here, he posits *augmentum* and *robur ad praedicandum*. To the second, Guerric summarizes a variety of positions: some say, he writes, that no other grace is given in Confirmation than was given in Baptism, but only an arrangement (*dispositio*) of the grace there given. Others say that the grace, and the sign (*sacramentum*), and the character inscribed, are all different, and that the grace given in Baptism fashions virtues, while the grace

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<sup>155</sup> I originally translated *paranympus*, here and on p. 104, as “groomsman”; I am indebted to Matthew Levering (see Levering, 2008, p. 43) for the much more apt term (in this context) “matchmaker”.

given in Confirmation fashions the “gifts.” Gueric himself, citing Denys, replies that the grace of each sacrament is straightforwardly (*prorsus*) different, distinct and “unconfused” (*inconfusa*).

As to the third, the question of character, Gueric states that the distinctive character given in Baptism is newly-begotten faith (*fidei genitae*), in Confirmation it is strengthened faith (*fidei roboratae*), and in Orders it is for increasing faith among others (*fidei in altero multiplicandae*). To frame this in terms of identity, in terms of an answer to the question “Who?”, as I have suggested that we should do, we might say that Baptism makes one a new creation, Confirmation an equipped and strengthened member of Christ’s Body, and Orders a means of the sanctification of others.

### **Richard Fishacre (d. 1248)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Commentarius in IV Librum Sententiarum* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 63-72).<sup>156</sup>

Fishacre was an English Dominican from Devon whose adult life was spent studying and serving in Oxford. In contrast to some recent dismissals of mediaeval theology as abstract or rationalistic, Brown (in Grayling, Goulder and Pyle, eds., 2006), writes that Fishacre “claimed that when he would comment on the *Sentences*, he was simply finding a complementary and integrating way of studying the Scriptures.”

Fishacre cites Acts 8, the Apostles’ hand-laying, as the source of Confirmation, and adds that the Confirmation of the Apostles occurred at Pentecost (*confirmatio...Apostolorum facta est in Pentecoste*). He reckons that, as Baptism is a type or figure of the death of Christ, Confirmation is a type or figure of the sending of the Holy Spirit (*aestimo quod sicut baptismus figurat mortem Christi, sic confirmatio missionem Spiritus Sancti*).

Its effect, he says, is a gift of the Holy Spirit (*donatio Spiritus Sancti*) to give strength for the sake of preaching (*roboratur ad praedicandum*); he clarifies that this “preaching” may be done by works (*opere*) as well as by speech – a point that we will read many centuries later in another English Friar Preacher, Herbert McCabe. Confirmation also makes the confirmand fully Christian, meaning that she has fully all that is necessary and useful for salvation. Using expressions we have seen before in William of Auxerre, it confers “sufficient” and “abundant” (*copiae*) fullness; where the Holy Spirit is poured out, the hearts of the faithful are enlarged unto

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<sup>156</sup> At the time of writing, the *IV librum* had not yet appeared in R.J. Long’s critical edition of Fishacre’s *Commentary on the Sentences* being issued by the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften.



prudence and constancy – a phrase from “Melchiades”. Fishacre affirms vigorously that Confirmation must not be repeated, because the grace conferred in Confirmation suffices for all time, a grace he sees prefigured in the one-time sending of the Holy Spirit from Heaven (*missio enim Spiritus Sancti de caelo semel tantum facta est, quae per confirmationem, ut dixi, figuratur*).

Fishacre comments more extensively than other writers on the difference between two strengthening sacraments, namely Confirmation and Eucharist: Confirmation strengthens us against those who attack the faith (*uno quo robaremur circa impugnantes fidem et hoc est confirmatio*), the Eucharist strengthens us against the vices that attack morals (*alio quo robaremur circa vitia quae mores impugnant*). By proposing this distinction, Fishacre is actually implicitly denying the ascetical *robur ad pugnam* interpretation of Confirmation.

Another notable particularity of Fishacre’s treatment of Confirmation is his prescient confession that he does not see why a simple priest should not confirm, except that the customs of the Church, “from the time of the Apostles,” are otherwise (*fateor ego nihil video quare simplices sacerdotes non possunt conferre hoc sacramentum... nisi consuetudo et constitutio Ecclesiae veniret contra*).<sup>157</sup>

### **William of Auvergne [William of Paris](c. 1180 – 1249)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *De sacramento confirmationis* (from *Opera omnia Gulielmi Alverni*, Venice, 1591).

William of Auvergne served from 1228 as bishop of Paris. He uses many original images in his discussion of Confirmation that I have not found in any other contemporary writer: for example, that of inheritance. Through Confirmation, “the right to a heavenly inheritance, which the baptized has received through the divine calling and baptismal sanctification, is confirmed and strengthened that he [the baptized] might possess it firmly and immovably.”<sup>158</sup> William also describes Confirmation as a fortified city wall (*muniri in arces*) that the Church builds in times of spiritual combat, comparable to those built in times of material combat (1591, pp. 407-408).

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<sup>157</sup> Long and O’Carroll suggest in their survey of Fishacre’s life and works (1999, pp. 41-42, 48) that his *Commentary on the Sentences* may have influenced Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. As we shall see, the most unique feature shared by both Thomas and Richard is their willingness to entertain the possibility that priests might confirm. Thomas’ position, in his *Sentences* commentary, is quite bold on this point, explicitly affirming the presbyteral power to confirm, provided one has an episcopal mandate. It would be interesting to investigate whether Fishacre’s humble admission here might have paved the way for Thomas’ innovative conclusion.

<sup>158</sup> *Ius enim caelestis haereditatis, ad quod divina vocatione et baptismali sanctificatione assumptus est baptizatus, ei sacramento confirmationis confirmatur, et roboratur, ita ut illud firmius et immobilius possideat* (1591, p. 407). (In this and all excerpts from William of Auvergne, I have slightly modified the spelling used in the 1591 *Opera omnia* so as to be more consistent with the spelling used elsewhere in this dissertation – for example, “&” becomes “et,” “vt” becomes “ut,” and so forth).



Perhaps most memorably, William reads the Vulgate version of Exodus 34:29 – *Moses...ignorabat quod cornuta esset facies sua ex consortio sermonis Dei* – and finds in it a prefiguring of the “spiritual horn” we receive from Confirmation. Since this horn is associated with receiving chrism in the middle of the forehead, naturally William compares the confirmed to a rhinoceros (*unicornis*), equipped to do battle.

Another original analogy William uses is to compare Baptism and Confirmation with various types of clothing; Baptism is like the garments that provide essential measures against cold and rain, but which are not enough to provide protection that only armour can give, armour that is conferred by Confirmation.<sup>159</sup>

More conventionally, William sees Confirmation prefigured in Pentecost: “On the day of Pentecost, the Apostles were clothed with power from on high, and they received the Holy Spirit for strength, although they received many other eminent gifts.”<sup>160</sup> He adds that the Holy Spirit thus was poured out on them not once, at Baptism only, but a second time, at Pentecost; and he objects that since there is no salvation (*salus*) without the sevenfold gifts enumerated in Isaiah, we must conclude that these and all gifts (*dona*) and virtues (*virtutes*) are given in Baptism, not only at Confirmation. William stands out among his contemporaries for this explicit denial that the sevenfold gifts are associated specifically with Confirmation; he is also part of the great chorus of theologians who affirm that the Spirit is given in Confirmation, without thereby implying that the Spirit was not given at Baptism.<sup>161</sup>

### **Herbert of Auxerre (d. 1252)**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *Summa de sacramentis* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 52-60); *Summa abbreviata* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 61-62).

“The purpose of this sacrament,” Herbert writes in his *Summa sacramentis*, “is spiritual vigour” (*Finis autem huius sacramenti est spiritualis strenuitas*). Further on he explains that this vigour is meant for a decidedly military *pugnam*, for the struggle against heretics and enemies of the faith (*in hoc sacramento datur strenuitas pugnandi contra haereticos fidei inimicos*). He states that it is unrepeatable

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<sup>159</sup> *Et quemadmodum dum vestimenta sola non sufficiunt corpori ad sui tuitionem, sed requiruntur arma; sic virtutes baptismales non sufficiunt animabus nostris: propter vestiendam ergo animam humanam, merito est sacramentum baptismi, et propter eandem armandam, sacramentum confirmationis* (1591, p. 409).

<sup>160</sup> *Die autem Pentecostes induti sunt Apostoli virtute ex alto, et Spiritum Sanctum acceperunt ad robur, licet alia etiam dona quam plurima, et magnifica* (1591, p. 408).

<sup>161</sup> It may be helpful to remind the reader here that so far in twelve centuries we have seen *no* patristic or mediaeval author, except Tertullian, suggest that the Spirit is only received at Confirmation and not at Baptism.

(*iterabile non est*) for while the sign of the sacrament, namely the unction, is transitory (*unctio transit et non permanet*), its effect (that is, its character) is permanent (*eius effectus, id est character, permanet, et non transit*). He finds the origin of Confirmation in the Apostles' hand-laying for the imparting of the Holy Spirit – a precedent that, he acknowledges, does not provide a warrant for the use of chrism and of a given form of words. Herbert justifies the addition of these kinds of features to the sacrament on the grounds that the Church sometimes adds things to the forms handed on by the Lord or the Apostles, not out of necessity but for the sake of greater adornment and reverence (*non ad necessitatem sunt sed ad decorem et reverentiam sacramenti*).

Herbert is concerned with the implications of Confirmation for a proper understanding of the need and usefulness of Baptism; in his view, the obligation of Confirmation does not imply a defect in Baptism. Rather, he writes,

Nobody is a true Christian apart from the sacrament of Confirmation, that is, if he despises the sacrament of Confirmation. If in fact the lack is not out of contempt, he is nevertheless a true Christian, if he is baptized.<sup>162</sup>

Herbert here posits an important distinction: two baptized but unconfirmed Christians may respectively be in completely different relationships to God and the Church depending on whether the absence of Confirmation is deliberate or not. Unlike Baptism, which is objectively necessary for salvation (in this view), Confirmation is useful, but only necessary in the sense that it must not be deliberately omitted.

There is an idiosyncratic and enigmatic component in Herbert's treatment of Confirmation, namely his notion that the vigour which is the grace of Confirmation is a "circumstance" of baptismal grace, and the character of Confirmation a "circumstance" of baptismal character (*strenuitas quae est gratia confirmationis est circumstantia gratiae baptismalis, ita et character characteris*). This seems to be a way of saying that one who is not baptized cannot be confirmed, a claim that is quite common in theologians of the period; Confirmation, in this view, must be a confirming of Baptism and of the baptized. This reading is supported by Herbert's remarks in his *Summa abbreviata*: "in Confirmation a new character must not be [said to be]

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<sup>162</sup> ...nullus est verus Christianus absque sacramento confirmationis, id est, si confirmationis contemnatur sacramentum. Si vero carentia non est ex contemptu, nihilominus vere Christianus est, si fuerit baptizatus.

inscribed, but the baptismal character must be [said to be] confirmed.”<sup>163</sup> A more widely used expression for this relationship is to say that the character of Confirmation entails an “arrangement” (*dispositio*) of baptismal grace.

### **William of Middleton [Melitona, Milton] (d. 1257)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Quaestiones de sacramentis* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 101-134).

William was probably a Franciscan master at Cambridge and Paris, and eventually became one of Bonaventure’s teachers. William finds Confirmation’s origin in the Holy Spirit – *sacramentum autem confirmationis habuit a Spiritu Sancto* – who confirmed the disciples at Pentecost, and in the subsequent practice of the Apostles. He offers a remarkable rationale for why Confirmation was not needed before the coming of Christ: “for to confess and broadcast faith in God was glorious in all ages, but to confess faith in Christ and the disgrace of the Crucified seemed foolish and mad.”<sup>164</sup> William thus clearly sees the effect of the sacrament as *robur ad praedicandum*, the strength to witness boldly to Christ, “taking away pusillanimity and timidity and inducing boldness in confessing Christ,” and giving grace to elicit the act of faith present in confessing the name of Christ<sup>165</sup>; though he explicitly posits *robur ad pugnam* as well, for he says that only a Christian who has been confirmed may be described as a soldier of Christ engaged in battle against the adversary (*Christianus dicitur...ex...eo quod miles Christi sit in certamine contra adversarium*). He also writes that Confirmation “summons forth” (*excitat*) the gift of fortitude (Lynch, 1957, p. 128).

William’s doctrine of Confirmation here includes a subtle consideration of the relation between baptismal grace and the grace of Confirmation. One of his premises is that the sacrament of Confirmation does not confirm baptismal grace, it confirms the baptized person; the “confirming” is thus posited of the person, not of the preceding grace.<sup>166</sup> Lynch (1962, p. 104) considers this latter point, with its implication that “the several sacramental graces constitute entirely separate graces”, to be William’s “most distinctive and abiding note”, one destined to “arouse determined controversy.” William’s discussion of these points is subtle, but the insight

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<sup>163</sup> ...in confirmatione non debet novus character imprimi, sed baptismalis character confirmari.

<sup>164</sup> ...ante adventum Christi non fuit necessarium haberi sacramentum confirmationis, quia confiteri et publicare fidem Dei gloriosum fuit in omni tempore, licet confiteri fidem Christi et ignominias Crucifixi stultitia et insania videbatur.

<sup>165</sup> Nihilominus spiritualiter (Lynch, 1962, p. 100 says this should read ‘specialiter’) in illa datur gratia ad eliciendum actum fidei qui est in confessione nominis Christi (Lynch, 1957, p. 118).

<sup>166</sup> Non dicitur sacramento confirmationis confirmari gratia baptismalis, sed homo baptizatus. Et confirmatio est personae non gratiae (Lynch, 1957, p. 105).

that may prove most germane to our enquiry here is that a white thing (*albedo*) can become whiter through a greater absence of blackness (*i.e.* less of its contrary, of the opposite of whiteness), or else through greater proximity (*accessu*) to light (*primam lucem*). My reading of William's point here is that, even if we conceive of grace as something "simple" (*simplex*) and thus not susceptible of *quantitative* increase, we can still envision an increase of grace through a greater proximity to or participation in the "light." This position anticipates Charles Davis' insight that in any alteration of a person's relationship with the Holy Spirit, all the change is on our side; we grow or decrease in proximity to the Spirit, it is not the Spirit who changes location or relation to us. I shall consider this claim in more detail when we come to consider Davis in the next chapter.

### **Roland of Cremona (1178 – 1259)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Summa* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 80-95).

Roland's writing on Confirmation includes a lengthy discussion of the specific suitability of anointing the forehead with chrism<sup>167</sup> and balsam. "Confirmation," the Italian Friar Preacher writes, "is the sacrament of proficiency and pugnacity, for it is an anointing, and pugilists are anointed...By this sacrament we are made fighters against demons and the world, for we do not wrestle against flesh."<sup>168</sup> Further on he adds, in the same vein, "Pugilists are anointed that they might not be grabbed, or if grabbed cannot be held onto," but he also adds the theme of courage in professing Christ – *robur ad praedicandum* – to this theme of *robur ad pugnam*. The forehead is anointed, Roland writes (citing the *magistri*), lest we blush (*erubescamus*) to confess Christ's name.

Roland complements this reflection on the rite of Confirmation with a vivid grounding in Scripture:

The grace given in Baptism is signified by the Lord's breathing on the disciples. He sent the Holy Spirit once from heaven for the sake of strength, but left behind the sacrament of Confirmation for the Apostles to distribute.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> And indeed of the suitability of olive oil for chrism, as opposed, say, to poppy-seed or nut oils.

<sup>168</sup> *Dicendum est de confirmatione quod est sacramentum proficientium sive pugnantium, quia unctio est et pugiles unguuntur...Et per istud sacramentum fimus pugiles contra daemona, quia non est nobis colluctatio tantum adversus carnem, et etiam contra mundum* (Lynch, 1957, p. 80).

<sup>169</sup> *Gratiam quae datur in baptismo significavit per sufflationem quam fecit in discipulis. Semel autem misit de coelo Spiritum Sanctum ad robur, sed tamen sacramentum confirmationis reliquit Apostolis disponendum* (Lynch, 1957, p. 85).

The abundant fullness (*plenitudinem copiae*) of the Holy Spirit conferred in Confirmation has the effect of making the confirmand abler (*habilior*) and of removing from her all impediments to good operations (*removetur impediens ad bonas operationes*), and by good operations she grows in grace (*per bonas operationes crescit gratia*).

We can see in Roland a thoroughgoing acceptance of both the “ascetic” and “witnessing” *robur* traditions, without any sense that they are distinct effects of the abundant fullness of the Holy Spirit. Rather, we might see Roland’s doctrine as an affirmation that Confirmation equips the Christian for the slings and arrows of life in the world: for both the personal, interior temptations that this life entails, and the outward struggles that arise from confessing Christ’s name in an unsympathetic environment. Roland is a firm enough believer in the “ascetic” role of Confirmation that it subtends his question about the repeatability of the sacrament. “Since the sacrament is given for the diminishing of carnality,” he asks, why can it not be given multiple times – as often, one assumes, as it is needed, the way extreme unction is? His answer is that Confirmation impresses a character, and that the character is the “attenuation of carnality” (*attenuationis carnalitatis*) both signified and accomplished by Confirmation. This very concretely ascetical concept of character as a grace that mitigates temptation is quite different from Alexander’s notion of character, and can be justly criticized as an interpretation that obscures what is most unique and valuable about Confirmation.

### **Hugh of St Cher (d. 1263)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Commentarius in IV Librum Sententiarum* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 13-20).

Hugh was a Dominican and eventually a cardinal who was active at the Council of Lyons. His doctrine of Confirmation echoes themes seen in his contemporaries: it consists of giving the sevenfold Spirit for strength (*robur*) that we might be equipped (*idonei*) to fight and to carry Christ’s name before the world (literally “kings and princes”) – *pugnare et portare nomen Christi coram regibus et principibus*. We know that it confers a character because, like Baptism, it is not repeated; and this character is vigour for combat (*strenuitatis ad pugnandum*). He maintains that the character that results from Confirmation is not a new character, but is the same as the baptismal character,

differing not according to kind but according to degree, like ‘strong’ and ‘stronger’; Confirmation confirms and strengthens the baptismal character.<sup>170</sup>

A more distinctive feature of Hugh’s doctrine is that he affirms that Confirmation confers intellectual strength, whereas the Eucharist confers affective strength (*robur intellectus est effectus confirmationis, robur affectus est effectus sacramenti eucharistiae*). It is very common for writers of the period to distinguish between the strengthening effects of these sacraments, but Hugh’s taxonomy seems unique. On the other hand this categorization is consistent with Honorius of Autun’s opinion that Confirmation particularly confers wisdom, a gift ordered specifically to the intellect.

### **Albert the Great (c. 1200 – 1280)**

Principal work(s) where Confirmation is discussed: *In IV Sententiarum* (distinctio VII, *De confirmatione*) (from *Opera omnia Alberti Magni*, ed. Borgnet (Paris, 1894), vol. 29; *Summa de sacramentis* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 223-229).

In his *Summa de sacramentis*, the Swabian Dominican Albert (who became Thomas Aquinas’ most important teacher) finds the basis and ground for Confirmation in Acts 8, which he summarizes as the Apostles laying hands on the baptized that they might receive the Holy Spirit. To the objection that this seems superfluous, for grace is fully and sufficiently given in Baptism, he replies like William of Auxerre that sacramental graces are diverse and that the grace of one sacrament is not received by means of another (see *Summa de sacramentis*, in Lynch (1957, p. 223) and *In IV Sentent., dist. VII, A, art. 5, solutio*, in Borgnet (1894, p. 162). The effect particular to Confirmation, for Albert, is strengthening by the Spirit (*corroboratio Spiritus*). The role of this *robur* is ascetical, to fight against weaknesses arising from the “embers” (literally, “kindling”) of our fallen nature (*contra infirmitatem ortam ex fomite*), a grace that he does not consider to have been given already with the gift of fortitude: *alia est gratia fortitudinis virtutis vel doni et alia confirmationis*. As he says in his *Sentences* commentary, Confirmation does not merely increase the grace of Baptism, it confers a new grace (it “gratifies”, as Lynch (1962) renders *gratificare*) for this distinct purpose of healing the weakness that is an ember of concupiscence, a result of original sin, that we might the more effectively confess the faith (see *In IV Sentent., dist. VII, A, art. 5*; Borgnet, 1894,

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<sup>170</sup> ...idem est character baptismi et confirmationis secundum essentiam, sed differens tamen secundum rationem, scil. secundum forte et magis forte (Lynch, 1957, p. 15). A few paragraphs later he employs an enigmatic simile; he writes that simple wine and “*vinum serratum*” – perhaps fortified or well-aged wine? – are both sold under a similar image, namely a circle, but the one is sold under the sign of a “simple” circle (*circulus simplex*) and the other a “wrought” or “worked” circle (*circulus malleatus*). His point is that the essence is the same, but the magnitude or intensity is different.

pp. 164-165).<sup>171</sup> Albert notes in the same work that while Confirmation is not “absolutely” necessary for salvation, it is necessary in the conditional sense that the strength we require to combat that residual weakness is supplied by Confirmation, not by Baptism.<sup>172</sup>

Albert gives further scrutiny to the grace conferred by Confirmation; he distinguishes between sanctifying or habitual grace (*gratia gratum faciens*, “the grace that makes gracious”) and *gratia gratis data*, “grace freely given,” and asks which of the two is the kind of grace conferred by Confirmation (*In IV Sentent., dist. VII, A, art. 5*; Borgnet, 1894, p. 160). He replies that Confirmation bestows *gratia gratum faciens*, that – like Baptism – it confers abiding, sanctifying grace; while it does not directly heal the guilt of sin, the way Baptism does, it does heal the “penalty” (*poenam*) of original sin which impedes the good and incites to evil (*ordinatur haec gratia...contra poenam quae est impeditiva boni, et incitativa mali*). Moreover, because Confirmation is connected to the fullness of the Holy Spirit, Albert considers that it must entail sanctifying grace. Lynch (1962, p. 125) considers that Albert’s doctrine that the grace of Confirmation is “a separate *gratia gratum faciens* was that point of his theology which was most signally to mark it,” and “meet the contradiction” of Thomas and Bonaventure. Lynch’s word “separate” is unfortunate, as it implies that the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit is meted out in discrete parcels; perhaps a “new” or “renewed” *gratia gratum faciens* would be nearer the mark.

Either way, this account creates a puzzle. If, as Albert initially claimed, Confirmation confers a *robur* that heals sin and makes it possible to confess Christ, then it seems that he is positing a *gratia gratis data*, an “actual” grace – a concrete gift from God like health, insight, courage, or eloquence. Why does he conclude instead that Confirmation, like Baptism, bestows sanctifying grace, *gratia gratum faciens*? Albert himself compares the healing *robur* to the vivifying grace of Baptism; in other words, he does not so much posit a specific “actual” grace of preaching or persevering, but instead a flourishing of the life already given at Baptism, a flourishing that fosters audacity in confessing Christ. Rather than conferring something like the courage to persevere in this or that sticky circumstance, Albert seems to argue that Confirmation is a new

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<sup>171</sup> Just as a comprehensive appreciation of Alexander of Hales’ doctrine of Confirmation would require a careful study of his complex theory of sacramental character, similarly a very sophisticated and crucial feature of Albert’s thought is his doctrine of grace. I will not attempt here to do justice to Albert’s understanding of grace as he expounds it in his *Sentences* commentary; one such attempt may be found in Lynch (1962, pp. 113-125).

<sup>172</sup> ...*ex gratia in baptismo percepta habeat unde stet, non tamen hoc habet ex gratia specialiter ordinata ad robur contra debilitatem quae est ex fomite deprimente...et si debeat hoc robur haberi, necessarium est confirmari* (*In IV Sentent., dist. VII, A, art. 1*; Borgnet, 1894, p. 150).



baptismal life – perhaps a new phase in that indwelling and work of the Holy Trinity originally initiated at Baptism, within the soul of the confirmand.

Albert maintains in the *Summa* that since three sacraments – Baptism, Ordination and Confirmation – cannot be repeated, and since the first two impart a character, Confirmation must impart a character as well; whereas the character of Baptism is to distinguish the faithful from the unfaithful (*distinguit secundum esse fidei et infidelitatis*), the character of Confirmation is to make us recruits in Christ’s militia (*pertinet ad t[ri]rones, et confirmat nos tir[on]um Christi*). This is consistent with the point I have made already, namely, that character should be understood as an answer to the question “Who is this?”; it is not visible to the senses but perceptible to the intellect in the light of the steps one has undertaken in the Christian mysteries. It is not itself a power or grace but is an identity correlated with certain duties and therefore certain graces and powers. Albert describes character in more detail in his commentary on the *Sentences*, always in terms of healing the *fomes*, the residual effects of fallen nature: it “imprints a sacramental character for the expulsion of the fearfulness that comes from the embers.”<sup>173</sup> In language and categories that are distinctively his own, it is accurate to say that Albert sees the purpose of Confirmation as *robur ad praedicandum*, specifically strength that heals original sin’s residue of fearfulness – fearfulness that dissuades us from proclaiming Christ openly.

### **Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274)**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *Scriptum super Sententiarum* (*liber IV, distinctio VII*); *Summa Theologiae* (III<sup>a</sup>, q. 72); *De articulis fidei et ecclesiae sacramentis* (all from *Corpus Thomisticorum*, online version of *Opera omnia Sancti Thomae*).

Thomas’ writing about Confirmation, taken as a whole, is voluminous, particularly because of the lengthy treatment he gives the sacrament in his *Sentences* commentary (*Scriptum super Sententiarum* [*Sent.*]) which dates from around 1255. He devotes eight articles of that commentary to various aspects of Confirmation, including its proper matter, form, minister and recipient. His second set of articles dealing with *distinctio 7* of Lombard’s fourth Book is of particular interest to us here because he addresses directly the question of Confirmation’s effects. His doctrine of Confirmation in the *Summa*, though much more concise, has the added weight of being his more mature thought on the question.

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<sup>173</sup> *Confirmatio ...imprimit characterem sacramentalem ad expulsionem timiditatis ex fomite provenientis* (*In IV Sentent., dist. VII, A, art. 2*; Borgnet, 1894, p. 153).

So ample is the secondary literature on Thomas' theology of Confirmation that it could provide the framework for a dissertation in its own right. We should have, for instance, to consider Murphy (1950), Swierzowski (1956), Walsh (1988), Perrin (1998), Mohelník (2005), and Miner (2009), to speak only of treatments of Confirmation specifically. The catalogue of works dealing with his general theology of the sacraments is far more extensive still.

In *Sent.*, Thomas posits several features of Confirmation: against the objection that the rite does not seem to have been instituted by Christ, he finds the gesture of imposition of hands prefigured in Jesus' laying of hands on the children in Matthew 19 (*Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 1 a. 2 qc. 1 ad 1) and further on he finds evidence that only bishops should confirm in the apostolic hand-laying of Acts 8 (*Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 3 a. 1 qc. 2 s. c. 1); concerning the "necessity" of it, Thomas affirms that Baptism provides the fullness of what is strictly necessary, whereas Confirmation provides the fullness of abundance to resist the pressures of the world (*plenitudo copiae gratiae ad fortiter resistendum contra pressuras mundi* – *Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 1 a. 2 qc. 2 ad 1), a greater gift of grace (*in confirmatione additur amplius munus gratiae* – *Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 1 a. 2 qc. 2 ad 3). Thus Confirmation is necessary to flourish as a Christian in the world, but not necessary for salvation. How is it useful? It is for the perfection of grace (*hoc sacramentum est ad perfectionem gratiae* – *Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 1 a. 2 qc. 1 ad 3), ordered against the weakness of sin (*contra morbum peccati ordinatur* – *Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 1 a. 1 qc. 2 arg. 2) and for increase in good (*ad accessum ad bonum* – *Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 1 a. 1 qc. 2 arg. 3). This healing of weakness and strengthening in goodness is more specifically a strengthening for spiritual combat (*confirmationis sacramentum detur ad roborandum in pugna spirituali* – *Sent.*, lib. 4 d. 7 q. 2 a. 1 qc. 1 arg. 1), an effect Thomas posits repeatedly in this work (see, e.g., q. 1 a. 2 qc. 2 arg. 5, and q. 3 a. 2 qc. 2 arg. 2). He understands this *robur ad pugnam* not in an ascetical, but in a martyrial sense: he actually denies that Confirmation is directed to the universal obligation to combat that which threatens one's own salvation, and instead argues that the *robur* it provides is ordered to persevering strongly in the fight against one who insults the name of Christ, to remaining a steadfast confessor of Christ, to confessing the faith and to fighting on its behalf (*ad persistendum fortiter in pugna qua quis nomen Christi impugnat, et ut invictus confessor Christi permaneat* – *Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 2 a. 1 qc. 1 ad 1; *ad confitendum fidem, et ad pugnandum pro ipsa* – q. 3 a. 2 qc. 2 arg. 2).

Thomas agrees, in the *Sentences* commentary, that Confirmation imparts a character. He explains (*Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 2 a. 1 qc. 1 s. c. 1) that character is a sign conforming us to the Holy

Trinity (*signum conformans nos Trinitati*); in Baptism, the character of faith is inscribed, conforming us to divine wisdom (*in baptismo imprimatur character fidei, conformans nos divinae sapientiae*), while in Orders the character of power is inscribed, conforming us to divine power (*in ordine character potestatis, conformans nos divinae potentiae*); in Confirmation the character of the fullness of the Holy Spirit is inscribed, conforming us to divine goodness (*in confirmatione imprimatur character plenitudinis Spiritus Sancti, conformans nos divinae bonitatis*). We should not be surprised that multiple distinct characters (namely that of each of the three sacraments named) should conform us to the one Trinity; this claim implies no compromise of the divine unity, for the Father has only one perfect representation, namely the Son; but in the case of imperfect representations, it is possible to have many diverse representations of the same simple reality, so it is fitting that different characters in the soul should conform in diverse ways to the Trinity.<sup>174</sup>

Moreover:

through character one is reckoned as part of the family of Jesus Christ; Christ being our Father, our Priest and our King. As through Baptismal character we become joined to Christ as sons of the Father, and through the character of Ordination we become as ministers of the High Priest, so in the character inscribed at Confirmation we become as ministers of the King.<sup>175</sup>

A confirmed Catholic, then, is an intrepid, faithful Minister who is a defender of her Sovereign's honour and claims.

In book 4 (d. 7, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, s. c. 1 and 2) of the *Sent.*, Thomas asks (as Albert did) whether Confirmation confers *gratia gratum faciens*, sanctifying grace; he considers that it does, for reasons similar to Albert's: namely, that Confirmation entails a gift of the Holy Spirit, and – while it does not remit guilt – it heals the *poenam* that arises from and leads to guilt, an effect cognate with the remission of guilt that results from sanctifying baptismal grace. It may be helpful to recall that the Catholic understanding of original sin is simply the flipside of Catholic anthropology: we were created for communion and friendship with God, for a life in which God shapes each

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<sup>174</sup> *Sed si non sit perfecta repraesentatio, tunc possunt esse diversae assimilationes ad unum simplex; et ideo diversae creaturae diversimode secundum suum modum divinam similitudinem habent; et propter hoc non est inconueniens, si sint diversi characteres in anima, Trinitati secundum diversa conformantes* (*Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 2 a. 1 qc. 2 ad 1).

<sup>175</sup> *Praeterea, per characterem quasi ascribimur ad familiam Jesu Christi. Sed Christus sicut est pater noster et sacerdos, ita est et rex noster. Cum ergo per characterem baptismalem ascribamur ei quasi patri filii regenerati per Baptismum, et per characterem ordinis quasi ministri sacerdoti summo, videtur quod simili ratione in confirmatione debeat imprimi character, quo conformemur ei quasi minister regi* (*Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 2 a. 1 qc. 1 s. c. 2).

person. Where God is seriously rejected, that same human identity cannot flourish. Thus Baptism “washes away” original sin not indeed by washing anything away, but by giving life, new life in Christ and communion with the Holy Trinity. That new life, that presence and action of God, is sanctifying grace. If Confirmation confers sanctifying grace, as Aquinas argues, his point is not that it takes the place of Baptism but that, like Baptism, it excludes sin by restoring or fostering friendship with God. In short, sanctifying grace is not a thing but a Person, *viz.* the three divine Persons of the Trinity, and communion with those Persons; if Aquinas says that Confirmation imparts sanctifying grace it must be the case that one can receive sanctifying grace while already in a state of sanctifying grace: that friendship with God can grow and flourish and thereby exclude more and more that which hinders holiness.

A remarkable feature of Thomas’ doctrine of Confirmation in the *Sent.* (repeated in the *Summa*) is his opinion that simple priests, not only bishops, are able to confirm, a position that we saw only hinted at in Fishacre. Aquinas’ general response to this question is that the Pope, who has the fullness of pontifical power, may commission a priest to “promote to any perfection” which pertains not to the “true body of the Lord” but only his “mystical body.” Just as a priest, he reasons, cannot ordain to the priesthood under any circumstances, but with a papal mandate may confer minor orders, similarly, with a papal mandate, simple priests can confirm.<sup>176</sup>

In the *Summa theologiae* [*ST*], Thomas’ thought concerning Confirmation has undergone a certain evolution. He finds Christ’s institution of the sacrament in that profoundly pneumatological passage of the Gospel, John 16, where Christ “instituted this sacrament not by delivering, but by promising” (*non exhibendo, sed promittendo* - *ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 1 ad 1), namely, promising the Paraclete Spirit – a promise that was not to be fulfilled until Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension.<sup>177</sup> This pneumatological reading of Confirmation is reinforced by Thomas’ interpretation of Acts 2: “The Holy Spirit filled the whole house, which means the Church, and afterwards it is written that all were filled with the Holy Spirit. But [Confirmation] is given that the same fullness may result.”<sup>178</sup> Thomas also writes less in the *ST* than he did in *Sent.* about hand-laying, and more about chrism, as the matter of the sacrament.

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<sup>176</sup> *Et ideo dicendum, quod promovere ad illas perfectiones quae non respiciunt corpus domini verum, sed solum corpus mysticum, potest a Papa, qui habet plenitudinem pontificalis potestatis, committi sacerdoti, qui habet actum summum super corpus domini verum* (*Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 7 q. 3 a. 1 qc. 3 co.).

<sup>177</sup> Thomas here quotes John 7:39 (RSV): “...as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

<sup>178</sup> *...spiritus sanctus veniens replevit totam domum, per quam significatur Ecclesia, et postea subditur quod repleti sunt omnes spiritu sancto. Sed ad illam plenitudinem consequendam hoc sacramentum datur* (*ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 8 s. c.).

His first description of the purpose of Confirmation compares it to the growth and maturity of a person as compared with his initial birth: “Thus one receives spiritual life through Baptism, which is spiritual regeneration. And in Confirmation, one comes to the perfect age of the spiritual life, as it were.”<sup>179</sup>

This perfect age of the spiritual life, this growth and maturity of the baptized person, “conforms” the confirmed to Christ (*Christo conformantur*) who is full of grace and truth, for it is the sacrament of the plenitude of grace (*quae est sacramentum plenitudinis gratiae* – *ST* III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 1 ad 4). This echoes what Aquinas wrote about Confirmation character in the *Sent.*, that it is the “fullness of the Holy Spirit.” The “fullness of the Holy Spirit is given more particularly for spiritual strength that coincides with perfect age” – the age at which one begins to communicate with others.<sup>180</sup> Thomas’ Confirmation *robur* is thus a strength ordered to mature communication with others, a *robur ad praedicandum* – a spiritual maturity which, he takes pains to insist, has nothing to do with bodily age (see *ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 8 ad 2).

Thomas’ doctrine of the character inscribed by Confirmation shows much continuity with his earlier treatment. Character is the basis for the unrepeatability of the sacrament; the character proper to Confirmation consists of “the capacity for those actions which pertain to spiritual combat against the enemies of the faith.”<sup>181</sup> This combat is proper to the spiritually mature: Confirmation empowers those who are already believers for further struggle. The spiritual character (*character spiritualis*, *ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 5 ad 3) inscribed by Confirmation is the spiritual virility and maturity – irrespective of physical age – to fight against the *hostes fidei*. Confirmational character, for Aquinas, is a “distinctive sign, distinguishing not the faithful from non-believers but rather the spiritually advanced from those of whom it said ‘they are like newborn infants’.”<sup>182</sup>

Even more consistent with his doctrine in the *Scriptum super Sententiarum* is his teaching that Confirmation bestows sanctifying grace because it entails the gift of the Holy Spirit and because its effects complement the baptismal remission of sins. He describes in greater detail than he did in *Sent.* what this complement means: “sanctifying grace is not only given for the remission of guilt

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<sup>179</sup> *Sic igitur et vitam spiritualem homo accipit per Baptismum, qui est spiritualis regeneratio. In confirmatione autem homo accipit quasi quandam aetatem perfectam spiritualis vitae* (*ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 1 co.).

<sup>180</sup> *...in hoc sacramento datur plenitudo spiritus sancti ad robur spirituale, quod competit perfectae aetati. Homo autem, cum ad perfectam aetatem pervenerit, incipit iam communicare actiones suas ad alios* (*ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 2 co.).

<sup>181</sup> *...in confirmatione accipit potestatem ad agendum ea quae pertinent ad pugnam spiritualem contra hostes fidei* (*ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 5 co.).

<sup>182</sup> *Et ideo character confirmationis est signum distinctivum, non infidelium a fidelibus, sed spiritualiter provectorum ab his quibus dicitur, sicut modo geniti infantes* (*ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 5 ad. 1).

but for the increase and reinforcing of righteousness. And this is conferred in this sacrament [of Confirmation].”<sup>183</sup> In *ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 62 a. 2 ad 3, Thomas writes that “the relationship between sacramental grace and grace in the general sense is like the relationship between species and genus.”<sup>184</sup> The sacramental grace of Confirmation is both like and unlike the grace by which the baptized is justified; both are instances of sacramental grace, and so stand in relation to each other as species within a genus, inasmuch as each has a specific, defining effect; but the grace of Baptism is the sanctifying, justifying grace upon which all other sacraments build, and so the grace of Confirmation may be said to build on that of Baptism (see *ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 7 ad 3). His urging, in the *ST*’s eighth article on the sacrament, that Confirmation ought to be given to the dying, recalls Sicardus of Cremona’s insight that without being necessary for salvation, Confirmation may yet cause one soul to differ from another, as one star differs from another in brightness.

In his eleventh article in the *Summa* (*ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 11 ad 1) Thomas comes to the same conclusion about the minister of the sacrament as he had in *Sent.*; with a papal mandate, even a simple priest might confirm.<sup>185</sup> However, so important is it for a bishop to be the one to confirm when possible that Thomas considers that this consideration trumps the admitted importance of maintaining the connection between Baptism and Confirmation (*ST* III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 ...). Better to separate Baptism and Confirmation than to fall short of the full meaning of Confirmation expressed when a bishop is its minister.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> ...*gratia gratum faciens non solum datur ad remissionem culpae, sed etiam ad augmentum et firmitatem iustitiae. Et sic confertur in hoc sacramento* (*ST*, III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 7 ad 1).

<sup>184</sup> ...*ratio sacramentalis gratiae se habet ad gratiam communiter dictam sicut ratio speciei ad genus.*

<sup>185</sup> Thomas’ Confirmation doctrine in *De articulis fidei et ecclesiae sacramentis* does not differ from what we find in the two works considered here. The crux of his doctrine is here expressed pithily: “The effect of this sacrament is that the Holy Spirit is given to [us] for strength, as he was given to the Apostles at Pentecost, namely that the Christian may boldly confess the name of Christ.” (*Effectus autem huius sacramenti est quod in eo datur spiritus sanctus ad robur, sicut datus est apostolis in die Pentecostes, ut scilicet Christianus audacter confiteatur nomen Christi*). Where the brief consideration of Confirmation in this work differs most substantially from *Sent.* and *ST* is in its plain and simple denial of the “error of the Greeks,” namely, that a priest can confirm. As we have seen this is certainly not Thomas’ last word on the subject.

<sup>186</sup> G. Dix (1946, p. 24) is guilty of an egregious lapse here; he is so intent on denouncing the perversity of the mediaeval theologians for following Lombard, and for perpetuating Lombard’s omission of the clause from Gratian that affirmed the connection between Baptism and Confirmation, that he includes Thomas in his condemnation despite Thomas’ unmistakable awareness of that teaching and his considered opinion on it.

### **Bonaventure (c.1217 – 1274)**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *In IV Sententiarum*, distinctio 7 (from *Opera omnia Sancti Bonaventurae*, ed. Peltier, 1866, vol. 5); *Breviloquium* (VI, 8) (de Vinck (trans.), 1963, pp. 249-251).

Bonaventure, an Italian Franciscan, was a contemporary and friend of Aquinas and a student, among others, of Alexander of Hales and William of Middleton. His doctrine of Confirmation in the *Breviloquium* consists of three elements: an extremely concise description of its effects (“By this sacrament, a man is strengthened as a soldier of Christ, prepared to confess His name publicly and courageously” – Bonaventure, 1963, p. 249); a discussion of what this “confession” of Christ entails; and an enquiry into the connection between the ritual of Confirmation (anointing with oil and balsam on the forehead, with a set form of words) and this “confession.” A “fitting” confession of faith, Bonaventure writes, is “truthful,” not just “speculative but also practical”, arising from mind and heart; and it is “whole, acceptable, and courageous” (p. 250). Confirmation is meant as a “complement” to Baptism, the “strengthening hand of heavenly grace” since we are too “fainthearted” without divine grace to manifest this courage. The wholeness that Bonaventure posits is an integrity of faith, including profession of the Incarnation and Cross of Jesus, and the “acceptability” he posits arises from an “enlightened” mind and “purified” conscience (p. 250).

A summary of the main points of Bonaventure’s Confirmation doctrine in his commentary on the *Sentences*, on the questions that have interested us in this chapter, reads as a *précis* of what had become the standard Catholic position, and would shortly be codified in the councils of Constance, Florence and Trent. Confirmation was instituted not directly by Christ (though he promised it when he promised the Spirit), but by the Apostles – who had to wait until after Jesus’ Ascension to receive the Holy Spirit, whom they received fully at Pentecost (Bonaventure, 1866, pp. 402 and 404) . It is conferred by bishops, the Apostles’ successors, but priests may confirm under certain circumstances (p. 400). It imparts a character and is unrepeatable (p. 401), and it imparts sanctifying grace (pp. 406 and 408). It serves to strengthen and embolden for the sake of “spiritual combat” – more precisely, for the sake of confessing Christ’s name, healed of that fearfulness that results from original sin (p. 410).

Though Bonaventure expresses a standard doctrine of Confirmation’s effects, some of his observations are especially lapidary: “The grace of Confirmation is added on top of the grace of



Baptism and has a distinct effect, namely the eradication of fearfulness...Sanctifying grace is one in the soul, but many and varied in its effect.”<sup>187</sup> Or: “In this sacrament grace is given for strengthening faith, as much for stout-heartedness as for open, vocal confession.”<sup>188</sup> And a third example: “Confirmation does not confer sanctifying grace to make the impious devout, but to make the devout more pious.”<sup>189</sup>

Connolly (1963) concludes that for Bonaventure, whose doctrine of character “corresponds” to Albert’s, “character is a certain spiritual quality of the soul, not a “power” or a “passion” (to use the Aristotelian terms that Bonaventure did) but a “habit” which “connotes assimilation and configuration to Christ” and is a “disposition”, albeit a perpetual one, to a “further perfection, namely grace” (pp. 131, 134, 136). This is very consistent with what I have been proposing with respect to Alexander and Albert, namely, that character is a matter of identity, that it answers the question “Who is this?” and is not itself a power or grace but is correlated with an identity that entails certain duties and therefore certain graces and abilities.

### **Richard of Middleton (Mediavilla, Menneville) (c. 1249 – 1300)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Super quatuor libros Sententiarum* (Brescia, 1591, pp. 85-94).

The *Sentences* commentary of Franciscan friar Richard of Middleton holds no surprises insofar as its Confirmation doctrine is concerned, though as always the unique arguments that this or any author brings to bear in pursuit of his *Sentences*-inspired enquiry are interesting and worth noting. The effect of the sacrament is that the Holy Spirit is given for “increase and strength” (*per confirmationem spiritus sancti datur augmentum, et robur* – p. 86); the matter of the sacrament is prefigured in the apostolic hand-laying whereby the Holy Spirit was given in a visible sign (*per impositionem manuum Apostolorum dabatur spiritus sanctus in signo visibili* – p. 87); like Thomas, but unlike many before him, Richard considers that only bishops may confirm *ex ordinaria potestate*, but that simple priests may confirm *ex domini Papae commissione* (p. 88), to which he adds that a defrocked or laicized (*degradatus*) bishop is capable of confirming, but ought not to (p. 89). Like most writers of the period, Richard agrees that Confirmation imparts a character –

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<sup>187</sup> ...*gratiae baptismali superadditur gratia confirmationis, quae habet alium effectum, scilicet ablationem pusillanimitas...Gratia enim in anima una est gratum faciens, sed effectus sunt multi et varii* (Peltier, 1866, p. 408).

<sup>188</sup> ...*in hoc sacramento datur gratia ad robur fidei quantum ad confirmationem in corde, et quantum ad confessionem in ore* (Peltier, 1866, p. 403).

<sup>189</sup> *Confirmatio gratiam gratum facientem confert non de impio pium facientem, sed de pio magis pium* (Peltier, 1866, p. 406).

one that distinguishes the Christian in fighting-form from one who is weak (*ut distinguatur christianus pugil a debili* – p. 90) – and that it confers sanctifying grace, for the familiar reason that it is not so much against guilt (the way baptismal grace is) as against the consequences left behind by guilt (*gratia gratum faciens, non est tantum contra culpam: sed etiam contra poenam derelictam ex culpa* – p. 91). To be even more precise, we should have to clarify that sanctifying grace does not flood the soul once sin is removed; rather, it is sanctifying grace (*i.e.* friendship with God) that excludes and heals sin and all that alienates one from God.

It is unrepeatable, for the power it confers is permanent, even if the weakness it combats is recurring (pp. 92-93).

### **Walter [Gautier] of Bruges [Brugghe] (c. 1225 – 1307)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Commentarius in IV Librum Sententiarum* (in Lynch, 1957, pp. 162-174).

Walter was a Franciscan, provincial of the French Friars Minor and later bishop of Poitiers. He affirms that Confirmation is a sign and cause of grace (*signum et causam gratiae* – Lynch, 1962, p. 168) given – as he repeats four times – for strength against interior fear and outward shame (*hoc sacramentum datur in robur contra timorem interiorem et contra erubescitiam exteriorem* – p. 162; see variations of the phrase on pp. 163, 165 and 168). It makes the recipient a fighter for God and a defender of the faith (*facit suscipientem Dei pugilem et fidei defensorum*, p. 163). Walter notes two contrary opinions concerning the minister of Confirmation, and affirms his own position as a middle way between them: he considers that simple priests can confirm with a papal mandate, but are unable to ordain under any circumstances (see p. 167). It confers a character, that is, a “distinctive sign” (*signum distinctivum*). Walter compares the three character-bestowing sacraments to a soldier’s relationship with the regiment (Baptism), the regiment’s relationship with the people (Confirmation), and the officer’s relationship with all others (Orders). Like the soldier vis-à-vis the untrained populace, the confirmed Christian is distinguished by the sacramental character from those who are not vigorous enough to defend the faith.<sup>190</sup> The imparting of this character is one of the reasons Walter gives for the unrepeatability of Confirmation; the other reason he provides is that the sickness (*morbus*) that Confirmation is meant to heal does not recur. The latter rationale is intriguing since it seems to fly in the face of the lived experience of Christians; if Confirmation

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<sup>190</sup> *Distiguuntur...in hoc exercitu milites Christi, defensores fidei, per characterem confirmationis a simplicibus et debilibus fidem defendere non valentibus* (Lynch, 1957, p. 170).

is meant to cure pusillanimity, it must do so in some very special sense if we are to claim that the confirmed suffer from it no longer, since it is clearly the case that confirmed Christians are as liable to fear and discouragement as anyone. Walter is presumably not flagrantly ignoring blatant evidence to the contrary; he must have meant that those cured of apostolic timidity by Confirmation are no longer susceptible to its depredations in the sense that trust in God's promises assures us that the faithful will not be forsaken. This is an important challenge in understanding, not just Confirmation, but all the sacraments: for the most part, they do not seem to make a visible or at least measurable difference in the lives of the faithful, so that their efficacy is a matter of faith or principle, not of evidence.

Confirmation bestows grace as well as a character; grace is given in two ways, either to make someone who is ungracious into someone gracious (*fiat homo de non grato gratus*) or to make the gracious person more so (*fiat de grato magis gratus*, p. 172). Walter thus concludes that since the soul does not have "parts", and grace pertains to the entire soul, one cannot speak of the grace of Baptism and Confirmation as different graces (*impossibile est quod hae sint duae gratiae per essentiam differentes*); instead, the grace of Confirmation should be understood as an increase in baptismal grace (*gratia confirmationis auget gratiam baptismalem* – p. 172). Walter's point here is a crucial one, although not chiefly for the reasons he identifies. While it may be true that the soul does not have parts, it is more to the point to recall that God does not have parts, is not bestowed in packets. If both Baptism and Confirmation entail grace, then they entail the presence of the same God, albeit in different ways and for different ends; the grace of Baptism and Confirmation respectively is the same grace. This corrects the view of William and Albert, that the various sacraments are distinguished by the ostensibly diverse graces that are proper to them.

Walter's doctrine is not innovative, but his vocabulary is distinctive, and the clarity with which he explains character and grace is helpful: in Walter's account, Confirmation is merely a completion and perfection (in the sense of an actualization) of baptismal grace, and in that sense implies no defect or rival to the centrality of Baptism in Christian initiation; on the other hand, Confirmation is quite distinct from Baptism by virtue of the new permanent character it confers. Consider the contrast on this point with William of Auxerre's doctrine, in which the character conferred by Confirmation is not different from the one imprinted at Baptism, but consists simply in an "arrangement" or ordering of the grace there received.

### **Gilbert of Tournai [G(u)i(l)bertus Tornacensis] (d. 1284)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Tractatus de officio episcopi et ecclesiae caeremoniis* (Maxima Bibliotheca Patrum, Lyons, 1677, vol. XXV, ch. 43, p. 417).

Gilbert's treatment of Confirmation is entirely conventional: the Franciscan friar states that in Confirmation the Holy Spirit is given for strength (*in qua confirmatione datur Spiritus sanctus ad robur*, p. 417), that one is signed with the Cross so as not to be confounded in confessing the ignominy of the Cross before humanity, and that the anointing of Confirmation is like the unction of a fighter, "wrestling against vice and the devil" (*luctans contra vitia & Daemones*). We can see in Gilbert's concise treatment elements both of an ascetical *robur ad pugnam* and of *robur ad praedicandum*.

### **John Duns Scotus (c. 1265 – 1308)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Ordinatio IV, dist. 7* in *Opera omnia*, (vol. 11, edited by B. Hechich *et al.* Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 2008).

John was born at Duns in the county of Berwickshire in Scotland. He became a Franciscan, and worked in Oxford, in Paris and (like Albert the Great) in Cologne. Scotus' commentary on *distinctio 7* of the *Sentences* begins with a rich definition:

Confirmation (or the sacrament of Confirmation) is the anointing of a wayfarer, who never consensually or of his own free will received it before in any way; the anointing is done on the forehead, with sanctified chrism in the shape of a cross, by a suitable minister having at that time of anointing the needed intention, using certain words. By divine institution it effectively signifies the divine anointing of the soul by strengthening grace, for the sake of confessing faith in Christ with assurance.<sup>191</sup>

Duns Scotus expands at greater length on the significance, for the sacraments, of consent, and of the adult's use of reason, in his remarks on Baptism (see *Ordinatio IV*, dist. 4 p. 2 q. 1).

Duns Scotus sees a possible objection to the divine institution of Confirmation in the fact that Jesus did not set a precedent for any kind of anointing or chrismation; instead he breathed on

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<sup>191</sup> *Confirmatio seu sacramentum confirmationis est unctio hominis viatoris, aliquantulum consentientis vel libero arbitrio nunquam usi, facta in fronte in figura crucis, cum chrismate sanctificato, et hoc a ministro idoneo, simul cum intentione debita in unguento, certa verba proferente, efficaciter significans ex institutione divina unctionem animae per gratiam roborantem, ad confitendum cum fiducia fidem Christi* (*Ordinatio*, lib. 4, dist. 7, *exordium*). For a discussion of the mediaeval concept of *homo viator*, see Ladner (1967).

the disciples and sent the Spirit in the form of tongues of flame (*insufflavit et dedit discipulis Spiritum Sanctum, et Act. 2 quando misso Spiritu Sancto in linguis igneis confirmabantur – Ordinatio, lib. 4, dist.7, exordium III*).

Scotus is in agreement with his predecessors and contemporaries that Confirmation is not necessary for salvation *simpliciter*, but it is necessary in the sense that it cannot be omitted out of disdain (*sic tamen quod non contemnat*); like Thomas and other writers, he acknowledges that not just bishops but those whom they commission are able to confirm (*Minister autem est episcopus vel alius cui committi poterit - Ordinatio, lib. 4, exordium II*). He considers it not only sinful (if done knowingly), but ineffectual to repeat the sacrament, because (as Walter of Bruges also held) the particular sickness against which it is the remedy does not recur, although other sicknesses might (*morbus, ut contra ipsum est ista medela, non iteratur, licet aliter possit iterari - Ordinatio, lib. 4, dist. 7 q. 3*). This seems like a tendentious position, a *petitio principii*: “Confirmation remedies the *morbus* of pusillanimity,” this argument goes, “and is not repeated because the *morbus* does not recur. If a *morbus* seems to recur, then it cannot be the *morbus* remedied by Confirmation, because Confirmation remedies the *morbus* of pusillanimity, and is not repeated because the *morbus* does not recur...”

### **Durand [Durandus] of St. Pourçain (c. 1275 – 1344)**

Principal work(s) where Confirmation is discussed: *In IV Sent.* (distinctio vii, q. 2) (in Durand, 1563, pp. 264-267).

Durand was a member of the Dominicans and served as bishop in turn of Limoux, Le Puy and Meaux. His treatment of Lombard’s book IV, *distinctio 7* fills about nine columns in the 1563 Lyons edition; of these, fully five-and-a-half columns are devoted to one specific problem, namely, whether anyone other than a bishop may confirm. We have seen throughout the mediaeval period that every theologian whom we have examined affirms that the bishop is the proper minister of Confirmation, although a few in the latter part of this era concede that priests might be ministers of Confirmation, provided they have a papal mandate, while others laconically deny that priests can ever confirm. In no author have I found such a robust and vigorous opposition to the claim that priests can confirm as in Durand. His categorical conclusion, based on his premise that Christ and not the Church determines the matter, form, and minister of each sacrament, is that:

If, by Christ's institution, only bishops are ministers of Confirmation, in no way can the Pope's mandate empower simple priests to confer this sacrament...Either a simple priest is a minister of Confirmation by divine institution and is therefore able to confer it [even] without a papal mandate, or he is not a minister [of Confirmation]...<sup>192</sup>

Durand warns that it is dangerous (*periculosa*) to make our faith in the sacraments depend on the free will of one man (*quod fides quam habemus de sacramentis dependeret ex libera voluntate unius hominis* – lib. 4, dist. 4, q. 3; Durand, 1563, p. 265). In contrast, he concedes that the Pope has the authority to dispense from requirements as to the minister, when it comes to sacramentals established by the Church (*in sacramentalibus per ecclesiam institutis Papa potest dispensare circa ministrum* – q. 4, p. 267).

Durand raises very important questions about the minister of the sacrament of Confirmation. It seems clear that for Durand, only a bishop has the power to confirm; priests do not have this power, and it cannot be delegated to them. The claim that priests can confirm of their own authority, Aquinas describes as the “error of the Greeks”; he maintains that priests can confirm provided they have received a papal mandate. The current practice of the Latin Church is complex: bishops always have faculties to confirm, and priests *automatically* have the power to confirm adults whom they baptize, but they must be *given* faculties by their bishop to confirm youngsters, or adults who were previously baptized. This means that, for the Latin Church, the power to confer Confirmation does not depend exclusively on episcopal *status*, unlike Holy Orders, which only a bishop can confer; presbyteral ministers of Confirmation do not even necessarily require an explicit episcopal *mandate* (though an implicit mandate can be said to exist by virtue of being a priest in good standing incardinated in a diocese or community, and by virtue of the canon giving such priests authority to confirm adult catechumens). This raises the question: If a priest were to attempt to confirm, let us say, an adult previously baptized, but without having received the faculties to do so, would that Confirmation be valid but illicit, or would it be invalid? If the latter, then Confirmation is an unusual sacrament, in that validity is contingent on permission, which appears to be in fact the case. In contrast, while a priest who is not authorized to absolve sins or celebrate the Eucharist publicly in a given diocese acts illicitly if he attempts

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<sup>192</sup> *Si autem ex institutione Christi solus episcopus sit minister confirmationis, nullo modo simplex sacerdos ex commissione Papae potest hoc sacramenti conferre...aut simplex sacerdos ex divina institutione est minister confirmationis et tunc absque commissione Pape potest eam conferre, aut non est minister...*(lib. 4, d. 7 q. 4; Durand, 1563, p. 266).

these sacraments anyway, nevertheless the sacraments illicitly conferred are valid. This means Confirmation is more like Marriage than like the Eucharist; because of the significant social implications of the sacrament of Matrimony, its validity is contingent on the array of conditions known collectively as “canonical form”. A marriage celebrated without canonical form is not sacramental; a Confirmation celebrated without episcopal mandate (*i.e.* by a bishop, by a formally delegated priest, or by a priest acting within the specific parameters described above) is not valid. The Latin practice emphasises how deeply Confirmation’s meaning is rooted in the bishop’s ministry and, by extension, the apostolic ministry. This is actually not seriously at odds with the Eastern Christian understanding; in the East as well, the bishop’s ministry is essential. In the East the bishop is always present by means of the *myron* which he alone can consecrate.

In other respects, Durand’s treatment of Confirmation is conventional, albeit articulate; he describes the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation this way: “although in times of peace the virtue of faith suffices for the simple confession of faith, it does not suffice for the confession of faith amid persecutors, where there is the danger of death - for which the virtue of fortitude is needed with faith.”<sup>193</sup>

### **Council of Constance (1415)**

Principal mention of Confirmation: Session 8, condemned article 28; and session 15, condemned article 8 (English translation in Tanner (ed.), 1990, pp. 412-422).

The Council of Constance was convoked from 1414-1418 to address the Great Western Schism, and to confront the teaching of Wyclif and Hus. The teaching of the Council of Constance on Confirmation is limited to affirming in a general way its dignity and usefulness. It indirectly affirms this by condemning two opinions:

Confirming the young, ordaining clerics and consecrating places have been reserved to the pope and bishops because of their greed for temporal gain and honour (session 8, condemned article no. 28).

As for the oil with which bishops anoint boys and the linen cloth which goes around the head, it seems that this is a trivial rite which is unfounded in scripture; and that this confirmation,

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<sup>193</sup> *Licet enim ad simplicem confessionem fidei tempore pacis sufficiat virtus fidei, tamen ad confessionem fidei coram persecutore ubi est periculum mortis, non sufficit fides, sed cum fide requiritur virtus fortitudinis* (lib. 4 d. 7 q. 1; Durand, 1563, p. 264).



which was introduced after the apostles, blasphemes against God (session 15, condemned article no. 8).

The modest positive doctrine one can extrapolate from these condemnations is simply that Confirmation is neither trivial nor blasphemous, that it presumably was not introduced only after the Apostles, and that it is indeed founded in Scripture.

### **Denys the Carthusian [Denys van Leeuwen, Denys Ryckel] (c. 1402 – 1471)**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *Summa Fidei Orthodoxae* (IV, 96); *In IV Sententiarum* (d. vii) (in *Opera omnia Dionysii Cartusiani*, Tornaci, 1904, vol. 24, p. 9 and pp. 181-201).

Denys was a Flemish monk of the austere and solitary Carthusian order, and earned the sobriquet “the Ecstatic Doctor.” His treatment of Confirmation in his commentary on the *Sentences* is a pastiche of many authors now familiar to us, whom he cites explicitly, repeatedly and at length. The sources he names include Thomas, Bonaventure, Albert, Duns Scotus, William of Auxerre, William of Auvergne (*Gulielmus Parisiensis episcopus*), Durand of Saint-Pourcain, Peter (probably Peter of Trabibus, in the light of the account of the latter’s views as summarized by Lynch, 1962, pp. 251-265), Hugh of Strasbourg (*Argentiniensis*), and of course the earlier Denys. His doctrine of the effects is summarized by his affirmation, following Bonaventure, that Confirmation confers the sanctifying grace that makes the gracious person more gracious, not the sanctifying grace of Baptism, which makes the ungracious person gracious in the first place (1904, p. 195). It makes her more gracious by working against the fear and pusillanimity that are not themselves guilty, but are the consequences of human guilt. We see from this example that the notion of multiple advents of the one Spirit, multiple gifts of the one sanctifying grace, became commonplace and quite standard as the Middle Ages advanced, and not a source of perplexity.

### **Council of Florence (1439)**

The council of Florence was a continuation of the council of Ferrara and was intended to address the schism between Greek and Latin Christians. Florence’s teaching on Confirmation is found in its *Decree for the Armenians*, which is widely seen as closely modeled on Aquinas’ doctrine in *De articulis* (see, e.g. Carra de Vaux Saint-Cyr, 1961, p. 17). This Decree formally affirms that there are specifically “seven sacraments of the new Law, namely baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders and matrimony” (Council of Florence, *Decree for the Armenians*;

English translation from Denzinger, 2012, no. 1310); it states that “by confirmation we grow in grace and are strengthened in faith” and that “three of the sacraments, namely baptism, confirmation and orders, imprint indelibly on the soul a character, that is a kind of stamp which distinguishes it from the rest. Hence they are not repeated in the same person.” The Decree provides the matter of Confirmation (“oil and balsam blessed by a bishop”), the form of words, and the “ordinary” minister, namely a bishop. The Council explains:

Whereas a simple priest can use other unctions, only a bishop ought to confer this one, because it is said only of the apostles, whose place is held by bishops, that they gave the holy Spirit by the imposition of hands, as this text from the Acts of the Apostles shows [*there follows the text of Acts 8*]...In place of this imposition of hands confirmation is given in the church. We read that sometimes for a reasonable and really urgent cause, by dispensation of the apostolic see, a simple priest has conferred this sacrament of confirmation with chrism prepared by a bishop.

“The effect of this sacrament,” the Decree concludes, “is that a Christian should boldly confess the name of Christ, since the holy Spirit is given in this sacrament for strengthening just as he was given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.”

As Foxen remarks (Foxen, 1975, p. 36), citing Philip Hughes, the contemporary records of discussions surrounding the *Decree for the Armenians* are not extant. It is thus impossible to know what considerations informed Florence’s articulation of indelible sacramental character, though again, as Foxen also states (p. 39), this doctrine is much influenced by Thomas’ *De articulis*. In this work the Angelic Doctor concludes that certain sacraments impart a character on the basis of the fact that they are not repeated.

### **Council of Trent (1545 – 1563)**

The Council of Trent met intermittently for several years to deal with the pastoral, doctrinal and disciplinary challenges posed by the Protestant Reformation and the state of the Roman Catholic Church. The seventh session of Trent, in 1547, issued canons concerning the sacraments in general and each of the sacraments in particular (see Denzinger, 2012, nos. 1601-1630, pp. 389-392). Canons 1, 6 and 9 on the sacraments in general (Denzinger, nos. 1601, 1606 and 1609; see also 1767) define (by condemning the contrary propositions) that

Confirmation is indeed “truly and properly” a sacrament, “instituted by Jesus Christ”; that the sacraments “contain the grace they signify”; and that in Baptism, Confirmation and Orders “a character is...imprinted on the soul, that is, a kind of indelible spiritual sign by reason of which these sacraments cannot be repeated.”

With respect to Confirmation specifically, Trent repeats (Denzinger 1628) that it is a “true and proper sacrament,” and it anathematizes the proposition – rather extreme, one must concede – that Confirmation is “useless.” It also condemns the (at any rate flagrantly unhistorical) claim that Confirmation “was nothing more than a sort of catechesis in which those nearing adolescence gave an account of their faith before the Church.” Canon 2 of the section on Confirmation condemns any who state that “those who ascribe any power to the sacred chrism of confirmation are offending the Holy Spirit” (Denzinger 1929), but from this it strictly follows only that, for Trent, ascribing such power does *not* offend the Holy Spirit – not necessarily that the chrism does indeed have “any” power. Finally, the third canon (Denzinger 1630) affirms, by negation, that the bishop is the “ordinary” minister of Confirmation (*sanctae confirmationis ordinarium ministrum*), repeated in the canons on Holy Orders (Denzinger 1768, 1777).

Trent, in summary, defines that Confirmation is a true and proper sacrament, instituted by Christ, containing the grace that it signifies; that it imparts an indelible and therefore unrepeatable character, and that its ordinary minister is the bishop. Ascribing power to the chrism he uses to confirm is, at least, not offensive to the Holy Spirit. Trent does not provide further guidance as to the nature of the grace signified, contained and conferred, or of the character imprinted, by Confirmation.

Foxen (1975) provides insight concerning what the theologians at the Council understood by “character,” though it is the concrete terms of the Council fathers’ eventual definition, and not the theologians’ likely (and varying) interpretations of what it meant, that is a solemn and irreformable magisterial reference-point of Catholic sacramental theology. Foxen’s account reveals that the principal reasons for the theologians’ restatement of Florence’s teaching on character are, above all, the fact that the character-conferring sacraments are never repeated, along with references to several authorities. The references Foxen catalogues are to the Council of Florence and to Innocent III in his letter *Maiores Ecclesiae Causas* (the two most frequently cited sources, according to Foxen), along with Augustine’s writings against the Donatists, chapter 2 of Denys’ *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia* (which calls the sign traced on the baptizand’s forehead a *sphragis*),

Basil's homily on Baptism, and Jerome's commentary on Ephesians 4. Four passages of Scripture were also cited apropos of character: 2 Corinthians 1:21-22,<sup>194</sup> Ephesians 1:13<sup>195</sup> and 4:30<sup>196</sup> and Revelation 7:5<sup>197</sup>. To these authorities, among whom Augustine's anti-Donatist influence is especially vital, we must add the opinion that "character is posited *ex consensu ecclesiae*" (Foxen, 1975, pp. 32-33). The text from Innocent reads "Thus, then, the sacramental operation impresses the sign, when it does not meet the resisting obstacle of a contrary will" (*Tunc ergo characterem sacramentalis imprimit operatio, cum obicem voluntatis contrariae non invenit obsistentem* – Denzinger, 2012, no. 781, p. 258). It is remarkable to note how more recent treatments of sacramental character confine themselves to essentially the same reference points as those on the table five hundred years earlier: see Murphy (1950), Pabst (1956, pp. 5-6), and Kenny (1958, pp. 8-9).

Foxen notes that the theologians in the lead-up to Trent may have held a number of different views of the weight of Florence's affirmations. He concludes that "it is unlikely that the theologians at Trent would have considered Florence's description of character as a solemn determination of the words according to the precise way they were used by any one school of theology at the time" (p. 40). He continues:

In the absence of any more precise explanation from the records of the theologians' examination [at Trent], we can perhaps conclude that many of the theologians would have considered the pronouncement made by Florence as an authoritative witness determining *de fide* the existence of character received in three sacraments. Others, however, might have considered the statement as a proof or demonstration for the council's teaching on the impossibility of repeating the three sacraments and therefore not itself determined as *de fide* (pp. 40-41).

We shall examine later developments in the doctrine of character as we consider subsequent theologians in their turn in chapter 3, and will return to the problem of sacramental character in general in chapter 4.

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<sup>194</sup> "But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; he has put his **seal** upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee..." (*RSV*).

<sup>195</sup> "In [Christ] you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit..." (*RSV*).

<sup>196</sup> "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption" (*RSV*).

<sup>197</sup> "And I heard the number of the **sealed**, a hundred and forty-four thousand **sealed**, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel..." (*RSV*).

## Conclusion to chapter 2

This has not been an exhaustive enquiry into the Confirmation doctrine of mediaeval theologians, but I have attempted to include the great majority of writers and especially the full range of opinions on the specific question of Confirmation's effects. We have seen that a standard, rather uniform model of Confirmation evolved over the course of the Middle Ages, though many writers made some original and noteworthy contribution, whether it was a fresh simile, Scriptural reference, decision to focus particularly on certain questions or problems, connection made with other aspects of the Catholic faith, or something else. It is true, as has often been said, that the pervasive mediaeval doctrine of Confirmation included an important place for *robur* of one kind or another, and it seems likely that this was due in part to the misattribution of Faustus' *robur*-themed sermon to "Melchiades". This is not the whole story, nor the most important part of the story. First, mediaeval theologies of Confirmation did not universally use *robur* as a description of its effects. Second, even when they did, they very often employed a significantly different understanding of *robur* than we find in Faustus' original text, and more developed than the notion of *robur* that was eventually attributed to "Melchiades" (which is limited to the barest assertion that *robur* is conferred). Third, what is most universal and foundational for mediaeval theologies of Confirmation is its pneumatological significance. Confirmation is above all, for the Scholastics, a gift of the Holy Spirit. This is even true of Faustus, though it is not Faustus' pneumatology that was most often cited.

I shall explain each of these points.

1. As we have seen, from time to time a mediaeval author has proposed a new model of Confirmation that does not fit into the categories we find in Faustus: Bruno of Segni considered that in Confirmation the "entire fullness of the mysteries of the Christian religion is fulfilled," the equivalent of Pentecost which was "for the perfection of all virtue and knowledge"; Honorius of Autun compared Confirmation to the wedding garment, Praepositinus to a dowry, while Sicardus posited that the Christian manifested a greater "brightness" from a greater plenitude of the Holy Spirit, as one star differs from another in clarity. While these could be read as ascetical interpretations, visions of Confirmation that approach it in terms of personal sanctification, they cannot easily be described as species of "*robur*". Instead they reflect the preoccupation of mediaeval theologians to affirm the foundational importance of Baptism while acknowledging that Confirmation is neither as essential as Baptism nor, merely on that account, superfluous. For

an understanding of this role they turn to nature and to the Gospels for comparable relationships between birth *vis-à-vis* growth, infancy *vis-à-vis* maturity, healing from sickness *vis-à-vis* outright health, a passive resistance of the devil *vis-à-vis* an active resistance, an outward confession of Christ *vis-à-vis* an interior faith, and so forth.

2. Next, the magnitude of Faustus/“Melchiades” influence must not be exaggerated. It is certainly present:

- In Ivo of Chartres, Peter Lombard, in *Ysagoge in Theologiam* from the school of Abelard, in Thomas (*ST III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 1 s. c.*) and in many other mediaevals, “Melchiades” is cited to show that a rite involving the imposition of hands by a bishop must be a great sacrament, great like baptism though not greater. This admittedly became a recurring question for mediaevals – which of the two sacraments is “greater”? It may not be an obvious question for us to ask, but it is there in “Melchiades”, and made its way into Lombard and thence into mediaeval theology.
- Thomas cites “Melchiades” statement that Confirmation is a giving of the Holy Spirit for increase in grace and for strength,<sup>198</sup> for *pugnam*,<sup>199</sup> and that it provides the necessary equipping and training for combat in the world.<sup>200</sup>
- Thomas further cites Melchiades to the effect that Baptism and Confirmation are so closely connected that they “should not be separated except by death.” However, Thomas readily supports the legitimacy of a divergent practice – the separation of the two sacraments – on account of what he saw as the obligation to have a bishop celebrate it.<sup>201</sup>

In other words, the mediaevals do find in “Melchiades” a *robur* model of Confirmation directed to combat, a description of Confirmation as the imposition of hands, and an affirmation

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<sup>198</sup> *Melchiades Papa dicit, spiritus sanctus, qui super aquas Baptismi salutifero descendit lapsu, in fonte plenitudinem tribuit ad innocentiam, in confirmatione augmentum praestat ad gratiam. In Baptismo regeneramur ad vitam, post Baptismum roboramur – ST III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 1 co. and III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 7.*

<sup>199</sup> *ST III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 8 arg. 3.*

<sup>200</sup> *...victuris tamen confirmationis beneficia necessaria sunt. Confirmatio armat et instruit ad agones mundi huius et praelia reservandos – ST III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 8 arg. 4.*

<sup>201</sup> *Melchiades Papa dicit, ita coniuncta sunt haec duo sacramenta, scilicet Baptismi et confirmationis, ut ab invicem nisi morte praeviente nullatenus possint segregari, et unum sine altero rite perfici non possit – ST III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 12 ad 1.*

of the importance of the connection between Baptism and Confirmation. They cite these opinions with deference, but do not hesitate to disagree or to move the discussion in other directions. Confirmation was originally an imposition of hands (a point Louis Ligier (1973) and Michael Whitehouse (2008) have made abundantly clear), but Thomas and other mediaevals dwell enthusiastically on Pseudo-Dionysius' rich theology of the *myron*, and on the fittingness of anointing with chrism. (Indeed, Heugel (2003, pp. 181ff.) provides a vivid portrait of the preference given to chrism over hand-laying in mediaeval practice.) For another example, for "Melchiades" Baptism and Confirmation are closely connected, but Thomas does not hesitate to posit a separation between them if the episcopal ministry requires. What Thomas does *not* do is cite "Melchiades" and stop there as though the matter were settled on his authority.

And as for *robur* itself, Aquinas and many of the other scholastics mean something else by it than Faustus did. Faustus is particularly concerned with the ravages of greed (*cupiditas*) in the life of the follower of Christ, and he bears witness to the power of the Holy Spirit to confer wisdom (*sapientia*) to combat greed. Wisdom is one of the seven so-called "gifts of the Holy Spirit", a recurring trope even today in discussions of Confirmation, one that originates in Isaiah 11 and was developed by Ambrose of Milan and Gregory the Great. Through Baptism, Faustus affirms, we are enrolled in an army; through the laying-on of hands we are equipped with those gifts of the Holy Spirit and trained to fight. Whom does Faustus consider that we are fighting? Not against any human being, but against the invisible enemies, the *invisibiles hostes* that threaten our salvation. For Faustus, Confirmation is a means to fight against the enemies of one's salvation (whether interior or exterior), a theme we also find in Geoffrey of Vendôme, Magister Simon, Otto of Bamberg, John Pagus, Guy d'Orchelles and Roland of Cremona

A similar theme, that Confirmation is to Baptism what growth is to birth, a plenitude of the Holy Spirit for doing battle, is developed by Robert Pullus, Hugh of St. Victor and Hugh of St. Cher, but they make no reference to "Melchiades"; if anything, they seem inspired in this vein by the very word *confirmatio* and by its timing to coincide, more or less, with adolescence. John Moussy similarly speaks of Confirmation as a defense against spiteful waylayers (*contra malignos insidiatores*). (Hugh of St. Cher and Roland of Cremona seem to acknowledge both *roburs* – *ad pugnam* and *ad praedicandum*).



Alan of Lille, William of Auvergne and Herbert of Auxerre are preoccupied with Confirmation's effectiveness against one particular threat to the Christian – namely the “seductions” and “false reasonings” of heretics.

For Gueric of St. Quentin, Richard Fishacre, William of Middleton, Albert the Great, Thomas, Bonaventure, Walter of Bruges and Alexander of Hales, the strength of Confirmation is given chiefly for the confessing of the faith. These authors also cite Pseudo-Dionysius' *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and its profound meditation on the chrism, the *myron*, as has been mentioned. These theologians speak of confirmational *robur* as a permanent feature of the confirmed Christian; a gift of the Holy Spirit like the one that animated the Christian community in Acts 2, a gift that counters the shame and fearfulness that might dissuade one from witnessing to Christ, and inspires boldness to aid in that act of witness. These theologians are far more interested in the significance of the Pentecost event – and in the possibility that the Pentecost event may be available today for the baptized Christian – than they are in the pronouncement of “Melchiades”, though that is treated with deference. Their theology of Confirmation is not ascetical, not preoccupied above all with personal sanctification and combat against purely interior temptations, but pneumatological: preoccupied with the promise and gift of the Holy Spirit, and what the Spirit's presence means for the Church. They see the Spirit as the source of the Church's hope, confidence, and perseverance, and its enthusiasm in witnessing to Christ.

In other words, it does indeed seem possible that, were it not for Faustus' views and the subsequent misattribution of his sermon to “Melchiades”, the word *robur* might never have entered mediaeval theologies of Confirmation. However, the word and the concept *robur* is almost always paired with some other notion – preaching, witnessing, persevering, fighting temptation, standing up to the devil or to enemies of the Faith. These qualities cannot be easily distilled into a single concept, and several are often posited at once by any given author. To some extent the notion of *spiritual maturity* encompasses these qualities: a fully-formed Christian (regardless of her biological age) is one who is equipped to stand firm, to witness, to fight and so forth, and the idea of spiritual maturity is also conveyed by the theme of *augmentum*, of growth and flourishing. The importance of these themes in mediaeval theology is due to the fact that maturity and *robur* are used by the Scholastics as a proxy for the Pentecostal power of Christian witness. Since the meaning of Confirmation in the Middle Ages is pneumatological and Pentecostal, the *content* of the most important mediaeval theologies of Confirmation would not be radically different from

what they actually were, had Faustus' sermon never found its way into the Pseudo-Isidorean *Decretals* and thence into Lombard. Some of the perplexities that the mediaevals loved to posit and to solve would have been different, but even those questions were not absolutely determined by the *robur* model. For instance, several Scholastics asked, "if Confirmation is strength for battle, shouldn't children be exempted from receiving it, since we do not send children into battle?" They answered that even children can witness to Christ, as some of the very young martyrs of the primitive Church demonstrate, so that in fact children do wage *spiritual* battle. The example is interesting – but note that the conclusion does not hold too closely to a strict interpretation of the language of *robur ad pugnam*. For many scholastics, it is the case that *robur ad pugnam* must be read so as to accommodate the missionary, evangelizing dynamic of Pentecost, rather than that Pentecost is re-interpreted to be above all a Faustan ascetical combat against personal temptation and weakness. A majority of the most important mediaeval voices do not bend their understanding of Confirmation to accommodate *robur*, rather they bend every feature of their discussion, including *robur*, to emphasize the Pentecostal, witnessing commission of Confirmation. When they speak of strength, it is strength to witness; when they speak of grace, it is grace to witness; when they speak of character, it is character that enables one to witness; when they speak of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's sevenfold gifts, these gifts empower one to witness; they speak of the strength to resist temptation and withstand the foes of Christ, it is in order to make Christ known (see, for instance, Albert the Great's reasoning in precisely this vein).

Bernard Leeming's argument about Faustus' influence is also worth citing here. Leeming (1955, p. 621) objects, as I have done, to Dix and Thornton's dismissal of the mediaeval doctrine as nothing but a footnote to the Pseudo-Isidorean *Decretals*. His rebuttal focuses especially on elements of the mediaeval doctrine that may be found earlier than "Melchiades" and therefore cannot be attributed to his influence: for example, Tertullian's doctrine in *De Carnis Resurrectione* that "the body is signed that the soul may be fortified" (*caro signatur ut et anima muniatur*). Leeming points out that "the conviction that the Holy Ghost through the seal protects and fortifies the confirmed is common among the Fathers, perhaps even more in the East than in the West" (Leeming, 1955, p. 628), though one might hesitate to use the word "confirmed" as unequivocally as Leeming does here.

3. Last, as I have just suggested, the really universal element in all mediaeval treatments of Confirmation is not *robur* but a vividly pneumatological focus: Confirmation is Pentecost for the

baptized Christian. Whether Christ is held to have instituted the matter of the sacrament when he blessed the little children with the laying-on of hands, or the Apostles when they laid hands in Acts 8; whether Christ is held to have promised the sacrament when he promised the Spirit in John 16, or to have instituted it outright when he breathed on the Apostles in John 22; for all the extraordinarily detailed disagreements as to scriptural precedents for chrismation, the propriety of signing the forehead, and important differences of opinion as to the (even theoretical) possibility that a *sacerdos simplex* might confirm; nevertheless, every mediaeval writer who wrote about Confirmation agrees that when the bishop confirms, he is acting as a successor of the Apostles, conferring a Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the confirmand. This vigorous, categorical and deeply Scriptural pneumatological claim is by far the most important characteristic of mediaeval theologies of Confirmation. Among the fifty or so writers I have considered in this chapter, opinion is more or less evenly divided among the four major effects of Confirmation (*augmentum*, and the three kinds of *robur*). What is universal is the conviction that in Confirmation, the Holy Spirit is given.

In sum, this is not to say that the eventual ubiquity of the *robur* model is without importance – but its importance has little to do with Faustus’ alleged influence, for good or bad. When a mediaeval writer invokes *robur*, he may be doing so in a variety of ways: he may mean (as Faustus did) that Confirmation confers *robur* ascetically, against temptation, or missionarily, against the fear that dissuades one from witnessing. The ascetical sort of *robur* does appear in the era under consideration, even quite late into the scholastic period (*e.g.* in William of Auxerre, and in Denys the Carthusian who quotes him so extensively), but it is more frequently the case that *robur* is taken to refer to some version of *robur ad praedicandum*, to the strength necessary to confess Christ boldly in the face of persecution. This strength is usually tied to the boldness with which the Apostles set forth after Pentecost – even Peter, who had been cowed not long before by the pert importuning of a young girl. Note the importance of this scriptural framework: even if we granted that the pervasiveness of the *robur* model were due entirely to a regrettable mistake concerning “Melchiades”, we would still be obliged to point out that Faustus’ ascetical understanding, his idea of what *robur* is for, did not prevail. Instead, mediaeval writers adopted the word *robur* as a proxy for something quite different from Faustus’ model, a *virtus* far richer than mere strength, something anchored in the centrifugal impact of Pentecost on the Apostles – from being fearful and inward-focused, they became a fearless and other-centred missionary

community. The post-Pentecost community baptized all nations into the death and Resurrection of Christ and nourished them with the Eucharist, not because it was a community naturally confident and full of hope, but because of the hope that the Holy Spirit gave them at Pentecost. This hope allowed them to be fearless about their fates, and deeply concerned about the destiny of all women and men. For mediaeval writers, Confirmation is indeed the sacrament of *robur* – but a Pentecostal *robur*, which is only a proxy for Spirit-inspired hope.

Even the writers whose models of Confirmation do not invoke *robur* – models like Bruno of Segni’s “perfection of virtue and knowledge,” Geoffrey of Vendôme’s image of the protected and fortified soul, or Honorius’ wedding-garment for the king’s feast – and who, perhaps in consequence, focus less on the missionary impact of the Spirit’s outpouring, are nonetheless emphatically pneumatological in their reading. Confirmation, for all the mediaeval writers, is first and last a gift of the Spirit. It really has no meaning that does not flow from this fundamental pneumatological identity.

As for the problem that has so exercised some recent writers on Confirmation – namely, the allegation that positing a gift of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament implies a defect in Baptism – it left the mediaevals untroubled. Their reasoning is simple: it is not necessary (indeed, it is not possible) to deny that the Holy Spirit is received in Baptism in order to affirm that the Spirit is received in Confirmation. “The Holy Spirit was given twice,” as many of them wrote, “once on Earth when Jesus breathed on his disciples, and once from Heaven at Pentecost.” Bruno of Segni even posited a *threefold* gift of the Spirit.

The liturgical or ritual problem too is of relatively little moment for the mediaevals; they are much interested in the reasons why chrismation is fitting and consistent with Scripture, but for the most part they find the Dominical precedent for the matter of Confirmation in Christ’s imposition of hands on the children, and the Apostles’ hand-laying for gift of the Spirit. For the mediaevals, the imposition of hands is without a doubt the original and fundamental rite of Confirmation, but any number of scriptural precedents and allegorical considerations (which they supply copiously) make it desirable for the Church to confirm with chrism. In coming to this conclusion the mediaeval period is consistent with the work of both Ligier and Whitehouse on the original significance of confirmational hand-laying, and its gradual replacement by anointing with chrism.

Recent theology, as we shall see in the next chapter, has increasingly emphasized the role of Confirmation as a sacrament of initiation, partly because of the liturgical origins of Confirmation as a completion of Baptism, which we saw illustrated especially in chapter 1. This theme was not absent from mediaeval accounts, especially since many of them cited the letter of “Urban” (from the Pseudo-Isidorean *Decretals*) that through Confirmation one becomes a “full” Christian (*e.g.* Lombard, William of Auxerre, or Thomas in *ST III<sup>a</sup>* q. 72 a. 11 co.; see also Milner, 1971, pp. 63 and 70), but the theology of this particular initiatory plenitude was not extensively developed in the Middle Ages. It was often cited in the context of the question “Is Confirmation necessary for salvation?” The idea that there is such a thing as a “full” Christian implies that there is such a thing as an “incomplete” Christian – one who, by definition, might not be able to be saved. This objection the mediaeval writers (*e.g.* Richard Fishacre) addressed by distinguishing between what is *necessary* for salvation, and what is *useful* for sanctification.

One feature of mediaeval theologies of Confirmation has a strong liturgical foundation in the sense that it is a doctrine derived from the shape of the liturgy, and that is the doctrine of character. Most of the mediaeval writers ask outright whether Confirmation can be repeated, and all deny that it may; many of them add that attempting to do is a grave injury and deserves harsh penalties. From the fact that Confirmation is never repeated and ought never to be repeated, they conclude that it imprints an indelible character. As we have seen, this permanent character is best described as a distinct *identity*, the identity of a Christian equipped to witness without fear, in contrast to merely justified and sanctified Christians who are not thus equipped. Character is an answer to the question “Who is this?” and it entails duties, along with powers and graces to carry out those duties and fulfill that identity. Confirmation identity entails a grace of healing from the *morbus* of pusillanimity that results from original sin (though it is distinct from the *culpa* of original sin, which Baptism disposed of). This theological edifice appears to be built on a brute liturgical, not theological fact: namely, the fact that Confirmation is never, in fact, repeated. This is the exception to Catherine Bell’s observation (1997, p. 219) that thirteenth-century theology was little interested in liturgy except allegorically: the doctrine of character is founded squarely on the liturgical fact that certain sacraments are never repeated. Consider Duns Scotus’ theology of Confirmation: he sees that, logically, if the weakness that hinders Christian witness recurs, then the sacrament that heals that weakness should recur as well. However, he replies to this objection that while some weaknesses (*morbus*) recur, it is not the case with the weakness Confirmation is

intended to cure. He provides no proof of this: Though Scotus is *Doctor subtilis*, his is a blunt affirmation, not a detailed defence of the doctrine of unrepeatability and hence character.

This is not to say that there is no scriptural or theological precedent at all for character; we have briefly seen the roots of the concept in Paganus of Corbolio and before him in Augustine's treatment of the "seal" in Paul's letters. However, as Foxen shows (1975, p. 31), even at the Council of Trent the discussions preceding the Council's affirmation of sacramental character sometimes amounted this rationale: that we must conclude that a character is conferred by the unrepeated sacraments, for otherwise they would be repeated.

Throughout the Middle Ages, one of the most intriguing positions of the patristic era quickly fades from view, namely Augustine's point (taken up by Isidore, Leidrad and Sicardus) that no human being can "give" the Holy Spirit, but only invite him or pray that he might come. This view of sacramental efficacy is at odds with Aquinas' view, which has been described (e.g. by Blankenhorn (2010), p. 136ff.) as strongly "metaphysical", but is also at odds with the "covenant" theology that Blankenhorn associates with Bonaventure and Richard Fishacre (p. 136). Both Thomas' intrinsic "sacramental instrumental causality" (p. 138), and the more "exterior" causality of "covenant" theology that "proposes that God's grace is given simultaneously with the performance of a particular liturgical rite, but not through an intrinsic power" of the sacrament itself (p. 136), imply a reliable link between sacramental actions and the conferring of divine grace, whereas Augustine's position suggests a radical affirmation of the divine freedom to choose not to heed the prayers and sacraments of the faithful. This is a vitally important and fascinating question, but it is one that pertains not so much to the role of Confirmation as to a theology of sacramental efficacy as a whole; since my concern in this dissertation is primarily to identify the ostensible effects of Confirmation, then the mechanism by which those effects are deemed to come to pass (whether intrinsically, or by virtue of a covenant, or purely by an exercise of divine freedom) must remain in the background. However, the consensus of Western theologians in the period just examined is that, whatever the mechanism of their efficacy, the sacraments cause definite effects.

## Chapter 3

# CATHOLIC THEOLOGIES OF CONFIRMATION SINCE THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

### OVERVIEW

This chapter will present the spectrum of theologies of Confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church from the Council of Trent to the present,<sup>202</sup> as well as a few writers from other Christian traditions whose work has been very influential or germane to the Roman Catholic discussion. As before, my primary focus is on accounts of Confirmation's purpose and effects, rather than on liturgical and ceremonial questions (for instance), or on broader problems of sacramental efficacy and causality. As Baudry remarks (1981, p. 5) theologians seeking the meaning of Confirmation can get lost in the "thickets" of the history of liturgical rites.<sup>203</sup>

My selection of authors here is not exhaustive – among other constraints, the selection is limited to work available in English, French, Latin, Spanish and Italian – but I aim to be comprehensive in my inclusion of all major interpretations of Confirmation, as well as many that are original and interesting, even if not widely held. My goal has not been to survey every author who has written on the subject, but to include the great majority of authors in the languages

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<sup>202</sup> A fuller portrait of the period immediately after Trent would include works by the very important theologians Suarez (1747) and Cano (2006), whom I have omitted. Cano's work is striking for its virtual omission of Confirmation; while the challenge of including Suarez is that his treatment is very lengthy, while his understanding of Confirmation's effects tends much more to synthesis than to innovation. For that reason, had I more space at my disposal, I would wish to include Suarez, though little that is new is lost by omitting him here. Among the most important surveys of the recent period, which I have used in supplementing my own bibliography of sources (though defects in my assessment remain my own), are Bastian (1962), Bohlen (1963), Triacca (1972) and Leijssen (1989). I have consulted several other works from the period that I have not written about here, for they are not chiefly concerned with the effects and purpose of Confirmation; the strength of these works, in many cases, is rather in their attention to more pragmatic pastoral and liturgical considerations, or their *vulgarisation* of more abstruse treatments. These omitted works include Roberto (1978), Bourgeois, Michel and Pinckers (1982), Gordini *et al.* (1983), Ardura (1983), Barral-Baron (1983), Kubick (1991), Triacca (1993), Herbreteau (2001) and Gabrielli (2013). Gabrielli's work in particular, which briefly but effectively documents the eclecticism of approaches to Confirmation in the American Church since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, illustrates the need for the present project: a theology of Confirmation that comprehensively draws together and integrates themes from all ages and regions of the Church.

<sup>203</sup> The selection might well have been broadened to include several other important and more recent voices in the Anglican tradition – such as Holmes (1975a; 1975b; 1975c), Weil (1977), Burnett (2006), Slocum (2001), Meyers (2001; 2006), Mitchell (1973; 1982; 1986), and Tanner (2006) – but I have omitted them here to keep the scope of the enquiry more manageable. Their perspectives, however, are valuable in illuminating the discussion of Confirmation's purpose. As I have indicated, the few non-Roman Catholics whom I do explore in this chapter were chosen because of the importance of their influence on the Roman Catholic discussion.



mentioned, so as to present a detailed portrait of interpretations of Confirmation within the Roman Catholic tradition during this period.

In the modern period we will see three major interpretations predominating:

1. “**Robur**”: some theologians of the modern period will continue to affirm the gift of strength that was so typical of the Middle Ages, but will tend to synthesize or collapse the different types of *robur* (asceticism, combat, witness) that we saw in the Middle Ages into one general gift of strength for Christian discipleship and mission. Varied examples of these views will be found in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, Klinge, Bellarmine, Martimort, Anciaux, Solá and Haffner.
2. **Perfection or completion of what was begun at Baptism**: this theme will become quite established and commonplace in the modern period. It interprets Confirmation as a fulfillment or completion of Baptism, and a number of advocates of the theme understand this completion specifically as what might be called “ecclesial maturity”: not necessarily connected with or dependent on physical maturity, *ecclesial* maturity is the status of having been fully initiated in the Church and fully received the mission and mandate proper to the Christian disciple, like Jesus the Messiah whose mission reached a certain fulfillment at Baptism. Authors who endorse the “perfection” interpretation, whether they endorse the theme of “ecclesial maturity” or not, tend to do so in pneumatological terms. Examples: Solá, Scheeben, Camelot, Leeming, Bouhot, Hamman, Davis, O’Neill, Revel, Henrici and Van Slyke. Not all authors who interpret Confirmation’s purpose as “completion” do so in terms of ecclesial maturity; some, such as Bohen and even some of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, posit a vaguer *intensification* of baptismal grace.
3. **Pentecost**: By far the most striking feature of modern interpretations of Confirmation is the frequent and robust affirmation that Confirmation is Pentecost. The way in which this observation is mapped to Scripture varies, and descriptions of what it means to live a sacramental Pentecost range from detailed accounts to a more apophatic approach which is content to say that whatever Pentecost meant for the Apostles, Confirmation means for Christians today. However, the modern Roman Catholic view of Confirmation could be broadly

summarized as the claim that it is a personal Pentecost. This doctrine is held by a diverse spectrum of theologians, including Bouyer, Thurian, Luykx, Fransen, Milner, Ligier, Baudry, Neunheuser, Congar, McCabe, and McPartlan.

De Menthière's interpretation includes elements of all three major themes just outlined, as do the interpretations of Revel, Mohelník, and Walsh, though Pentecost remains especially important for all three. As we shall see when we consider de Menthière, Mohelník and Revel in greater detail, their balance and comprehensiveness makes them especially useful resources for a theology of Confirmation today.<sup>204</sup>

To this list of three thematic clusters I would add two outliers: two approaches to Confirmation that have been popular at certain times in the modern period, but are not solidly rooted in the tradition and are confined to limited periods of the Church's history. The first of these positions is the view, especially popular just before the Second Vatican Council, that Confirmation is the ordination of a layman to the lay apostolate, a sacrament of "Catholic Action": this view was held, for instance, by Laros and Pabst, although O'Neill has advocated it quite recently, as has Elberti, using the expression "the priesthood of the faithful". The other "outlier" is a purely psychological or pedagogical view of Confirmation: interpretations that do not posit any sacramental efficacy or causality, and may not even frame Confirmation's significance in terms of grace, but purely as a human ritual intended for the individual and the community to express and affirm certain values. It is far from rare to affirm that the concrete materials, words and rituals of Confirmation convey some meaning – we shall shortly see an example in Klinge, and a different kinds of examples in Ligier and Walsh – but the *purely* psychological view that I refer to here affirms that the psychological impact is the *only* effect of Confirmation. Modern proponents of this sacramental naturalism include Bausch, Ganoczy, Lawler, Osborne and Chauvet. As for Aidan Kavanagh, he seems to have considered Confirmation simply pointless.

#### **AUTHORS**

##### **Konrad Klinge (1483 – 1556)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Catechismus Catholicus* (1562).

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<sup>204</sup> It is intriguing that of the four authors I have singled out here, three are Dominicans.

Klinge describes Confirmation first of all as an “examination” of the faith of Christ (*examinatio fidei Christi*), and as such, a confirming and strengthening of the baptized faithful; or as a confession of the faith in the presence of the bishop, the faith that was professed on one’s behalf by a godparent at Baptism. It is the culmination of the process of catechesis of a young person (Klinge, 1562, p. 151). So far the influence of Reformation views on Klinge are evident. He does not stop there, however: he writes that Confirmation is not only a matter of words, but involves an episcopal hand-laying as well. The purpose of the hand-laying is to invoke and impart the Holy Spirit for the strengthening of believers against the temptations and attacks of the devil, and against sin (p. 151), but also to permit the Christian to persist in confessing Christ’s name before non-Christians (*ut constanter profiteamur nomen Christi contra Turcas, Judeos et Barbaros*, p. 152). Thus Klinge embraces as much as he can of the Reformation view of Confirmation while retaining the essentials of the traditional Catholic view, including its foundation in Acts 8 and 19 (p. 152). It is the sacrament of those who wish to persevere to the end (p. 152). Noticeably absent is any reference to Pentecost. One unique emphasis we find in Klinge is his close attention to the meaning of the ritual blow (*percussio maxille*), which he associates with the blows Christ endured on our behalf, with the beatings meted out to the Apostles in Acts 5, and with the “other cheek” that Christ bids his followers to turn when they are attacked (p. 152).

### ***Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566; McHugh and Callan, trans., 1982)***

This work, edited under the direction of Charles Borromeo, elaborates on the decisions of the Council of Trent for the benefit of parish priests. It affirms the Pentecostal nature of Confirmation – stating explicitly that catechists who wish to explain the effects of Confirmation ought to describe the impact that Pentecost had on the Apostles (1982, p. 210) – but it focuses on a martial interpretation of its effects: “if there is no obstacle to the efficacy of the sacrament, a baptized person” who is confirmed “becomes stronger with the strength of a new power, and thus begins to be a perfect soldier of Christ” (p. 199) and is “armed” and “made ready for conflicts” (p. 202). The *Catechism* also compares the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation to that between birth and growth (p. 201) and uses the standard comparative language of “perfecting”: Confirmation “perfects the grace of Baptism” and “increases grace” (p. 209). However, the *Catechism* also implies very strongly that Confirmation makes up for a defect in Baptism, which is an interpretation we have not often seen made explicit; it compares the baptized to infants who

are weak and vulnerable, and compares Confirmation to a process whereby the infant becomes stronger, better suited to face the onslaught of life and the world (p. 209).

Finally, the *Catechism* merely affirms, without any further explanation, that Confirmation “impresses” a character and is therefore unrepeatable (p. 210).

### **Robert Bellarmine (1542 – 1621)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *De sacramento confirmationis* in *Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei*, vol. 3 (Naples, 1858, pp. 209-234).

Bellarmino devotes thirteen chapters of his *Disputationes* to the sacrament of Confirmation. Apart from the unique traits arising from his specific polemical purpose (*viz.*, his pervasive engagement with Chemnitz, Calvin, Luther, Wyclif and other Reformers), and from his seventeenth-century perspective (such as his references to the Council of Trent), Bellarmine’s Confirmation doctrine is consistent with what we saw in the Scholastic period. Bellarmine locates the origin of Confirmation in Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit in John 14, and in the Apostles’ receiving and handing on of the Spirit in Acts 2, 8 and 19. He writes, against some Reformers, that “if these ceremonies [of Confirmation] are magical, we make of Christ a teacher of magic, which is impious and blasphemous” (*si magica est haec caeremonia, Christum magiae doctorem faciemus, quod est impium et blasphemum* – p. 233). He enters in greater detail into patristic sources in chapter 5 (on the Greek fathers) and chapter 6 (on the Latins) but still cites “Melchiades” as an authority and even comes to his defence, calling him *sanctissimum virum*, against Calvin’s criticisms (p. 212).

Bellarmino describes Confirmation as “ceremonies that confer grace and that are distinct from Baptism” (*caeremonia dantem gratiam et a Baptismo distinctam* - chapter 3, p. 216). In chapter 7 he addresses Augustine’s point, which we have seen already, that the imposition of hands is “nothing but a prayer over a person.” Bellarmine replies that Augustine was thinking of the hand-laying meant for the reconciliation of heretics – which can be repeated – and not of Confirmation, which (Bellarmine argues) he understood to be conferred primarily by chrismation. He makes the point that “reconciliatory hand-laying was distinct, especially in the Western Church, from confirmatory hand-laying” (*sed manus impositio reconciliatoria distincta erat, praesertim in Ecclesia occidentali a manus impositione confirmatoria* – p. 220).

The bulk of Bellarmine’s discussion is devoted to matter and form; chapter 11, on the effects of the sacrament, is shorter than any of his other chapters on Confirmation. He states that

Confirmation has two effects: to confer sanctifying grace (*gratiam confert gratum facientem* – p. 229), and to imprint a character. The sanctifying grace is greater than that given in Baptism insofar as “strengthening the soul against the assault of the devil” (*ad roborandum animam contra diaboli impetus*) is concerned, but lesser insofar as the remission of sins is concerned, for Confirmation “does not remit all penalty” (*quia non remittit totam poenam* – p. 230). He writes that by the confirmational character “we are enrolled in Christ’s army, just as in Baptism we are enrolled in his family” (*quo adscribimur in Christi militiam, sicut per Baptismum in Christi familiam* – p. 230). His principal argument for the imprinting of a confirmational character is its non-repeatability – again, a familiar mediaeval perspective.

Bellarmino focuses on martial and ascetical imagery – combating the assaults of the devil, and enlisting in Christ’s army – and does not allude explicitly to witnessing or to *robur ad praedicandum*. As his copious references to the Fathers make clear, Bellarmine considered Confirmation to be, above all, a descent or outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

### **Alphonsus Liguori (1696 – 1787)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Theologia Moralis*, lib. VI, tract. ii, cap. 2 (ed. Gaudé, 1909, vol. 3).

Liguori specifies that Confirmation was “instituted by Christ that one might receive strength and an increase of grace” and that the pouring out of oil signifies “the grace of the Holy Spirit” which Christ pours out on our heads in this sacrament (1909, p. 138; see also p. 163). Like Bellarmine, a very significant portion of his learned treatment consists of enumerations of diverging opinions concerning the proper minister, subject, matter and form of the sacrament, and its necessity; though he does not come to any unexpected or surprising conclusions on these points, he arrives at them only after exploring a wide representation of theologians and magisterial sources. He addresses the institution of Confirmation obliquely, when he posits *apropos* of sacramental matter that the institution of confirmational hand-laying is found in Acts 8 (see pp. 142, 143, 148).

In contrast, when he enquires into Confirmation’s effects, Liguori does not cite disagreements among theologians but writes as though there are no disagreements of any note and as though the answer is settled. By “increase,” Liguori means greater perfection; Confirmation is not necessary for salvation, but it perfects salvation. He compares its utility to the

usefulness of a horse for walking, or of medicine for health (p. 162). A horse is not necessary for transportation, but makes the task of walking easier and faster; a given medicinal substance may not be necessary to sustain life, but it can promote flourishing. We may conclude that for Liguori, Confirmation promotes a greater “degree” of sanctity, though he does not spell out what this means practically beyond the ability to defeat the snares of the enemy (*ad vincendas hostium insidias*, p. 162), a purpose (as he notes) that is also served by such means as frequent reception of the Eucharist, prayer and penance.

### **Matthias Scheeben (1835 – 1888)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *The Mysteries of Christianity* (1897; Vollert, trans., 1946).

The German theologian Scheeben includes Confirmation among the “sacraments that consecrate” (Vollert, trans., 1946, p. 572), in contradistinction to the sacraments that “heal”. For Scheeben, the four “consecratory” sacraments (which are the three held to impart a character, plus marriage) “dedicate us to a supernatural destiny, and assign us a special permanent place in the mystical body of Christ” (p. 572). His description of the specific effects of Confirmation are ambiguous as to details, though the venerable confirmational theme of robustness is manifest:

That we may become virile children of God and strong, energetic members of Christ, confirmation is added as a sort of complement to baptism, in order to attach us still more closely and firmly to Christ, to confer on us a still higher consecration, and also to permit supernatural grace to flow over us from Christ in richer abundance. With this sacrament the supernatural consecration and rank of the individual, simple members of Christ’s body reach their perfection (p. 572).

Scheeben affirms of all the consecratory sacraments that they “produce and virtually contain supernatural grace” as well as conferring “a supernatural consecration which elevates the recipient above his nature to an eminent position in the mystical body of Christ” (p. 576). Among the four consecratory sacraments, three are those which had long been held to imprint a character, including Confirmation: these Scheeben calls the “hierarchical” sacraments because they “build up the membership of Christ’s mystical body and, by thus building up the body, draw the powerful graces of the head to the members concerned” (p. 579). They “effect a real elevation

of the recipient to a supernatural, organic unity with Christ, whereby unity of life with Him is conferred.”

So far, Scheeben’s treatment is puzzling, as it describes Confirmation as a super-Baptism – a “higher” consecration, a “closer” and “firmer” attachment to Christ, a “richer” abundance – with no explanation of what is new in this elevation, or of how Baptism falls short of the perfection he attributes to Confirmation.

He sheds greater light when he expands on the doctrine of sacramental character. Scheeben describes character as the “signature” which assimilates (here we should understand, “increases resemblance to”) the members of Christ’s body to the head, and “testifies” to their “organic union” with Christ (p. 582). Sacramental character, he explains, “must be a reflection and replica of the theandric character” of Christ, “analogous to the hypostatic union” (pp. 582-583). Character is distinct from grace,

somewhat as the holiness which Christ’s human nature formally possessed by pertaining to the Logos through the hypostatic union, was distinct from that holiness which formally consisted in the conformation of His human nature to the divine nature...We might say that grace is an ennobling and elevation of our nature and its activity by their gratification and transformation. But the character is an ennobling and elevation of the hypostasis, so far as it raises our hypostasis to a certain unity with Christ’s hypostasis (p. 583).

Thus Christ’s human holiness of intellect and will is distinct from, but depends on, the holiness of his human nature hypostatically united to the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. How does this translate into our human experience? The key to Scheeben’s doctrine of character is its relation to grace:

...grace springs from the character, not as though the character were the latent material that would yield grace after all obstacles have been removed, but because it brings us into contact with Christ as the source of grace, as the heavenly vine whose branches we are through the character, and because it gives us a right actually to possess grace if we set up no impediment to it (p. 584).

Thus, for Scheeben, character does not create a kind of permanent interior *source* of holiness, of greater conformity to Christ; it is not in itself a power or a grace; rather, it is a permanent



*relationship* to Christ who is the source of holiness (analogously, albeit imperfectly, with the hypostatic “relationship” of Christ’s human nature with his divine nature) whereby, provided we cooperate and pose no hindrance, we may be serenely confident that holiness (grace) conferred by the Trinity will be at work in our wills and intellects. The confirmational character, in Scheeben’s model, must therefore be understood not so much as a permanent “feature,” less a “seal” or “brand” of the soul, but rather an abiding *relationship* with Christ that allows the confirmed Christian confidently to count on grace, like the relationship between branch and trunk that allows the branch “confidently” and with assurance, to know that it has the means to bud and bear fruit. This is quite consistent with what I have been arguing thus far, that character pertains to identity, that it answers the question “Who is this?” and entails certain duties and therefore certain graces and abilities. Later on Scheeben uses the human body as a simile: “character is to the mystical body of Christ what the general configuration is to the members of the natural human body” (p. 589). Character is thus a right relationship with the body as a whole, and with its head, that allows this or that member to flourish and contribute to the general flourishing.

Scheeben develops this point further. “Every character,” he writes, “anoints and consecrates us for active participation in the priesthood of Christ” (p. 586). In the case of Confirmation, it “does not confer any new power for the performance of external acts or for participation in them,” unlike Baptism which allows one (*e.g.*) to receive the Eucharist, or Orders which allows one to celebrate the Eucharist; Confirmation “corroborate[s] the existing qualification and obligation for the carrying out of external and internal acts of worship” (p. 586). One sees here the echo of Aquinas’ doctrine that confirmational character is a deputation to worship.

With his rich understanding of character, one regrets that Scheeben did not have the opportunity to devote more space and energy to the question of Confirmation’s effects and purpose, for that part of his Confirmation doctrine is as terse and unsatisfactory as his teaching on character is profound.

### **Johann Umberg (1875 – 1959)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: “Confirmatione baptismus perficitur” (1924).

Umberg explores the meaning of the classic phrase that Confirmation “perfects” Baptism. He concludes that it does so in three ways: it perfects the *regenerating grace* infused into a person at Baptism by a new conferring of the Holy Spirit; perfects the *baptismal character* by incorporating the confirmed into the messianic reign (which Umberg interprets as a fuller participation in the Church Militant, a kind of enlistment as a soldier of Christ – see p. 512), and perfects the *sevenfold gifts* already given at Baptism by actualizing them for the profit and flourishing of the Christian (Umberg, 1924, p. 517). The first and last of these do not seem to be different effects from those which would accompany any exercise of Christian piety, and it is not clear what it means for one who is already a baptized Christian to be “incorporated into the messianic reign,” only after an interval of several years and the reception of a distinct rite. Another frustrating shortcoming with Umberg’s explanation is that, while he enumerates the various “species” of the perfection that has historically been predicated on Confirmation, he does not always explain the nature of that perfecting.

### **Matthias Laros (1882 – 1965)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Confirmation in the Modern World* (1938).

Laros concedes that Confirmation is Pentecost for the Christian (Laros, 1938, p. 12). However, his book-length treatment of Confirmation is really more of a meditation on the value and importance of an engaged, well-formed Catholic laity, and an energetic invitation to the faithful to become builders of God’s Kingdom. Laros uses the phrase “Catholic Action,” popularized by Popes Pius X and Pius XI and sometimes used to describe an organized initiative of the faithful, to denote the lay apostolate, *i.e.* the involvement of the lay faithful in the ecclesial task of being transformative leaven in secular society and their quotidian activities.<sup>205</sup> For a time, among theologians of Confirmation, the sacrament would often be tied to this lay apostolate under the name of Catholic Action. Laros assumes, rather than demonstrates, that Confirmation is the sacrament that commissions and empowers the laity, upon reaching maturity (or as he calls it, “personality”), to engage in their share in the work of the Church. A jarring note in Laros’ work is his citing of martial enthusiasm among the Italian and German youth of the 1930s as proof that the Church is well-advised to focus on Confirmation’s role as enlistment in Christ’s

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<sup>205</sup> For example, in his encyclical “*Il Fermo Proposito*” of June 11, 1905, Pius X wrote: “Here We wish to recall those numerous works of zeal for the good of the Church, society, and individuals under the general name of ‘Catholic Action,’ which by the grace of God flourish throughout the world as well as in Our Italy” (par. 2).

Army, and similarly his use of the experience of the Hitler Youth to show that young people are eager to belong to something radical and energetic. While he does not openly criticize these phenomena, his focus on the servant character of Christian leadership and the primacy of Christ's Kingship over earthly rulers, and his citations from Faulhaber, suggest that he may have felt the urgency of offering a Christian vision of belonging and fighting that would correct the pathologies of Nazi Germany.

Laros thus does not advance our understanding of Confirmation very much, but he does exemplify a pattern whereby Confirmation becomes an empty vessel into which the pastoral preoccupations of a given time and place can be poured.<sup>206</sup> In one context, an opportunity to catechize teenagers is sought; Grün (2011) proposes intense Confirmation-preparation camps for adolescents. In another, the importance of a free and mature choice to follow Christ is apparent; Rahner embraces Confirmation as the ratification of infant Baptism. In another still, the inaction of the laity is lamented; Pabst and others affirm Confirmation as a mandate for the lay apostolate. And in this example, Laros is part of the movement to get the laity to participate more in the celebration of Mass; he repeats the view that through Confirmation the faithful participate in the common priesthood, and explains it (in part) as a commission to be more actively present at the Eucharist (see p. 37). In each case, a pastorally useful interpretation is retro-fitted with a pneumatological component – somehow the Holy Spirit is tied to power, commission, strength, courage, faith – and made the purpose of Confirmation.

The inadequacy of Laros' pneumatology (which does not detract from his principled and earnest advocacy of the lay apostolate) is revealed in his account of how Confirmation differs from Baptism:

The Holy Ghost descends upon us both in Confirmation and in Baptism, but in different quality and measure. In Baptism He is given to us inasmuch as He makes of us a "new creature", refashioning us in the image of God and making us partakers of the Divine *Nature*; in Confirmation

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<sup>206</sup> Wesley Carr complains of a similar tendency in pneumatology:

Discussion of the Holy Spirit is at present in a state of almost total confusion. A renewed interest is being shown in the Spirit and in the process the term 'Holy Spirit' is tending to become a rag-bag into which are relegated all those aspects of religion and life which we are unhappy simply to assign to the working of God. It has become a cover for our deficiencies, so that the Spirit is whatever we like to make it. Phrases are created on analogy with 'The Spirit of Truth' to associate with the Spirit whichever particular aspect of life a writer wishes to dignify (Carr, 1975, p. 501).

Both Confirmation and pneumatology susceptible to becoming the overflow basin for the rest of theology - a most intriguing coincidence!

He is given to us *ad robur*, as the mighty Divine *Person* who is the Spirit of those who are themselves fully developed personalities (p. 64).

The Holy Spirit, however, cannot be portioned out in greater or lesser quantity, though if the wind blows where it will the work of the Spirit can presumably vary according to the divine will; nor can the Spirit be given “as the mighty Divine Person” in Confirmation, but *not* in Baptism. Laros is resorting to a hasty and jury-rigged pneumatology to buttress his interpretation of Confirmation, so that his principal purpose – to promote Catholic Action – might be furthered.

One of Laros’ quotations from Faulhaber is an excellent concise summary of the vision of Catholic Action to which so many recent theologians have associated Confirmation: “It is not enough for us to be fishes in the net of the apostle, we must be fishers and apostles ourselves” (p. 77). We must still assess whether, and how, Confirmation is the means of this transformation from fish to fisher.

### **Gregory Dix (1901 – 1952)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism* (1946).

Dix, an Anglican Benedictine of Nashdom Abbey in Buckinghamshire, must be included in this chapter because he was a major interlocutor in an important debate in Anglican scholarship that has been very influential on recent Roman Catholic theologies of Confirmation. Dix had no sympathy for the doctrine of Confirmation that evolved in the Middle Ages (see, *e.g.*, Dix, 1946, pp. 21, 24, 32, 34), but his work has nonetheless exercised a profound influence on Roman Catholic theologians in his own day and since, for he writes in defence of a vigorously pneumatological interpretation of Confirmation that has much in common with a classic Roman Catholic view. He maintains that Confirmation is Dominically-instituted (p. 33) and that the confirmational “sealing” is a “Pentecostal Baptism of the Spirit” (p. 30), the ““sealing of the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption’ [Ephesians 4:30]” (p. 35). “The gift of the Spirit is not...a mere *consequence* of a previous salvation by the Son. Rather it is the Spirit who actually *operates* the salvation of each Christian” (p. 30); thus he intends to argue that the two moments in the Christian’s life, though closely connected, are distinct. However, this insight seems to confirm a rather different perspective, namely the presence and activity of the three divine Persons in any divine act. The Son does not save apart from the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is not bestowed in

contrast or as an alternative to the work of the Son. Confirmation follows Baptism for the Christian as the Holy Spirit's descent on Jesus followed his Baptism in the Jordan; the individual's "regeneration" is "*incomplete* until the full power of operation of the new divine life *from within* the Christian has been bestowed" (p. 30, emphasis in original).

On the other hand, the later Western custom of administering it separately from Baptism, and interpreting it through the lens of the Pseudo-Isidorean *Decretals* is, for Dix, a departure from its true meaning; "the mediaeval mistake comes...in the *dissociation* of Confirmation from Initiation in *teaching*" (p. 31, emphasis in original). Dix summarizes the most significant problem with the classic Roman Catholic account of Confirmation with concision and pertinence:

...it was hard to see why a mere 'strengthening' of the graces already received in Baptism should not be repeated, or indeed why it was not very desirable that it should be. On the other hand, it was difficult to see how the character of Confirmation differed from that of Baptism...It was indeed not very easy to see how they could differ very much even in their effects (p. 26).

Any account of Confirmation's effect in the Roman Catholic tradition must deal with the puzzle of why it is unrepeatable, but the *robur* model is especially vulnerable to criticism on precisely Dix's grounds. The criticism most often cited, however, by later Roman Catholic writers (e.g. Lawler, 1987, p. 84) is that the separation of the two sacraments making up the unified baptismal rite transferred "the whole content of the major rite into the preliminary (that is, water baptism), and the degradation of the 'baptism of the Spirit' to a mere *augmentum gratiae*" (Dix, 1946, pp. 31-32).

### **G.W.H. (Geoffrey William Hugo) Lampe (1912 – 1980)**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *The Seal of the Spirit* (1951, 2nd ed. 1967).

Lampe was an Anglican priest, army chaplain during the Second World War, and theologian at Oxford, Birmingham, and Cambridge. We have already seen, in chapter 1, Lampe's views as revealed in his use of patristic testimony. He summarizes his position concisely: "Confirmation as practised in the Church of England today may have little direct historical connection with what was done by Peter and John in Samaria" (Lampe, 1967, p. 322). On every point that was important to the mediaeval theologians whom we have examined, Lampe is sceptical: he denies that there is any foundation in the New Testament or the early Fathers "for

the view that in the Christian dispensation God's people are sealed as His own possession by undergoing an outward and visible ceremony, other than Baptism in water" (p. 306). There "was no special sacrament of 'Spirit-baptism'" (p. 307). He describes the mediaeval doctrine of Confirmation as a "[rationalization of] the division of the rite of initiation" (p. 309), and denies any foundation to the view that its purpose is to be "a gift of the Spirit for strengthening and equipping for spiritual warfare" or a "sacrament of growth and spiritual maturity" (p. 309). Lampe does not deny that the faithful may receive the Spirit in some sense at Confirmation (p. 312), but in Anglicanism's sixteenth-century divines "there is little or no assertion that a specific gift is received through the imposition of hands" (p. 313).

As for the minister, that it should be a bishop is "obviously highly fitting and appropriate, although...in no way essential" (p. 315), though he does not expand on its ostensible appropriateness. Lampe wishes to ensure that the primacy of Baptism is maintained; he sees Confirmation's purpose as a part of adult initiation, intended to "convey the blessing of the bishop to a new member of his flock, and a commission to take his place as an active partner in the Church's apostolic task...but there should be no thought of the gift or seal of the Spirit as a grace of Confirmation" (pp. 316-317). Imposition of hands is a "highly appropriate" rite for Confirmation but chrismation is not, since Lampe considers that it hearkens back to the earlier Baptism rather than communicating what is happening in Confirmation itself (pp. 321-322).

Lampe very appositely warns that "we must avoid the attempt to isolate the workings of the Spirit from each other...We are concerned not with 'fuller' or 'lesser' outpourings, but with the gracious dealings of a Person" (p. 317). This is the insight that we shall have most cause to return to again and again in attempting to resolve outstanding problems with Confirmation: the personhood of the Spirit. The Spirit is Thou, not It.

### **Louis Bouyer (1913 – 2004)**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: "Que signifie la confirmation?" (1952) = "La signification de la confirmation" (1954).

Louis Bouyer was a French priest of the Congregation of the Oratory who began his life of ministry as a pastor in the Lutheran church. Bouyer's treatment of the Middle Ages in his discussion of Confirmation is inadequate; he writes of the "extreme awkwardness" (*extrême embarras* – Bouyer, 1952, p. 5) of the Scholastics concerning Confirmation, and inaccurately claims that

they widely believed that Confirmation was instituted at the Council of Meaux. (This was the view of some important mediaeval theologians, but we have clearly seen that it was not the most common view). Bouyer laments that the modern student has access to abundant sources, which Aquinas would have been overjoyed to exploit to the fullest in place of the “poor” and “defective” sources at his disposal, but that contemporary Confirmation theology remains unsatisfactory: he singles out for criticism the model of Confirmation as an “ordination” to Catholic Action, which he describes as “extravagant” (p. 5).

In place of the prevailing contemporary theories, Bouyer urges attention to two insights in particular to shed light on Confirmation: the centrality of the “gift of the Holy Spirit” in the liturgy of Confirmation, and the unity of all the sacraments as “one reality, of which the Eucharist is the heart” (p. 6). From the second point Bouyer argues that both Baptism and Confirmation are oriented to the Eucharist as two “successive but inseparable phases” (p. 6) of initiation to the Eucharist. This initiation has, for Bouyer, “one meaning”:

to conform the candidate to Christ by union with his death and resurrection, such that the candidate might be filled with the Spirit of Christ and that he might thereby adore the Father in Spirit and in truth (that is, to offer the holy oblation from which the bishop will confect the Eucharist [*offrir la sainte oblation dont l'évêque fera l'Eucharistie*]). “Confirmation” is nothing but the fullness of this accomplished union, of this entry into sharing the life of the Spirit, of “communion” with the Body of Christ, in its offering and consummation (p. 9).

For all his disapproval of the supposedly picayune mediaeval model of Confirmation, Bouyer has simply re-asserted the link between Confirmation and Baptism and described the former in terms of an undefined “plenitude” of the latter. Aquinas, of course – echoing the much-maligned “Melchiades”! – had emphasised the link between Baptism and Confirmation; Bouyer commendably reminds us of the link, but it cannot be said that he has shed additional light on its meaning. A little further on, he re-asserts that “‘confirmation’...has no other meaning than to communicate that fullness of life in the Spirit that is Christian life, with that fullness of participation in ecclesiastical life, properly so-called, that is inseparable from it” (p. 11).

Lest it be concluded from this that the baptized but as-yet unconfirmed Christian lacks the Holy Spirit, Bouyer compares the situation of such a person to a catechumen or a penitent who intends to receive the sacraments of Baptism and Reconciliation respectively. In neither case, he



argues, would we insist that the Christian is incapable of “supernatural charity”, of any share in the life of the Trinity, until the sacrament proper is received. The desire to receive the sacrament already entails a beginning of the life the sacrament bestows. So it is, he suggests, with Confirmation: saying that the fullness of the Holy Spirit is received at Confirmation does not mean that the pre-confirmed is without the Spirit, for the very intention or orientation to eventually receiving the sacrament is a desire for the sacrament and therefore an anticipation of its effects. This is a perceptive observation that merits closer attention; perhaps the doctrine of *ecclesia supplet* could help integrate the baptism of desire, and Bouyer’s example of “absolution by desire,” with his perspective on the pneumatic component of “full belonging” to the Church. The Catholic tradition does not despair of catechumens who die without Baptism, or penitents who die without Penance, but trusts that their desire for these sacraments already entails a certain participation in them.

To conclude this intriguing point, Bouyer adds an endorsement of the “maturity” model of Confirmation: he writes that there is something unfulfilled in a Christian’s Baptism, something unfulfilled in their participation in the Eucharist until they “freely choose” to “consciously adhere” to the faith (p. 12). This is, however, equally true of Byzantine Christians who were confirmed in infancy, or of Roman Catholics who were confirmed in deference to family pressure, as so many are: ideally they too ought eventually to “consciously adhere” to the Gospel, but it would be absurd to conclude that a new sacrament is necessary to confirm their Confirmation.

### **Aimé-Georges Martimort (1911 – 2000)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: “La confirmation” in *Communion solennelle et profession de foi* (1952).

For Martimort (a French priest of the diocese of Toulouse and a liturgical *peritus* at Vatican II), the doctrine that Confirmation “perfects” the Christian – *confirmatione baptismus perficitur* – is at once the principal certainty and the central puzzle of the rite. The teaching is all but unanimous, but grasping its meaning is an “uneasy” task (Martimort, 1952, p. 160). Equally “unanimous” is the teaching that the Holy Spirit is “abundantly” conferred in Confirmation (p. 161).

There are...two invisible sendings [*missions invisibles*] of the Spirit. But then how are they to be distinguished from each other, and above all how can we continue to say that Confirmation gives the Holy Spirit, since the candidate for this sacrament has already received the Holy Spirit? (p. 163).

Martimort's answer is that what sets Confirmation apart is not the presence of the Holy Spirit but the specific goal *for which* he is sent in this particular sacrament – a goal, Martimort concludes, so “characteristic” of the Holy Spirit that it is appropriate to describe Confirmation as the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit. This archetypally characteristic goal is to make the Christian a “herald of the Gospel”, a “witness” and “messenger” of Christ. “It is the Holy Spirit’s work par excellence to constitute a person as a prophet, witness to God, and to make that person speak (p. 164). Martimort develops this theme from the Fathers of the Church, who sought the meaning of Confirmation in the effects they perceived in Jesus after he was baptized: at that moment Jesus was identified as the beloved Son, which evokes the Christian’s baptismal gift of the Spirit who makes one cry “*Abba! Father!*”<sup>207</sup>, but also revealed to the world and “accredited as a witness” to the unbelieving crowd. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus in the Jordan is thus a “sending on a mission” (p. 166). Martimort cites several examples from Scripture to sustain his thesis that “often, when the sacred authors tell us that the Spirit of God has come or will come on such-and-such an individual, it is always to confer on them a public mission that demands strength and audacity” (pp. 168-169).

Martimort acknowledges the strong tradition (including Aquinas and the Councils of Florence and Trent) of interpreting Confirmation in terms of Pentecost; without doing violence to the points he has already made, he very easily synthesizes this Pentecostal theme as well with what he has called the “characteristic” prophetic gift of the Spirit. The “gift of prophecy” at Pentecost is, for Martimort, “to be constituted a witness to Jesus; witnessing for Jesus is a work of the Spirit and the sign of his presence” (p. 176), for “the Spirit of God is the witness to Christ *par excellence*” (p. 177).

Martimort is concerned, finally, to address facile dismissals of mediaeval accounts of Confirmation – to address those who consider the mediaeval doctrine to be a long misattribution of “Melchisedech” and a misinterpretation of the *alapa*:

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<sup>207</sup> “When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God...” (Romans 8:15-16, *RSV*).

But what do they matter, these liturgical errors and apocryphal endorsements? It remains the case that it is the undoubted affirmation of the tradition: even if, in handing the tradition on, it is not clear what it should be tied to, they witness nonetheless to the continuity of the belief. And the fact is, there is a superabundance of texts that prove for us that, with or without Pseudo-Melchiades, the belief in every age was that Confirmation was the sacrament of strength and struggle (pp. 183-184).

Martimort traces the *robur* theme back to Jesus himself, as reported in Luke and Acts.<sup>208</sup> “If the confirmed is clothed with power, it is to preach to others, to profess publicly and boldly the name of Christ. For the prophet’s role demands courage” (p. 186) – the courage to overcome one’s own fearfulness, and to face an audience that may not be receptive, may even be hostile.

### **L.S. Thornton (1884 – 1960)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Confirmation: its place in the baptismal mystery* (1954).

Thornton, an Anglican priest of the Community of the Resurrection, addresses the question of what is “the distinctive gift of the Holy Spirit in confirmation; and closely bound up with this is the further question concerning the relation between that gift and the benefits bestowed in baptism” (Thornton, 1954, p. 153). Thornton is not concerned, as so many recent Catholic theologians have been, that the mediaeval doctrine exalts Confirmation to the detriment of Baptism, but instead that the mediaeval doctrine does not give sufficient pride of place to Confirmation. Thornton approvingly cites Tertullian’s doctrine (“following St. Luke”, p. 154) that the Holy Spirit is not given in Baptism but only in the “subsequent laying on of the bishop’s hands,” to illustrate how jejune the mediaeval view of Confirmation became in ostensibly positing “only an increase or strengthening of what had already been bestowed in baptism” (p. 155).

Citing the example of Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan as a cognate of Confirmation, Thornton acknowledges that “on the one hand confirmation may rightly be said to strengthen the regenerate life in all its aspects” but cautions that it would be “fatal” to leave it at that (p. 160). He presents the descent of the Spirit at Jesus’ Baptism in terms of calling, in terms of the carrying-out

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<sup>208</sup> “And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49, *RSV*); “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8, *RSV*).

of Jesus' "messianic mission", a second and distinct bestowal of the Spirit that followed and fulfilled the gift of the Spirit at Jesus' conception: which first gift "disposed the developing humanity of the incarnate Lord to the acceptance of the Servant's vocation" (p. 160). The gift of the Spirit for the follower of Christ likewise "belongs to a second stage in initiation" (p. 172):

Christian baptism is for the neophyte his entry into the new birth of the world through death and resurrection, whereas confirmation constitutes his participation in the pentecostal gift of the Spirit...In the Acts of the Apostles...the evangelist ...[makes] clear that the completion of the church's initiation at Pentecost is repeated seriatim in the initiation of individual Christians (pp. 179, 181).

Thornton denies the "strange modern notion" that positing a "completion" of Baptism by Confirmation is "derogatory" to Baptism (p. 183), arguing that complementarity exists even in the relations of the Persons of the Holy Trinity and that the complementarity of the stages in Christian initiation implies no defect but is an image of Trinitarian complementarity. The things Confirmation accomplishes do not make up for what is lacking in Baptism, for Thornton; they fulfill the vocational promise or potential, the mission, that was conferred at Baptism when Christians "entered the divine-human being of the incarnate Lord" (p. 185).

### **Paul Anciaux (1921 – 1979)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: "Le sacrement de confirmation" in *Christo Signati* (1954).

Anciaux acknowledges the classic view that Confirmation is Pentecost (Anciaux, 1954, p. 9) but in turn modifies it slightly by situating Pentecost in a greater scriptural narrative concerning the Holy Spirit. Anciaux argues that, in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is the "sign and guarantee" of a specific mission (p. 9), that the "prophetic and messianic mission" of Jesus was displayed by the descent of the Spirit at his baptism (p. 11), and that Jesus in turn promised the same Spirit to his disciples for the accomplishment of their mission (p. 12). That promised was fulfilled at Pentecost, but also by the Apostles' intervention in Samaria. Thus, even more than being Pentecost for the Christian, Anciaux presents Confirmation as the promised gift of the Spirit, a promise fulfilled in various ways, *including* Pentecost and the apostolic hand-laying

in Acts 8 and 19. The effects he attributes to Confirmation are quite standard: spiritual strength intended for witnessing, and for the combat and challenges that arise from that witnessing (p. 21).

Anciaux attempts a more detailed account of character than many of his contemporaries. He describes sacramental character in general as

a real transformation of man, a spiritual investiture including him in the organism of salvation [*l'introduisant dans l'organisme du salut*], constituting him as a member and agent of Christian redemption. Sacramental character unites and assimilates one to Christ in his priestly and redemptive function...[it] consecrates man with a view to Christian life and action in this world according to the diverse steps in an always more complete participation to the work of Redemption, to the priesthood of Christ, to the building up of the Body of Christ (p. 24).

Anciaux continues that the specific sacramental character of Confirmation confers the “spiritual power to accomplish certain sacred acts, different from those” which Baptism empowered one to carry out (p. 25). Baptism makes one able to act with respect to one’s own salvation, while Confirmation equips one for combat. This account seems most unsatisfactory to me: it does not seem that the confirmed Christian is in fact capable of certain acts which the merely-baptized cannot do. To claim otherwise appears to be special pleading, which is a perennial challenge when appraising discussions of sacramental character: there is no obvious *habitus* to compare with baptismal identity as an adopted child of God, no *potestas* to compare with the ordained priest’s capacity to consecrate the Eucharist, and theologians are thus reduced to claiming that special character is imprinted without being able to describe either that character or its effects. It is not even a “black box”; not only do we not see the mechanism by which an input becomes an output, but we do not see the output.

### **Pierre-Thomas Camelot (1901 – 1993)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Sur la théologie de la confirmation* (1954).

Camelot, a French Dominican, opines that the contemporary “manuals and treatises of theology” on the subject of Confirmation – confining themselves, as they do, to “commenting the formulas of ‘Melchisedech’ (‘augmentum ad gratiam, confirmamur ad pugnam’)” – leave the reader feeling a little hungry (Camelot, 1954, p. 637).

Camelot notes that Confirmation seems to be no more than an accessory to Baptism, which maintains its value without Confirmation and “suffices in itself for the initiation of the Christian” (p. 641). Indeed, citing Dix, Camelot notes that in the separation of the two rites of initiation in the West, “Western theology has transferred all the most important content of the rite to what was only preliminary, and downgraded baptism in the Spirit to the point that it was nothing but a simple *augmentum gratiae*” (p. 642). This is not to say that water-baptism has nothing to do with the gift of the Spirit – Camelot cites passages from Paul that emphasize the pneumatic aspect of Baptism.

Camelot laments the (to him, false) dilemma: Either the Holy Spirit “intervenes” in Baptism, in which case Confirmation is “useless”, or he does not, in which case Confirmation is “necessary”. “To this dialectic of *either/or*,” Camelot writes, “one must substitute *both/and*...The Holy Spirit is given in Baptism, and yet he intervenes again at Confirmation. But how?” (p. 645).

Camelot admires Bouyer’s work on this very question, but finds that his concern for returning to the liturgical sources prevents him from perceiving clearly enough “the proper and specific grace of Confirmation, which makes of it a ‘sacrament’ in the strong sense” intended by Trent (p. 648). What is more, Bouyer says nothing about sacramental ‘character’. Camelot also appreciates and criticizes the work of Martimort and Thornton.

His own solution to the problem he poses is that while all the sacraments entail an increase in grace, the *augmentum gratiae* proper to Confirmation “is the growth of a living being which reaches its full adult stature. Confirmation is the *τελείωσις* [*teleiosis*, “development”] that leads the neophyte to the state of *τέλειος* [*teleios*, “being perfect”], of the perfect Christian” (p. 652). Camelot frames the *robur* model – which he acknowledges (p. 653) to be a major part of the Catholic tradition of Confirmation, quite apart from “Melchiades” – in terms of this adult stature:

Strength is given not so much for spiritual combat against interior enemies as for combats of faith. The new gift of the Spirit accomplishes the total initiation of the Christian, not only to allow him to take his place in the Church at the eucharistic communion, but also to exercise his activity as an adult in the Church and for the Church. The anointing of Confirmation is...the anointing of the prophets, and the grace of Confirmation is a grace of witnessing (p. 653).

Though Camelot presents this interpretation of *robur* as a contrast to the prevailing tradition, we saw in the last chapter that in fact the predominant mediaeval interpretation of *robur* was precisely *robur ad praedicandum* as much as it was *ad pugnam*. Camelot's originality was to develop the theme of *robur ad praedicandum* in terms that overlap with Confirmation as a rite of maturity, of adulthood in the Church and the power to live seriously one's duties as a full Christian and to live "for others" (p. 655). However, like Bouyer, Camelot does not accept the view that Confirmation is a kind of lay ordination, an empowerment for Catholic Action and the lay apostolate. This, he claims, is "playing with words" (p. 654). While this may be granted insofar as the particular expression "ordination" is concerned, Camelot's focus on the responsibility and discipleship of the lay Christian has very much more in common with the promotion of Catholic Action than he admits. He is squarely in the camp that views Confirmation as the sacrament of the lay apostolate.

Finally, Camelot attempts to remedy the insufficient attention paid by his contemporaries to the doctrine of character. The character imprinted at Confirmation creates "a new resemblance to Christ, a closer participation in his priesthood – a resemblance and participation through which the confirmed is endowed with graces of strength which allow him to witness to his faith" (p. 657). One notes the ubiquitous comparatives that characterize modern accounts of Confirmation - a *new* resemblance, a *closer* participation – without really clarifying its purpose.

### **Bernard Leeming (1893 – 1971)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Principles of Sacramental Theology* (1955).

Leeming's remarks about Confirmation arise principally in connection with his criticism of Dix, Lampe, Thornton and the other participants in the early twentieth-century Anglican debates about initiation, and they show the growing Roman Catholic awareness of the lay vocation and lay apostolate at the time he wrote. The English Jesuit's own view may be gathered from his conclusion concerning these debates:

Both sides in this controversy are right in what they affirm, wrong in what they deny<sup>209</sup>: the one side right in affirming a seal and a gift of the Spirit in Baptism, the other in affirming a seal and a

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<sup>209</sup> John Stuart Mill, admittedly no theologian himself, is the author of the pertinent epigram that has thus been appositely applied to theological debate not only by Leeming but also by F D Maurice and Reinhold Niebuhr: he wrote "It might be plausibly maintained, that in almost every one of the leading controversies, past or present, in



gift of the Spirit in Confirmation; the one wrong in denying a seal and a special gift of the Spirit in Confirmation, the other in denying a seal and the indwelling of the Spirit in Baptism. The mistake common to both, speaking generally, is too rigid a concept of ‘the Seal of the Spirit’, and too narrow a concept of the manner in which the divine Spirit produces effects in the souls of men (Leeming, 1955, pp. 221-222).

This echoes Camelot’s insistence that one ought to approach Confirmation with a “both/and” perspective.

Leeming’s positive statement of his view of Confirmation is not detailed. He writes: “Confirmation gives a special share in the apostolic mission of the Church, and in giving that share, the Spirit of God himself gives the graces, whatever they be, needed to fulfill the commission given” (p. 222). There is no trace of an ascetical interpretation of Confirmation’s effects here; Leeming sees Confirmation as a kind of ordination of every Christian, empowering them to a specific kind of role as a member of Christ’s body in the world. It remains unclear how this differs from the identity conferred at Baptism, except that Leeming has characterized the Confirmation mission as a “special” share. A little further on he writes, “Confirmation gives a recognized adult standing in the Church and a special commission to share in the apostolic work of the Church” (p. 236). Standing, share, commission: the effect of Confirmation, for Leeming, is above all one of identity, a character associated with the apostolic mission of the Church. He does not write of *robur* in particular, or even of grace in general, but of an apostolic commission.

### **Francisco de Paula Solá (1907 – 1993)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *De sacramento confirmationis* (1956).

Solá lists many of the names by which Confirmation has been known, some of them drawn from the material used (such as *chrisma*), others from its effects (namely, σφραγίς [“seal”], *signaculum*, *sigillum*; *signaculum dominicum*, [*signaculum*] *vitae aeternae*, [*signaculum*] *spiritale*; *chrisma spiritualis unctionis*, *chrisma salutis*, ἅγιον χρίσμα [“holy anointing”], μυστικόν χρίσμα [“mystical anointing”], *consignatio*, *confirmatio*, and βεβαίωσις [“confirmation”]; and finally, names drawn from its relation to Baptism, namely *perfectio*, *complementum*, *consummatio*, *baptismum Spiritus Sancti*, and μυστήριον τελετής μύρον [“mystery of the rite of chrism”] (Solá, 1956, pp. 184-185).

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social philosophy, both sides were in the right in what they affirmed, though wrong in what they denied.” J. S. Mill, *Dissertations and discussions: political, philosophical, and historical*, vol. 2, (H. Holt, 1864), p. 11.

Solá describes it as a sacrament willed by Christ to mirror physical life, so that the baptized might not be static, but progress like growing bodies in the spiritual life (*in vita spirituali homines progredierentur*, p. 189). He defines it more precisely, after R. Puig de la Bellacasa, as the rite that follows and completes (*ut eius complementum*) Baptism, conferring the Holy Spirit for strength that one might firmly believe and fearlessly confess (p. 189). Baptism is the sacrament of rebirth; Confirmation, of adolescence (p. 190). Through Baptism one becomes part of Christ's people; through Confirmation one enters the army of Christ the King, fearlessly defending the faith, armed (*ad armaturam*) with the gift of the Holy Spirit (p. 220); in fact, Solá explains confirmational character as “constituting” the confirmed as a soldier (p. 222).

Solá also explains confirmational character as a sign that distinguishes: whereas baptismal character distinguishes the faithful from the unfaithful (*fideliū ab infidelibus*), confirmational character distinguishes those who are spiritually advanced from newborns (p. 221). Whereas Baptism imparts a character that opens the door to other sacraments, the character imprinted by Confirmation “perfects the soul in its capacity to receive the sacraments” (p. 221). The strength and equipping provided by Confirmation empowers one to engage in Catholic Action, to the spread of the faith (p. 223).

### **Louis H. Pabst (1926 – 1995)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *The nature of the sacramental character of confirmation* (1956).

Louis H. Pabst was a Baltimore-area pastor and veteran of the Second World War. In Pabst's 1956 dissertation for the licentiate in theology at St. Mary's University in Baltimore, the sources he cites for his portrait of Confirmation are mainly contemporary studies and presentations of Church teaching, such as Kavanagh (1935), Kelly (1945), Hesburgh (1946), and Philippon (1954). The dissertation thus provides a snapshot of views of Confirmation circulating in the English-speaking world at the time. As we have just read, Leeming presented Confirmation as a share in the Church's mission; Pabst defends a similar interpretation. He writes that the character imprinted by Confirmation causes the confirmand to “participate in Christ's priesthood” and obliges her to “participate in the lay apostolate” (p. 16); it “is the soul's permanent consecration and deputation for the multiple engagement of social Catholicism” (p. 29). Where Baptism “incorporates” a person into the Mystical Body of Christ, and Orders is

aimed at “promoting” the “sanctification of others”, Confirmation “increases the sacerdotal power given in Baptism and intensifies the Christian’s configuration to Christ as Priest” (p. 17). It “incorporates” the confirmed Christian “into the Church under a new title,” and even confers “the power to offer the Father a homage which is worthy of Him,” reinforcing the “baptismal character to the maximum degree.”

For Pabst, as for Laros, Confirmation is closely tied to Catholic Action, to the lay apostolate and the obligations of an active and informed laity: “The confirmed Christian,” Pabst explains, “assumes the responsibility of striving for the salvation of others” and has the duty of defending “the rights of the Church” and undertaking “the spread of the Faith” (p. 19). He frames the distinctness of Confirmation from Baptism in martial and hierarchical terms, writing that Confirmation entails a duty that Baptism does not, “a duty to fight under a leader – the Bishop” (p. 22). He adds that the lay Christian is often the “sole point of contact” between the Gospel and the secular world, which may never be in contact with those whom he styles “the official teachers of truth” (p. 29). This is not so much a *robur ad pugnam* as a *missio ad pugnam*, less a personal quality than an office or commission; but Pabst does not omit the pneumatological element in this commission, for “Christ sends...the Spirit of constancy and Divine Faith, in order to form the child of God into a soldier of Christ” (p.23). Pabst’s interpretation also retains an ascetical element (see p. 24), for he writes of personal mortification and asceticism as important habits of the effective soldier of Christ.

Most innovatively, Pabst bears witness to an interpretation of Confirmation that we have not often seen in Catholic circles prior to this era, though we have seen the first stirrings of it in Camelot and Leeming (and even a distant anticipation of it in Klinge): Confirmation as the “sacrament of maturity.” “No matter what age the baptized Christian has attained, “ Pabst writes, “he is still a child spiritually until he is confirmed” (pp. 24-25).

The predominant shortcoming of Pabst’s interpretation is the difficulty of translating the many comparatives whereby he defines Confirmation’s effects in terms of Baptism’s graces – “stronger,” “deeper,” “clearer,” “more excellent,” “to the maximum degree” and so forth – into a concrete or precise understanding of the second sacrament’s utility and purpose; and of avoiding the conclusion that Baptism is merely provisional, a bare necessary minimum until the plenitude of Confirmation can be furnished. Such a view of Baptism may or may not be *prima facie* implausible, but it is not clear why Christian identity should be graduated in this way.

### **Boniface Luykx (1915 – 2004)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: “Théologie et pastorale de la Confirmation” (1957); “Confirmation Today” (1959).

In his 1959 article (which follows closely the arguments of his 1957 work), Luykx echoes Dix and Thornton’s lament of the reduced understanding of Confirmation, from its place as an initiatory moment in the “vital whole” of the Christian mystery to a mere utilitarian “strengthening for combat”. He sees part of the cause of this reduction in Aquinas who posited this effect as Confirmation’s “principal efficacy”, and especially in those who followed him, “faithfully copying each other” (Luykx, 1959, pp. 333-334).

Luykx finds the origins of Confirmation in the Church’s recognition of a “special rite” other than Baptism, “for the communication of the fullness of its life” (p. 334). This rite was a hand-laying by the Apostles, along with an invoking of the Spirit. Though distinct from the baptismal water-bath, the pneumatic hand-laying formed a single initiation “which in its totality, was called ‘baptism’” (p. 334). This unified rite of initiation was originally, and remained – in Luykx’s day and in our own – the practice of the Eastern churches. Luykx – who went on to become archimandrite of Holy Transfiguration Byzantine Catholic monastery in California – urges a return to this unified practice. Luykx cites contemporary ecclesiastical directives which urge that Baptism and Confirmation be administered together under certain circumstances (*e.g., in extremis*) to support this program of restoring “organic” unity; the subsequent decades have, of course, only reinforced these precedents.

As for the purpose and effect of Confirmation, Luykx emphasizes another feature of Aquinas’ Confirmation doctrine, an aspect of his thought that has been less widely transmitted than the *robur ad pugnam*: “Confirmation is related to baptism as growth to birth” (p. 336). He summarizes the patristic doctrine of this relationship in this way: “Confirmation is related to baptism like the dynamic element of the ever-renewing Spirit to the more static element of likeness to Christ” (p. 337). Luykx disagrees with attempts to deduce, from the interpretation of Confirmation in terms of Christian maturity, that it is suited especially to adolescence or physical maturity. This, he writes, would be a “dangerous materialization of grace”, as though spiritual maturity were tied to bodily development. Instead, he insists,

the theological foundation of these arguments is that the term spiritual “maturity” is nothing but an attempt at translating the theological reality of this sacrament, just as the phrase “*augmentum ad gratiam*”, taken from the False Decretals and employed by St. Thomas, means simply that confirmation completes baptism (*gratia*) as its normal development (p. 338).

Confirmation, Luykx concludes, “completes the ontological resemblance to Christ by an active fullness of the Holy Spirit” (p. 338). Observing that Jesus did not undertake his public work until he had been baptized in the Jordan and received the Holy Spirit, he argues that though “by baptism [we] already participate in the divine sonship...it is our confirmation that invests us with the triple dignity [priestly, prophetic, and royal] and mission of Christ in order to make this sonship active.” Luykx does not abandon the mediaeval doctrine; in fact, he resumes what he has said in terms of another profound mediaeval theme, the *praedicandum*: “Work struggle, responsibility, these are the lot of an adult in the community: these values are all contained in that one great word in which the triple dignity of which we have spoken passes from potentiality to act: namely, *witnessing*” – which Luykx sees as the essence of what Jesus mandated his Apostles to do at Pentecost (which he calls “their confirmation”) (p. 340). Provided we define “witnessing” broadly, Luykx goes so far as to endorse the view that Confirmation is “the sacrament of Catholic Action” (understood not as a formal mandate, but an ordinary part of being Christian). As for the third, priestly component of the confirmed’s conformity to Christ’s “triple dignity and mission,” Luykx sees it “in our active participation in eucharistic worship” (p. 342); this shows that Confirmation should always precede the reception of Communion by the faithful. Confirmation, for Luykx, is Pentecost for the baptized Christian.

### **Max Thurian (1921 – 1996)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *La confirmation: consécration des laïcs* (1957).

Thurian, a member of the Taizé community, was not a Roman Catholic at the time he wrote this study but was deeply familiar with and sympathetic to the Catholic view of Confirmation. His profound commitment to ecumenism led him to seek an interpretation of Confirmation that would integrate the insights of various Christian communities.

In his annotated bibliography on the rite, Thurian contrasts the two views that he sees operative in the contemporary Anglican debates about Confirmation (e.g. Dix, Thornton, and Lampe). He summarizes the two opposed views as “Confirmation as a seal of initiation,

sacrament of the gift of the Spirit” and “Confirmation as prophetic ‘ordination’, a ceremony of consecration for witnessing” (p. 116). While this may describe the contrary views of Thornton and Lampe, one notes that (as we have seen) the gift of the Spirit was, for many mediaeval theologians, oriented to a strengthening for the sake of witnessing. To be sure, it was not for the mediaevals a ceremony of consecration – a ceremonial mandate or commissioning – but it was a sacramental mandate in the sense that the confirmand was empowered to witness to Christ. This is a helpful reminder that concord among supposedly divergent models of Confirmation may not be insurmountably difficult to achieve: one might posit (to retain only Thurian’s terms) a completion or perfecting of baptismal initiation that consists of a gift of the Spirit for the sake of ‘ordaining’ or ‘empowering’ to bear Christian witness.

Thurian summarizes the *status quaestionis* among contemporary Catholics (Roman and Anglican) as follows:

In this debate, some maintain that primitive tradition is the only legitimate one [*seule valable*] (Dix, Bouyer): Confirmation is the “seal” of initiation. Others wish to take evolution into account (Martimort, Anciaux): Confirmation is part of initiation but is also ‘*ad robur*’ for witnessing. Finally, certain others (like Lampe) retain only the end-point of the mediaeval evolution [*le terme de l’évolution médiévale*] that they believe they can see in the New Testament: Confirmation is not part of initiation (all is given at the water-baptism) but is a kind of ordination of layfolk (Thurian, 1957, pp. 117-118).

Thurian builds his theology of Confirmation on the “two moments” in the one Christian Baptism that he finds in the New Testament: the Baptism in water and the Spirit of which Jesus speaks to Nicodemus in John 3:5. Thurian finds the first moment in the water-baptism “from which we emerge regenerated by repentance and faith, in the death and resurrection of Christ,” and the second moment in that baptism in the Spirit “where we receive, like the faithful at Pentecost, the gifts necessary for persevering in the faith, for witnessing, for the royal priesthood” (p. 19). In the New Testament, the baptism in the Spirit is mediated by several different events, including the familiar instances of hand-laying in Acts. These two moments were present in Christian initiation until it was separated into two rites in the West late in the first millennium; they remained present even after this separation, in Thurian’s view, though the liturgical symbolism failed to convey that these were in fact two moments in one single initiation (p. 74). Thurian insists on the importance

of uniting the two moments of initiation, baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit, in a single rite; any subsequent rite called “confirmation”, meant to mark the advent of adolescence or adulthood, must not be confused with the post-water-baptism gift of the Spirit (see p. 81). Thurian retains the word “Confirmation” for a rite, conferred at maturity, meant to consecrate the believer “for the service of Christ and the Church” (p. 87); Thurian affirms that in this later rite, the Spirit will provide the strength to witness.

Thus Thurian acknowledges a dual quality in initiation (the ritual application of which, however, ought not to be divided in two), baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit, and calls for a rite of mature commitment and consecration that in effect is a fulfillment of the promise and call first made at one’s twofold Baptism. Thurian integrates into one vision the primitive initiation practice which evolved into the later Roman Catholic separation of rites, urging at once a repealing of the separation, an acknowledgement of the distinct post-baptismal gift of the Spirit, and the creation of a suitable Spirit-invoking rite to mark mature commitment and consecration to Christ. This is not exactly the same as the contemporary view of Confirmation as the sacrament of Catholic Action; the latter model sees, precisely in the post-baptismal initiatory gift of the Spirit, a perfecting of one’s communion with the Church and an empowering to act in the world on behalf of Christ. Thurian, in contrast, insists on the importance in Scripture and Tradition of baptism in the Spirit that is distinct from water-baptism, but also calls for a further prayerful invocation of the Spirit to strengthen and consecrate – Thurian calls it an “ordination” – Christians in their royal priesthood, for service in the world (pp. 94-96). As an example of what difference this “ordination of the layperson” might make, Thurian writes that where someone “baptized in the Spirit” might witness, pray and intercede in her daily life, another who has been “confirmed” could serve as a catechist or a lector in church. Thurian’s “confirmation” thus resembles the minor orders that precede the diaconate in the Catholic Church: an interpretation of the common priesthood of the faithful in clerical, not lay terms, rather than an outright recognition that the sphere where the confirmed Christian exercises her priesthood is all of daily life, daily work, daily duties of home and school and workplace.

### **Edward Schillebeeckx (1914 – 2009)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (1960).



For Schillebeeckx, the two sacraments of initiation are “related” to the two fundamental mysteries of Christ’s life: his “passover” (*i.e.* his love-filled sacrifice that is pleasing to the Father) and his “establishment in power as *Kyrios* whereby, as man, he becomes sender of the Spirit” (Schillebeeckx, 1960, p. 160). The two corresponding sacraments are distinct from each other but expressions of a single reality, the one “redeeming mystery of Christ” (p. 161). Where Baptism makes one a member of the Church, Confirmation makes one share in the Church’s fullness and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, and “thus in the Pentecost mystery of Christ himself. Therefore Confirmation makes us adult members of the Church,” an identity of which the classical language of *robur* “undoubtedly reflects an essential aspect” (p. 161). While the Belgian Dominican’s reasoning as to the Trinitarian reason for a twofold initiation is clear and interesting and will be taken up again by Mohelník, his account of how the effects of Confirmation really differ from those of Baptism remains obscure. To borrow a phrase used by Douglas Farrow to describe a contrast in his own work, Schillebeeckx is prone to be overly fascinated with method to the detriment of a strong, clear centre to his treatment of Confirmation.<sup>210</sup> He repeats (p. 162) that Baptism makes Christ’s passover visible, while Confirmation makes Pentecost visible, but this explanation accounts only for the distinction between the two at the level of sign or symbol; it does not explain how their intrinsic consequences for a Christian’s life are distinct. However, Schillebeeckx explains confirmational character as a “commission,” a mandate “to take an active part in the ecclesial mystery of Easter...primarily the sacramental activity of the Church, above all the Eucharist” (p. 163). In light of the historic order of the sacraments, where Confirmation always preceded Eucharist, Schillebeeckx’s model interprets Confirmation as an admission to the Eucharist, a permanent character that admits one to the Eucharist. Schillebeeckx retreats from this definition somewhat when he criticizes as excessive the condemnation by Luykx and others of Communion before Confirmation. If Schillebeeckx’s account is correct, reversing the order of initiation really is a severe shortcoming; by denying that the reversal really is a serious aberration, Schillebeeckx undermines his case.

Schillebeeckx attributes another consequence to Confirmation: it is a visible extension of the Church’s “charismatic activity in the Spirit”, comparable (he argues) to the way Christ visibly unfolded “the full force of his messianic purpose” only once he entered “into his heavenly

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<sup>210</sup> “Lacking, for good or for ill, the continental fascination with method, and preferring a centre to strictness of order, I have taken as far as possible a story-like approach to my study” (Farrow, 1999, p. x). I think it is clear by now that I also lack this fascination and have opted for a thoroughgoing narrative approach to the problem at hand.

Pentecost mystery” (p. 164). Confirmation reflects what Schillebeeckx considers a development in the life of Christ: when he became “Messiah to the full through his resurrection and exaltation...and through his establishment as human sender of the Spirit” (p. 165). He presents confirmational character as an “ordination” (p. 167) to lay ecclesial status, that is, to the apostolate which is to take part in the Church’s mission of “bestowing the Holy Spirit upon men” (see pp. 169, 173), and as a gift of the grace appropriate to that task (p. 174).

### **Georges Delcuve (1908 – 1976)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: “La confirmation est-elle le sacrement de l’apostolat?” (1962).

Delcuve, a Jesuit, was the founder of a catechetical centre in his native Belgium that became the *Centre international Lumen Vitae* in Brussels. Delcuve’s concise but rich and often unique treatment of Confirmation in his 1962 article anticipates some of the pivotal points around which I will be constructing an integrated interpretation of the sacrament.

His claim is that the sacraments of initiation are Trinitarian in structure and meaning, though he finds (like Piet Fransen, upon whose work (Fransen, 1960) he draws extensively here) that this is often neglected in theological explorations of them. As the sacraments of initiation are meant to bring the Christian into participation in the life of the Trinity, we should expect to see the structure of that relationship mirrored in the sacraments. Delcuve considers that we find two baptisms of Jesus in the New Testament, that the Church as a whole mirrors this in its own two baptismal moments, and that every Christian in turn receives two baptisms: water-baptism and Confirmation, or baptism in the Spirit. The twofold character of Baptism-Confirmation is a common trope in sacramental theology, as we have seen, and even the two initiatory moments in the life of the Church (the Apostles’ initial act of faith, which Delcuve associates with the water-baptism administered by John, followed by Pentecost) and in the life of Jesus (his experience of the Spirit subsequent to his own water-baptism) are widely cited in various reflections on the sacraments (see Delcuve, 1962, p. 321). Where Delcuve is especially distinctive is in his view that Jesus’ second initiatory moment was not the dove’s descent at the river Jordan, but his transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1–9; Mark 9:2-8; and Luke 9:28–36). Delcuve is persuaded, citing the work of Francis Durrwell, of the pneumatic character of this incident:

P. Durrwell writes that, in particular, many authors believe they can interpret the cloud on Tabor the way John the Baptist interprets the dove (John 1:33), that is, as from the Holy Spirit. This interpretation is corroborated by the presence of Elijah, the prophet who was carried off to heaven in a fiery chariot; by the texts in Acts (4:27 and 10:38) relating to the anointing of Christ, which it seems preferable to tie to the Transfiguration rather than to his Baptism; and finally by liturgical commentaries.<sup>211</sup>

The Spirit at work in baptized Christians is the Spirit, “the love of the Father”, by whom Jesus’ life is totally devoted to that same Father (Delcuve, p. 303), as seen especially following his baptism in the Jordan; the Transfiguration, the analogue in Jesus’s life for Pentecost in the life of the Church and for Confirmation in the life of the Christian, is a “glorious transcription” (p. 306) of the crucifixion, that is, of the Son’s obedient sacrifice and self-giving. In this light, Confirmation completes the baptismal seal, which is one of filial adoption, with the “seal of the Spirit of the Father which the Lord Jesus communicates to his Church, having received it from the Father both perfectly to offer his temporal life, and gloriously to rise again.”<sup>212</sup> That seal, Delcuve continues, is also the Father’s testimony on behalf of his son (see Delcuve, 1962, pp. 323-325) – and it is this testimony that provides the “strength” which the tradition associates so consistently with Confirmation (p. 327).

Having understood Confirmation’s link with the apostolate not in terms of physical maturity or a personal choice of the confirmand, but with the completion of Christian initiation that is an icon of Jesus’ own initiation and that of the Church, Delcuve ends by gently suggesting that an earlier age for Confirmation would be preferable, provided that suitable pastoral measures are taken to ensure that parents and communities are properly equipped to foster the spiritual life of young confirmands (p. 332).

### **Adolf Adam (1912 – 2005)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Confirmation et Pastorale* (trans. Meilhac, 1963).

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<sup>211</sup> *En particulier, de nombreux auteurs, écrit le P. Durrwell, croient pouvoir interpréter la nuée du Thabor, comme Jean-Baptiste interpréta la colombe (Jean I, 33), c’est-à-dire de l’Esprit-Saint. Cette interprétation est corroborée par la présence d’Élie, le prophète qui fut emporté au ciel dans un char de feu, par les textes des Actes (IV, 27 et X, 38) relatif à l’onction du Christ, textes qu’il semble préférable de rapporter à la Transfiguration plutôt qu’au Baptême, enfin par les commentaires liturgiques.*

<sup>212</sup> *La confirmation est le sceau de l’Esprit du Père que le Seigneur Jésus communique à son Église, l’ayant reçu du Père à la fois pour offrir parfaitement sa vie temporelle et pour ressusciter glorieusement (Delcuve, 1962, p. 319).*

Adam provides an excellent summary of various interpretations of Confirmation over the centuries. He alludes to quite a few of these models, including eight designations rejected by Koster (1948): Koster rejects the understanding of Confirmation as oriented to “initiation of youth,” “virility,” knightly investiture,” “personality,” “adulthood [*majorité*],” “public life,” “universal priesthood,” and “apostolate,” while he accepts “plenitude of the Spirit” and “fulfillment of Baptism” (see Adam, 1963, p. 17); Also notable among the views catalogued by Adam is that of Rupprecht, to whom Adam ascribes the view that (in the words of Crehan (1955, p. 513)) Confirmation is an “act of acceptance of the (spiritually) new-born child parallel to the act by which a Roman father accepted the child his wife had borne to him.”

In particular, Adam provides a very useful history of views of the *effects* of Confirmation; six which he traces principally through treatments of peribaptismal rites in the patristic era, namely: 1) “gift of the Spirit”, 2) “fulfillment of Baptism”, 3) “growth in the Spirit”, 4) “strength and armour”, 5) “seal of the Spirit”, and 6) “participation in the functions of Christ” (Adam, 1963, pp. 24-40); four that he finds in the Middle Ages, namely 1) the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit and especially the strength to preach to others, 2) an increase of grace, 3) the Lombardian *ad robur* and *pleni Christiani inveniantur*, and 4) a variety of views of strength and combat (*e.g.* the ascetical interpretation); some Catholic views influenced by the Reformation, with particular reference to Berthold de Chiemsee (1528), Konrad Klinge, Georg Witzel (1560), and Johan Ignatz Felbiger (1775)<sup>213</sup>; and finally, contemporary views, including 1) Catholic Action and the lay apostolate, 2) the “sacrament of personality” developed by M. Laros (1938), 3) the sacrament of “majority,” 4) the sacrament of “mystical priesthood” *per* Graber (1937), and finally 5) Koster’s vision of Confirmation as a witness to the sufferings of Christ (Koster, 1948).

Here I shall concentrate on what is distinctive to Adam – namely his own treatment, and Graber and Koster’s interpretations which he summarizes tersely and effectively. I have already described Laros above.

Graber is inspired by “an unknown theologian of the school of Eichstätt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century” to posit that “the sacrament which grasps our life in its innermost depths and makes of it a burning sacrifice of love is Confirmation, ordination to the ‘sacerdotium flaminis’” (Adam, p. 56). This is not the priesthood of the faithful, but a conforming (by means of sacramental character) specifically to the “Saviour’s spirit of immolation” (p. 57); Confirmation is thus

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<sup>213</sup> I survey Klinge above. At the time of writing I have not found de Chiemsee, Witzer or Felbiger in translation from the German.

understood to be “‘consecration to the mystical death of Christ’, the ‘sacrament which immerses us in the continual mystical sacrifice of Christ’.” (p. 57). Adam rejects Graber’s model as an example of how “artificial and untenable” theological conclusions can be when not guided by tradition.

Koster also attempts a “new conception of Confirmation”: on the strength of an instruction of 1946 concerning Confirmation of the sick, Koster proposes that “the simple human sufferings and death of the Christian become a witness for the sufferings and death of Christ” (p. 57). His argument is that Confirmation of the dying must have some other purpose than the witness proper to a healthy person, so it must be intended to confer a witnessing function precisely on the sick person’s afflictions. While, taken in the strictest sense, this interpretation has no roots in the tradition – indeed Adam rejects it – it is possible to subsume the witness offered by a person in distress within the general charism of witnessing that we have consistently seen ascribed to Confirmation over the centuries. “If I am in sickness,” Newman wrote, “my sickness may serve Him”.

As for Adam himself, just before turning his attention to the pragmatic and pastoral problems around Confirmation, he affirms as his own the view of Confirmation that was “splendidly renewed” in the catechism published after Trent (p. 60) and cautions against narrowing that view out of a desire for novelty.

### **Marian Bohen (1930 – )**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *The Mystery of Confirmation* (1963).

Marian Bohen is an American Ursuline whose pastoral career has included high school teaching in the Bronx, lecturing in theology in Indonesia, and ministry to the incarcerated.<sup>214</sup> Her work is especially interesting for its appraisal of contemporary views of Confirmation, although her taxonomy is not persuasive. She lists five “general views” (Bohen, 1963, p. 18):

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<sup>214</sup> I am puzzled by the relative paucity of women’s voices in the discussion of Roman Catholic sacramental theology and sacramental causality in general, and of the effects of Confirmation in particular. Susan Ross writes (2002, p. 233) that “while there has been considerable discussion in feminist theology about women’s *liturgical* participation, both traditional and non-traditional sacramental theology has not received the same amount of attention.” The same observation is true more generally of women working as theologians in the Roman Catholic tradition, whether adopting feminist or other approaches: relatively few (at least in the languages I have been working in) have focused on sacramental theology. Bohen is one of the few Roman Catholic women theologians to give the subject of Confirmation’s effects prolonged attention. In the opinion of Teresa Berger, “the effects of confirmation...is not a subject that has generated a whole lot of energy among contemporary women writers” (personal communication, November 8, 2013).

- 1) A Faustan *robur ad pugnam*, which she describes as the view of Aquinas and Trent;
- 2) A curious category that she calls “other principal effects,” having in common only their ostensible rejection of *robur ad pugnam*. These “other effects” include “deputation to worship,” “sealing” (to safeguard baptismal gifts), “new presence of the Holy Spirit” and “prophetic mission.”
- 3) A revised *robur ad pugnam* that has no overt reliance on “Melchiades”, but this ought to be listed with the first view, *supra*, albeit with qualification;
- 4) Rite of maturity or majority;
- 5) “that sign of the Church as *Ursakrament* which effects a participation in the Church’s mission to work for man’s redemption” (p. 19).

It would have been more apropos to categorize them as follows:

- 1) *Robur ad pugnam*, not always grounded in “Melchiades”;
- 2) *Robur ad praedicandum*
- 3) Maturity
- 4) Perfection or completion of Baptism (sealing, new presence of Spirit)
- 5) Catholic Action (lay apostolate, etc.)

Bohen confines her own interpretation mainly to intensification: Confirmation is the *mystērion* (her keyword for understanding the sacrament) that “complete[s] baptismal dying and rebirth”; through it the Holy Spirit “vitalizes and dynamizes those who have been called to live according to the Spirit”; it “seals” the “baptismal death to sin” (p. 64). Bohem’s view is that Confirmation is above all an intensification of baptismal grace.

### **Ralph J. Bastian (1927 – )**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *The Effects of Confirmation in Recent Catholic Thought* (1962); “Confirmation: the Gift of the Spirit” (1964).

Chicago-born Ralph Bastian was a Jesuit at the time he did his main work on Confirmation in 1962 and 1964. His short but insightful 1964 article strikes a careful balance between criticism and respect of the received tradition concerning Confirmation. He insists that the *robur* model is a “genuine datum of tradition and certainly not a deviation from it” (Bastian, 1964, p. 172), but also that it is not what is most foundational and central in the Church’s historic doctrine of Confirmation. He also recognizes the tradition that describes Confirmation as a

“perfection” of Baptism, and enquires how that perfection ought to be described. Bastian recognizes that the perennial aporia of Confirmation is the question of what it adds to Baptism – a question that seems destined to result in attributing some defect to Baptism, or making Confirmation superfluous.

The foundation of Confirmation, for Bastian, is that it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. This is nothing new: as we have seen, the most universal model of Confirmation in the Catholic tradition is that it is Pentecost for the individual. What is unique and revolutionary in Bastian’s approach is that, while acknowledging the legitimacy of such models as *robur* and maturity, he sees them as manifestations of the more basic Pentecostal identity of Confirmation, and he is willing to refrain from categorically defining the effect of Confirmation any more precisely in order to let the abundant meaning of the Pentecost event mean many things at once, without undue restriction. He presents a few of the themes to be found in the New Testament’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit inspires and empowers the disciples for preaching, discernment, holiness, unity. These are important and real effects of the coming of the Spirit in the Greek Scriptures, and Bastian associates all of them with Confirmation without singling any out or insisting on a precise definition (p. 177). The work of the Holy Spirit is beyond easy categorization; therefore the effects of Confirmation which confers that same Spirit are likewise beyond easy categorization. Pentecost implies many things for the life of the Church, and therefore so does Confirmation. This is Bastian’s most valuable contribution to our enquiry, but valuable also is his acknowledgement that one particular problem about Confirmation remains persistently unresolved: every prayer, every sacrament entails a coming of the Holy Spirit. Where grace is, there is the Holy Spirit. Therefore Bastian asks: “Has there been some indication which renders the communication of grace in confirmation the gift of the Spirit par excellence, apart from his communication in every bestowal of grace?” (p. 183). *Prima facie*, we would have to locate this uniqueness in Confirmation’s Pentecostal significance.

### **Charles Davis (1923 – 1999)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Sacraments of initiation: baptism and confirmation* (1964).

In 1964, Davis (at the time, a priest of the Archdiocese of Westminster and theology professor at Ware) equated the apostolic laying of hands with the sacrament of Confirmation and



understood it as part of an initiatory whole, with Baptism; through the two rites, the “first disciples...were...aware that they could join others to their fellowship” (Davis, 1964, p. 40). This pneumatic imposition of hands is the ordinary way the Spirit is received in the New Testament: “Baptism is a first requirement; the gift of the Spirit followed upon it. This was the order of events unless God intervened in a special way [*e.g.* in the case of Cornelius, Acts 10:44]” (p. 104).

Davis recognizes that one of the major reasons for “differing views” of Confirmation among theologians is the variety of “external rites” through which it has been mediated over the years. These diverse rites may imply a diversity of effects of the sacrament. The point is a perceptive one: Confirmation is indeed a sacrament in search of meaning to the extent that we seek the meaning in the several rites and gestures by which it is or has been conferred – to the extent that we seek to derive the mythological meaning from the ritual action, in Catherine Bell’s terms. As Davis notes, the “great scholastic writers” (and later the council of Florence) were quite willing to forsake the imposition of hands in favour of anointing, recognizing fully that this was a shift from what they themselves considered to be the apostolic practice. Though Davis does not make this point, it is one I shall make later: the scholastic example suggests that the mythological meaning they ascribed Confirmation informed their decisions about ritual practice, rather than *vice versa*.

For Davis, the predominant confirmational *leitmotiv* that is consistent throughout the tradition is that it is “the completion, the finishing or perfecting of baptism. The second sacrament is there to complete the work of initiation begun by the first sacrament, baptism” (p. 127). Davis’ own reading of this completion is similar to that of many of his contemporaries: it makes confirmed Christians “adults, with the fullness of the Spirit and...a responsible part in the work of the Church” (p. 130). Davis rejects the interpretation that associates the Spirit with Confirmation and not with Baptism. Since Baptism involves the remission of sins, he argues, it necessarily involves sanctifying grace and therefore necessarily involves an “indwelling” of the Holy Spirit (p. 145). Confirmation is thus not distinguished from Baptism by the gift of the Spirit, since the Spirit was already given in the first sacrament; but “there is a further coming in confirmation and a special increase in his gifts” (p. 146). We have seen before this rather vague sort of language to describe the mode of the Spirit’s presence in Confirmation, but Davis advances our understanding of the claim by reflecting on the “inadequacy of language” (p. 146).

Davis corrects ambiguity and anthropomorphism in language about God: The Holy Spirit, he writes,

does not come by moving from one place to another, from an imaginary heaven to a space within us. The Spirit comes by establishing or strengthening a relation with us, and all the change this involves takes place on our side. The coming in confirmation has a purpose distinct from the coming in baptism and therefore has different effects (p. 146).

This is not to say that the Spirit's freedom is not a factor in human relationships with God, but the freedom exercised by the Spirit is not a parceling out of his own person; it is a more or less radical transformation of the human soul, drawing the disciple asymptotically to union with the Holy Trinity, not without the participation of the disciple's will. I propose an analogy from human relations: suppose one man visits another. He does not visit in greater or lesser measure or even a different quality (though he may come under one or another title, function, name, etc.). Having arrived at the other's house, the first man may do more or less, he may speak more or less, the relationship between the two may flourish or stagnate or suffer; but the man himself either comes, or he does not. What varies is the work he does and the degree to which the other is willing to receive and engage with him. Thus Davis may be pitching it a little strong to say that "all the change...takes place on our side," for the Spirit blows where it wills; but Davis is correct to insist that what varies among those who have received the Spirit is not the "quality" or "measure" of God, but the *degree* to which the soul is receptive and cooperative, and the *purposes* for which the Holy Spirit wills to act in this or that disciple.<sup>215</sup>

What is the "distinct purpose" of Confirmation? To "make the Christian a witness of Christ" (p. 146), just as at Pentecost the Spirit gave the first Christians "a share in the mission of Christ" (p. 150). For this mission, the Christian is "made ready to receive the suggestions and

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<sup>215</sup> This may not be the place to presume to settle the matter of divine change and suffering, but I think Paul Williams has it right when he writes:

...it simply does not seem to follow in any obvious sense that if God acts in the world, intends, or responds to prayer, then God needs to undergo change. Of course, from our side, as beings in time, we see God as acting in time and explain it in these various ways. But there does not appear to be any obvious contradiction in saying that what we call 'God responding to Archibald's prayer', or 'God guiding the good works of Mother Fiona', is from God's side the case, as it were, from all eternity. No change occurs in God when he responds to Archibald's prayer. I say 'as it were' because if God is outside time then it would not follow that God was always guiding the good works of Mother Fiona, say a million years before she was born. This would be to see God's eternity wrongly as a state of eternal prolongation, rather than as outside time. There would seem to be no contradiction in a being outside time bringing something about and, as a being outside time, it follows that this being could not change. Change can occur only in time (Williams, 2002, p. 38).

promptings of the Spirit” through the “gifts” of the Spirit – which are not seven distinct things, but “ways in which the Spirit moves us and acts upon us” (p. 153). The doctrine of character is another way of saying that this status of being a witness, “with the function and power of giving testimony to Christ,” is “permanent” (p. 155). Davis contrasts this vision with a narrow view of Confirmation in terms of ascetical *robur*, as “the sacrament of our personal struggle with sin” or as a way of facing the ordeals of adolescence, which narrow interpretation he rejects. The theme of *robur* is an important and traditional one, but must be understood as “strength to profess the Faith and bear testimony to Christ” (p. 158), a *robur ad praedicandum*.

Like Luykx, Davis summarizes his own position thus: “Confirmation, then, is the Pentecost for each Christian” (p. 154).

### **Burkhard Neunheuser (1904 – 2004)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Baptism and Confirmation* (1964).

Neunheuser was a Benedictine monk of Maria Laach Abbey in Germany. In the work under consideration here, he implies strongly that he views the pneumatic apostolic hand-laying of Acts 8 and 19 (as well as Hebrews 6:1-6) as a primitive initiatory rite: “a laying on of hands for the imparting of the Spirit – performed after the water-bath and as a complement to this bath – existed already in the earliest apostolic times” (Neunheuser, trans. Hughes, 1964, p. 42). Arguing from Coppens’ work (1925), Neunheuser denies that the varying conceptions of the Spirit in the New Testament (so well resumed, for example, by Milner (1971)) are contradictory; “in particular,” he writes, there is no contradiction in the New Testament “between the conception of the Spirit as a person and its conception as a gift” (p. 45).

Neunheuser’s history of the evolution of Confirmation is mainly about the shifting “matter” and “form” of the sacrament, and scarcely at all about its effects; he notes that Lombard considered its “*virtus sacramenti*” to be “the imparting of the Holy Spirit ‘for vigorous action’” (p. 243), and cites Thomas’ view of Confirmation’s effects in his *Summa* and *Sentences* commentary. Otherwise, he does not comment on effect until his last two pages. Quoting D. Winzen (1935) he writes that it is

related to baptism ‘as Pentecost to Easter. Confirmation is the sacrament of the messianic fullness of the Spirit. Therefore it elevates Christians to the highest ranks of the spiritual life, it ordains them to priests, to prophets and to genuine rulers in the kingdom of the Spirit. And because the

Spirit of the Lord is destined to fill the whole world, confirmation makes Christians confessors and apostles of Christ's kingdom in the face of the world' (Neunheuser, 1964, pp. 251-252).

Neunheuser adds that Confirmation is given that Christians of today "may not lack the primitive strength of the Holy Spirit...but that he may be ours, to confess before the world" (p. 250).

### **Herbert McCabe (1926 – 2001)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *The People of God: the fullness of life in the Church* (1964).

Even so incisive a mind as the great English Dominican McCabe's confessed some perplexity before Confirmation in his 1964 work: "Confirmation is a completion or ratification of baptism, and one of the reasons why it is a little obscure is that it is difficult to disentangle from that sacrament" (McCabe, 1964, p. 147). McCabe cites especially the liturgical vestiges of ancient Baptism to be found in Confirmation – for example, the bishop's role as minister – as examples of the confusion. McCabe suggests that a key to understanding Confirmation may be what he calls a "strange phenomenon" of the ancient Church, namely the visible outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was frequently an adjunct of Baptism – for example, the prophecy and speaking in tongues described in Acts 19. McCabe speculates that this manifest presence of the Spirit was "regarded as a sort of confirmation of baptism" (p. 148) and was meant for the faithful to witness to Christ. In this reading, the remarkable signs that accompanied Baptism were not merely remarkable, they were deliberately oriented to the proclamation of the Gospel to others. This is McCabe's central thesis: the Spirit is given at Confirmation in order to "overflow" from the confirmand (p. 149) so that he in turn becomes "a source of the Spirit to others", presumably by making it possible for them to embrace faith as well and thereby become part of the Church. McCabe compares Confirmation with Holy Orders:

the bishop exercises his priesthood in offering the Mass by sacramental acts, the layman exercises his baptismal priesthood by his personal devotion. The bishop exercises his priesthood in witnessing to the Gospel by preaching, while the layman witnesses to it in more personal and complex ways (p. 149).

McCabe provides a valuable new insight on the standard affirmation that Confirmation empowers one to witness. The authority or effectiveness of a lay Christian as a witness to Christ – McCabe calls Confirmation the “sacrament of lay witness” (p. 151) – is not only, or even chiefly, a function of her articulacy, her rhetorical and dialectical skill. It arises from the power of the Holy Spirit, McCabe argues, hence the unique power and credibility of holy people in leading others to Christ. The conviction they inspire is not just a consequence of thoughtful preaching or erudition, but of the palpable presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in their lives. McCabe provides examples of this dynamic from Scripture: in I Corinthians 2, Paul cites the power of the Spirit as the real source of his credibility<sup>216</sup>; in Luke 12<sup>217</sup>, Jesus promises a persuasiveness to his followers that will come not from personal skill above all, but from the Holy Spirit.

McCabe’s too-brief treatment of Confirmation ends with a suggestion for further reflection: he proposes that theologians should enquire into “the relation between the priestly authority associated with the episcopate and the analogous priestly authority associated with confirmation” which pertains to authority “in the family and in all kinds of education – also the interaction between the authority of the layman in these fields and that of the bishop” (p. 151).

McCabe’s treatment of Confirmation in his work from 2000 is similarly brief but also enlightening. In question-and-answer catechism format, the book is a short introduction to the Catholic faith for adults. He writes:

What mystery of the Church is signified and brought about in Confirmation?

The mystery of the Church that is signified and brought about in Confirmation is a sharing in the priesthood of Christ by a permanent consecration to the mission of Christian witness; this is called the character of Confirmation.

What mystery of grace is signified and brought about in this sacrament?

The mystery of grace that is signified and brought about in Confirmation is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit by which we are brought to maturity in Christ. We receive the gifts of ‘wisdom and understanding, of right judgment and courage, the gifts of knowledge and reverence and the gift of

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<sup>216</sup> “...my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (I Corinthians 2:4-5, *RSV*).

<sup>217</sup> “And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12:11-12, *RSV*).

wonder and awe in the presence of God' (cf. Is. 11:2) so that our lives become a witness to God's love (McCabe, 2000, p. 30).

In a footnote to the second paragraph, McCabe describes the gifts of the Holy Spirit that he enumerated as "qualities of sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit." McCabe's summary is remarkable for its distilling of many insights of the Catholic tradition – *e.g.* the quality of sacramental character as a conforming to the priesthood of Christ, the martyrial vocation of each Christian, and the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit. Notably absent is a clear reference to *robur*. McCabe's most helpful move in this summary is his judicious phrasing of the theme of maturity: Confirmation, for McCabe, is not an act expressing the maturity of the Christian, but an efficacious means whereby the Spirit *brings about* maturity in Christ. Implicit in this phrasing is the possibility that an infant can be "mature in Christ" through the action of the Holy Spirit, such that there is nothing unseemly or absurd about the administration of Confirmation in infancy, adolescence, or adulthood; physical age does not matter because the maturity in question is a state of interior relationship to Christ. This phrasing does not avoid all difficulty: one still wonders what "maturity in Christ" consists of, and how we should describe the state of a baptized but unconfirmed adult Christian. However, it is a helpful step forward as it retains the theme of maturity without turning Confirmation into a (mere) rite of passage or an expression of adolescent ratification, and without doing violence to the pristine form of Confirmation, administered together with Baptism even to infants.

I must offer one criticism of McCabe. He wrote in 1964 that because Confirmation is the sacrament of lay witness, it was "little studied" until the laity began to find it proper place in the Church (p. 151). He is evidently thinking of the era of Catholic Action and the lay apostolate that began to flourish in the 1940s and 50s. His description is not accurate, however, if we consider the extensive attention given to the sacrament by theologians in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, as we saw in the last chapter. The real low-water marks for a theology of Confirmation were the meagre fare of the post-Tridentine period, and the liturgical historicism that has so depleted some treatments of the sacrament following the Second Vatican Council.

### **Jean-Paul Bouhot** (dates not found)

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *La confirmation sacrement de la communion ecclésiale* (1968).

After reviewing several important contemporary studies of Confirmation, Bouhot, a priest of the diocese of Dijon, concludes that “neither theology, nor biblical exegesis, nor history sheds enough light for us to grasp the origin or meaning of the sacrament of Confirmation” (Bouhot, 1968, p. 31). He adds further on that Faustus’ Pentecost sermon is similarly inadequate to ground an understanding of Confirmation (p. 90). Rather than “repeating old theses,” choosing among merely probably hypotheses, or “inventing an entirely new explanation,” Bouhot proposes to find the meaning of Confirmation through a better understanding of the history of the Church’s practice and thought (p. 31).

Bouhot emphasizes two sources that influenced mediaeval theology:

Thomistic theology – based on the one hand on the Roman ritual, which in practice retained the form which it took in the 5th and 6th centuries, and on the other hand based on the homily of Faustus of Riez – essentially considers the gift of the Spirit at Confirmation in terms of personal holiness and the spiritual progress of the baptized. Ancient Tradition highlights the ecclesial aspect of the link which Confirmation maintains with the gift of the Spirit (p. 104).

Bouhot’s own emphasis is on the consistent presence of the bishop at Confirmation. The confirmand’s link with the bishop is for Bouhot the “essence” of the sacrament:

If one wished to be faithful to the thought and practice of the ancient Church, one would say that in Confirmation the bishop empowers [*l’évêque habilite*] one whom God has already regenerated in Baptism to participate in the life of a concrete ecclesial community, and thereby builds up the Church (p. 106).

Bouhot considers that while Baptism allows (or causes) one to participate in Salvation (always capitalized for Bouhot: *le Salut*), Confirmation causes that participation to be lived (*fait vivre cette participation*). As a sacrament of ecclesial communion, Confirmation specifically ensures that the confirmed Christian lives in charity. This seems to be a revisiting of the ascetical *robur ad pugnam*, an interpretation focused on personal transformation, but with a new perspective – less focused on strength for interior or spiritual combat, and more focused on the life and virtues that build up ecclesial communion. However, Bouhot does not focus exclusively or primarily on the personal trait of charity; he consistently describes Confirmation as constitutive of a certain kind of



existence, namely ecclesial. Confirmation “signifies and accomplishes the ecclesial condition of Christian life” (p. 115).

### **Pope Paul VI (served 1963 – 1978)/Vatican II**

Principal magisterial documents where Confirmation is discussed: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Second Vatican Council, 1963); *Lumen Gentium* (Second Vatican Council, 1964); *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (Second Vatican Council, 1964); *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Second Vatican Council, 1965); *Divinae Consortium Naturae* (Apostolic Constitution, 1971), English translation (1975) by International Commission on English in the Liturgy.

Several documents of Vatican II mention Confirmation, mostly tangentially. In *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [SC] (the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963), the Council Fathers urged that “the rite of confirmation is to be revised...so that the intimate connection of this sacrament with the whole of Christian initiation may be shown more clearly” (paragraph 70). The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (1964) [LG] affirms in paragraph 26 that bishops “are the original ministers of Confirmation,” a phrase intended to respect both the Eastern and Western practices. This phrase originally read “ordinary minister” and was modified at the urging of representatives of the Eastern Catholic Churches. The modified version is thus consistent with paragraph 13 of the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (1964) [OE].

LG also invokes the theme of Catholic Action, teaching that “The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through Baptism and Confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself” (paragraph 33)<sup>218</sup>, as does the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (1965) [AA]:

The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head; incorporated into Christ’s Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself (AA, paragraph 3).

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<sup>218</sup> Pierre-Marie Gy’s reading of LG is that “what is most important, and may be of the greatest consequence for Confirmation, is that the Council underlines the unity of initiation and tempers the role of the bishop in the sacrament” (Gy, 1986, p. 9) and that it intends to dissuade models of Confirmation as a sacrament of adolescence (see pp. 10ff.).

The duties of the lay apostolate are further affirmed by the Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes* (1965) [AG], which posits a duty of “cooperating in the expansion and spreading out of Christ’s body.” AG attributes this duty to “all the faithful” and explains it as a consequence of having been made like Christ through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist (paragraph 36).

*Divinae Consortium Naturae* [DCN] is Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Constitution accompanying the reform of the rite of Confirmation. This revision was implemented in fulfillment of the Council’s wishes, as mentioned above. The main changes to the rite of Confirmation as effected by this revision are the following:

- The words pronounced by the minister of the sacrament were altered: the older formula was “I sign you with the Sign of the Cross and confirm you with the Chrism of Salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The new formula, echoing the Byzantine usage, became “*Accipe signaculum domi Spiritus Sancti*” (“Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit”).
- Whereas previously the confirmand’s baptismal sponsors were not permitted to serve as sponsors for Confirmation, under the new rite they were not only permitted but encouraged to do so, to better express the link between the two sacraments.
- Under the new rite an adult who is baptized must be confirmed at the same time unless some grave reason prevents it; to facilitate this practical connection between the two sacraments, all priests automatically receive the faculties to confirm any adult they baptize, though the bishop (or someone specifically delegated by him) remains the usual minister of Confirmation for younger persons.
- To show the link among all three sacraments of initiation, Confirmation is normally to be conferred in the context of a Eucharistic celebration.
- The revised rite calls for Confirmation to be conferred, normally, at the “age of reason”.

*DCN* describes the origin and chief effect of the sacrament as a perpetuation of the grace of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled the disciples and they “began to proclaim ‘the mighty works of God’.” Pope Paul adds, quoting from section 11 of *LG*, that confirmands receive

the inexpressible Gift, the Holy Spirit himself, by which ‘they are endowed... with special strength’. Moreover, having received the character of this sacrament, they are ‘bound more intimately to the Church’ and ‘they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith both by word and by deed as true witnesses of Christ’.

None of the effects of Confirmation is anything new in this account, but all are *intensifications* of existing qualities of strength, attachment to the Church, and the obligation to witness and to defend.

### **Adalbert Hamman (1910 – 2000)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Le baptême et la confirmation* (1969).

Hamman’s interpretation of Confirmation is that it is not an increase of grace, but a “perfecting” of it; a perfecting by the Spirit “of Christ’s image, really living and working” (Hamman, 1969, p. 220). The French Franciscan denies that it confers or creates a new state (p. 219), and instead describes the perfecting as a fulfillment of the baptized Christian’s place in the Church. Its function is to “make” or “build” the Church (p. 218), as shown by the bishop’s presence in administering Confirmation. He bases his brief discussion on *Lumen Gentium*’s teaching on the sacrament and on the themes he finds in the primitive unity of Baptism and Confirmation and in the current legitimate diversity of practice between East and West (p. 217).

### **Piet Fransen (1913 – 1983)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: “Confirmation,” in *Sacramentum Mundi* (1969).

The Belgian Jesuit Fransen finds most treatments of Confirmation “unconvincing” because their perspective is “too narrow” (Fransen, 1969, p. 405). He singles out some mediaeval approaches for criticism, and argues that they placed too much emphasis on defining each sacrament as the vehicle of some specific grace, and too little on what he calls “the primordial source of all grace,” “implied in the saving presence of the Trinity” (p. 405). He argues that

the proper efficacy of the sacraments in general, and of confirmation in particular, is seen to be inseparable from [the] loving activity of the three divine persons – insofar as it is visibly attested and sacramentally effected in the liturgical prayer of the Church (p. 405).

This may readily be granted: surely none of the mediaeval theologians we have seen would deny that Confirmation is a work of the Holy Trinity in the life of a Christian, one that is distinguished from other such activity precisely by the sacramental means by which that activity is mediated, but not by some presence that is exclusively limited to those sacraments. Fransen is quite right to object to the “specific-grace” model of the sacraments that I have criticized in William of Auxerre and Albert the Great, but he must explain the *purpose* of the particular gift of grace in Confirmation, and clarify the “organic unity” he posits (p. 405) as essential among the three sacraments of initiation.

For Fransen, an interpretive key for the understanding of Confirmation is “the salvific action of the Spirit as messianic gift” (p. 405). He explores the work of the Holy Spirit as presented in Scripture and summarizes it as the “sustaining” of Christian life (p. 406) – a perspective that he notes is not contrary to the *robur* model, though it is not fully expressed by it. Confirmation is thus, from a Scriptural point of view, “concerned only with the ‘gift of the Spirit’” – in contrast to Baptism, which Fransen links with “belonging to Christ,” and with the forgiveness of sins and incorporation into the Church that are essential elements in that belonging. In contrast to this richer vision, Fransen describes the mediaeval focus on *robur* and *augmentum gratiae* as “unfortunate” and “meagre,” but argues that these features do not fully express the mediaeval understanding (p. 407). Fransen maintains that the Scholastic tradition, under the influence of the liturgy, taught a more spiritual doctrine of Confirmation than is generally acknowledged, informed by such notions as the fullness of the Spirit and the priesthood of the faithful.

The three essential elements that, in Fransen’s view, must be included in any theology of Confirmation are a) Confirmation as Pentecost, b) Confirmation as perfection of Baptism, and c) Confirmation as preparation for the Eucharist (p. 409), which latter point Fransen does not explicitly develop. The meaning of Pentecost, he writes, is that the Spirit is there revealed as the one who “take[s] us out of ourselves in the act of bearing witness” (p. 409). Fransen’s account of how Confirmation “perfects” Baptism is unclear: he resorts, as so many do, to ambiguous comparatives, writing that “Baptism unites us to Christ...Confirmation gives *full reality* to this act

of salvation” (p. 409, emphasis added) and that “above all” it gives the Christian “the full rights of membership in the Church” (p. 410). The expression “rights of membership” in connection with adherence to the Church seems to me an unfortunate and objectionable choice, implying as it does a vision of the Church as an exclusive club with degrees of membership and privilege.

Finally, Fransen affirms that the sacramental character bestowed by Confirmation, the foundation for its non-repeatability, is the “divine fidelity” (p. 410). This is a promising model of character that ties it to confidence in God’s activity in the sacraments; some sacraments are one-time events in which grace is dependably bestowed once and for all upon some realm of the Christian’s life (as in the case of Marriage or Baptism), while others are dependable daily means of sustenance and healing (the Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick).

Fransen concludes that it is “disastrous” to separate Baptism and Confirmation. While his interpretation of Confirmation as a mission “to exercise prophetic authority and be ministers of sanctification” (p. 410) is consistent with the tradition as we have seen it, it adds no precision or clarity to this tradition and fails to explain what Confirmation adds to Baptism.

### **Austin Milner (1935 – 2010)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *The Theology of Confirmation* (1971).

Milner’s interpretation of Confirmation stands out for its profound dependence on Scripture. His starting point for an understanding of Confirmation is to enquire into the meaning of “the gift of the Spirit” especially in the New Testament (Milner, 1971, pp. 81ff.), for it is clear to him from his survey of patristic and mediaeval sources that Confirmation arose precisely as a peribaptismal “gift of the Spirit.” Different understandings of the work of the Spirit are found in Matthew and Mark, in Paul, in Luke and in John respectively. In Matthew and Mark, Milner writes, “the Holy Spirit is conceived and portrayed almost entirely...as God’s power to perform special acts” (p. 82); in Paul, the Spirit is “the power of faith, the power which mediates supernatural knowledge and determines both the content and the form of...preaching” (p. 85; Milner refers here to 1 Corinthians 2:7), gives “the ability to love as the chief of his gifts...his love is no merely human activity, it is the love of God” (p. 86; see Romans 5:5) and “enables the believer to pray” (p. 86; see Romans 8: 15, 26) along with the other workaday activities enumerated in Galatians 5:22-23: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (*RSV*). For Luke, the Spirit’s role “remains very much what was expected

of the Spirit in late Judaism” (p. 89), which Milner sees as “the power of God...working out God’s inscrutable purposes,” especially when it comes down on individuals like the prophets “who until then had been comparatively unnoticed, and now come forward as leaders” (p. 81). What is new in Luke’s pneumatology, for Milner, is the “universality of the gift” of the Spirit (p. 89). Thus the prophetic and universal character of Pentecost is the centrepiece of Luke’s theology of the Spirit: the Spirit is bestowed on the Church to confer on it prophetic power of understanding and being understood, discerning God’s will, and “most of all the preaching of the disciples” (p. 89). Milner does not see a precedent in Luke for a standard pneumatic rite of hand-laying: Luke’s Spirit is independent and “unpredictable” (p. 91). Finally, in John,

the function of the Paraclete is to make the divine reality present as it was present in Jesus and will continue to be present in his word. The Paraclete is the spirit of truth in the midst of the world of unreality and mere appearance...The Spirit shapes the life of the people of God and in doing so judges and summons the world (pp. 94-95).

Milner affirms that, for the Catholic and Orthodox Church, Confirmation is the sacrament of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit “whereby power is received from on high for the task of spreading the Gospel message...the sacrament of the mysterious influence of the Paraclete upon the life of each Christian enabling him to bear witness to Christ” (pp. 100-101).

Milner’s treatment is notable for his stopping short of a detailed enumeration of the effects of Confirmation: he identifies the central event of the sacrament (a gift of the Holy Spirit) and the duty or mission conferred at the same time (witnessing to Christ) and stops there. Paradoxically, the economy of his consideration makes his interpretation more convincing: the reader is not required to embrace antecedently a detailed set of contingent presuppositions to make sense of the place of Confirmation in the Church, in contrast to (for instance) Schillebeeckx, for whom Confirmation’s meaning is distilled from a complex series of idiosyncratic observations about salvation history. Milner’s theology of Confirmation is not part of a system, but is a reflection on the Holy Spirit in Scripture and the Church.

### **Louis Ligier (1911 – 1989)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *La confirmation: sens et conjoncture hier et aujourd’hui* (1973).

Ligier's main concern throughout his 1973 work is the evolution and fittingness of respective rites used in Confirmation (anointing, imposition of hands): he notes that "the Holy Spirit was not incarnated" and was only manifested historically at Pentecost, which means that there isn't an obvious material expression for the sacrament of Pentecost of the same order as water, wine and bread. He is concerned that the Roman Church's decision to downplay hand-laying in the revised 1971 rite of Confirmation "abandons" (*lâche*) most of the Eastern churches as well as its own age-old tradition (p. 229), though the underlying meaning of Confirmation "corresponds to a primitive reality, common to all the churches that have remained faithful to the apostolic succession" (p. 238), namely – whether manifested in hand-laying or chrismation – the grace of the Holy Spirit (p. 249).

Ligier's vision of Confirmation finds its meaning, to a certain extent, in Catholic Action and the lay apostolate, but above all in the outpouring of the Spirit promised in Scripture; he writes that the "charismatic" gifts, "great and small," that priests ought to discern among the laity, are the "proper domain" of the theology of Confirmation (Ligier, 1973, p. 210). He laments the tendency to define Confirmation with reference to baptismal grace:

In reality, the gift of Pentecost, expressed in the apostolic rite, had a broader meaning. It reminded the Apostles that, before imitating Christ by dying for the Gospel, they had a mission to carry out on Earth...Instead of pushing the baptized to go join the Lord in short order, the grace of Pentecost brought them back to a present task (p. 211).

It is also the sacrament of the Church's prayer, "bold" with the faith born at Baptism, a "pure" prayer ardently open to and filled with hope in the Holy Spirit (p. 219), the Spirit whose "outpouring" was promised in Scripture (p. 239). The Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit, according to Peter's preaching in Acts 2, was proper to the end-times and marked the fulfillment of God's plan, and was perpetuated by the Apostles' hand-laying (p. 244). Ligier prefers to speak of the messianic abundance given in Confirmation – the Holy Spirit itself – than to speak in misleadingly "inflationist" terms as though Confirmation made one a "superhuman" or a "superbaptized" (p. 246).

That Confirmation confers the Holy Spirit does not, for Ligier, compromise the action of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, since the three persons of the Trinity intervene in each of the sacraments. However,



it is not inconceivable that a sacrament be particularly associated with the Holy Spirit [*lui soit spécialement rapporté*] on account of his place in the Trinitarian life and his role in the ecclesial mission of Pentecost...The Holy Spirit is not just a divine person conjoined to Father and Son...but someone-for-us, freely sent and coming freely to us, just like the Son (p. 251).

The meaning of Confirmation, for Ligier, is that it is an experience of the sending of the Holy Spirit *qua* sent, by Father and Son, upon the adoptive child; it is a sacrament that affirms that the Holy Spirit is not apart from us and indifferent to us, reachable only (if at all) by cajoling and strenuous effort, but is instead freely sent upon and among us even before we are aware of it, because of the boundless charity of God. He distinguishes it from the baptismal adoption itself; it is an experience of what that new baptismal life entails, something known only abstractly (for Ligier) by virtue of the Baptism in itself. An analogy suggests itself: the first act of the Canadian House of Commons after the Speech from the Throne (which opens a new legislative session) is a *pro forma* bill C-1 whose sole purpose is to exercise concretely the very authority just conferred. Parliament is well and truly opened by the ceremonies, but the further action is taken so that the authority which the opening entails is actually exercised, and does not remain merely a theoretical possibility. Hence Ligier's point that Confirmation is the sacrament of the Church's prayer: an exercise of baptismal grace, an act in fulfillment of one's baptismal identity, but still one that is only possible and meaningful because of grace.

### **Karl Rahner (1904 – 1984)**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *The Church and the Sacraments* (1963); *Meditations on the Sacraments* (1977a); *Theological Reflections*, vol. 8 (1977b).

In his 1963 work, Rahner writes of a “double movement” of the grace of God (Rahner, 1963, p. 91). He describes one movement as the grace of “dying with Christ”, of “the downfall of the world”; the other is a grace of “incarnation” and “world-transformation” (p. 91). The first is “expressed” in Baptism, the second in Confirmation. The grace is the same in both; what differs is how they respectively “appear” (p. 92). For Rahner, sounding the note of world-transformation is a corrective to an undue emphasis on one's own salvation, and a corrective emphasis on mission to and for the world.

In his 1977 work, Rahner initially offers a classic-sounding account of Confirmation: it is “the sacrament of *mission* and of *witness*: the fulfillment of the task given to us for the Church and for the world” (p. 18). In it, “the gift of the Spirit” – note that he writes not the “gifts”, not the “grace,” but the Spirit itself – “is increased and strengthened...for the purpose of bearing witness before the world” (p. 22). Rahner’s understanding of the sacraments diverges from a traditional view, however: “We should not start with the idea that sacraments are ritual events which effect and give something which otherwise does not exist” (p. 23). This seems to diminish the significance, for an understanding of Confirmation, of character, grace, and of a change in one’s relation to the Holy Spirit. Instead, Rahner asks,

where do we repeatedly and everywhere in our daily life experience “grace,” that reality which elevates and frees our life and which we call the Holy Spirit? The sacraments in these terms can be understood as the promise and fulfillment of precisely this grace, as events that happen in the sphere of existence of the Church (pp. 23-24).

Rahner seems to be denying that the sacraments in themselves have an objective effect, and to imply that they merely bring to mind or commemorate collectively what would already be the case in any event. Rahner describes Confirmation, further on, as the place where we “perceive” the “cultic and socially official promise” of the “Spirit of the grace of God” (p. 24). (We saw before how Rahner wrote in 1963 that the sacraments “express” particular graces). He proceeds to list “difficult but unavoidable experiences of life” that we welcome with joy and not as “fearful specters” as examples of where we “experience...the Holy Spirit” (1977, p. 25). Rahner’s description might be summarized as a paean to Christian hope, which for him resides in the promise of the Holy Spirit; but Confirmation does not seem to play a role in generating that hope except by way of example or reminiscence, by way of “expressing” aspects of the life of the Church.

Rahner makes passing references to Confirmation in several places in his *Theological Investigations*, but his most prolonged treatment in that work is in volume 8 (Rahner, 1977b). There he observes that Baptism is the “sacramental basis for the position of the layman in the Church,” a position he describes as “an enduring and inalienable form of life in which he makes an active contribution to the Church in the realisation of her own nature and destiny.” Rahner employs the language of comparatives to understand initiation: “all that we have said of baptism applies in a

still higher degree when we come to think of the sacrament of confirmation” (p. 68). Noting the difficulties that dogmatic theologians may have in distinguishing the “meaning and effects” of the two sacraments, he evades the difficulty by insisting that the two must be taken together as two “aspects of our Christian calling”. Though he insists that he does not wish to say more than this by way of distinguishing the two, he adds a series of descriptors which are more evocative than precise. The sacrament of Confirmation, he explains, is a sacrament of “charismatic fulness...in which those sealed with the Spirit are sent into the world to bear witness in order that the world may be made subject to the dominion of God” and is the sacrament of “strengthening in the faith against the powers and forces in this world, the powers of lying and disbelief and of the diabolical hybris involved in attempting to work out one’s own salvation” (p. 68). This interpretation has more in common with a more classic theology of Confirmation than do his earlier remarks on the subject, inasmuch as they present a fairly standard list of examples of the qualities a Christian witness may need in the world, and suggests that those qualities come from the Confirmation seal of the Holy Spirit: a classic, but imprecise account.

### **Louis-Marie Chauvet (1942 – )**

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: “Réflexions théologiques sur quelques orientations actuelles de la pastorale de la confirmation” (1979).

Like Osborne and Lawler, Chauvet’s interpretation of Confirmation is a symptom of a larger trend in sacramental theology: suspicion of earlier, “metaphysical” approaches to the sacraments, a trend well diagnosed by Blankenhorn (2006; 2010). Chauvet does not consider that the question “What does Confirmation ‘add’ to Baptism?” is an apt way to explore the sacrament (see Chauvet, 1979, p. 58). He criticizes this approach as a mathematical cutting-up, where the theologian ought instead to think in terms of the “symbolical structure”: “starting not from the parts taken in isolation, but from the *whole* formed by these elements and the *relationship* between them” (p. 58). In this perspective, we should approach Confirmation as an unfolding or fulfillment (*déploiement*, p. 59) of Baptism for the benefit of missionary witnessing and growth of the Church. He argues that we should not see the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation as equivalent to the relationship between Easter and Pentecost; rather, we should dwell on the relationship between the Baptism-Confirmation relationship, and the Easter-Pentecost relationship. This is Chauvet’s way of saying that Baptism and Confirmation are not really two

different things but two components of a single reality; the Holy Spirit is not given uniquely in Confirmation, he explains, but is given for the distinguishing purpose of empowerment for mission (p. 59). Chauvet offers this point to keep at bay any suspicion that his interpretation is a “simple matter of psychological and social ratification by the [confirmed] subject” (*une simple affaire de ratification psychologique et sociale par le sujet*, p. 60). However, Chauvet – invoking the Western custom of awaiting an age where a free choice is possible before confirming – places a great deal of emphasis on the centrality of the human response to God as the defining feature of the sacrament of Confirmation. The gift of the Holy Spirit is essentially a gift in response to a human person’s free decision: hence the particular appropriateness of inviting young people to make a public profession of faith at their Confirmation (p. 64). The purpose of the public profession and the confirmation of Baptism, with the gift of the Holy Spirit that it entails, is to be oriented toward “missionary responsibility” (p. 66).

Chauvet’s most evocative (and, though it is no fault of his, increasingly obsolete) image for his understanding of the sacraments of initiation is that of a photographic darkroom: the sacraments of initiation, like the bath of chemicals used to develop negatives, are the milieu into which the faithful are immersed to reveal what they already are. Confirmation, through the presence of the bishop, the symbolism of the liturgy and the maturity of the confirmand, reveals the missionary identity of the Church and – when freely chosen and embraced – thus invites and accepts the gift of the Holy Spirit. Chauvet’s model of Confirmation is thus that it is an especially solemn and ecclesial moment of free, personal, individual ratification of one’s Baptism and consequently a commitment to the Church-building imperative that such a ratification implies. Christian faith supplies one with the confidence that to such an act of ratification – itself occasioned by grace – the Holy Spirit will respond with his presence. Chauvet writes of a confident trust that the Holy Spirit will heed our prayers for his advent, in distinction from the view that the sacrament itself confers the Holy Spirit or grace. This may seem like a laudable humility to maintain before the mystery of God, but positing a radical distinction between God’s heeding of the prayers of the faithful, and the *instrumental* role played by the very material of the sacraments, is a departure from the sacramentality of the Catholic tradition. For the Catholic tradition to affirm that “sacraments cause grace” is not the outcome of ignorance or indifference to God’s transcendence; it is an acceptance of the logic of the Incarnation, scandalous as that may be. Christ healed and bestowed the Spirit not purely by a detached exercise of his will, but

theandrically, with mud and saliva and imposed hands and exsufflation; the Cross was no abstract act of obedience, but a violently corporeal act of solidarity and compassion. Augustine asked, “What is the laying-on of hands but a prayer for the Holy Spirit?” In the case of Confirmation, as we have seen, the Catholic tradition answers that it is a prayer using the same material means that the Apostles used, a prayer that is audaciously confident that, by God’s mercy, the very stuff of the sacramental observances will certainly cause a change in the confirmand. This is more than a prayer: it is *causation*, as much as we must nuance that conclusion with acknowledgement of the personhood and sovereignty of God.

### **Gérard-Henry Baudry (1935 – )**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Le sacrement de confirmation: dans le dynamisme de l’esprit* (1981).

Baudry insists on the centrality of Pentecost for an understanding of Confirmation; he calls it an “unvarying” feature of theologies of the sacrament (Baudry, 1981, p. 88, note 11; see also his discussion on pp. 11-12). As Mohelník will develop at length some decades later, Baudry sees the twofold sacramental initiation as an image of the two missions of Son and Holy Spirit (p. 24). Pentecost “fulfils” and “confirms” the Paschal mystery: it ushers in the messianic community, the last times foretold by the prophets (p. 13, p. 21). The Holy Spirit, as the Nicene Creed affirms, is *vivificantem*, and the Christian who receives the Spirit receives also a renewal of the “creative force” that better allows one to find one’s place (*mieux s’inscrire*) in God’s plan for creation (p. 15). Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation, one becomes a “co-creator” – a co-creator in the new creation that was inaugurated with the dawn of the messianic age that began with Pentecost. Baudry also affirms (pp. 18-19) the royal and prophetic roles associated with the Spirit in Scripture, and thus the apostolic mission that devolves upon the confirmed who receives the Spirit.

For all his pneumatic emphasis, Baudry also clarifies that Confirmation is the sacrament of the Spirit not to the exclusion of Christ, but in addition to being (as all the sacraments are) a sacrament of Christ (p. 21). Christ himself “experienced” the Spirit during his life (p. 22) and thus Baudry describes him as the first among the confirmed (and Mary as the first woman to be confirmed, when she was overshadowed by the Spirit at the Annunciation, p. 25). As this example illustrates, Baudry’s approach is to point out the connection between Confirmation on the one

hand, and discipleship and the Holy Spirit on the other, and then to devote his energy to exploring the significance of the Spirit and discipleship for Christian life as though this sufficed to explain Confirmation's purpose and significance. He uses common turns of phrase, *e.g.* that Confirmation orients the Christian to a “deeper” and “more responsible” witness and service (p. 32), but as is often the case with theologians of Confirmation, he does not explain why a distinct sacrament is needed for these ends and in distinction from Baptism. His proposal that Confirmation be understood as “the sacrament of Christian action” is not made much clearer by his qualification that in this context “*action* must be understood as the manifestation, the total unfolding of *being*”<sup>219</sup> especially since he rejects as “elitist” any impression that he understands this to mean *Catholic Action* in the sense we have so often seen.

### **Yves Congar (1904 – 1995)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (trans. Smith, 1983, pp 217-227).

Congar's survey of the theology of Confirmation is the subject of a chapter in his great work of pneumatology – itself a sign of how closely he associates the sacrament with the Holy Spirit. He remarks that the close link between Baptism and Confirmation is universally acknowledged, and even suggests that Baptism and Confirmation might be best understood as two very distinct steps in a single sacrament, the way diaconate, priesthood and episcopate are clearly distinct phases in Holy Orders (pp. 217-218). He writes that this interpretation is not inconsistent with the enumeration of seven sacraments (p. 218) but this claim is difficult to sustain. Without wishing to split hairs, it seems that we might indeed compare Baptism/Confirmation to Diaconate/Priesthood/Episcopate, but in that case we ought either to speak of *six* sacraments or of *nine*; enumerating Baptism and Confirmation separately, but not the stages in Holy Orders, implies that the distinction is more radical than Congar and many others allow. Making too little of the distinction between Baptism and Confirmation trivializes the fact that among the few magisterial parameters governing a theology of Confirmation, we must include the canonization of precisely *seven* sacraments, no more and no fewer.

Questions of number aside, Congar asks what he describes as the “urgent” question for a doctrine of Confirmation: “What does confirmation add to the grace of baptism?” (p. 218).

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<sup>219</sup> ...pour autant que l'agir est compris comme la manifestation, le déploiement total de l'être. L'ÊTRE n'a de sens et de fécondité que s'il est AGIR (p. 35, emphasis in original).

Congar is one of the very few authors who identifies the puzzling phenomenological side of this question: he points out that there is seldom a visible difference between a confirmed and an unconfirmed Christian, which makes it difficult to describe Confirmation's usefulness and specificity. Congar is, of course, too careful a theologian to ignore the fact that "the supernatural reality takes place in secret" (p. 218) and that Baptism is similarly bereft, normally, of tangible consequences; but he rightly notes how "unsettling" the apparent ineffectiveness of Confirmation is, on top of the theological puzzlement it provokes. This observation is not only a puzzle in the case of Confirmation: in the case of all the sacraments, it is possible to question what visible difference they make in the lives of the faithful. The working of the Holy Spirit through Baptism, through the Eucharist, through Reconciliation and the other sacraments is not something that can easily be identified and correlated directly with the sacrament; this veil of obscurity is not especially typical of Confirmation.

Veiled effects or not, for Congar, Confirmation is Pentecost. Like Thornton, Fransen, Schillebeeckx and Lécuyer, whom he cites, Congar proposes that the meaning of Confirmation is specifically the messianic significance of the Spirit sent by Christ at Pentecost:

...baptism makes us be conceived and born as sons of God within the Church, and confirmation enables us to participate in Christ's messianic anointing...What takes place in the sacrament is that the baptized persons who are confirmed are fully fitted into the apostolic community of the Church (pp. 219, 220).

Congar invokes Aquinas' model of Confirmation to elucidate this interpretation: Confirmation fosters *magnanimitas*, against *pusillanimitas*, which Congar explains means something particular for Aquinas: the fault or even sin of "acting at a level below one's full potential" and "not letting one's gifts bear fruit" (pp. 221-222). Congar never uses the word *robur*, but his description of full participation in the life of the Church and fulfilling one's potential is thoroughly consistent with a vision of Confirmation as directed to the lay apostolate and the common priesthood of the faithful.

### **William J. Bausch (1929 –)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *A New Look at the Sacraments* (1983).



Bausch's interpretation of Confirmation is predominantly psychological: he presents it as a celebration and commemoration (for the benefit of the confirmand and of the community) of an event that occurred at Baptism:

...confirmation celebrates the baptismal experience, or at least the public, conscious proclamation of the Spirit. Therein it openly tells the world that the candidate has a certain definite vision of life, and from that vision (Spirit) he hopes to speak, act, love, witness, and die (Bausch, 1983, p. 120).

Bausch does not attribute any consequences to Confirmation other than the pedagogical and psychological: it serves to remind the confirmand and her community of the difference made by beginning to live in the Spirit, an "act of witnessing" that is "datable" and "more evident" (p. 121).

### **Alexandre Ganoczy (1928 – )**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *An Introduction to Catholic Sacramental Theology* (1984).

Ganoczy rejects the attempt to find the origins of Confirmation in Acts 8; he writes that "such attempts at legitimation...cannot stand up under scientific exegesis" (Ganoczy, 1984, p. 81). He does not supply any examples of the exegesis in question, scientific or not. After reviewing very briefly some high points in the evolution of the sacrament, the theme that he retains is "safeguarding" the Christian's "mission" in the Church and in the world (p. 83). He does not wish this to be understood martially, but instead sees it as having "to do with a conviction of faith that is of high quality, characterized by a sense of responsibility and a willingness to act and give witness, and which can be realized only in the power of the *Holy Spirit*" (p. 83). He writes further that Confirmation is "completely meaningful" when (and presumably only when) it is the free ratification of Baptism by a person who has reached a certain maturity (p. 84). It is the individual and her "faith community" that confirms faith and confirms Baptism. Confirmation is thus primarily, for Ganoczy, as for Bausch, an act of the disciple; one which requires the presence of the Holy Spirit to fulfill adequately, but one that is fundamentally a young adult's ratification and free election to live according to the identity conferred at his Baptism.

**Thomas Marsh** (dates not found)

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: *Gift and Community: Baptism and Confirmation* (1984). Also Marsh (1962), (1972a), (1972b) and (1973).

Marsh is an inveterate scholar of Confirmation in the recent period. His valuable and thoughtful treatments span more than twenty years. Here I will focus on his 1984 work as his maturest work on the question, and his longest.

Marsh recognizes that the chief problem for the interpretation of Confirmation is the problem of identifying what it adds to the already “rich significance” of what was accomplished at Baptism (Marsh, 1984, p. 154). Marsh affirms that Aquinas’ interpretation of Confirmation – which he praises as “brilliant” and “penetrating” – is the view that was adopted at Florence, and has since become the “official understanding” of the Church, echoed (for instance) in Vatican II’s *Lumen Gentium*. He summarizes Confirmation in this view as a “perpetuation of Pentecost,” entailing a “giving of the Spirit...directed toward the public profession and witness of the faith” (p. 153). For Marsh, the most important datum for evaluating the “adequacy” of this received view is the perennial basic twofold reference of Christian initiation, christological and pneumatological (p. 156): “Christian initiation means entering into union with Christ in the power of the Spirit,” two themes that are distinct in the New Testament because messianic and pneumatological themes “were essentially distinct and separate in the thought of Judaism” (p. 157). Marsh is not persuaded by the conventional view that mediaeval Confirmation models were mere footnotes to Faustus: Rabanus’ influential *robur ad praedicandum*, for instance,

...simply reproduces...in expanded form the thought of [Alcuin]. In doing so, however, he accurately sums up the long tradition, going back to the early Church itself, which understands the post-baptismal gift of the Spirit in prophetic terms, as ordained to forceful preaching of the faith accompanied and confirmed by other signs of the Spirit’s power (pp. 170-171).

For Marsh, this gift of forceful preaching, and not any consecration of adolescence as such, is what is meant by Aquinas when he writes that Confirmation confers “a kind of adult age of the spiritual life” (p. 173, citing *ST III<sup>a</sup> q. 72 a. 1*). Marsh considers that Aquinas, and therefore Florence which echoes him, is a faithful witness to the western tradition, which holds that “there are two gifts of the Spirit in christian initiation: in baptism as the source of divine life, in confirmation as the gift of prophetic force” (p. 174). In Marsh’s view, this poses a problem: “The

New Testament does not speak of two gifts of the Spirit, but of one, however many aspects it may recognise within that one gift” (p. 175), and subsequent attempts to reconcile these traditions have remained unsuccessful. Nevertheless, Marsh considers that the received tradition about Confirmation has the advantage of asserting the Spirit’s presence throughout all of Christian initiation, and of asserting that Confirmation is not “an optional state of life within the Church,” like Matrimony or Holy Orders, “but with the making of the Christian” (p. 176).

Marsh finds a path to a solution in the revised 1971 rite of Confirmation: whereas the adult catechumen receives both Baptism and Confirmation, without delay between them, at the end of a process of formation, infants and children in the Church continue to wait for a significant period between one sacrament of initiation and the other. In both cases, Marsh considers that what is being ritually emphasized is that both sacraments are sacraments of initiation; in the case of a young person, it happens that these rites “frame the initiation process...marking its beginning and its end” (p. 189), but in the case of young and old alike one is fully initiated only once both have been received. Marsh attempts to synthesize this perspective with the older model he already described by dramatically re-interpreting what it means to “receive the Spirit”:

The gift of the Spirit refers really to entering the Spirit-filled community and thereby sharing in the Spirit which fills and animates the community. When full membership of the community is understood as mature membership, the entry of the infant, child, young person, into such membership is necessarily a process of growth. In this context the gift of the Spirit is also a process and not simply a once-for-all moment of time...the child growing up in the community is growing into the community and therefore growing in the Spirit which fills the community (pp. 189-190, 191).

Marsh seems to have created a graver dilemma by resolving the problem of divided sacraments in this way. While his solution does alleviate the western tradition’s division of initiation into two gifts of the Spirit – which for Marsh needs alleviation, because he does not find it in the New Testament – it does so by equating “growth in the community” with “growth in the Spirit.” The growth in holiness, in and of the community, is itself the work of the Holy Spirit; Marsh’s interpretation thus either continues to posit two gifts of the Spirit, or else reduces Confirmation to a mere augmentation of baptismal grace.

### **Frank C. Quinn (1932 – 2008)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: “Confirmation Reconsidered: Rite and Meaning” (1985; in Johnson, 1995).

This article by Quinn, an American Dominican from Minnesota, is principally devoted to the work of Marsh (1984) and Kavanagh (1984). He finds the likely origin of Confirmation (*per* Marsh) in the “practice of water and hand described in the Acts of the Apostles” (Quinn, in Johnson, 1995, p. 235) which eventually evolved into the third rite of Christian initiation, following water-baptism and the royal and priestly anointing. The third rite was an imposition of hands accompanied by prayer for the Holy Spirit. Quinn considers that a return to hand-laying with epiclesis would be the “healthy” path for the Church to follow, and agrees with Kavanagh that this confirmational hand-laying ought to be reunited with Baptism “in order to get on with other issues” (p. 237), as though the quest to discover Confirmation’s purpose were a major drain on the Church’s time and energy, and as though such a step would obviate further enquiry into the purpose and nature of Confirmation. One sees in Quinn’s remarks an echo of Augustine’s question: what is the imposition of hands but a prayer that the Holy Spirit might come? Quinn does not ascribe any value to mediaeval accounts of Confirmation: he writes dismissively and inaccurately that Aquinas’ theology of Confirmation “has been in use with little change since the thirteenth century,” and considers that (given Aquinas’ references to “Melchiades”) “it is very difficult to conclude anything but Thomas’ radical indebtedness to a minor, fifth-century, semi-Pelagian bishop” (p. 234), a conclusion that we have already seen to be completely unwarranted.

### **Gerard Austin [Charles Gerard Austin]** (birthdate not found)

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Anointing with the Spirit: the Rite of Confirmation, the Use of Oil and Chrism* (1985).

Austin is an American Dominican who pursued his doctoral studies under the guidance of Pierre-Marie Gy and currently serves in the Department of Theology and Philosophy at Barry University in Miami Shores, FL. At the outset of his book on Confirmation he describes a questionnaire that he gives his graduate students; the first question is an excellent version of the problem I am trying to address throughout this dissertation. The questionnaire asks, “Is the Holy Spirit given at baptism? If so, what is the difference between that bestowal and the gift of the spirit

at confirmation?” (Austin, 1985, p. ix). Austin unfortunately scarcely returns to this question, as his treatment is much more concerned with the evolution of the liturgical rites, not with their ostensible effects. At most he alludes to predominant views of the purpose of Confirmation, past and present, sometimes with hinted disapproval, but without much development.

For example, Austin summarizes the mediaeval view of Confirmation’s effects as “conferring a particular gift of the Spirit (fortitude)”, providing “strength for battle (*robur ad pugnam*) and strength to preach to others”, ostensibly in opposition to an “earlier emphasis” on the gift of the Spirit “as such” (pp. 19-20). When he comes to discuss the modern era, Austin cites Paul VI’s teaching in *Divinae Consortes Naturae* – that “the receiving of the Holy Spirit as a gift concerns the very essence of the rite of confirmation” and that this gift “was given in a special way on the day of Pentecost” (p. 46; see also p. 48) – without further comment, beyond an expression of scepticism concerning Paul’s affirmation that the perpetuation of Pentecost through apostolic hand-laying was “Christ’s wish” (p. 47). Austin’s own position is to define Confirmation as a “part of the initiation process” (p. 153), though he seems to concede that it is a “gift of the Spirit” (p. 155), again without further comment.

### **Karl J. Becker (1928 – )**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: “Le don de la confirmation” (1986).

Cardinal Becker, a German Jesuit who has served as a consultor to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is aware of the diverse strands that make up the Roman Catholic tradition (and contemporary discussion) of Confirmation. He looks for a possible synthesis – a “vue d’ensemble” (Becker, 1986, p.17) – but acknowledges that the *Urtext* for the sacrament is the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (p. 25). Among the great strengths of Becker’s brief but dense review of accounts of Confirmation’s effects are the distinctions he makes among various meanings of “the gift of the Spirit,” and his integration of Augustine’s insight – “we cannot give the Spirit” – with an appreciation of the classic tradition of Confirmation. His treatment is concise enough that I will cite him at some length rather than paraphrasing:

Are created grace and uncreated grace together the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation? Created grace certainly. But uncreated grace as well? The Holy Spirit himself, certainly not: such a reply would be absurd. But perhaps the presence of the Spirit in man? It is difficult for me to grant this. The presence of God in man cannot be seen as the effect of a human action, even if

only in an instrumental fashion. This is why I prefer, like the Bible, to describe the presence of the Spirit as a gift and not as an effect.<sup>220</sup>

Becker's insight is valuable but misplaced: he is right to insist that the Spirit must be understood in personal terms, with respect for the Spirit's sovereignty and freedom and personhood. The Spirit is not an impersonal substance "given," like an object, as a result of certain inexorable words and gestures; it is not an "effect" like the carbon dioxide that reliably forms when sodium bicarbonate is mixed with acetic acid. Still, it does not follow that his advent is in no sense an "effect"; provided we use the word advisedly and cautiously, it is an "effect" in the sense that God has entered into a covenant to sanctify his Church and his people in certain ways when the sacramental signs are deployed in a spirit of obedience. An analogy for this is the way that the sympathy and sorrow of a compassionate person are the "effect" of encountering suffering. Such sympathy may be so characteristic as to be predictable, without being an impersonal or magical effect.

**Michael Lawler** (birthdate not found)

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Symbol and sacrament: a contemporary sacramental theology* (1987).

Lawler, currently the director of the Center for Marriage and Family at Creighton University in Nebraska, evinces an inadequate understanding of Confirmation's evolution throughout his 1987 treatment of the sacraments. He writes, for instance, that

the theological problem involved in the question of the relationship of baptism and confirmation is quite specific: Does the Holy Spirit indwell a Christian from the ritual moment of baptism or only from the moment of confirmation?...The sources yield two contradictory opinions; one is that the Holy Spirit indwells Christians from the moment of their baptism, the other is that he indwells them only from the moment of their confirmation (Lawler, 1987, p. 86).

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<sup>220</sup> "...la grâce incréée et la grâce créée sont-elles ensemble l'effet du sacrement de la Confirmation? La grâce créée, très certainement. Mais la grâce incréée aussi? Le Saint-Esprit lui-même, certainement pas. Une telle réponse serait absurde. Mais peut-être la présence de l'Esprit en l'homme? Il m'est difficile de l'admettre. La présence de Dieu en l'homme ne peut être regardée comme l'effet d'une action humaine, même si c'est seulement d'une manière instrumentale. C'est pourquoi je préfère, avec le Bible, qualifier la présence de l'Esprit de don et non d'effet" (Becker, 1986, p. 31).

As we have seen throughout the Middle Ages and the modern period, this is certainly not the problem at all; that the Holy Spirit is received in Baptism and in Confirmation is universally acknowledged by Roman Catholic theologians throughout these thousand years, the only significant exception (which is not even from the period under consideration) being Tertullian. The problem is, rather, to understand the nature of the effects and the “further” gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, a point that Lawler concedes on p. 97.

At first glance, Lawler’s resolution of this problem seems to be quite consistent with the tradition: he describes Confirmation as “a new Pentecost” wherein the Spirit “comes down upon believers, not for the first time, but in a new and humanly truly extraordinary way” (p. 99). When he comes to explain what he means by this, however, the resemblance fades:

There comes a time when believers will wish to proclaim in some solemn way the presence of the Spirit of God within them, both to themselves and to the Church in which they have learned faith. That is the time for confirmation, the solemn ritual in the Christian Church for revealing, realizing and celebrating the presence of the Spirit of God in baptized believers. That ritual makes Spirit just as surely as rituals of love make love (p. 99).

In other words, Lawler (like Bausch and Ganoczy) interprets Confirmation primarily as a rite whereby the individual affirms something about God and the Church, about her own experience of God and the Church, and thereby causes “the presence of the Spirit of God” to “grow” and “develop” (p. 99). It serves to “reveal to the neophyte, and to the assembled Church, that the new life [of Baptism] is to be a holy and a righteous life, guaranteed by the Spirit received in the water, who is not only a Holy Spirit but also a holi- (or sancti-)fying Spirit” (p. 94). Lawler’s interpretation provides no room for a sacramental character, nor is the Holy Trinity the ultimate agent in Confirmation; instead, for him it is only a pedagogically and psychologically significant act, a conclusion which is certainly not the view of the tradition.

### **Kenan Osborne (1930 – )**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist* (1987).

Kenan Osborne, an American Franciscan, considers that “There is no comparison...between some person who has just been confirmed and a Francis of Assisi. The



presence of the Spirit in Francis was and remains a remarkable event for the Christian community. However, Francis did not receive such a fullness of the Spirit through confirmation...the “fullness of the Spirit” in someone...has never been noticeable simply with the administration of the sacrament of confirmation” (Osborne, 1987, p. 133). Osborne, it seems, knows the fullness of the Spirit when he sees it, and he does not see it in the confirmed.<sup>221</sup> Osborne considers that, rather than being a gift of the Spirit, Confirmation is a moment of prayer, and prayer (for him) is “a reaction to something that God is primordially doing, and prayer is a reaction of wonder and awe” (p. 133). When the Church celebrates Confirmation, he considers that it is “celebrating the presence of the Spirit in a particular and therefore special individual” (p. 133).

Osborne does not deny the existence or presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, but for him Confirmation is not a means of initiating or fostering that presence: it is a “celebration” of it, in contradistinction to the theology of strengthening that Osborne acknowledges in the Middle Ages, but that he regards as simply “theologizing” or *post facto* rationalizing about the historical accident of a separated initiation rite (see pp. 125-127).

### **Aidan Kavanagh (1929 – 2006)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Confirmation: Origins and Reform* (1988). See also (1984) and (1989).

Kavanagh’s 1988 work is a longer treatment of the case he argued in his articles of 1984 and 1989. We have seen in the first chapter how central this American Benedictine’s interpretation of *AT* 21 is to his understanding of Confirmation. His approach may be summarized as follows: *AT* 21 describes the origin of the rite that evolved into Confirmation; it is in no sense a pneumatic rite but is merely a *missa*, a ritual dismissal, closing the rite of Baptism and ushering one into the Eucharist; therefore Confirmation today ought to be understood as a rite of transition between Baptism and the Eucharist. The risk he sees in not heeding these putative origins is that “Confirmation is a fundamentally modest rite which...is capable of doing vast damage in the Church’s initiatory economy if misperceived and misused” (Kavanagh, 1988, p. xi).

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<sup>221</sup> We may presume, moreover, that St Francis had been confirmed by the time of his great conversion.

Kavanagh's reading of *AT 21* has been briefly criticized by Turner (in Johnson, 1995) but a full-length critique has yet to be made. Such an assessment is proper to liturgical and patristic specialists; my objection is to Kavanagh's systematic theology, to his argument that the meaning of Confirmation must shift according to the meaning of this rite that has historically been considered a phase, even an important one, in Confirmation's evolution. Kavanagh's reasoning here is, of course, dependent on his theological method, set out at length in his *On Liturgical Theology* (1992). *Contra* Kavanagh, I argue that even if we grant that the pertinent rite in *AT 21* is a *missa*, this is only relevant to a theological interpretation of Confirmation if the Church's understanding was historically framed in reference to *AT 21*. This is not the case; as we saw in the last chapter, the mediaeval period had very little interest in exploring how the apostolic hand-laying evolved into a post-baptismal anointing of the forehead. Their preoccupation was, rather, with the promise of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the perpetuation of that gift in Acts 8 and 19.

Like Austin, Kavanagh writes of Paul VI's interpretation of Confirmation in *DCN* with a certain detachment, noting what the Pope writes but seemingly not adopting or embracing that view: "In this Apostolic Constitution...Paul VI...specified that the sacrament is conferred by an anointing with chrism on the forehead, the effect of which is a sealing with the gift of the Spirit" (p. 90). Kavanagh's own view is that Confirmation is a "modest rite of transition from [baptismal] Pool to [eucharistic] Table" (p. 100).

The lacunae in Kavanagh's understanding of the historic interpretation of Confirmation are obvious from his criticism that

The theological question of why, given the almost exclusive emphasis on giving the gift of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, the Spirit is withheld from certain of the baptized but not from others on the basis of age is left unanswered (p. 107).

Such a remark betrays an inexcusable ignorance of the sacrament's history: as we have seen, it is beyond all doubt that neither the mediaeval nor the modern Roman Catholic interpretation of Confirmation ever tolerated any suggestion that the Spirit was not given in Baptism but only in Confirmation. The universal view of the Roman Catholic tradition is that the Spirit is received in Baptism but that Confirmation also imparts a certain kind of presence or action of the Spirit, directed to witness (*e.g., robur ad praedicandum*). Kavanagh is here engaged in disputation with straw

men. “Confirmation,” he concludes, tilting to the last at this shimmering windmill, “should not be made too much over...it...cannot possibly...supply a Holy Spirit who was somehow absent from baptism” (p. 117), nor “ordain” the laity, nor “constitute the gift of ‘Christian community’” (p. 118). Kavanagh’s only acknowledgement of the real substance of the Catholic tradition regarding Confirmation is an impatient survey on his final page:

How confirmation strengthens the baptized in some way different from the eucharist, or more or less specifically than the other sacraments, or how it increases baptismal grace by the gift of the Holy Spirit who is already present and active in baptism are questions that theologians have been arguing about for centuries, with no end in sight (p. 118).

Again, Kavanagh does not indicate what his own views are concerning the reality, let alone the modality, of the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.<sup>222</sup> His concern is the liturgical form of the rite – the age, words, gestures, materials and minister – based on his understanding of the rite’s history. From his treatment, one would not suppose that it has any “effect” other than the subjective and psychological (see, for instance, his discussion (1988, pp. 103-104) of the sensory inadequacy of the current rite of Confirmation).

### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1997)***

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] addresses Confirmation in paragraphs 1285 to 1321. It reiterates the teaching of Florence and Trent, affirming the link between Confirmation and Pentecost (paragraph 1302) and declaring that it bestows an indelible spiritual mark (par. 1304). The CCC, like the Second Vatican Council whose teaching it distills, describes Confirmation’s effects in terms of intensification: the sacrament “*increases*” and “*deepens*” baptismal grace, “roots us *more deeply* in the divine filiation”, “unites us *more firmly* to Christ”, “*increases* the gifts of the Holy Spirit”, “renders our bond with the Church *more perfect*” and “*perfects* the common priesthood of the faithful” (paragraphs 1303 and 1305). The CCC does not describe Confirmation except through intensifiers applied to the effects of Baptism, with the exception of the statement

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<sup>222</sup> Many have read him as undermining any account of Confirmation that posits any kind of intrinsic effect: e.g. Bernard Cooke (1989), who writes that if Kavanagh’s “historical reconstruction is accurate – the case he makes is solid and persuasive – it renders futile much of the attempt to explain the sacrament of confirmation as a conferring of the Spirit, or as an anointing for active discipleship, or as a strengthening for mature battle with the forces of evil, or as a confession of faith on the threshold of adult Christian life” (p. 186).

that its character confers a “special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross” (paragraph 1303).

Given the near-universal dissatisfaction with catechetical resources on Confirmation among those charged with preparing candidates (both children and adults) for the sacrament, it is both very surprising and not a little disappointing that the *CCC*, explicitly intended to support a renewal of catechetics in the Church, should offer such a tentative and impoverished account of the second moment of Christian initiation. In this it does not more than reflect the missed opportunity of Vatican II, which affirmed the *status quaestionis* with respect to Confirmation as it was in the early 1960s, but failed to draw on the deeper Pentecostal imagery at its disposal.

### **Colman O’Neill (d. 1987)**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments* (rev. ed., 1991, rev. by Romanus Cessario); *Sacramental Realism: A General Theory of the Sacraments* (1998).

Irish Dominican Colman O’Neill turns to Thomas Aquinas’ treatment of Confirmation as a model of how theologians ought to proceed, a model of “meditation on revelation” and of immersion in Scripture (O’Neill, 1991, p. 144). O’Neill sets the stage for an exploration of Aquinas’ interpretation by raising questions not about the classic martial imagery (which he considers to be well-grounded), but about what that imagery really means, given that even a merely baptized Christian (albeit not confirmed) must stand up for his faith (see p. 146). O’Neill sees that the theologian’s task is to discover how Confirmation is intrinsically useful and necessary and not merely an “eccentric” addition. For O’Neill, Aquinas “sees in confirmation a further assimilation to Christ as he was revealed in his baptism. It was a time of fullness of grace; so too is confirmation” (p. 149). Just as Christ’s messianic identity was further revealed at his Baptism, the baptized Christian attains the fullness of age in the Church as Confirmation. O’Neill describes the effect of Confirmation as “acquiring adult status in the visible organization” (p. 150). O’Neill does not consider this adult status to be connected particularly to adolescence, to physical maturity; rather, it arises from the distinctive confirmational character which, “like all [sacramental] characters, is directed towards making official signs of faith” (p. 158). The confirmational character transforms every manifest, outward act of faith of the confirmed Christian into an “objective” part of the “fabric of the visible Church” (p. 158). O’Neill explains this in terms

redolent of Catholic Action, the common priesthood, and the lay apostolate: through the exercise of their Christian faith in word and deed (which O’Neill notes is not coextensive with outright preaching or even catechesis, but describes any external manifestation of faith in Christ), the confirmed Christian does not merely set a good example but (on this view) objectively, sacramentally sanctifies the world – or better, she is the means through whom Christ sanctifies the world. This is not so much an adult “attitude” toward the faith as the expression of an adult “status” (p. 151), of an identity as a full Christian: Christ sanctifies the world through the confirmed Christian’s expression of faith, by means of his ordinary duties – not by virtue of his having a right disposition, but by sheer virtue of his identity as a confirmed Christian whose honorable actions are, objectively and not only psychologically, means of grace for the world (the school, the factory, the legislature...) and are, *qua* acts of an adult, other-directed and oriented to building up the Church (see pp. 152-153). In his much briefer treatment of Confirmation in his work on the sacraments in general (O’Neill, 1998, pp. 197-201) O’Neill focuses specifically on the theme of the priesthood of the faithful, as an image of what he means by this objective fullness of adult status in the Church and the sanctifying power of the Christian’s ordinary duties.

**Paul McPartlan** (birthdate not found)

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: “The Holy Spirit and Confirmation: Time to Put Things Right” (1998).

Paul McPartlan is a priest of the archdiocese of Westminster and a professor of theology and ecumenism at The Catholic University of America. His brief but very perceptive article provides a valuable Trinitarian perspective to the enquiry concerning Confirmation; he is also concise but cogent on the questions surrounding the most suitable age for Confirmation, and on the frankly unconscionable disruption, virtually everywhere in the Latin Rite, of the normal order of the sacraments of initiation for children (*i.e.* the conferral of first Communion before Confirmation).

He points out that the fear among Orthodox churches that Roman Catholics relegate the Holy Spirit to an inferior place compared with Father and Son – the very fear that makes the *filioque* pneumatologically and not just ecclesiologically problematical – is reinforced by the apparently inferior status of Confirmation, ostensibly the sacrament of the Spirit (McPartlan, 1998, p. 306).

McPartlan is less cogent, alas, in his assessment of the mediaeval data; he is one of those who errs by writing off Faustus' views in themselves on the grounds of the bishop's "Semi-Pelagianism" (p. 311) and he writes off even Aquinas' advocacy of the *robur* model as being founded on a misunderstanding of "Melchiades" real authority. However, his keen sensitivity to the Orthodox perspective leads him to the valuable insight that "Confirmation is a preparation for the Eucharist" and "the Eucharist renews the grace of Confirmation" (p. 312). This is not merely a feature of Confirmation; for McPartlan, the orientation of Confirmation to the Eucharist is its most important purpose. But what does Confirmation do to prepare one for the Eucharist? It is "Pentecost in the life of the Christian" an "outpouring of the Spirit"; yet emphatically not in contradistinction from Baptism, for "the Spirit is needed even for Baptism" (p. 304). McPartlan does not explore the question of why there should be a rite imparting the Spirit in addition to Baptism, but this is where his hints about the Trinitarian structure of initiation may point us in a theologically promising direction with help from Mohelník, whom we shall consider presently.

### **Peter Henrici (1928 – )**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: "A sacrament of maturity" (1998).

Henrici, a Swiss Jesuit, comments that "Confirmation has had some difficulty finding its proper identity" (Henrici, 1998, p. 316) – another voice in the chorus describing it as the sacrament in search of meaning. He points out the contrast between the apostolic hand-laying of Acts 19, and the spontaneous outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 10 (see Appendix I), and concludes from these examples that the Spirit is always freely imparted, not a human gift to dispose of at will. His main question in this article is like Fisher's; granted that it is not as imperative to distinguish sharply between the effects of water-baptism and the effects of hand-laying when the two are part of a single rite, nonetheless the question must be asked now that they are separate in the Latin Church. Since the Spirit is already given in Baptism, is it possible (he asks) that Confirmation is or will become "superfluous" (pp. 317-318)? Given the dramatic signs in Acts of the presence of the Spirit, Henrici wonders whether the tangible gifts associated with the charismatic renewal are the true equivalent today of the outpouring of the Spirit, rather than the sacrament of Confirmation (p. 319).

Henrici's treatment remains ambiguous. He concedes that Confirmation entails a gift of the Spirit (see p. 320), but since the Spirit was already given in Baptism, he seems to conclude that some additional function must be posited for it to avoid superfluity: he finds that function in the free and explicit consent given by an older person to their Baptism in infancy. Confirmation is thereby best understood, for Henrici, as "the sacrament of Christian majority." The "gifts of the Spirit" associated with Confirmation are distinguished by their orientation to the service of the community, not to the good of the confirmand (p. 321); it is in this orientation to the other that "maturity lies". Thus for Henrici, Confirmation confers the Spirit, but this is not new or distinctive, for such an outpouring of the Spirit already occurred at Baptism; in point of fact, since Confirmation is received in the Latin Church after the age of discretion, the further gift of the Spirit therein can be understood as given for the sake of a mature appropriation of faith, and a mature concern for the good of others, of the community. Henrici does not reduce Confirmation to a psychological rite of passage, nor does he simply call for it to be restored to unity with Baptism; his approach is unique in that he acknowledges that the Western *status quo* is something of an aberration, but proposes a way to draw on its theological significance to serve a perceived pastoral need.

### **Guillaume De Menthière (1964 – )**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *La confirmation, sacrement du don* (1998).

De Menthière, a French priest of the diocese of Paris and instructor at that diocese's formation centre, the École cathédrale de Paris, takes aim against an "inflationist" understanding of Confirmation that interprets it as a magnification of Baptism – a "fullness" of the Spirit, an "addition" of grace, a "perfecting" of Baptism (de Menthière, 1998, p. 87). He points out, as so many others have, that this language suggests a defect or imperfection in Baptism, or perhaps a partial and incomplete first gift of the Spirit, neither of which seems consistent with either the Catholic understanding of Baptism or of the Spirit. De Menthière seeks to shed light on the meaning of Confirmation by employing the classic threefold distinction in sacramental theology: its *res* or *res tantum* (the final effect of any given sacrament), *sacramentum* or *sacramentum tantum* (the sign whereby it is conferred), and *res et sacramentum* ("intermediary between the *sacramentum* of which it is the effect and the *res* which it signifies", p. 88). De Menthière provides an excellent illustration of this distinction using the Eucharist: the *res* of the Eucharist, the ultimate end to



which the Eucharist is directed, is “the charity and unity of the Church”; its *sacramentum* is the bread and wine, and the *res et sacramentum* is the Body and Blood of Christ. The *sacramentum* of Confirmation is straightforward enough in the new Roman rite: it is chrismation. But what is its *res*, and its *res et sacramentum*? De Menthière replies that Confirmation’s *res* is the grace of the Holy Spirit (*la grâce du Saint-Esprit*) or gift of the Holy Spirit (see p. 96), and its *res et sacramentum* is confirmational character. Character, he notes, is always conferred by the valid administration of the sacrament, irrespective of the recipient’s disposition; whereas the ultimate end, the grace or gift of the Holy Spirit, is only bestowed (in virtue of that character) when a proper disposition is joined to the character (p. 94).

The indelible character that de Menthière posits as Confirmation’s *res et sacramentum* is “a sign of belonging to Christ...a certain participation in the priesthood of Christ” (pp. 94-95). It “perfects” baptismal character by giving the confirmand (in Aquinas’ words) “the power to confess faith in Christ publicly and...*quasi ex officio*” (p. 96). Confirmational character is at once “a sign of attachment (*agrégation*) to the Church, a mark of the Holy Spirit, and a delegation to spiritual worship (*députation au culte spirituel*)” (p. 96).

So much for character. What is the nature of the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation? De Menthière recognizes that the impossibility of denying the presence of the Holy Spirit in either Baptism or Confirmation is precisely what generates the “inflationist” language that he criticizes: describing Confirmation as a fuller gift of that Spirit already given in Baptism is a tempting way to affirm both gifts without making either seem superfluous or defective. But what do all these comparatives mean? What is a “fuller” gift of the Spirit, or a “more perfect” bond with the Church? De Menthière seeks the answer by exploring the presence of the Spirit in Jesus’ life, as documented in the Gospels; the Spirit who, though present at Jesus’ conception, continues to work manifestly at key moments in Jesus’ life.

First, he notes that the Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove. The dove, he remarks, is not a traditional symbol in the Hebrew Scriptures for the Holy Spirit; rather, de Menthière sees its significance in the fact that the dove was the poor person’s Temple offering. Since the Spirit who descends on the confirmand is the Spirit who descended on Jesus in the form of a dove, “the confirmed are filled with the Holy Spirit in order to be able to make an offering of their lives” (p. 101).

Next, de Menthière reflects on the Holy Spirit who was present at Jesus' Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1-8) in the form of a "bright cloud", accompanied by the words of the Father: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (*RSV*). De Menthière considers that it is not enough to be adopted as God's children in Baptism; a father must recognize his children and raise them, which is what the Christian experiences in Confirmation, as Jesus – who was already God's Son – was identified as such on Tabor. What's more, the Father instructs those around to "listen" to his son; therefore Confirmation "adds to Baptism the note of mission of witnessing" (p. 107), a mandate from the Father *ad praedicandum*.

De Menthière notes that the Transfiguration was intended to strengthen the disciples before the ordeal of the Passion. From this example he concludes that, just as we say that Jesus was "made perfect" through suffering – not that he himself moved from a defective to a perfected state, but that in the Passion his mission was thereby fulfilled, *i.e.* perfected – so too the baptized is "made perfect" by obedience, by the self-offering she freely makes (p. 109). (Of course, this comparison falls apart if we try to apply it to the Confirmation of infants).

Finally, de Menthière cites the familiar example of Pentecost, the age-old template for an understanding of Confirmation:

To understand the marvelous efficacy of the sacrament of Confirmation, says the Roman Catechism of the Council of Trent, nothing could be more useful than to contemplate anew the mystery of Pentecost...Fearful, they are filled with audacity. Weak, they become strong; reclusive, they are sent to the ends of the earth; unlettered, they speak all languages. Peter himself, who trembled before a mere serving-girl, from now on preaches boldly the name of Christ. All these admirable effects are produced in the confirmed (p. 110).

Through Confirmation, through the personal living of Pentecost, the Christian becomes one who is sent; "autonomous, for the Spirit will be an interior law within him" (p. 117). The three effects that de Menthière finds in Pentecost – constituting the Church, receiving the Holy Spirit, being sent out – are mirrored in *Lumen Gentium's* description of Confirmation: it binds the faithful in more perfectly to the Church, endows him with a special strength of the Holy Spirit, and obliges him more strictly to witness to Christ.

**Arturo Elberti** (dates not found)

Principal works where Confirmation is discussed: “*Accipe signaculum doni Spiritus Sancti*: la Confermazione: fonte del sacerdozio regale dei fedeli?” (1991); *Lo Spirito e la Confermazione* (2003).

Elberti’s interpretation of Confirmation in his 2003 book (which expands on the views he presented in 1991) draws heavily on the notion of the “royal priesthood” (*sacerdozio regale*) of Christ and of Christians. This “common priesthood of the baptized”, though central to Vatican II, goes much further back: it is a Scriptural theme that (as we saw in earlier chapters) has been consistently tied to post-baptismal anointing. As he points out (Elberti, 2003, p. 83), the theme of priesthood is quite prominent in Aquinas’ treatment of Confirmation character: Thomas describes the character as a *deputatio ad cultum*. The Italian Jesuit, who teaches theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, asks what is added by the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, if it is the case that the royal priesthood is already conferred at Baptism (Elberti, 2003, p. 86), as the royal and sacerdotal imagery of the immediately post-baptismal anointing of the crown of the head suggests; he also wonders if there is really a precise moment when the Christian becomes priestly in the course of her initiation, and thus mandated to *cultum* (p. 83). This is the effect of initiation: to render Christians not only “children of God” but to incorporate them into the royal and priestly people that is the Church.

Elberti presents this common priesthood and the *deputatio ad cultum* as the “duty” and the “right of the faithful to an active participation in the liturgy” (*il diritto dei fedeli ad una partecipazione attiva alla liturgia*, p. 89, emphasis in original), but also as their “active” consecration (p. 91) to the priestly task of consecrating the world to God through their labours. This consecration is closely tied to baptismal identity, and Elberti is very sensitive to the rich active and positive meaning of Baptism (as distinct from merely negative effects, such as remitting sins), so that he is loath to accept the question of a precise “moment” when someone is incorporated into the common priesthood. In his treatment, Confirmation is neither superfluous nor does it supply a major benefit that is missing from Baptism. Instead, it is initiation as a whole that imparts this priestly identity; it was the separation of initiation in the West, for Elberti, that introduced the dilemma of trying to identify distinct moments and functions. Without attempting to resolve the dilemma, Elberti notes the appropriateness of trying to craft a more adequate theology of Confirmation that situates it, along with Christian initiation generally, in the Paschal mystery (p. 103).

**Benedikt T. Mohelník (1970 – )**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: “*Gratia augmenti*”: *contribution au débat contemporain* (2005).

Like Milner but unlike most other recent commentators on Confirmation, Mohelník, a Czech Dominican who serves as Provincial of the Order’s Bohemian Province, considers thoughtfully and in depth how a theology of the Trinity sheds light on the sacraments. Inspired by a tersely expressed intuition of Congar (see, *e.g.*, Congar, 1983, p. 222), that the meaning of the sacraments is to be sought in the missions of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, Mohelník explores the visible “missions” – the visible irruptions into human history, reflecting the eternal “processions” – of the Son and the Holy Spirit as understood by Augustine and by Thomas; and he explores the relationship between these visible missions and salvation history as understood by Charles Journet (see Mohelník, 2005, pp. 137-159). His conclusion is that the Church was “fully formed” only once the Son was visibly sent at the Annunciation, and the Holy Spirit was visibly sent at Pentecost (p. 155). “Through the visible missions of the divine Persons,” he writes, “salvation history reflects the interior life of the Holy Trinity. The general history of salvation” – which Mohelník sketches – “must touch individuals personally. This is done through the sacraments” (p. 159). For Mohelník it is clear, from the gesture of hand-laying and the liturgical use of the Pentecost story, that Pentecost is the “meaning” of Confirmation (p. 165).

Mohelník’s contribution is valuable: remaining firmly within the clear tradition that associates Confirmation with Pentecost, he finds a profound theological reason for the two pivotal events of salvation history: Incarnation (with all the attendant mysteries of Christ’s life, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension) and Pentecost. From that solid foundation, he argues for the fittingness of two distinct sacraments of initiation that reflect respectively the visible mission of the Son and the visible mission of the Holy Spirit. The eternal processions of the Son and of the Spirit are reflected by two visible missions of the Holy Trinity that redeem humanity, and these are expressed both in the collective history of salvation, and in the individual sacramental appropriation of that history by twofold initiation.

What are the consequences of this sacramental appropriation in Confirmation? Starting from Aquinas’ view of character as conformity to the priesthood of Christ, Mohelník concludes that the effect of the character inscribed by Confirmation is to transform all virtuous acts into “acts of worship characteristic of the ecclesial community” (p. 191). The confirmed Christian

involves the Church in an act of worship every time she acts in a virtuous way. This interpretation of confirmational character overlaps significantly with the opinion that Confirmation is the sacrament of the lay apostolate, Catholic Action, or the common priesthood, whereby all Christians offer real worship to God through their mundane daily work, and thus participate in the worship of the Father by Christ the High Priest (see p. 192). The worship offered by the Christian's righteous living is itself a witness to Christ, and Mohelník sees this as the principal way that Confirmation may be said to be oriented *ad praedicandum* (p. 194), though certainly not to the exclusion of literal, verbal witnessing (p. 196).

In order to ascertain the specificity of the grace conferred by Confirmation, Mohelník rightly reminds us first that no difference should be posited between sacramental grace and sanctifying grace. "There is only one sanctifying grace" (p. 202), an insight that evokes Davis' and Thornton's remarks *supra* – the Holy Spirit is a person, not an impersonal and divisible substance. The ultimate effect and purpose of all grace is eternal life, a share in the life of the Holy Trinity; the immediate effects vary with each sacrament (p. 203). Mohelník turns first to what Aquinas wrote about the immediate effects proper to Confirmation: fullness of the Spirit, aptitude for spiritual combat, and above all the notion of growth and "perfect age" analogous to growth and maturity in physical life (pp. 207-218). Mohelník explains the effect of Confirmation above all in terms of Aquinas' doctrine of perfection in his *Sentences* commentary: there are two kinds of perfection, perfection of the person and perfection of the person's nature.<sup>223</sup> The first is conferred sacramentally in Baptism, which sanctifies the Christian in herself; the second is conferred in Confirmation where the baptized Christian is empowered and commissioned to serve the good of others, to flourish and contribute *qua* member of the community (see pp. 233, 238). Thus Mohelník's model of the sacraments of initiation integrates Thomas' doctrine of twofold perfection with the traditional view of Confirmation as the sacrament oriented to service, witnessing, lay apostolate, and the rest. In this way Mohelník distinguishes Confirmation from Baptism without making either of them superfluous; he interprets it as the manifestation of the second kind of perfection, and a reflection of the visible mission of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>223</sup> This follows from Thomas' teaching in *III Sent.*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 4 corp.: *In rebus omnibus duplex perfectio invenitur; una qua in se subsistit; alia qua ad res alias ordinatur*, quoted in Mohelník, 2005, p. 229.

## **Jean-Philippe Revel (1931 – )**

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *Traité des sacrements II: la confirmation, plénitude du don baptismal de l'Ésprit* (2006).

Revel is a Dominican serving as a pastor and seminary professor in his native France. Revel's most fundamental principle in his enquiry into Confirmation, initially, is that

...a sacrament is defined by the specific effect of the grace to which it is ordered...In every sacrament, God gives us...sanctifying grace, that is, participation in his own divine Life, according to a singular modality which is the sacramental grace proper to that sacrament, determined by the particular mystery of Christ's life...[S]acramental grace is the work, in us, of the Spirit...who is making use of the sacramental rite...as an instrumental and signifying mediator (Revel, 2006, p. 25, pp. 601-602).

Later on in this work, he concludes that his initial assumption was mistaken, and states outright the conclusion that I have reached also in these pages: that he does *not* believe that two sacraments must have two distinct effects (p. 628).

Revel describes two claims as the unanimous and consistent testimony of the Catholic tradition: 1) that an effect of Confirmation is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and 2) that Confirmation is closely linked with the Pentecost event. He rejects what he calls the “extreme” positions, represented for him by Tertullian and Jerome respectively: that the Spirit is not conferred in Baptism but only in Confirmation, and on the other hand that the imposition of hands is nothing but an “honorific ceremony” (pp. 39-43).

His criticism of other models of Confirmation is even farther-reaching: he rightly and pertinently points out, in opposition to various attempts to define Confirmation in terms of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, that these gifts are “inseparable from sanctifying grace” (p. 45) and therefore are among the “fruits of Baptism” (p. 46). He also assesses, and ultimately does not accept, the classic *robur ad praedicandum* interpretation, which he divides into two distinct models: one that emphasizes *robur*, the other emphasizing the witnessing component of that classic model. His criticism of the *robur* model cites the influence of “Melchiodes” and some of the more idiosyncratic features of mediaeval theology – *e.g.* its eagerness to associate each sacrament with a particular virtue, which in the case of Confirmation results in a definition that accentuates fortitude, and its ostensible over-emphasis on the word “*confirmatio*” with its strength-themed

etymology – so that he concludes that the reasons subtending the *robur* model are inadequate (pp. 46-64).

Revel's criticism of the attempts to define Confirmation in terms of witnessing is quite fundamental: he asks, having presented the rich theme of witnessing in Scripture and Tradition, whether (baptismal) sanctification and witnessing are indeed separable (p. 73); not only does this imply a division in the workings of the Spirit within Christians, but Revel points out that it is implausible that one could be a Christian engaged in the process of sanctification without having some missionary solicitude for others (see p. 604). His reply embodies one of the most basic concerns raised by modern theologians about the interpretation of Confirmation:

Every attempt to define Confirmation by such-and-such a special effect given by the Spirit results in a *mutilation of the grace of Baptism*, inasmuch as this particular effect is unduly subtracted from an authentic conception of baptismal grace (p. 76, emphasis in original).

From this we can anticipate that the defining grace of Confirmation, for Revel, will not be an “effect given by the Spirit,” which would thereby artificially fence off some gift of the Spirit from the initial grace of Baptism. What does Revel consider to be the defining grace of Confirmation?

He argues that Pentecost is not a one-time, distinct, “datable” event, but an “enduring” and constantly renewed reality that is “coextensive with the entire history of the Church” (p. 623); it reflects the gift of the Spirit to each Christian, a gift which is not repeated or manifold but “complete, total, universal, permanent, progressive, in constant expansion, multiple in its manifestations, not by means of partial fulfillments, but by virtue of the profusion of its wealth” (p. 622). So Confirmation, even if it is Pentecost for the Christian, *because* it is Pentecost for the Christian, is not a new gift of the Spirit who is only given once and for all at Baptism:

There can be no specific difference between the baptismal gift of the Spirit on the one hand, which is this first and total gift, and on the other hand, the gift of the Spirit at Confirmation which is this gift in its plenitude, that is its totality (p. 627).

Baptism and Confirmation, then, do not have distinct effects, for Revel, but the same effect; Confirmation *perfects* and *fulfils* baptismal grace (p. 630). He adduces a significant body of patristic evidence in favour of this conclusion (we have seen mediaeval support for it in chapter 2) but the



question persists: what does it mean to perfect baptismal grace? Are we not still left with the perennial problem of seeming to disparage Baptism by claiming that it needs completion?

Revel claims that Confirmation is the fullness or perfection of Baptism on three points: the gift of the Spirit, apostolic witness and royal priesthood (p. 645). It is not clear to me in what sense Confirmation “perfects” Baptism on these points, if it is not the case that Confirmation supplies something that Baptism is missing; if Revel’s point is that Confirmation actualizes the potential for witness and priesthood that are conferred at Baptism, it is not clear to me how Confirmation specifically (as opposed, *e.g.*, to the sheer exercise of the apostolate itself, or deeds of piety and justice in general) accomplishes this actualizing.

For Revel, the most important effect of Confirmation is to “fulfill the neophyte’s entry into the ecclesial community” and confer on her the fullness of belonging and integration into the Church, an effect achieved by the presence of the bishop. Hence Revel’s conclusion, reminiscent in some respects of Bouhot’s:

The sacramental grace of Confirmation is nothing other than the grace of Baptism carried to its fulfillment and plenitude, more particularly to the extent that it accomplishes, through the sign of the bishop, complete integration into the ecclesial community through the fullness of the gift of the Spirit (p. 647).

What distinguishes Confirmation from Baptism cannot be its link to Pentecost, its orientation to witness, *tout court*; for Revel, the Pentecostal and witnessing themes are central to a proper understanding of Baptism as well. Confirmation can only be an increase or perfecting of these traits, and this applies even to character: Revel makes his own Villalon’s conclusion (1977) that the sacramental character of Confirmation is not different from that of Baptism, but a “growth” of it (p. 667). What the growth of sacramental character might consist of, precisely, is left unexplored.

**Paul Haffner** (birthdate not found)

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *The Sacramental Mystery* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2007).

Haffner, an English priest of the diocese of Portsmouth, has a background in the study of physics and in pastoral care as well as theological research. Confirmation seals Baptism, in Haffner’s view, as the Spirit’s descent at Pentecost seals the Paschal Mystery (Haffner, 2007,

p. 71). He cites Acts 8 as a scriptural instance of the sacrament – it was a “tangible sign” that “produced grace” (p. 72) – and concludes that it must originate with Christ: “Since the Lord promised to impart the Holy Spirit to all the faithful, it must be assumed that He laid down clear instructions about how this Gift was to be communicated” (p. 72). Haffner maintains that Confirmation’s effect is to commission and empower the lay Christian to live publicly the implications of her faith; to this end, it “completes” and “perfects” Baptism, focuses on the communal implications of Church membership, and is “connected” to growth in maturity. Thus Haffner ties together several consistent themes in the history of Confirmation – *robur ad praedicandum, baptismus perficitur*, maturity, lay apostolate – under the single heading of emphasis on the community, in contrast to Baptism’s emphasis on individual sanctification. He stresses that the Holy Spirit is received in Confirmation, but not for the first time; Confirmation confers the Holy Spirit more “deeply” and imparts a greater “closeness” to Christ than was effected by Baptism (p. 84).

**Liam Walsh** (dates not found)

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: *The Sacraments of Initiation* (2011).

Liam Walsh is an American-born, Irish-raised Dominican. His engagement with Confirmation is deeply informed by Scripture and the tradition. His approach is unique in that, like Kavanagh, Osborne and others, he attaches a high level of importance to the materials and gestures of the sacraments – their tangible shape and format – but he does not posit the liturgical against the theological, the ritual against the mythological. Instead, with a firm grasp of the tradition, he explores how the outward shape of the sacrament communicates a purpose and effect that we do not discover from scratch in the rites, but that accompanied and moulded the evolution of the sacraments. “The originality of the sacraments is not so much in what they do – God can do all that is needed for human salvation without them – but that they make what God is doing visible in a human symbol” (Walsh, 2011, p. 195).

Walsh understands Confirmation to be:

a sacramental way of making visible the messianic, eschatological quality of the gift of the Spirit in the New Testament: it does in ritual form what the spectacular events of Pentecost, on the one hand, and the inner experience of ultimate salvation enjoyed by the first Christians, on the other hand, do in a prototypical way (p. 197).

What Walsh means by the messianic and eschatological gift of the Spirit is that, with the advent of Jesus, the “day of the Lord has come,” after which “no further divine act is needed for the salvation of the world” (pp. 196-197). For Walsh, Confirmation is Pentecost, but Pentecost is simply an especially vivid experience of the presence and work of the Spirit who was present and at work throughout salvation history. Pentecost expresses “something about the quality of grace”; since God’s work has reached its fulfillment, Walsh calls the eschatological grace of Pentecost an “adult” grace, “lived with the self-confidence and maturity that comes from the experience of having been given within oneself all that is required for salvation” (p. 198). For Walsh, it is “reasonable” that this experience of adult grace, of being fully equipped as we might put it, should be had by someone who is being initiated. In other words, for Walsh, Confirmation is a rite of maturity, but it is not a rite attached to adolescence or physical growth; the maturity of Confirmation is the fulfillment reached by God’s action in the world at the coming of Christ. Walsh points out that this fulfillment or “perfection” should not be thought of merely as an “inflation” of the grace of Baptism, but as the “ultimate, definitive state of things”: the Spirit understood as “messianic” and “eschatological” as distinct from the Spirit manifested in Baptism as the “principle of new creation and new birth” (p. 200).

As for Confirmation’s sacramental character, Walsh describes it as a “signing” and “sealing” that “empowers” the confirmand to “play an active part in the transformation of the world by the Spirit” (p. 206). Walsh sees the connection between this vision and the interpretation of Confirmation as oriented to the lay apostolate, but is concerned that this is only an aspect of the confirmational character. Walsh understands the character conferred by Confirmation to be the power “to take an adult, public part in everything that needs to be done for their own salvation, for that of their fellow Christians, and for that of the whole world” (p. 207).

**Daniel Van Slyke** (birthdate not found)

Principal work where Confirmation is discussed: “Confirmation: a sacrament in search of a theology?” (2011).

Van Slyke shows an impressive familiarity with the complexity of the problem of Confirmation, including historical, liturgical and doctrinal puzzles. Objecting to the cliché that Confirmation is in search of a theology, Van Slyke focuses on one set of texts, namely those

issuing from the Magisterium. He explores two aspects of Confirmation doctrine in particular, *viz.* the bishop's role in Confirmation, and the gift of the Spirit as its chief and defining effect. His principal *loci* are Paul VI (*Divinae Consortium Naturae*), the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Innocent I's letter to Decentius, and the Councils of Florence and Trent, but he also cites other recent Pontiffs and magisterial teachings.

Noting the consistent affirmation in the Western tradition of the bishop's role as ordinary minister of the sacrament, Van Slyke shows that the Roman Catholic tradition thereby teaches that Confirmation is instrumental in perfecting and maturing the Christian's relationship with the Church, and solemnizes the Christian's relationship to her local church (Van Slyke, 2011, pp. 526-527 and ff.).

Van Slyke notes that positing a gift of the Spirit in Confirmation inevitably raises the question of whether this implies that the Spirit was not given in Baptism; arguing that God's grace is infinite, Van Slyke cites examples from Scripture and the Fathers to show that it is legitimate to posit a further gift of grace. To say that Confirmation imparts the Holy Spirit does not imply a denial that this also happens at Baptism (p. 532). The sevenfold "gifts" of the Holy Spirit are "conferred, augmented, or increased" at Confirmation (p. 533) for the sake of greater sanctity, and for what Van Slyke calls the "defensive" and "offensive" components of spiritual combat (p. 536). By "defensive" grace he means the strength to combat temptations and assaults on the soul; by "offensive" he means the lay apostolate (p. 538). Given these effects, Van Slyke argues that the graces of Confirmation are especially valuable in adolescence and therefore should not be delayed until a later age (p. 551).

### **Conclusion to chapter 3**

In this chapter I have surveyed interpretations of the effects of the sacrament of Confirmation in the Latin West, in the five hundred or so years since the Council of Trent. It has not been an exhaustive survey, but it has been comprehensive; by reviewing many of the major treatments during this period of Confirmation's purpose, in Latin, English, French, Italian and Spanish, including both little-cited works as well as those that figure almost universally in bibliographies on the subject, I have sketched the full range of opinions that have been embraced in the Roman Catholic tradition about the effects of Confirmation.

Some generalizations can be made about this company of theologians. First, with respect to the rite of Confirmation: All of them accept that Confirmation should be administered through hand-laying with chrismation and accompanied by an epiclesis (Ligier is the most nuanced and informed in addressing this issue); many urge that Confirmation follow Baptism as soon as possible even for infants, and most of those who address the question of the order of sacraments recognize that there is no good reason to continue the widespread custom of confirming only after children have been admitted to Communion. Many either tolerate or endorse outright the delay of Confirmation until adolescence, in order to provide a pastoral opportunity for catechesis and mature ratification of the faith, or even in order to be consistent with what they see as Confirmation's theological identity, such as a conferral of full membership or spiritually "adult" status in the Church.

Next, with respect to the effects of Confirmation: theologians of the period generally agree that the sacrament has some real effect beyond whatever psychological impact the rite may have on the individual recipient. The influence of Thomas Aquinas is consciously seen in some writers, whose accounts of Confirmation's effects consist principally of commentaries on his interpretation. The most striking pattern, however, to be seen in this period is the flourishing, during the three decades prior to the Second Vatican Council, of interpretations focused on the role of the laity. This tendency was often associated with a renewed insistence on Confirmation's place in the whole of initiation and on its close relationship with Baptism. We saw that these patterns were already emerging before the exchanges among Dix, Thornton and Lampe took place, but the work of the Anglican scholars enhanced substantially the scriptural and patristic reference-points of subsequent Roman Catholic writers. During the pre-conciliar period, criticisms of mediaeval views of Confirmation also began to be in evidence, often on the basis of an allegedly excessive reliance on "Melchisedech". These criticisms have, of course, continued to this day, though authors like Martimort (and, later, Marsh) contested the caricatural views thus attributed to the mediaevals.

Following the Council, several theological "silos" have developed, different approaches to Confirmation that employ their own respective methods and perspectives, but engage very little with each other. For example, one might compare Kavanagh's "liturgical theology", O'Neill's deep study of Aquinas, Revel's focus on "perfection" and "growth", and Milner's careful exploration of the role of the Spirit in Scripture to shed light on the meaning of Pentecost, and by

extension Confirmation: none of these enquiries alludes more than passingly, if at all, to the others, and the methods and sources they use do not always overlap. The cliché that Confirmation is a sacrament in search of a theology, though not an accurate claim, is understandable in view of this fragmenting of theological reflection.

An ecumenical lacuna throughout this period is particularly glaring: though many writers who urge a reunification of the sacraments of initiation cite Eastern Christian *liturgical* practice as a precedent, and note the doctrinal understanding of Protestant communities, we have seen very little attention paid to the contemporary *theological* understanding of chrismation in the East. This may be due in part to the scanty literature available from Orthodox and Eastern Catholic theologians themselves concerning the sacrament.

Now that we have seen the development of theologies of Confirmation in the patristic, mediaeval and modern periods, in the next chapter I will attempt to construct a theology of Confirmation that builds on the insights of the tradition and addresses outstanding problems that have become clear from this enquiry.

## Chapter 4

### INTEGRATING MODELS OF THE PURPOSE AND EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

*“Le geste rituel lui-même semble avoir connu quelques variations; l’effet propre du sacrement prête matière à discussion entre théologiens; le magistère solennel de l’Église, s’il a parlé, l’a fait plus rarement et plus brièvement que pour d’autres points de doctrine. Néanmoins, on ne se trompera pas en mettant un lien spécial entre ce sacrement et l’Esprit Saint.”* (Carra de Vaux Saint-Cyr, 1961, p. 19).

Mediaeval treatments of Confirmation usually analyzed the sacrament in terms of several specific categories<sup>224</sup> shared by the theologians of the period: the *institution* of Confirmation (“Where does it come from?”), the *matter* and *form* (“How is it conferred, using what words and materials and gestures?”), its proper *minister* and *subject* (“To whom and by whom is it given?”), and its *effects* (“What does it do? What is it for?”).<sup>225</sup> In this final chapter, I will first address each of those questions in light of the discoveries and puzzles identified by the theologians we have been surveying, to determine the lights and shadows that remain in the doctrine of Confirmation. I will then propose an approach that will integrate the diverse accounts of Confirmation’s effects, an interpretation that is consistent with tradition and the teaching of the Councils, and that

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<sup>224</sup> John Hill (Hill, 1998, p. 290) cautions against what he sees as the mediaeval approach of viewing the sacraments taken together as a genus, of which the members share certain traits such as having been instituted by Christ, and which members are divided by certain features into seven species. While his caution is perceptive, it is misplaced; the questions I have listed (“Where does it come from?”, “who administers it and how?”) are not bound to a notion of sacraments as a genus, but are reasonable questions to ask when trying to describe any reality. If I wished, for example, to know more about April Fool’s Day customs, I would likely ask the same questions as the mediaevals asked about Confirmation – Where does this observance come from? Who may participate, and in what capacity? What is the purpose of the day, and what are its consequences? How should one participate? – without thereby forcing April Fool’s Day into the category of a sacrament. What is more, rather than speak of “sacrament” as a *genus*, we might think of it simply as a *set*: the set of all things, and only those things, that are rites instituted by Christ to effect what they signify.

<sup>225</sup> Many mediaeval treatments add another question: Whether someone ought to sponsor (the preferred term was “hold”, *tenere*) the confirmand, and what qualities that person ought to have. This is a pastorally and theologically interesting question that has, remarkably, been largely neglected, indeed ignored, by modern treatments, but that merits renewed attention. The canon law of the Roman Catholic Church today requires that the Confirmation sponsor be a confirmed and communicant Catholic, at least sixteen years of age, living “a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken,” and forbids parents from acting in this role for their children. It also recommends as “suitable”, *expedit*, that the sponsor for Confirmation be one who has previously sponsored the confirmand for Baptism (Caparros *et al.* (eds.), 1993, canons 874 and 893).



addresses the problems I have identified. Finally, I will suggest some ways to verify, correct and improve the interpretations I have proposed.

### **ORIGIN, RITE, MINISTER AND SUBJECT, EFFECTS**

These questions presuppose that there is something that may be properly<sup>226</sup> called a *sacrament* of Confirmation in the first place; from my remarks below, it will be clear that I consider this presupposition to be historically and theologically well-founded and reasonable. I will not attempt a justification of the very claim that Confirmation even exists. Rather, I am working with the assumption that a Roman Catholic theology of Confirmation *must* affirm the canons of Florence and Trent, and that these canons require Roman Catholic theologians to affirm the existence of seven sacraments including Confirmation, to affirm that Confirmation is unrepeatable for it imprints a sort of character, and to associate Confirmation with a gift of the Holy Spirit. These assumptions are open to criticism and enquiry, but here I will take them as data.

I am also working with the assumption that a Roman Catholic interpretation of Confirmation must be “sacramental” in the strong and realist sense described by Tappeiner:

The sacramental principle in its simplest form is the belief in the transmission of spiritual power through material means. If the sacramental principle is going to be upheld it is not enough to be content with a certain ‘congruity’ between the saving revelation of God in salvation history as it culminates in the incarnation and the use of material rites in the economy of realised redemption. The sacramental principle involves the crucial assertion that sacraments are ‘means’ in a ‘causal’ sense, for the transmission of spiritual power through material elements. This asserts ontological efficacy for the sacraments, It is this assertion of genuinely ‘causal’ efficacy for the sacraments,

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<sup>226</sup> By “properly” I mean a rite that is a sacrament in the same sense as the other sacraments of the Church, a divinely instituted means of grace, and one that is part of a solid and continuous tradition in the Church, as opposed to a rite developed at a later date for perhaps laudable but not ultimately supernatural purposes. For instance, one may choose to use the name “Confirmation” for a pastorally desirable adolescent profession of faith, but such a rite would have little continuity with what the tradition has called Confirmation. It will be helpful to recall here the distinction often made in the Roman tradition between *sacraments* and *sacramentals*: Catholic religious praxis includes any number of objects and gestures to which the faithful resort with the pious hope that God will bestow needed graces and desired favours. These “sacramentals” – holy water, religious medals, scapulars, novenas and so forth – are understood by Catholics to be worthy of reverence and to be laudable undertakings, but they are optional human creations and do not have the status of “sacraments,” which are Dominically-instituted covenants, assured causes of grace, intended for all persons. As we saw in chapter 3, one serious defect in some recent theologies of Confirmation is to interpret it, in effect, as a sacramental but not a sacrament: a pious, pedagogically useful act entailing the use of auxiliary materials, but not a divinely-instituted covenant embodied in a solemn ritual.

however, it is explained, which ultimately divides all who are actually sacramentalists from all non-sacramentalists (Tappeiner, 1975, p. 243).

### **Origin: Where does it come from?**

**Liturgical continuation of Pentecost.** This question enquires into both the events that gave rise to Confirmation in the first place, and the evolution it has undergone. We have seen very different opinions in response to these questions: Aidan Kavanagh hypothesized that an early-third-century rite of dismissal mutated into something very different and eventually became Confirmation. J.D.C. Fisher was so confident that the rite itself has origins among the Apostles that he strove to find evidence even amid the silence of the first two centuries that a Confirmation rite existed then. The mediaevals generally held that Jesus provided the warrant for the rite when he promised the Holy Spirit, and that the circumstances of the early Church (as in Acts 8 and 19) were catalysts for emergence of the rite proper by which that promise was fulfilled. Mohelník proposed that the twofold visible missions of the Holy Trinity – of the Son and the Holy Spirit respectively – demand that Christian initiation should be twofold, and should include a component focused on Christ (Baptism) and another component focused on the Holy Spirit (Confirmation).

Now, as the mediaeval approach shows, it is quite consistent with Catholic tradition to maintain that Jesus “instituted” the sacrament merely by providing a precedent for certain gestures (such as laying hands on the heads of the children), and by stating a duty and promising a gift to be fulfilled only later, without directly inaugurating the rite as such. Consider again the opinions concerning institution that Aquinas catalogued; he dismissed many of them as inaccurate, but not as invalid, and the fact that some mediaevals credited the “Council of Meaux” with the creation of Confirmation is a particularly vivid example of a mediaeval attribution of sacramentality to a rite that Jesus did not inaugurate. Indeed, I have seen virtually no author claim to have found evidence of Confirmation in the first two centuries (Fisher is a rare exception): but this apparent discontinuity or lapse in Confirmation practice troubles few theologians who defend a strong version of Confirmation, even if authors like Lampe and Kavanagh think that the scanty early evidence ought to give those theologians pause. In other words, if (*ex hypothesi*) evidence emerged that Kavanagh’s theory was correct and, further, that the alleged *missa* of AT 21 had indeed been *consciously* and *deliberately* “pneumaticized” into something different; if, in short, no rite of Confirmation existed in any form until the baptismal *missa* was

mutated into such a rite, it would not really affect the theology of Confirmation as long as the Church has grounds for believing that it can and should celebrate a rite that confidently invokes the Holy Spirit, a rite that serves as an individual Pentecost, a rite in which the Church has grounds for trusting in the causality of the sacramental observances. The most basic and widely shared claim of the Roman Catholic tradition about Confirmation is precisely that the Church does have such grounds: that the Church has the power and the duty in every age to confer a Pentecost on every baptized Christian.

This view evinces a quite simple logic: Christ promised the Holy Spirit to his followers who already believed in him and had begun following him (John 20). The original community of the faithful, united and supplied with their identity *qua* community by their belief in Jesus, received a tangible outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2). A tangible gift of the Holy Spirit was a normal concomitant of Baptism, and where it was lacking, the Apostles completed the incorporation of disciples into the Spirit-filled Church by an individual Pentecost through the concrete gesture of laying-on of hands (Acts 8 and 19); and what the Church did once, the Church can do again. What the Apostles did for the Church of their time, the bishops can do for the Church of ours, even if (to return to Kavanagh's hypothesis – *dato non concedo*) there was a hiatus of years or decades when this Pentecostal power was not exercised, and even if the preferred liturgical medium for exercising this power had its origins in a ritual that is not pneumatic at all.

Indeed, the burden of proof is on the theologian who would *deny* that the bishops (or priests, using episcopally-consecrated chrism) have the power to effectively pray an epiclesis over the baptized in continuation of the gift of Pentecost, for that modest claim is largely what the doctrine of Confirmation amounts to. We have seen the perceptive observation recur a few times in the history of Confirmation: “What is the laying-on of hands but a prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit?” This insight may express a hesitancy about strong sacramental claims for Confirmation, as if the questioner were objecting, “You cannot *give* the Holy Spirit inexorably, predictably, like a material object, a fistful of stuff; all you can do is *invite*, to *ask* the Spirit to be present and act.” However, even the strongest, most “realistic” sacramental interpretation of Confirmation does not, must not, deny the sovereignty and personhood of the Holy Spirit; only in the minds of caricaturists and polemicists is a realistic Roman Catholic sacramental theology indistinguishable from magic, from a system of incantations that mechanically harness the unseen

powers of the cosmos. Roman Catholic sacramental theology counts confidently on the outcome of the sacraments – on the forgiveness of sins, on the transformation of the bread and wine, on the conferring of the priestly office – not because God has been put on a leash or caught in a jar, to be released at will, but because it believes that God has entered into a covenant whereby those material means are instrumental causes of his grace.<sup>227</sup> By that covenant the Church may call on God confidently – humbly and gratefully, but confidently. Thus we should not distinguish

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<sup>227</sup> John Gallagher writes of two mediaeval schools of thought concerning sacramental causality: theologians who “denied a real power in the sacrament to cause grace...[In other words] God assists the sacrament, causing grace Himself directly in the soul when the sacrament is conferred” and “those who attribute to the sacrament a real instrumental power to cause grace” (Gallagher, 1965, p. 135). In neither case is God an object to be manipulated; both schools agree that the sacraments are real occasions of grace but disagree about the manner in which receiving a sacrament results in grace. God is counted on in both cases because of his faithfulness, not human power or merit. While Blankenhorn, for instance, rightly contrasts these schools of thought with a third – the “covenant theology” associated with Richard Fishacre, William of Auvergne, Bonaventure and Robert Kilwardby (Blankenhorn, in Cessario, Hütter & Levering, 2010, p. 137) – all three schools, I submit, presuppose a covenant with God in some sense. The difference among them is not that one posits a covenant and the others do not, but that the covenant in question is variously seen as a divine promise to bestow grace concomitantly with the *sine qua non* conferral of the sacraments, or else a divine dispensation to operate, through the sacraments, “a participation in the spiritual power of the Word Incarnate...because Christ himself imparts such power to them” (Blankenhorn, 2010, p. 148). The distinctions among the schools are real, but even an “ultra-metaphysical” approach that posits intrinsic sacramental causality does not forget that the intrinsic power of the sacraments is due to God’s certain promise – his covenant – to have imparted that power. None of this is intended to dispute the careful and vital distinctions that Blankenhorn makes (in this article and Blankenhorn, 2006), nor am I claiming to cut a Gordian knot of sacramental causality. In particular, Aquinas’ reasons for rejecting the causality posited by covenant theology as “mere signification” must be taken seriously by its advocates (see Blankenhorn, 2010, especially pp. 148-149), as must Ockham’s reasons for his *sine qua non* model of causality (see Goddu, 1996, p. 362; for a similar objection to the view that a material rite can be the “efficient cause” of a spiritual effect, see Tappeiner, 1975, pp. 249ff.). My purpose is, rather, to insist that all three of the schools just mentioned agree that the sacraments are efficacious, whether their causality be thought intrinsic or more exterior; that God is the source of their efficacy; and that the faithful may count with certainty on the gracious efficacy of the sacraments. This contrasts with the views of Kavanagh, Lawler, Osborne, Chauvet and others, for whom the sacramental rites are only as efficacious as the psychological impact they have, or at most only as “effective” as any prayer might be. (This confirms Cessario’s observation that contemporary Roman Catholic theology has largely retreated from claims that the sacraments have objective effects other than the psychological; see Cessario, 2013, p. 308). If we consider Ockham’s voluntarist description of *sine qua non* causality, for instance, as presented by Goddu, it is clear even there that both the divine and the material agency in the sacraments are affirmed by it:

Since God can be the total cause of an effect that God produces along with secondary causes, then secondary causes seem to be superfluous. Ockham responds to this putative objection that, since God is a voluntary, not a necessary, cause, secondary causes are not without effect. Suppose that a strong individual could carry ten things by himself and that no one else could carry them without that strong individual, and suppose then that one weak individual carried the ten things with the help of the strong one, we could draw two conclusions. First, we could assert that both immediately carry the ten things. Second, we could say that the weak individual is not superfluous if the strong individual does not wish to carry the ten things alone...Sacraments are causes of grace, Ockham concludes, because God so instituted the conferral of grace that grace is not conferred unless the sacraments are given, and thereby is the definition of cause satisfied, that is the sacraments are causes *sine qua non*. (Goddu, 1996, pp. 359, 362).

Again, this is not the place to settle the issue of sacramental causality, but one is struck by how much greater the difference is between, on the one hand, theologians who ascribe causality to the sacraments at all, whether *sine qua non* or intrinsic, and on the other those for whom the meaning of the sacraments rests in what they teach or celebrate or commemorate, than it is among various mediaeval models of causality. (For further discussion of the models of sacramental causality, in addition to the other authors cited here, see Leeming (1955) and Courtenay (1971; 1972).)

between interpretations that see Confirmation as a *prayer for* the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and those that see it as a *gift of* the Holy Spirit on the other, for the distinction is unreal and caricatural. Rather, we must distinguish between interpretations that see Confirmation as a humble, trusting prayer for a gift of the Holy Spirit *tout court*, and those which see Confirmation as a humble, trusting prayer for a gift of the Holy Spirit that is animated by the conviction that God himself has entered into a covenant always to heed that prayer – such that the sacramental elements themselves may even be described as *causes* of grace. In this way we see the inaccuracy of Tappeiner’s statement that “the critical question remains...as to whether...grace remains sovereign or has passed into the hands of men, to the Church” (Tappeiner, 1975, p. 246). This is a false dichotomy; the Catholic tradition affirms both, for the reasons just given.

**The *filioque*.** A further point might be made about the mission of the Holy Spirit, in connection with Confirmation. Mohelník maintained that Christian initiation reflects the two visible missions of Son and Holy Spirit; we might enquire further whether this initiation sheds light on the interpretation of the *filioque*, and is in turn illuminated by it, since that controversy too is informed by the problem of the mission of the Holy Spirit.<sup>228</sup> The *filioque* is found in Augustine, but as every schoolchild knows it was included in the liturgical recitation of the Creed in Spain, at the behest of the Visigoth Reccared at the Council of Toledo, to further safeguard faith in the Son’s divinity against Arianism. While much progress has been made to alleviate the ecumenical tension eventually provoked by that insertion,<sup>229</sup> the *magisterium* of the Roman Catholic Church has insisted that the *filioque* itself is not to be discarded or repudiated, for it enshrines important points in an orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity. This insistence is not restricted to Catholics: Karl Barth is a particularly distinguished example from the Reformed tradition of insistence on the *filioque* (see Barth, 1975, pp. 477ff.; for a thorough exploration of Barth’s position on this, see Guretzki, 2009). What is at stake, for these voices, in the *filioque* doctrine, and how does it relate to Confirmation?

Apart from the ecclesiological objections that many Eastern Christians have to the unilateral inclusion of *filioque* by Latins in the Creed of Constantinople, a substantial number of Eastern Christians also consider the theology of the Holy Trinity that underlies it to be

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<sup>228</sup> Here I must gratefully acknowledge remarks made by Professor Torrance Kirby of the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University, which first suggested to me that a link might be made between a theology of Confirmation and *filioque* theology.

<sup>229</sup> See, for instance, the 2003 statement of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation: “The Filioque: a Church-Dividing Issue?”

problematical or erroneous as well, perhaps dangerously so. Though some Orthodox theologians consider that an orthodox reading of *filioque* is possible, others cannot accept it. Some (such as Vladimir Lossky) even consider it to be the root of all the West's putative errors.<sup>230</sup> They object that the *filioque* runs the risk of modalism when (for example) the persons of the Trinity are presented as “beholder, beheld, and beholding,” or “revealer, revealed, and revealing,” that it relegates the Holy Spirit to a subordinate position, that it contradicts the monarchy of the Father as the principle of the unity of the three persons, and in its place substitutes an impersonal divine substance rather than the person of the Father. Hence the Eastern Orthodox insistence, on Trinitarian and not only ecclesiological grounds, of maintaining the Creed's original wording: “the Holy Spirit...proceeds from the Father”.

Western Christians who insist on retaining the *filioque* argue that, just as its inclusion was originally intended to clarify and safeguard endangered elements in trinitarian theology, its retention continues to be important and useful on the same grounds. They argue that the *filioque* is necessary to combat subordination of the Son and to assert his equality with the Father, and that sufficient warrant for the doctrine is provided by what Barth and others call the *opus ad extra* of Father, Son and Holy Spirit: “All our statements concerning what is called the immanent Trinity have been reached simply as confirmations or underlinings or, materially, as the indispensable premises of the economic Trinity “ (Barth, 1975, p. 479). (The Roman Catholic Church, at the Council of Florence but also in more recent ecumenical discussions, is committed to the view that the *filioque* must not be seen as a correction or contradiction of the original form of the Creed, but as a clarification that can only be understood in continuity with that original form; see Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove, 2011, p. 190.) Perhaps most crucially, the *filioque* clarifies *how* it is that Son and Holy Spirit are distinct; Dennis Ngien (2005, p. 28) identifies this as the chief consideration that compelled Anselm to advocate for the *filioque*.<sup>231</sup> Rather than saying of both persons that they have their origin in the Father alone, the *filioque* emphasizes that the Son has his origin in the Father alone, while the Spirit's origin is from the Father and the Son, not in a

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<sup>230</sup> For a thorough and informed airing of the theological discussions surrounding the *filioque*, see Coffey (1986), Del Colle (1997), Letham (2009), Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove (2011, pp. 189-193), McWilliams (1995), and especially Siecienski (2010).

<sup>231</sup> Ngien does a masterful job generally of exploring why the *filioque* was considered a vitally important insight, and not merely idly taken for granted, by Anselm, Aquinas, Richard of St. Victor and Bonaventure. The North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation's 2003 statement “The Filioque: A Church-Dividing Issue?” includes an excellent history of the *filioque* and a fair-minded statement of its importance for the West and of its legitimacy, but also of the sensitive issues that make it advisable for all the churches to revert to the common credal statement of faith in its pristine form.



double procession – the Second Council of Lyons explicitly insisted on this in 1274 – but as from a single cause. *Filioque* theology does not dispute the Eastern tradition as false, but seeks to safeguard the divinity and distinct identity of the Son.<sup>232</sup>

From the perspective of the *filioque*, the liturgically distinct sacrament of Confirmation acts as a similar safeguard: the twofold nature of Christian initiation reflects the visible missions of Son and Holy Spirit. The Son was sent by the Father in the Incarnation, into the death and resurrection of which incarnate Son, Christians are baptized; at Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father, *and by the Son* who promised to send the Paraclete Spirit. *Therefore* Christians receive a second sacrament of initiation by which they receive the Pentecostal sending of the Spirit. In this perspective, Confirmation, like the *filioque*, asserts what is distinct about the mission of the Holy Spirit, not in order to contradict the monarchy of the Father, but in order to clarify the divinity of the Son.<sup>233</sup>

### **Rite: How is it conferred?**

I have not explored in great detail what our several dozen authors have said about the ideal or correct mechanics of the administration of this sacrament, though much has been written on the question. This question has largely been treated as a prudential matter in Roman Catholic tradition, and I concur in viewing it as such. This is certainly not to say that the mechanics of the rite do not matter, but that all versions of the rite that Roman Catholic theologians have

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<sup>232</sup> It would be interesting to explore the relationship between the contemporary “Theology of the Body” movement in the Roman Church, inspired by Pope John Paul II’s catecheses on sexuality and popularized by Christopher West, and the *filioque*. Theology of the Body presents human personhood-in-relation as an icon of the Trinitarian life (see John Paul II, 2006, section 9:3, p. 163); perhaps an understanding of the Spirit as proceeding *ex Patre Filioque* affects one’s understanding of that Trinitarian life in such a way as to influence one’s notion of human communion. See also Ngien’s description of Richard of St. Victor and Bonaventure’s defence of the *filioque*, defences which centre on the importance of shared love of the “co-beloved” (*condilectus*) in the Trinity (Ngien, 2005, pp. 51-75 and 115-143).

<sup>233</sup> Might a connection be made between Lampe’s minimalizing view of Confirmation and his argument for the identity of Spirit and Son (see, *e.g.*, Lampe, 1977, p. 62ff: “...to experience God as Spirit and to experience the presence of Christ were one and the same thing...Without this conviction that...in Christ God the Spirit was concretely manifested, it is hard to imagine how the New Testament could have come to be written”)? I am indebted to Rowan Williams for drawing attention to this aspect of Lampe’s Trinitarian thought (Williams, 2000, p. 144). Lampe broaches the question of Confirmation in this 1977 work (pp. 193-197); he rightly affirms that it is impossible to live as a Christian in any meaningful sense without the Holy Spirit, but errs in assuming that a classic pneumatic account of Confirmation must posit an absence of the Holy Spirit between (infant) Baptism and (adolescent) Confirmation. Lampe here both repudiates a traditional doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and implies that that traditional doctrine is at odds with an equally traditional view of Confirmation: “*Even when* the Holy Spirit is regarded as a third person of the deity, subsisting together with a personally post-existent Jesus Christ, this notion [that the Spirit is only given in Confirmation, possibly years after Baptism] is plainly untenable. No one can be a Christian without the indwelling Spirit” (Lampe, 1977, p. 196, emphasis mine).



proposed vary within a modest range of options that all share the theological meanings we have been exploring. Liturgists may explore whether hand-laying or anointing is better suited to conveying the sacrament's meaning; pastoral theologians and theorists of catechesis may offer arguments for confirming infants or waiting until adolescence, but we do not see many eccentric departures from these parameters.

From one period to another, the ritual words used to confer this sacrament have varied, and the Church has opted for different formulas in different times and places. None is above criticism: the mediaeval and Tridentine formula has been criticized for being insufficiently pneumatic, while the 1971 formula has been criticized for having been taken out of context from the Byzantine liturgy, without its attendant epicleses. All the formulas were developed by the Church, and none was directly taken from Scripture (in contrast to the formula of Baptism, or the consecratory formula of the Eucharist).

Options as far as the *materia* is concerned are much more limited: the essential matter of Confirmation invariably consists of hand-laying, or chrismation, or both. Both of these are gestures that have a deep significance in Scripture, and each has been more or less ascendant in various periods and regions. The work of Coppens (1925), Ysebaert (1962), Ligier (1973) and De Halleux (1984) is of tremendous value in appreciating the meaning of both of these gestures, and the mediaeval writers in particular are at their most creative and enthusiastic when commenting on the appropriateness of each material component of this sacrament. What is more, there is no tendency among recent theologians to revisit the use of chrism and hand-laying in Confirmation. On this point, at least, opinion seems unanimous and settled.

One consideration that might influence the liturgical form of Confirmation is that, while each Person of the Holy Trinity is understood by Catholic tradition to be at work in each of the sacraments, it may be that the threefold format of initiation is intended to affirm severally the reality and work of each Person – adoption by the Father in Baptism, sanctification by the Spirit in Confirmation, daily transformation by the Son in the repeated participation in the Eucharist. If this is the case, then the shape of Confirmation should be an image of the sanctification it is meant to highlight. It seems that the blessing, empowering and sanctifying imagery of anointing and hand-laying, drawn from Scripture, fit this bill more than adequately.

### **Minister and subject: To whom and by whom is it given?**

**Minister.** Apart from the period during the Middle Ages when some Latin theologians uncompromisingly maintained that bishops alone can confirm, the question of the proper minister has largely been treated as settled by Roman Catholic theologians: before the rites of initiation were divided, the bishop was the original minister of the complete rite of initiation. Subsequently, the bishop became the ordinary minister of Confirmation in the West, and priests became the ordinary ministers in the East. The latter make use of chrism consecrated by the Patriarch or another bishop, and in the West, priests can be delegated to confirm (a point that, as we have seen, was already generally conceded in the Middle Ages), and some propose that today they should be so empowered by default, for various pastoral or theological reasons. Such divergences as do exist on the question of the minister of Confirmation are trivial, and there is no evidence that the question puzzles or agitates present-day theologians to any extent.

The question of minister ought to puzzle us more than it usually does, however, for there are sacramental and ecumenical problems bound up with the fact that the Church only considers Confirmation valid if conferred by a cleric. The Eastern and Western churches have complementary views of the respective roles of priest and bishop in Confirmation, but there is never any question of a layman (or a deacon) confirming; this is in contrast to the Church's acceptance of Baptism celebrated in other Christian communities by persons not in Holy Orders, or of "emergency" Baptisms celebrated by layfolk, Catholic or not. Confirmation, in this respect at least, is more like the Eucharist or Reconciliation than like Baptism or Matrimony: it can only be validly celebrated by a priest or bishop. Indeed, it is in some respects like Holy Orders, in that the bishop must in some sense be present to confirm. This puzzle is most sharply visible in the case of the Anglican communion: the Anglican churches celebrate Confirmation, and theologians in the Anglican tradition (as we have seen quite extensively) have contributed significantly to the enriching of Roman Catholic reflection on the sacrament; and yet, while the Roman Church vigorously affirms and accepts Anglican Baptism, a confirmed Anglican who comes into communion with the Roman Church must still be confirmed by a Roman Catholic cleric. A chrismated Orthodox who comes into communion with the Roman Church, on the other hand, is not re-chrismated. This seems to demonstrate that the Roman Catholic practice arises from the position that Confirmation can only be conferred by a cleric in valid Holy Orders (and from the contentious Roman Catholic doubt or outright denial that Anglican Orders are valid). Is this

because Confirmation, like the Eucharist, is a sacrament that can in no sense be conferred by a layperson, or is it because Confirmation's Pentecostal significance requires the agency of a minister with apostolic authority? This problem requires further attention.

**Subject.** The proper recipient of Confirmation, it is universally agreed, is a baptized Christian: the mediaevals sometimes asked whether this was the case, but invariably answered in the affirmative. The possibility that the enigmatic Syrian pre-baptismal anointings had a pneumatic significance, however, is an interesting puzzle. If Syrian pre-baptismal anointing was Confirmation, albeit under another name, it would supply evidence that the Church has not always considered that only a baptized Christian may be confirmed, though even in this case the close link with Baptism would be retained – one recalls Serra's discussion of the problem, and his point that the pre-baptismal anointings were not administered to someone who was soteriologically *tabula rasa*, but to someone who had undergone an exorcism and made a profession of faith. The resolution of this puzzle will depend on the work of historians investigating the Syrian initiation rites, and the conclusions they come to about the nature of those intriguing rites.

Can *any* baptized Christian be confirmed, regardless of age? In principle, it would seem so; in practice, infants and adults alike have been confirmed at certain times; but some theologians object to the practice of infant Confirmation. Some (such as Bouyer and Rahner) demur because they consider Confirmation at adolescence or young adulthood to be pastorally useful, but this is putting the cart before the horse: the meaning of Confirmation should not be compromised to accommodate a pragmatic goal that is unrelated to its primary meaning. The sacrament should not be reduced to a pedagogically interesting sacramental. (Biemer (1979) and Levada (1996) provide a more thorough discussion of this tension.) In some instances, however, theologians consider that the meaning of Confirmation does lie precisely in a certain kind of maturity (or adult status in the Church) and therefore that the proper age for its conferral is adolescence or later. If this account of Confirmation's meaning is correct, it still does not follow that it should be reserved for teenage or adulthood – some theologians with this view (Anciaux, Leeming) clarify that *spiritual* maturity or *ecclesial* adulthood has nothing to do with *physical* maturity – but it is certainly a departure from the historic practice of the Church, not merely to delay Confirmation until adolescence, but positively to deny it to infants and children. Any

interpretation of Confirmation that *requires* that it be delayed until adolescence is, *ipso facto*, to be eschewed as manifestly contrary to the tradition. Confirmation is not a Catholic Bar Mitzvah.

Restoring Confirmation to its place immediately following Baptism – for infants as well as adults – would respond to the concerns of many Orthodox and of critics like Dix and Fisher, who feel that the Roman practice has unduly disintegrated the unity of Christian initiation; it would obviate the perplexity some feel when they consider the ambiguous situation of a Christian during the years when one has been baptized but not yet confirmed; and it would increase the likelihood that any given baptized Catholic will in fact receive Confirmation, thus correcting a perennial delinquency that has understandably agitated councils and bishops in many eras. Originally, as we have seen, the delay of Confirmation was a consequence of insisting on its Pentecostal and apostolic meaning which demanded the ministry of a bishop; that instinct is worth preserving and reviving, but at any rate, in current practice, it is weakened by the common expedient of resorting to an episcopal delegate.

Restoring the unity of the sacraments of initiation would also manifest more emphatically the unity of the work and presence of the Holy Trinity in the sacraments. Yes, Baptism is participation in the death and resurrection of Christ and incorporation into Christ's resurrected Body, and Confirmation is empowerment by the Spirit to be a persuasive witness; but the Christ into whom we are incorporated by Baptism is himself empowered by the same Holy Spirit at every point in his existence. At Jesus' conception, for instance, the Spirit overshadowed the Mother of God: Congar writes, "A first sending of the Spirit – Thomas Aquinas speaks of the 'mission' of the Holy Spirit – made the little Jesus who was brought to life in Mary's womb 'holy' and the 'Son of God' (= Messiah)" (Congar, trans. Smith, 1983, p. 16). When the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ at his Baptism, it was not a first advent of the Spirit, but a new phase in the life of the Spirit-filled Messiah:

Jesus had been filled and sanctified by the Spirit since the time of his conception, which had brought about the union of a humanity with the person of the eternal Son. He had, however, been 'anointed' by the Spirit at his baptism in order to be the Messiah, the minister of salvation and holiness (Congar, 1983, p. 21).

Douglas Farrow, citing Sergius Bulgakov, notes that "the parousia of Jesus Christ...is...the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that Pentecost only anticipated. The glory of the God-

man...lies...ultimately in his own unlimited capacity to receive and transmit the Spirit” (Farrow, 2011, pp. 144-145). In short, the Holy Spirit is present and at work throughout the person, the life and the work of Jesus Christ, at his conception, at his Baptism, at his commissioning of the disciples to go out into the world, and at his parousia; when he is made present as Bread of Life at the Eucharist, the Church first invokes the Holy Spirit upon the elements of bread and wine. Restoring the unity of Baptism and Confirmation would better reflect the unity of the christological and pneumatological; separating them in time and space is not utterly unthinkable, but it is not ideal (just as the doctrine of Eucharistic concomitance renders *acceptable* the withholding of the chalice from the faithful, but the practice is nonetheless *not ideal* as it is contrary to the meaning of Eucharistic communion). Since Confirmation is delayed nowadays not, above all, for any reason related to its intrinsic meaning (other than the valid insight that it is especially fitting for a successor of the Apostles to be its minister), but because it has been deemed pedagogically useful as a sacramental appropriate to adolescence, it behooves the Church to restore the unity of sacraments of initiation. Finally, it is a matter of routine experience that adolescent Confirmation is rarely the moment of authentic personal appropriation that so many extol; far more often than not, alas, it marks the moment when parents and children desist from even a desultory presence in their parish.

### **Effects: What does it do?**

A major reason why the mediaeval account can seem unconvincing is that “witnessing”, “confessing” and “defending,” the effects most often posited by mediaevals, seem like mainly verbal activities, and it does not seem that Confirmation is necessary to make them possible: speaking, arguing, explaining, and other such functions that one associates with *praedicandum*, are manifestly able to flourish even without Confirmation. Hence, perhaps, the attraction of the *robur* model, which emphasized one concrete way in which speech might become easier: Confirmation does not appear to make one more articulate, more learned, more audible, more gifted at languages, but the claim that it makes one more audacious and less fearful is difficult to disprove. While this immunity from disproof makes the *robur* model appealing to the homilist, since it removes one obvious objection, it is not an adequate ground for affirming that *robur* is in fact a consequence of Confirmation; one requires some positive evidence that such an effect results from the sacrament. Thus, if the *robur* claim can be anchored on more solid and certain grounds, then

it is indeed meaningful to posit that Confirmation makes it more feasible to confess Christ *coram mundi*.

A second sense in which *robur* allows one to flourish as a witness is that it provides a basis for perseverance: not necessarily to confess Christ, but at least to refrain from denying him, even in the face of hostility and violence. Perseverance is a prerequisite for profession: one who stands firm and does not repudiate Christ might not go so far as to confess him outright, but one who denies him cannot at the same time confess him.

McCabe's insight, that a holy person or persuasive preacher convinces not only – or even primarily – through the cogency of her words, but above all through the evidence of her very being, resolves this dissatisfaction. Witnessing to Christ is, yes, a matter of careful words and judicious study, but above all of holiness, compassion, justice, and a quasi-sacramental presence of Christ to others. “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers,” as Paul VI wrote, “and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (Paul VI, 1975, par. 41): McCabe's insight is that one does not become a witness in the Pentecostal sense by trying to become articulate and dialectically clever; one becomes a persuasive witness to the extent that God makes of one a saint. If I am confirmed, Confirmation sanctifies others through me – not primarily because I am a persuasive debater or an intrepid defender, but because, as a confirmed person, I participate in the Holy Spirit and become a reason for hope for others to the extent that I live up to my baptismal identity, witnessing to Christ in the power of his Spirit. This often requires all the intellect and articulacy I can muster, but by no means requires such traits exclusively: holy men and women compel first by their lives and only then by their words, largely because their lives have lent their words credibility.

This is the first element in my proposal for a theology of Confirmation: to understand its ultimate effect as making a baptized Christian into a Spirit-vivified, persuasive witness to others, not just in word but in deed and in his or her manner of being. Its ultimate effect, I would say, is not only to help Christians to *provide* reasons for hope, but to help them to *become* reasons for hope.<sup>234</sup> This is not a rival claim to the mediaeval doctrines of *robur ad praedicandum*, *augmentum gratiae* and *baptismus perficitur*, nor to the modern idea of ecclesial maturity: Most of the predominant interpretations of Confirmation envision a function of edification, an effect ordered

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<sup>234</sup> Some translations of I Peter 3:15 (such as the *Douay-Rheims*) use “reason for hope” or a similar phrase to translate λόγον περι τῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδος. The *RSV* translates this verse as “Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you”.

to the building up of the Church through the life of the confirmand, but most limit that role to a more specific effect like enhancing courage, or “increasing” grace or union with the Church. Becoming a reason for hope, in virtue of being inhabited and transformed by the Holy Spirit, entails a change in one’s identity – one that will manifest itself in turn in certain kinds of activities, without being limited to or defined by those activities – and it places the emphasis not on the impact of an individual’s accomplishments, but on the Holy Spirit’s work through the individual as through a sacramental medium.

“Becoming a persuasive witness,” I submit, weaves together most threads of the tradition and stands as a faithful and accurate proxy for what happened at Pentecost. Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit, is consistently the defining event for an understanding of Confirmation, and if “persuasive witness” does not do that event justice, it may be discarded in favour of a better one, should one be found. Whether it is a satisfactory proxy for Pentecost, and a valuable key to Confirmation, must be verified by two questions: does it in fact synthesize the key insights of the tradition, and does it escape or resolve the difficulties which may be raised against those insights?

#### **FIVE FUNCTIONS, ONE GOAL: INTEGRATING COMPONENTS OF THE TRADITION**

Confirmation can appear to be a sacrament in search of a theology because (as we have seen for the last three chapters) any selection of different books or articles about it may seem to be writing about as many different sacraments. (Turner (2006) argues this point very well about the rather diverse contexts in which various rites called “Confirmation” are administered; but there is also diversity among accounts of the *effect* within almost any one of those “Confirmations”.) This discontinuity is not as profound as it looks: Confirmation is not a sacrament in search of a theology, but a sacrament with a few theologies, in search of integration.

With the exception of a few “outliers,” such as Honorius of Autun’s lovely but eccentric image of Confirmation as the wedding garment, I submit that most interpretations of Confirmation can be sorted into one of five functions, each of which serves, safeguards or advances the overarching Pentecostal goal of sending the Spirit to transform disciples into persuasive witnesses. The five functions are *teaching, ratifying, instituting and constituting, commissioning* and *equipping*. What I wish to argue is that, diverse as they are, the many interpretations making up the tradition are not rival models, but complementary aspects of a single insight: that Confirmation is a Pentecostal sending of the Spirit and therefore transforms the baptized



Christian into a reason for hope, an encouragement and means of sanctification, a persuasive witness, for others. The larger sacramental theology within which these interpretations are situated and from which they emerge may, on the other hand, be at odds: consider, for example, the sacramental models held by Aquinas as compared with Osborne or Chauvet. Their most perceptive respective insights into Confirmation may not, as such, be incompatible.

Here it will be germane to recall something written by Bernard Leeming (see *supra*, p. 184): “Both sides in this controversy are right in what they affirm, wrong in what they deny.” Leeming was writing about another aspect of the Confirmation debate, but his observation stands as an apt diagnosis of the confusion and eclecticism of theologies of Confirmation. Most interpretations have something to be said in their favour, but if taken in isolation, most are inadequate, prone to triviality, and susceptible to the charge of special pleading. This inadequacy usually arises not from what theologians of Confirmation affirm, but from what they deny: I have argued, for instance, that the mediaeval *robur* accounts, though narrowly focused on verbal models of witnessing, are nonetheless partly justified. Most advocates of the *robur* interpretation acknowledge this narrowness at least implicitly, in that they rarely posit *robur* to the *exclusion* of other effects; this contrasts, for example, with the wholesale dismissal of the mediaeval tradition *in toto* by Fisher and Dix as excluded by their own preferred vision of Confirmation. Advocates of *robur* are right to advocate it; their error would lie in denying complementary accounts. My purpose in proposing these five functions of Confirmation is to show that, by and large, theologians of the sacrament have been right in what they affirmed and been wrong, principally, in what they denied; and to show that if respective interpretations of Confirmation are read as examples of one or more of these five functions, they can all be simultaneously situated in a single overarching narrative that preserves their specific insights while escaping their peculiar shortcomings.

My project here resembles to some degree Avery Dulles’ work articulating and integrating disparate “models” of ecclesiology and revelation (Dulles, 1983; Dulles, 2002).<sup>235</sup> Dulles explains that he uses the word “models” instead of “aspects” or “dimensions” to reflect the mystery of the

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<sup>235</sup> Dulles proposes five models of the Church and five models of Revelation. My own choice of five models of Confirmation is coincidental – they began as six models, and though Dulles writes that his “five basic types [of the Church] reflect distinctive mindsets that become manifest in a given theologian’s way of handling all the problems to which he addresses himself” (Dulles, 2002, p. 4), there is no perfectly obvious correspondence between the five I have settled on and the five Dulles presents. It would be an interesting exercise to explore how closely the two sets of models can be made to correspond.

Church, which does not disclose itself fully through direct experience but is gradually and indirectly understood through analogy (Dulles, 2002, p. 2). He also observes that the various models cannot be integrated into a “single synthetic vision.” It may be that the confusion and disintegration afflicting theologies of Confirmation has similarly arisen from a perennial failure to adequately appreciate it as a mystery, a multi-faceted feature of the Church’s life that is only understood gradually through the judicious application of analogy. Like Dulles, I am attempting a models method that embraces different interpretations of Confirmation (rather than pitting them against each other) out of the conviction that this can help theologians to overcome the limitations of their chosen interpretations, and foster mutual appreciation among distinct mindsets that have kept theologies of Confirmation isolated in their respective silos over the centuries. Aidan Nichols has emphasized how much the insights and preoccupations of various theologians reflect their respective unique gifts, complement one another, and sometimes diverge, while sharing the “constants” that define all Catholic theologies (see Nichols, 2013, p. 604, and Nichols, 1991, pp. 264ff); I am confident that the meaning of Confirmation as revealed by all five approaches can be integrated into a single vision, on the condition that the vision itself be presented as an icon that admits of further reflection, rather than a sharp and clear definition that settles the meaning.

The value of integrating these five functions into a single narrative is demonstrated when we consider, for instance, the objection of Urban Holmes to what he thinks Aquinas taught about Confirmation. Holmes counters that “obviously baptized persons who are unconfirmed can witness to others of the faith that is in them” (Holmes, 1975c, p. 118). This objection is relevant if one claimed that the meaning of Confirmation consists in the ability to witness verbally. If, on the other hand, the graces needed to witness effectively are just one kind of example of one of five functions served by Confirmation – just one feature of a larger schema that consists of having received a visible gift of the Spirit to become a persuasive witness, a reason for hope, by one’s very presence – then Holmes’ remarks are an impertinence. Let us consider an analogy: a man expresses gratitude that the sacrament of marriage has provided him with the grace to be attentive to his wife’s welfare. A critic sneers that a man can be attentive to a woman’s welfare without any putative sacrament. True, perhaps, but impertinent; for the first man’s point was not to define marriage in those terms, but to draw attention to one aspect of one of its functions. He might reply: “Without marriage, I would not be that woman’s husband, and together we would

not be an icon of Christ's love for his Church, and I would be deprived – not of grace altogether – but of the abundant graces that flow from the sacrament by God's mercy." Similarly, the five-functions approach I am presenting allows the student of Confirmation to distinguish between what is primary and what is secondary, between what is the overarching purpose of the sacrament and what individual aspects merely further that purpose. A baptized and unconfirmed person can "witness to others", but has not yet been taught, ratified, commissioned, instituted and constituted, and equipped for the distinctive purpose of Confirmation, which is that she might be a radiant reason for hope.

To describe the effects of Confirmation in terms of these five functions may help to dispel the very common notion that each sacrament is defined by some particular grace. For example, the defining grace of Baptism has often been presented as the reversing or cancelling of original sin. This looks like one specific and distinctive grace until we reflect that it is merely another way of saying that Baptism confers sanctifying grace, and that sanctifying grace consists of new life in the Holy Trinity, and makes possible a host of new powers and opportunities. "Reversing original sin" is thus seen to be a proxy for grace as rich and complex as physical life itself. Similarly, Confirmation confers the Holy Spirit to make one a witness: a gift that can be broken down into the five functions that follow, but that must not be presented as radically *unlike* the work of the Holy Spirit in each of the other sacraments.

I will turn now to the five functions.

## **Teaching**

Recent interpretations of Confirmation have focused more than their immediate predecessors did on what might be called the *pedagogical* function of Confirmation: the psychological, intellectual or emotional impact it has on the confirmand and on the surrounding community.<sup>236</sup> For a liturgical theologian like Aidan Kavanagh, for instance, it makes little sense to speak of a sacrament's effects without speaking of the material details of the rite by which it is conferred. However, though Kavanagh's approach suggests that a sacrament's efficacy resides exclusively in its pedagogical and mystagogical impact, his is not the only possible approach to

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<sup>236</sup> O'Neill (1998, p. 139) diagnoses the situation very perceptively: "...in Catholic theology...the post-conciliar years have revealed a marked disinclination on the part of some theologians to speak in a direct fashion of an intervention of Christ in the sacraments which would, if its meaning were to be pressed, transcend the category of word. Their over-riding concern is to present the traditional doctrine of the sacraments in a way that will not involve the introduction of manners of speaking that they believe to be incomprehensible today."

liturgy. It is possible, after all, to say that liturgy matters, to acknowledge that the mechanics of a rite can teach a person and a community; and at the same time to posit an *ex opere operato* efficacy. A vivid example of this is the close attention paid by most theologians of the mediaeval period to the *symbolism* of chrism, hand-laying, the forehead, the bishop, the *alapa* and so on. The mediaevals and modern liturgists rightly agree that the sacraments have a pedagogical function. The impact, however, need not begin and end with pedagogy, and a psychological interpretation need not vitiate an ontological one.

Recent liturgical theology has also advanced our appreciation of the pedagogical value of the sacraments for the *community* and not only the individual, testifying before a congregation (for example) to what the Holy Spirit is doing in the Church today. The pedagogical impact of the Confirmation liturgy is an important feature of the pastoral problem of Confirmation, and should not be dismissed. It is only trivial when it is emphasized to the exclusion of other concerns, and thus becomes the entirety of the sacrament's signification.

The question of minister too is partly a pedagogical question: since the Roman Catholic tradition admits that priests and bishops alike are able to confirm, the preference in the West to reserve administration of the sacrament to bishops may be seen as a pedagogical choice, a wish to draw attention to the apostolic character of Confirmation which in turn reflects its Pentecostal significance. This episcopal/apostolic link is maintained in the East as well, by means of the chrism, but is less explicitly underlined and less obvious for those who are not present for the consecration of the chrism and who therefore may not know of its episcopal provenance.<sup>237</sup>

## **Ratifying**

Ratification – at least in the sense of a person's embrace of the Gospel, as distinct from Confirmation as God's ratification of a person's faith – is unquestionably a function and an effect of Confirmation when it is conferred on a willing adolescent Christian who was baptized as an infant: the capacity of Confirmation to motivate further post-baptismal catechesis and a mature (or maturer) acceptance of the faith, is rightly affirmed by many theologians. It is clear that Confirmation cannot have originally been intended as a ratification in that sense, for it is absurd

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<sup>237</sup> James Heugel's doctoral dissertation (Heugel, 2003) proposes a social-history account of the episcopal role in Confirmation; Heugel argues the bishop's involvement in Confirmation "connected people of both sexes and all ages and classes to the power and prestige that he represented...served...as a source of supernatural power which could be applied to a variety of ends, and through the practice of godparenthood, as a useful social instrument for the creation and extension of kinship networks."

to describe human or adult ratification as its purpose either when Confirmation is regularly (and properly) conferred on infants, or on adults whose baptismal profession took place only seconds earlier; moreover, too strong an emphasis on ratification gives a semi-Pelagian tenor to the sacrament since, in such an account, it derives its meaning primarily from what the confirmand is doing, rather than primarily from what God is doing.<sup>238</sup> However, with all these caveats in place, it is not incorrect to affirm that adolescent or adult Confirmation of a Christian who was baptized in infancy can serve a ratifying function that is consistent with the other-centred etiology of Pentecost and completed initiation.

This is an example of why one must distinguish between Confirmation's manifold *effects* on the one hand, and its *purpose* or meaning on the other: adult or, better, *mature* ratification is a useful and appropriate effect of Confirmation, without being its overarching purpose; that it is appropriate is determined precisely by the fact that it furthers that purpose, without being coextensive with it. I have defined Confirmation's purpose as sending the Spirit so that by participating in the Spirit, Christians might be persuasive witnesses; an adolescent or adult who chooses to publicly ratify her baptismal identity certainly encourages her fellow-Christians, and perhaps provokes salutary questionings in seekers and doubters: she becomes a reason for hope.

It might even be said that this relationship, between the ratifying function and the furthering of Confirmation's purpose, helps to explain why the Church prefers that those who are getting married, those who are being ordained, those who are beginning to partake of the Eucharist, and those who sponsor others at Baptism, ought first to be confirmed. Marriage, Holy Orders, Eucharist, sponsorship of new Christians: Each of these commitments is *in fact* a new and public ratification of baptismal and confirmational identity, even if such ratification is not one of its intended functions.

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<sup>238</sup> A particularly poignant example of the tendency to misconstrue Confirmation as above all an act of human ratification is the use made of it in interfaith dialogue, as a cognate to various acts or rites of passage and personal appropriation in other religious traditions. Consider, for instance, the proceedings of a Catholic-Buddhist dialogue in California in 2007, in which the Catholic representatives presented Confirmation in this light:

Fr. Tiso presented a pastoral perspective on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in order to underscore its "normative" character for post-Vatican II Catholic initiation, comparing it to the Buddhist theme of "coming to subjective awareness of one's spiritual maturation," upon which one might awaken faith and take refuge in the Three Jewels. The practice of infant baptism, while sustaining the Christian conviction about grace as a divine initiative, may in practice obscure the aspect of the human faith response to the divine gift. Therefore, several features of the rites of adult and infant baptism seek to emphasize the need for personal faith, affirmed within the life of a concrete Catholic community (Tiso, 2007).

While it can be deeply beautiful, irenic, and insightful when disparate religious traditions find points of mutual comprehension, it is a poignant shame when a putative correlation proves to be illusory.

It cannot be stressed too often that the anomalous situation prevailing throughout the Western Church, whereby children are typically confirmed *after* being admitted to the Eucharist, cannot be justified. This raises a bit of a dilemma: if the Latin Church were to restore the perennial order of the sacraments of initiation, consistent with the Orthodox practice (which is the only defensible sequence), then either Confirmation would be administered at a much younger age, or admittance to the Eucharist would be delayed. As the latter option would be most unfortunate and unjustified, reforming the order of sacraments of initiation would likely pave the way to restoring the primitive and present Eastern practice of infant Baptism, infant Confirmation, and infant Eucharist. Such a restoration, a frank acknowledgement that the Orthodox practice is right, would be theologically sound and a testimony to the Church's faith in compassionate Providence (who confirms even infants who are in no position to "confirm" their faith); but it would also obviate the ratifying function of Confirmation, at least from the confirmand's side. Babies can do many splendid things, but ratifying isn't one of them. For this reason (and because of the similar absurdity of describing adult Confirmation as a ratification, when Baptism immediately precedes it), the human ratifying function of Confirmation must always be considered a provisional and useful, but not an essential function.

Were such a restoration as I have just described to take place in the West, some sort of adolescent or young adult re-affirmation of faith would be an even more pressing pastoral need; that need should not be allowed to deform the meaning of Confirmation.<sup>239</sup> Each of these decisions and commitments, like the decision to be confirmed, is a public witness and a source of encouragement to others. Each of these commitments, as a new and public ratification of

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<sup>239</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, in a 2007 post-synodal letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church, plainly and frankly invites a re-assessment of the current Confirmation practice:

...attention needs to be paid to the order of the sacraments of initiation. Different traditions exist within the Church. There is a clear variation between, on the one hand, the ecclesial customs of the East and the practice of the West regarding the initiation of adults, and, on the other hand, the procedure adopted for children. Yet these variations are not properly of the dogmatic order, but are pastoral in character. Concretely, it needs to be seen which practice better enables the faithful to put the sacrament of the Eucharist at the centre, as the goal of the whole process of initiation. In close collaboration with the competent offices of the Roman Curia, Bishops' Conferences should examine the effectiveness of current approaches to Christian initiation, so that the faithful can be helped both to mature through the formation received in our communities and to give their lives an authentically eucharistic direction, so that they can offer a reason for the hope within them in a way suited to our times...(Benedict XVI, 2007, para. 18).

It would be worthwhile to investigate how the Eastern Christian Churches have arranged for adolescent and adult catechesis and appropriation of the faith when all of the sacraments of initiation are received in infancy, with few exceptions. These precedents would be a valuable resource for the Western Church if it undertook a restoration of the primitive order.

baptismal identity, is thus most suitably the act of a confirmed person, whether or not his own Confirmation was a conscious and deliberate ratification.

### **Instituting & Constituting**

It will be helpful here to remember Zizioulas' distinction between "instituting" and "constituting":

In a christological perspective alone we can speak of the Church as *in-stituted* (by Christ), but in a pneumatological perspective we have to speak of it as *con-stituted* (by the Spirit). Christ *in-stitutes* and the Spirit *con-stitutes*. The difference between these two prepositions... ["in-" and "con-"]... can be enormous ecclesiologically. The "institution" is something presented to us as a fact, more or less a *fait-accomplit*. As such, it is a provocation to our freedom. The "con-stitution" is something that involves us in its very being, something we accept freely, because we take part in its very emergence. Authority in the first case is something imposed on us, whereas in the latter it is something that springs from amongst us (Zizioulas, 1985, p. 140).

Zizioulas here uses these words to refer to a transformation by the Holy Spirit, a transformation emerging from within the person and the community, one that is consequent upon what Christ has accomplished for us. I am borrowing this specific distinction between the expressions "instituting" and "constituting", though not necessarily the further use Zizioulas makes of the themes in his work, to denote the effects of Confirmation that permanently change something about the confirmand's being. For example, we have seen some authors propose that the sacrament "conforms" the confirmand to some model or template (*e.g.* Bouyer's claim that the sacrament "conform[s] the candidate to Christ by union with his death and resurrection," Graber's hypothesis that it conforms the confirmand to the "Saviour's spirit of immolation," or the mediaeval views catalogued by Galot which posit a "resemblance to the suffering Christ" (Galot, 1958, p. 228))<sup>240</sup>. "Instituting and constituting" is another way of naming confirmational character: sacramental character is a new and permanent quality, a new identity, of the person

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<sup>240</sup> There is another vital sense in which "conformity to Christ" is central to Christian discipleship: the Christian strives to direct her will, so as to will what Christ wills; to let her mind be enlightened by the Gospel and by meditation, so as to see as Christ sees, and think as he thinks. This conformity is made possible by grace, but it is not the inexorable effect of the sacraments, and is certainly not indelible: a will that affirms charity and justice may go astray and choose the contrary, a mind that reasons and perceives in the light of wisdom and the Gospel may be darkened and deceived. *This* kind of conformity to Christ, then, cannot be what is meant by character, though it is what every Christian ardently desires.



receiving the sacrament, conferred from without (thus, an instituting) but yielding the possibility of new and freely-chosen life-giving effects (thus, a constituting).

Character was first ascribed to Confirmation to explain why it is administered once and never repeated. Recent theology has tended either to ignore sacramental character altogether, or to be content with alluding to mediaeval accounts of it (especially Aquinas) without comment or addition. Outside the Roman Catholic communion it is generally ignored as negligible, and sometimes even denied outright as wrong (see Holmes, 1975c). There has been very little effort in recent theology to offer a constructive critique of Aquinas' doctrine of character, or to propose new ways of understanding character that are consistent with Catholic dogma but that also complement or even correct the mediaeval models.

Character is ostensibly a change in the person who has received the sacrament, but where should that change be located, and of what does it consist? As Urban Holmes asks, "What place...does Confirmation assign that a Christian did not already have?" (Holmes, 1975c, p. 119).

A permanent attribute in a person may consist of some feature of his body: a scar, for instance, or a vital organ, or a brand or tattoo, such as the soldiers' marks that gave their name to sacramental "character" in the first place. Or it may consist of a power, a capacity to do certain things: *e.g.*, memory, intellect, will, or conscience. These powers shape a person's existence and activity and are abiding qualities of his or her life. These powers may be active or passive, may consist in the ability to *do* certain things, or in the capacity to *receive* certain things: to form conclusions and find solutions, for instance, or to perceive meaning and be moved by the plight of others. Or it may be a personality trait like a habit, or preference, or a certain ordering of powers that amount to a distinct gift. A gifted pianist has a particular array of talents that are more developed and integrated and disposed to each other than is the case with the average person – rhythm, manual dexterity, an ear for tone, and so forth. A "good listener" is sensitive, patient, and compassionate. A well-trained first responder has so honed her instincts for responding to a crisis that when the need arises, her inclinations and impulses help her to respond rapidly, courageously and effectively, so that she need not rely exclusively on advertent ratiocination. Gifts and habits such as these are like character: permanent (though not necessarily indelible) traits that define what a person is capable of doing, or inclined to do.

If Confirmation imparts a character, and this character is not a physical trait, then it seems that it must confer a) a power to do or to receive, b) an inclination, or c) an ordering of

gifts.<sup>241</sup> This is consistent with what we saw *supra*, suggesting that character is a matter of identity, an answer to the question “who is this?”, and resides in the intellect; for while this last question is distinct from the question, “What difference does that identity make?” – in other words, “What are the effects of this one effect we call character?” – it is impossible to posit some identity without wanting to know what the further implications of that identity are. So then, what permanent power, inclination, or disposition of gifts are “instituted” to “constitute” the identity of one who is confirmed?

The question of character is a little easier to answer when we ask it about the other two character-imparting sacraments, for the effects of the effect are easier to locate. In the case of Holy Orders, there is an unmistakable change in the acts of which a person is capable; the classic Roman Catholic account is that, regardless of his motives or the state of his friendship with God, an ordained priest (be he ever so debauched) is objectively capable of certain sacramental acts (confecting the Eucharist, absolving sins), of which even the saintliest layperson is not objectively capable. (Whether it is seemly or edifying for the priest to do so is, of course, altogether another matter.) In this case, the claim that Holy Orders confers a character has a vivid and precise meaning, because it imparts a new capacity or power to the ordained. Similarly, Baptism confers an identity (as a member of the Church, a member of Christ’s Body) that even the most radical apostasy cannot erase; one consequence of that identity is the power to receive sacraments that would otherwise be inappropriate or ineffectual. Can a change of a similar kind be posited of Confirmation?

Confirmational character as *deputatio ad cultum* has been interpreted to mean that the confirmed is empowered or obliged to participate more fully in the Eucharist (*e.g.* Luykx) or to mean that every good action of the confirmed is an act of the Church and therefore a sacrifice of praise, an exercise of the common priesthood (*e.g.* Elberti, Perrin). Aquinas, we saw, affirms (his expression is taken up by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 1305), that one effect of confirmational character is the power to confess Christ *quasi ex officio* – language that suggests a

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<sup>241</sup> This analysis echoes the mediaeval descriptions of sacramental character; see, for instance, Galot’s outstanding treatment of the subject and his survey of mediaeval doctrines of character. Galot notes that the mediaevals at first considered character to be a “quality” in Aristotle’s sense, and argued about which of the four Aristotelian species of quality applied to it: *habitus* (disposition), potency, passion or passible quality, or figure (Galot, 1958, p. 226). Subsequently, Galot continues, theological reflection led to three principal theories as to the nature of sacramental character: “disposition to grace, configuration to God or to Christ, or power with respect to worship (*pouvoir d’ordre cultuel*)” (p. 227). We must recall again, however, Haring’s survey of Augustine (1952) whom he considers to locate character not in the one receiving but in the sacred name invoked at Baptism, the royal banner that cannot be furled.

credentialed ambassador of the Church, as opposed to a merely well-intentioned freelancer. Scheeben understood the character resulting from Confirmation as a new relationship to Christ whereby one takes on a permanent claim or right to a particular kind of divine assistance.

Because of the importance of the notion of character in the Catholic tradition, and in the canons of Florence and Trent, “instituting and constituting” are vital functions in most interpretations of Confirmation. Nonetheless, it raises the question, What aspect of Pentecost may be aptly described as permanent and unrepeatable? The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost or in Confirmation is already a renewal of an outpouring first made at Baptism; the Spirit’s advent is therefore not unrepeatable. The graces traditionally associated with Confirmation – strength, increase of grace, audacity, resistance to temptation and the rest – can be prayed for at any time and therefore are not unrepeatable. However, the *visible* mission of the Holy Spirit is something that normatively occurs once for any given person: Jesus visibly received the Spirit once (in the form of a dove, at his Baptism; see Appendix I for this passage from Mark 1); the Apostles visibly received the Spirit once, in the form of tongues of flame at Pentecost; the Apostles “conferred” the Spirit visibly, once, by hand-laying, on those who had not visibly received the Spirit at Baptism; so that the visible component of Confirmation – a solemn chrismation with hand-laying – is the one visible mission of the Holy Spirit at the outset of one’s “ministry”, the dawn of one’s mature mission to the world. Jesus did not receive the Holy Spirit for the first or last time at the Jordan, nor the disciples for the first or last time in the upper room, nor the Samaritan disciples for the last time when the Apostles laid hands on them; but the visible mission marks the beginning of the exercise of their ministry, a vocation that I am describing as “reason for hope”. Similarly, for a baptized Christian, what is new at Confirmation is not the gift of the Holy Spirit, not even the mission of the Holy Spirit, but the *visible* mission of the Holy Spirit – where hand-laying and chrism stand in for the dove, the tongues of flame, and the apostolic hand-laying – to inaugurate one’s mature mission in the Church to the world, one’s call to be a persuasive witness. By extension, what is new at Confirmation is the identity – the character – of having partaken of the visible mission of the Spirit and thus having received the commission to witness persuasively.

The phrase may be unwieldy, but the most apt description of the permanent and unrepeatable Confirmation character, of the constituting that Confirmation has wrought, is thus that *Confirmation makes of one a Christian upon whom the Holy Spirit has now been visibly sent, thereby ushering in and sealing (confirming) her public vocation as ‘reason for hope’*. The visible mission leaves no

visible marks, but it has a permanent effect on the confirmand's identity, as surely as a new husband's or wife's identity is permanently albeit invisibly altered by the vows he or she has just publicly (*i.e.* visibly) made. That identity, that character which is an effect of Confirmation, in turn has consequences, or effects, of its own: the graces and duties that behoove the Christian who has visibly received the Spirit, and been sent into the world as a reason for hope, through holy chrism and apostolic hand-laying.

Another dimension of the "instituting and constituting" function we have seen much attributed to Confirmation is the *ecclesial* aspect of one's status and identity: the confirmed becomes a full member of the Church, her Baptism is perfected, and she attains a state of ecclesial maturity (*i.e.* she is a fully initiated Christian, even if she is an infant; maturity in the Church refers not to physical age or ability, but to the degree to which one has been initiated into the saving mystery of Christ). Holmes objects (1975c, p. 114) that referring to "full membership" in the Church is like trying to distinguish between being pregnant and "fully" pregnant. His jibe is ill-considered; we do indeed speak of someone's pregnancy being "full-term", meaning that her pregnancy is (at last) ready to enter its next phase; and one similarly refers to a adult organism's "full development," without denigrating earlier stages in its life. If Confirmation confers perfect status in the Church, it does not follow that *Baptism* is imperfect, but rather that the *merely-baptized* is imperfect in *one crucial way*: in terms of initiation. Baptism itself is not imperfect merely because it is not Pentecostal, any more than it is imperfect because it does not teach one to play billiards; Baptism is the *ianua* of all the sacraments, it is incorporation into the body of Christ, the beginning of the life of grace, and other inestimably important things, but it does not in itself create a perfect and fully-formed Christian. For that to occur, many more things must be added to Baptism as to an indispensable precondition, as when pluripotent stem cells cross the threshold of differentiation. For initiation and membership to be perfected, Pentecost must be lived in Confirmation, but that is not a slight against the Baptism which makes Pentecost possible in the first place. For holiness to be perfected, a lifetime of arduous graced progress along the purgative and illuminative ways is necessary, but that is not a slight against the Baptism which makes progress possible in the first place. Baptism is not defective merely because it does not, of itself, instantaneously create perfection.

## Commissioning

**“More strictly obliged”.** The word “commissioning” implies the notion of duty in the general sense, but especially (more narrowly) the notion of a duty imposed by another. One who has a commission in the strict sense is bound to some activity or goal that does not arise from universal moral obligation alone. It would be foolish, for instance, to propose that Confirmation obliges one to refrain from theft, for that duty is rooted in the moral duty of all persons and did not begin with Confirmation. However, as we have seen, the history of Confirmation includes interpretations that attribute new duties to the confirmand *qua* confirmand: the duty to witness to Christ, to be more audacious, to confess his name and defend the Gospel *coram mundi*. The early twentieth-century tendency to see Confirmation as the sacrament of the lay apostolate is just such an interpretation: Confirmation, in that view, enlists the layperson in the activities proper to the common priesthood of the faithful and obliges them to work for the sanctification of the world through their daily activities. Matthew Laros and Louis Pabst were especially articulate examples of this tendency.

The teaching of Vatican II and the 1997 *Catechism* about Confirmation endorses this reading but also illustrates its major weakness: Confirmation is described there almost exclusively in terms of gifts *already* given at Baptism but further “increased”, “perfected”, or otherwise enhanced. *LG* uses such language with reference to the commissioning function, claiming (in paragraph 11) that it imposes a “stricter” obligation to spread and defend the faith. If *LG* is correct on this point, then we should not say that Confirmation is defined by a distinct commissioning function, for the commission to witness was already imposed at Baptism; we should only say that it imposes a “stricter” obligation. But what could this mean?

The most serious weakness of many interpretations of Confirmation is their reliance on these comparatives, for in the Catholic tradition many things entail an increase of grace, of strength, of virtue, and so forth: prayer, pilgrimage, almsgiving, penance, in short the use of all the many sorts of sacramentals to which I have already made reference; hence the mediaeval insight that (*prima facie*, at least) Confirmation does not involve any gift that the Eucharist – or, for that matter, even simple, daily prayer – does not also provide. Now, most examples of new post-baptismal obligations in the Catholic Church – of duties that did not begin at Baptism but at some ulterior stage – arise from a deliberate vow to comport oneself in a certain way: religious and monastics make solemn promises to observe poverty, chastity and obedience, and in that

sense are “more strictly” bound to those compartments, and spouses are “more strictly” bound to mutual support and fidelity than a courting or even engaged couple. Catholics are bound to observe a handful of positive precepts that do not affect those outside the Church, and are not *per se* rooted in the moral law, namely the precepts pertaining to fasting and abstinence; these precepts only apply to those whose age and health make it advisable. Thus, it would be more accurate to say simply that, through Confirmation, Catholics are first obliged to become witnesses, obliged to confess the faith, not because they have undertaken a promise to that effect, but because they have thereby been fully initiated into the Church whose mission is directed both to individual sanctification and to outreach and sanctification of others. To claim that Confirmation imposes a “stricter” obligation to witness is less accurate than to say simply that Confirmation is precisely the sacrament by which the Christian duty to witness is imparted. Because the Latin tradition introduces a delay between Baptism and Confirmation, and thus appears to provoke the objection that Confirmation cannot be defined as the source of the obligation to witness without implying that Baptism does not impose such an obligation, we may have to resort to a promissory sacramentality: like Baptism of desire or blood, or reconciliation through perfect contrition prior to sacramental absolution, the baptized is indeed obliged to witness but in virtue of the anticipated commissioning to be received fully at Confirmation.

**Solemnization.** This does not amount to denigrating Baptism or finding it flawed or imperfect: Baptism is the sacrament by which one enters the Church, by which one dies and rises again with Christ. It is the foundation for all future holiness. However, it does not take the place of specific steps in the process of vocation and transformation. This aspect of the relationship between Baptism and the other sacraments can be expressed by the term “solemnization”, as in the “solemnization of marriage”: the phrase acknowledges the vital realities of marriage (namely, the consent and commitment of the baptized betrothed) that exist prior to the ceremonial or ritual celebration of it, while affirming the importance of that celebration with its additional elements such as blessing, witnesses, and the explicit formulation of solemn vows. We saw the similar point that Bouyer made (see *supra*, p. 177) about Baptism itself and Penance: the sacramental celebration of these does not create something completely new, but builds on an antecedent reality, so much so that the Catholic tradition can speak of a Baptism by desire alone, and of reconciliation by contrition alone. Extreme cases – the catechumen thrown to the lions,

the engaged couple irretrievably stranded on a desert island, the sincere penitent in an exposed foxhole, all of them far from the sacraments – are useful to clarify the prerequisites of the sacraments and what they actually accomplish, but they provide a poor justification for limiting what is normative for Christians to a stark minimum. The martyred catechumen is understood to be as good as baptized, the serious engaged Catholic couple who are utterly deprived of the means of exchanging vows according to canonical form are widely understood to be as good as married, the penitent *in extremis* is entrusted in his contrition to the mercy of God; but these limit cases do not justify abolishing Baptism, Matrimony and Penance as superfluous.

Baptism, then, is the indispensable foundation for the holiness of marriage and family life, and the marriage bond is already present in a serious way in the firm resolve of an engaged couple to marry, but one must take the distinct step of marrying to implement that promise, to accept and receive the divine covenant. Similarly, Baptism – individual incorporation into the Church – prepares the way for the turn to the other, for a missionary preoccupation with the welfare and holiness of all persons, but a distinct commission must still be “solemnized” (as the Apostles experienced at Pentecost) to live not only for my own sanctification (as vital as that is) but for the sanctification of others. Thus we should say simply that Confirmation obliges the faithful to witness to Christ; Confirmation, and not Baptism, is the sacramental implementation of the Great Commission and of the graces needed to fulfill it, because it is the individual baptized Christian’s experience of Pentecost. This does not require (or even allow) the Catholic tradition to claim that the baptized Christian, not yet confirmed, has no obligation to witness, and no divine assistance to fulfill that obligation; but it does mean that the Christian in that situation has not had her vocation to become a reason for hope sacramentally solemnized.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> The examples discussed here illustrate how the Catholic tradition constantly holds two sets of values in tension, namely, acknowledgement of the divine sovereignty and loving Providence which upholds every person, even if she is apart from the visible Church and its sacramental system (on the one hand); and (on the other hand) affirmation of the values inherent in that sacramental system, such as community, materiality and incarnation, solemn acknowledgement of the divine abundance that goes far beyond bare necessities, and the highlighting of certain specific features of the Christian vocation. Marriage again provides a helpful analogy: the Catholic tradition readily recognizes that marriage exists and is a serious and holy reality outside the visible Church, and honours the marriages of non-Christians as deserving of affirmation and protection. Precisely because it is important, the Church does not simply content itself with accepting the implicit sanctification of the marriage bond that exists when two baptized Christians enter into a marriage, but insists on a new solemnization of marriage vows, bringing about a distinct sacrament that enshrines, solemnizes and transforms that bond. Similarly, the holiness, seriousness of purpose, and convincing witness of non-Catholic Christians (many of whom have no sacrament of Confirmation) are not in dispute; but this is not a reason for the Church to consider Confirmation to be superfluous. The Church solemnizes the grace of Pentecost in the sacrament of Confirmation, without claiming that this grace is “locked up” in the sacrament.



## Equipping

The mediaeval accounts of Confirmation in particular, and many recent interpretations that follow them, focus on specific gifts and graces that the sacrament provides – *robur ad praedicandum*, *robur ad pugnam*, the sevenfold gifts, audacity, *augmentum gratiae*. Seen on its own, any one of these created graces seems too narrow to explain the existence of a separate sacrament; in the context of such a narrow focus, the instinctive mediaeval uneasiness that Confirmation seems superfluous, (*e.g.*, since it is the case that the Eucharist confers strength) was a sound instinct. But if we understand Confirmation in terms of its ultimate goal, which is to send the Spirit to make Christians into persuasive witnesses, then its more concrete effects, the created graces that spring from it – what I am calling its “equipping” function – can be posited without limiting the potential work of the Holy Spirit to the few specific activities we choose or happen to identify. Confirmation equips the Christian with strength, courage, audacity, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, articulacy, and anything else one may need to flourish as a reason for hope, as a witness in word and deed and presence for the sanctification of the world. The enumeration of the graces of Confirmation need not be a short or limited list; to the few typical examples like *robur* and *augmentum gratiae* and the rest we can add whatever graces a person may need at any time in order to be a living testimony. The enumeration of the graces of Confirmation need not be an exclusive list either, need not list only gifts that are conveyed through Confirmation alone: an unconfirmed Christian may need *robur* to persevere in private prayer despite doubt, for instance, or to combat depression and anxiety which tempt to discouragement and even despair. Such a struggle may be private, a question of the individual’s relationship with God in the internal forum; in that sense, the *robur* to persevere in prayer, or not to yield to discouragement, may be seen as a grace arising from baptismal identity. A spouse may need strength to be faithful and generous in his marriage when he is oppressed by temptations to infidelity or uncharity towards his wife; that grace of *robur* flows from the sacrament of Marriage which is renewed every day. What sets Confirmation apart is not the *robur* it confers, for strength is needed in many areas of the disciple’s life; what sets Confirmation apart is the specific aspect of the Christian vocation that it serves, namely, to be a witness filled with the Holy Spirit, whether that end is served by *robur*, hope, charity, wisdom, or even those more manifest gifts that the charismatic renewal has helped

the Church to appreciate anew.<sup>243</sup> All flow from Confirmation to the extent that they fulfill the vocation conferred at Confirmation.

The sacraments are not in competition with each other; they are united by the Christian vocation to holiness. They do not constitute a zero-sum game where advantages accruing from one are *ipso facto* absent from another. The Eucharist nourishes and gives new life to the Christian in all aspects of her life: in her relationship to the Father, the Eucharist fosters and feeds her *baptismal* identity as daughter of God; in her receptivity to the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist nourishes her *confirmational* identity as a reason for hope; in her call to generosity as wife and mother, the Eucharist allows her to fulfill her *matrimonial* identity. Anointing of the Sick is not administered in a vacuum, but is administered to this *baptized* person, this *confirmed* person, this *husband or wife*, this *priest*, this *penitent*, and as such fulfills each of those vocations through its distinctive and specific efficacy of consecrating suffering. If one were to identify the functions at work in Anointing of the Sick, one might come up with several effects that can in some sense be attributed to other sacraments: forgiveness, hope, soothing, perseverance, courage, *robur*. This doesn't make Anointing of the Sick superfluous, for its ultimate purpose – to serve discipleship, to serve holiness, by consecrating suffering, praying for healing, and reconciling to God one whose health is precarious – is both valuable and distinctive.

I cannot discuss the graces of Confirmation without acknowledging the elephant in the room in any discussion of sacramental efficacy or even of prayer: what do we make of the value of Christian prayer and sacraments in those cases when they do not seem to result in holiness? Should we not expect to see some difference in the life of a Christian who prays, who partakes of the Eucharist, who is confirmed? And if we do not see such a difference, what does that imply about the value of prayer and sacraments? I have insisted, in the preceding pages, that Confirmation's principal effect is visible: the visible identity of having lived a personal Pentecost and received the Holy Spirit. This in itself is not enough to constitute the Christian as a

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<sup>243</sup> For further discussion of the charismatic gifts and their role in building up the Church, see Tugwell (1972), McDonnell and Montague (1994), and Mühlen (1978); also, for patristic references, Patout Burns and Fagin (1984). An enquiry into the ways that those charismatic gifts might be seen as specifically furthering the Confirmation vocation would be intriguing. In my experience, Christians who have been renewed and moved to commit to discipleship anew by the charismatic movement are touched above all by a deeply personal and interior sense of God's presence and love for them, of the reality of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's activity in their lives. This in turn has often transformed them to become generous, faithful and edifying witnesses, but note that the charismatic experience first renews their own interior lives. In this sense I wish to suggest that the charismatic renewal is less a new Pentecost, for the outreach to others as "reasons for hope" comes later, than a new Emmaus: an experience of recognizing Christ anew (with burning hearts) under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Individuals and communities transformed by the new encounter are energized to receive or to live anew the Spirit of Pentecost.

persuasive witness and reason for hope; compassion, trust, charity, joy, truthfulness, courage and the other markers of divine presence must arise from that identity. Here I can do no more than to acknowledge the problem and to note that it does not afflict Confirmation alone: the value of prayer and the sacraments in general may be contested by one who does not see that they accomplish very much or make much difference in the life of one who frequents them. It is certainly pertinent to take note of anecdotal evidence testifying to the difference made by the sacraments, but we must also consider such scandalous counter-evidence as the high percentage of newly-confirmed who are rarely seen in the church again. This problem, which is not only pastoral but theological, demands closer attention.

All of the sacraments are one to the extent that they are works of the one Holy Trinity, to the extent that they animate the one Body, the Church, and to the extent that, in the life of any given Christian, they advance a single goal, which is communion with Christ and his Church. For this reason, we should understand the equipping effected by Confirmation not as though the confirmational *gifts* given are unique in themselves, but in view of the *unique particular aspect of the Christian vocation that Confirmation builds up* by means of those gifts. The sacraments are not, then, distinguished by the graces they impart nor by the end they serve, for the Holy Trinity is at work in all of them, the gifts God imparts are shared among them, and the end they all serve is communion with that same Trinity; the sacraments are distinguished from each other by the dimension of human life they are specifically ordered to divinizing and sanctifying. Confirmation teaches, shapes, and commissions but also equips a person to be a reason for hope, and even in some instances may afford an opportunity for her to ratify her baptismal identity.

### **THE WEST AND THE EAST**

For the most part, in this dissertation, I have focused on the Western tradition of Confirmation. On several occasions I have alluded to the Eastern Christian practice of Chrismation immediately following infant Baptism, but I have not dwelled on the *doctrinal* and *theological* significance of Chrismation in the Eastern Christian communions. This may not appear to be a grave lacuna, for I set out to assess *Roman Catholic* theologies of Confirmation, but still I must not ignore the East, for two major reasons.

First, because of the ecumenical imperative: to the extent that the Roman Church were to commit itself (*per impossibile*) to a vision of the sacraments that is quite novel or even outright

contrary to the Eastern tradition, it would be introducing obstacles to reconciliation between the churches. This must be avoided whenever possible, for working toward the restoration of communion between the Catholic and Orthodox churches is a duty for every Catholic. Therefore, as much as possible, a Roman Catholic interpretation of Confirmation must be consistent with the Orthodox tradition concerning the sacrament.

Second, the Eastern Christian tradition is not only an ecumenical and, as it were, “external” preoccupation for the Roman Church; rather, the Catholic Church in communion with Rome *consists* of twenty-three distinct churches *sui iuris*, all of them (except for the Latin Church) arising from Eastern traditions. While each Church *sui iuris* has the right and duty to maintain its own distinctive liturgical and legal identity, and each tradition will foster distinctive emphases in theology and the apostolate, they are united by Creed and Sacraments. The Latin interpretation of Confirmation may draw attention to certain features of Confirmation in a distinctively Latin way, but ultimately must be compatible and consistent with the understanding of the sacrament in the other Churches. Any interpretation of Confirmation in the Latin Church that cannot be affirmed by Christians of the other Catholic Churches *sui iuris* must be rejected; otherwise the Church contradicts itself internally, saying of Confirmation that it is both A and non-A, at the same time, and in the same respect. It is for this reason, for example, that interpretations of Confirmation as, above all, or necessarily, an act of adult ratification, cannot be sustained: since this cannot be squared with the perennial Eastern practice of *infant* Chrismation, it cannot be sound.

My initial brief review of Eastern Christian treatments of the sacraments of initiation suggests that the interpretation I have proposed here is indeed compatible and consistent with Eastern views of Chrismation. For example, McGuckin presents the Orthodox view of Chrismation as an unrepeatable (or very seldom repeatable) gift of the Holy Spirit, a gift that consecrates the believer in priestly fashion to the task of transforming the world through “love and justice” (see McGuckin, 2008, pp. 285-288). Greek Orthodox theologian G. Dragas (2011) describes Chrismation as “a personal Pentecost, whereby the person chrismated receives the gift of the Spirit, so that he may live the new life in Christ” (p. 143).<sup>244</sup> Another Greek Orthodox

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<sup>244</sup> Dragas’ article is marred by his blithe dismissals of the Roman Catholic tradition, which leads him to make egregious errors: for instance, he writes that Roman Catholic presbyters confirm “very rarely and as a matter of exception” and this, “by papal permission” (p. 145) which the most elementary acquaintance with Roman Catholic practice shows to be false. For another example, Dragas falsely asserts that “The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches have broken [Christian initiation’s] unity and have altered its meaning” such that it is no longer

writer, A. Coniaris, likewise describes it as a “personal Pentecost,” a “baptism with the Spirit” as Christ was baptized with the Spirit at his Baptism in the Jordan and as the apostles were at Pentecost (Coniaris, 1981, pp. 53, 55). What stands out for him is the Pentecostal advent of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, though he does briefly describe the effects of the Spirit’s presence: “setting us ablaze with fire and love, filling us with hope and joy, making us instruments of His action in the world” (p. 56). Similar accounts, including the phrase “personal Pentecost,” are found in the Russian Orthodox Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev (2002, pp. 135-137) and another Greek Orthodox theologian, Cyrille Argenti (1983a; 1983b). Alexander Schmemmann uses related images and adds rightly that Chrismation does not bestow certain *gifts of the Holy Spirit*, but the very Holy Spirit itself (Schmemmann, 1974, p. 78); he describes its effects as “my ordination to be myself, to become what God wants me to be, what he has loved in me from all eternity. It is the gift of vocation...the opening of man to the wholeness of divine creation, to the true *catholicity* of life” (Schmemmann, 1965, p. 93). Finally, a rare but useful example of an explicit comparison by an Eastern theologian of the doctrines of Confirmation and Chrismation respectively may be found in Kolliopoulos (2009)<sup>245</sup>, who concludes that East and West share the conviction that Confirmation/Chrismation is one of the sacraments of initiation, that the bishop is its “ordinary minister”, and that it

has its basis in the laying on of hands by the Apostles on the neophytes after Baptism in order to confer the gift of the Holy Spirit as it is described in Acts. This sacrament is the personal Pentecost of each Christian with the reception of the Holy Spirit. It has also the meaning of participation in the royal, prophetic and priestly dignity of Christ, in His messianic mission and it confers the power and the ability for witness to the Truth with consciousness (Kolliopoulos, 2009, p. 37).

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“clearly seen as being primarily a free (unconditional) gift of divine grace, but rather as an act centred on man” (p. 144). This criticism legitimately applies to certain contemporary theologians whom we have seen, but it is not true of the “Catholic Church” *tout court*. While Dragas writes reverently and enthusiastically about the liturgy of Baptism/Chrismation, and its echoes of Scripture, he does not address the kinds of questions about the sacrament’s effects that I have been exploring in this dissertation. There is much to be said for an attitude of apophatic reticence before the mystery of Pentecost, and a preference, instead of speculating about it, to celebrate a personal Pentecost in the Confirmation liturgy without subjecting it to too intense a scrutiny. On the other hand, the Roman Church’s tradition of theological analysis, at its best, is not an exercise in mental or verbal gymnastics or impious curiosity, but is meant to discover deeper insights, and deal with the sincere perplexities of the faithful. Neither the Eastern nor Western tendencies should be cartoonishly exalted or caricatured; both contemplation and enquiry enrich the lives of the faithful.

<sup>245</sup> Moolan (2010) is another example of attention to this question.

As for differences between East and West concerning this sacrament, Kolliopoulos finds them not in “theological understanding” but in “liturgical practice” (p. 40): he mentions the Western separation of Baptism from Confirmation, the aberrant administration of the Eucharist before Confirmation, and the Byzantine custom of anointing many parts of the body rather than just the forehead. He also considers that the Western approach, or at least the mediaeval expression of it, sees Confirmation as the “completion” of Baptism – resulting in a state of “maturity” – whereas the Eastern view considers it a “fulfillment” of Baptism. I argue, however, that the Western scholastic interpretation should also be understood as a Pentecostal fulfillment of the life in Christ begun at Baptism.

It seems clear from these examples that the Eastern Orthodox tradition is struck above all by the nature of Pentecost when it comes to describing Chrismation, and sees Pentecost above all as the unleashing of one’s own powers and personality by the new life of the Holy Spirit. This is less obviously consistent with the missionary theme of the classic Western account of Confirmation, but is much more easily squared and integrated with the focus I am proposing here on the transformative and evidential power of holiness, if holiness is understood as friendship with God that calls all one’s powers and potential to blossom.

To give an example from the non-Chalcedonian communions: Coptic Bishop Anba Gregorios writes of his tradition that “in Chrismation the faithful receive the gift of the Holy Spirit which confirms them in the life they receive in Baptism, and gives them power in their spiritual struggle” and confers “a distinguishing internal sign” (Gregorios, 1981, pp. 115, 116). Gregorios compares the Chrismation of the baptized to the anointing that consecrates sacred vessels and objects, but also priests, prophets and kings (pp. 116, 117); most interestingly of all, he lists the work that the Holy Spirit does in the lives of Christians. Gregorios enumerates seven: spiritual growth, reproof of sin, spiritual comfort, intercession (“The Holy Spirit...assists our prayers”), enlightenment (*i.e.* being led into greater truth and understanding), power of witness, and “other charismata” such as healing and miracles (pp. 117-118). What Gregorios has done here is to reflect on what the Holy Spirit does in the lives of believers (especially as set out in Scripture), and attribute those effects to Chrismation because the sacrament is pneumatic.

Interpretations by Eastern Christian theologians of the effects of Chrismation in the Eastern Church tend to be brief and focused primarily on a precise description of the liturgical actions without extensive commentary, and tend to describe its effect as the work of the Holy

Spirit who confers certain gifts to advance Christian life. The interpretation I have been advocating is compatible with this view, though I admit that it goes beyond what is usually explicitly affirmed by the East. However, while I have tried to provide an analysis of the effects of Confirmation in some detail, the very economy of the Eastern treatments is a vital lesson about the meaning of the sacrament. It is not simply that Eastern Christians have tended to write in less detail about the effects of the sacraments, but the Eastern tendency is often to eschew too precise an enquiry into those effects lest theology become a rationalistic dissection of the Mysteries. (Compare, for instance, the Roman Catholic tendency to try to identify the precise *moment* when the Eucharistic transubstantiation takes place, with the Eastern Christian preference for admitting simply that it happens during the entire extended part of the Divine Liturgy after the epiclesis.) In this perspective, the Orthodox propensity to let the liturgy say most of what needs to be said about the sacraments<sup>246</sup> converges with two particular aspects of my interpretation of Chrismation: namely, the fundamental assertion that Confirmation is a personal Pentecost whatever that may mean in detail, and the vision of “witness” that includes the ineffable evidential power of holiness and not only more obviously martyrial gifts like articulacy and dialectical adroitness.

This requires further attention: there is no one “Eastern” tradition, and the Chrismation theology of the churches making up the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox communions must be investigated thoroughly.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> An insight that can, alas, become a caricature: *e.g.* Schmemmann’s cavalier dismissal of much Western theology as a forcing of the liturgy into an *a priori* conceptual framework rather than a “‘receiving’ [of] the meaning of the sacraments from liturgical tradition” (Schmemmann, 1974, p. 76) – a dichotomy too caricatural to entertain seriously. Schmemmann writes naively, as though meaning is unproblematically ‘received’ from liturgical tradition with no admixture of presupposition, and as though the meaning one receives from the liturgy were not guided and governed by thematic and discursive influences like the definitions of the Councils. One can admit the wisdom of the normative status of the liturgy in Orthodox theology, without conceding Schmemmann’s naïve epistemology.

<sup>247</sup> One example of the importance of distinguishing among the traditions is the Assyrian Church of the East (of which the equivalents in communion with Rome are the Chaldean Catholic Church and the Syro-Malabar Church). The Assyrian Church, which is normally categorized apart from the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox communions, affirms seven sacraments but does not consider Matrimony or Anointing of the Sick to be among them; instead, the sacraments of Holy Leaven and the Sign of the Cross complete the seven. The Assyrian Church affirms the Oil of Unction, used to anoint the newly baptized, as a sacrament, but this rite does not seem to have a pneumatic or Pentecostal significance for theologians of the Church of the East. The Chaldean and Syro-Malabar doctrine of the sacraments and its implications for an ecumenically informed theology of Confirmation must be further explored.



## THE HOLY SPIRIT, FOCUS FOR FUTURE ENQUIRY

To recall once again Carra de Vaux Saint-Cyr's pertinent observation, the history of Confirmation is a history of claims about the Holy Spirit. That Confirmation entails a gift, that it is a trusting prayer for a promised gift of the Holy Spirit, is the common and basic meaning attributed to the rite from the second century to the present. The Holy Spirit comes at Baptism; the Spirit comes in the Eucharist, as every eucharistic epiclesis reminds the faithful; the Holy Spirit is invoked on betrothed couples as they are sacramentally united; the ordinand lies prostrate in humility as the *Veni Creator Spiritus* is intoned epiclestically over him. Confirmation is not unique because of the gift of the Holy Spirit, but because that the Spirit comes as the Paraclete Spirit, promised by Christ just before the Ascension, came at Pentecost.

I have thus proposed that Confirmation should be interpreted as Pentecost, the sending of the Spirit for the baptized Christian, and that the confirmational Pentecost should be understood as five functions that operate to bring about the principal effect of Confirmation, which is to transform a person into a reason for hope, a witness to Jesus Christ in word and deed and presence, a means of the world's sanctification through good work and the evidential power of holiness. The adequacy of this account must be tested above all by exploring the one crucial question: What is Pentecost? Is it enough to describe the effects of Pentecost as "transforming the Church and its members into reasons for hope"? To explore in greater depth the nature of Pentecost demands a close attention to a theology of the Holy Spirit. Since Pentecost is a visible mission of the Holy Spirit to the Church, we must return to theologians of the Spirit to verify whether important aspects of Pentecost have been overlooked. Mohelník and Milner provide good examples of how to patiently study the scriptural image of the Holy Spirit and Pentecost for guidance; further reflection in this vein is needed. The interpretation I have proposed must be weighed against the insights of theologians of the Holy Spirit too see whether it adequately conveys the mission of the Spirit at Pentecost.

A colleague from the Anglican tradition explained to me that he had never sought Confirmation because, to him, nothing in the Scriptures required Christians to seek anything beyond Baptism to be reborn in Christ. This is really the crux of the problem: What does Confirmation do? Is it necessary? This logically demands a more fundamental question: Necessary for what? Confirmation is not necessary for the Holy Spirit to be at work in the life of the believer, for that begins at Baptism; and if Confirmation is now necessary to be a

“fully-initiated” Christian, the Church could (one assumes) just as easily decree that it is not necessary, for by all appearances it was not a standard part of Christian initiation for at least the first century-and-a-half of the Christian era. In response, I would recall again Bouyer’s example of the reconciliation of a penitent even before he receives sacramental absolution, in virtue of God’s mercy and the man’s contrition. Not only does the Roman Catholic tradition admit that such reconciliation is possible, but the history of the rite of Penance leads one to conclude that this mode of reconciliation must have been normative during those centuries when sacramental absolution for grave sins was a public and once-in-a-lifetime affair. Until repeatable, private, auricular confession became the norm, “absolution by desire” was the only way by which a Christian who was alienated from God by grave sin could be restored to divine friendship during the course of daily life. In a similar way, Confirmation is not *necessary* for the baptized believer to receive the Holy Spirit; but like the sacrament of Penance, Confirmation should be seen as a liberation, not a constraint. It is not a burden for Catholics to have the opportunity for sacramental absolution, but a gift – absolution mediated by a rite that manifests the visible and tangible ministry of Christ, a rite that includes reconciliation with the visible Church, accountability, and a concrete (even sensory) experience of Christ’s abundant mercy. Similarly, the sacrament of Confirmation is not an affirmation that the Holy Spirit has been captured and will be meted out only at the whim of hierarchs; rather, Confirmation is a concrete rite by which the visible mission of the Holy Spirit is effected in the life of the believer, not in isolation but in communion with the visible Church, that the baptized might be consecrated by their personal (and communal) Pentecost to become reasons for hope.

## CONCLUSION

The meaning of Confirmation as I have been presenting it, like all the sacraments, echoes themes already present in Baptism, for Baptism is the *ianua* of all the sacraments. Of any aspect of a Christian's life, it is *apropos* to note that it is associated with Baptism: To pray is to address the Father in the name of the Son, animated by the Holy Spirit, to live one's presence in the heart of the Holy Trinity where one began to dwell at Baptism. To repent and undergo conversion is to recall one's identity as a child of God, inaugurated at Baptism. Sacramental marriage is possible only between two baptized persons, for only they can become icons together of Christ's love for his Church who are members of that Church. It does not follow, merely because the sacraments develop baptismal themes, that further development of those themes is superfluous.

The Eucharist, in a sense, does "no more" than renew or increase a grace of *Baptism*, namely communion with the Body of Christ. Marriage does "no more" than extend a *baptismal* grace – to be an icon of the Trinity's *caritas* – to one particular covenant in a Christian's life. Penance simply restores a state of *baptismal* friendship with God, a friendship that even the strictest of theologians admits can be restored non-sacramentally, by the very fact of turning to God with repentance. Other examples might be adduced. But the Roman Catholic tradition does not see the sacraments as a bare minimum, as the bare necessities meted out with an eyedropper according to what is only strictly necessary. Each sacrament is defined, not by its ability to do something that *no other sacrament can do*, but by its *especially visible and vivid* fulfillment of some vocation that can indeed be found in some sense in all the other sacraments. I have defined Confirmation as the sacrament that makes Christians into reasons for hope or persuasive witnesses, not because Baptism fails to do this, but because this missionary and caritative focus on the other is as essential to Christian life as service, healing, consecration of suffering, and fruitfulness of human love are likewise essential, and it is Confirmation's purpose (as an individual Pentecost) to bestow and serve that mission, as it is the purpose of Holy Orders, Anointing and the other sacraments to bestow and serve the other missions. Confirmation is a perfection, a fulfillment of Baptism; but then the entirety of the life of every Christian is a fulfillment of Baptism, punctuated and defined by certain values that give meaning to each of the sacramental mysteries.

In a Roman Catholic account of things, could not all the goods of sacramental life have been achieved by the gift of a single all-encompassing sacrament, perhaps one without any material component at all? No doubt; for the same reason that the vast drama of Creation, and the gift of the Incarnation, are gratuitously lavish expressions of divine will that might have been just as effectively (doubtless more efficiently) served in a more parsimonious fashion. The Scriptures provide no basis for expecting the divine initiative to be parsimonious. One need not be outstandingly abstemious to find six hundred litres of wine a trifle generous for a wedding party.

Carra de Vaux Saint-Cyr writes that, for all of Confirmation's obscurities, we cannot go wrong in associating it with the Holy Spirit. This is the most fundamental and universal interpretation of the sacrament in the Roman Catholic tradition. However, Confirmation cannot be defined simply as a gift of the Holy Spirit, for *every* sacrament is a new gift of grace, a new presence and action of the Holy Spirit; it must, rather, be specifically defined as a gift of the Holy Spirit *like Pentecost*. As a *Pentecostal* gift of the Spirit, Confirmation teaches, ratifies, constitutes (a visible mission of the Holy Spirit *ipso facto* conferring a new identity), commissions, and equips the already-redeemed and reborn Christian that he might become one more reason for hope, for other men and women.

If space allowed, my next task would be to try to apply this template of function/purpose to each of the sacraments in turn, and to identify for each one an overarching purpose (or possibly several related purposes), and the functions that each sacrament exercises in furtherance of that purpose. I would also want to see if some function (or several) is shared by all seven sacraments, and whether the five I have identified for Confirmation may represent a pattern that can be found in the other sacraments. The distinction between (multiple) function and (single) purpose is likely to be valid among all the sacraments. At first glance, the sacrament of Penance (for instance) carries out several functions: psychological experience of acceptance and reassurance; a framework for accountability; reconciliation with the community; a restoration of the grace or friendship with the Holy Trinity, lost through rebellion; a pedagogical effect of communicating paradoxically both the seriousness of sin and its inability to sabotage the compassion of Providence; and other functions as well, no doubt. All of these tend to further a single overarching purpose that I would tentatively describe as renewing one's participation in the death and resurrection of Christ – a participation that was misdirected, thwarted and hindered by

sin, but that is restored in this second Baptism. Can the functions of Penance that I have just named – healing, comforting, calling to account, and so forth – be correlated with those five that I have identified for Confirmation? It would appear not, save the odd exception, like the pedagogical effect, which is probably characteristic of liturgical acts in general. However, perhaps the distinctive functions of each sacrament can be correlated within some larger framework: a task for another time.

## APPENDIX I: PRINCIPAL BIBLICAL TEXTS

### **Exodus 30:22-30**

Moreover, the LORD said to Moses,

“Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, two hundred and fifty, and of aromatic cane two hundred and fifty, and of cassia five hundred, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin; and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; a holy anointing oil it shall be. And you shall anoint with it the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils and the laver and its base; you shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them will become holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests.” (Exodus 30:22-30, *Revised Standard Version [RSV]*).

### **1 Samuel 10:1-12**

Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said, “Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their enemies round about. And this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you to be prince over his heritage. When you depart from me today you will meet two men by Rachel’s tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah, and they will say to you, ‘The asses which you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the asses and is anxious about you, saying, “What shall I do about my son?”’ Then you shall go on from there further and come to the oak of Tabor; three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three kids, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. And they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall accept from their hand. After that you shall come to Gib’e-ath-elo’him, where there is a garrison of the Philistines; and there, as you come to the city, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying. Then the spirit of the LORD will come mightily upon you, and you shall prophesy with them and be turned into another man. Now when these signs meet you, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you. And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I am coming to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.” When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart; and all these signs came to pass that day. When they came to Gib’e-ah, behold, a band of prophets met him; and the spirit of God came mightily upon him, and he prophesied among them. And when all who knew him before saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, “What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?” And a man of the place answered, “And who is their father?” Therefore it became a proverb, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” (1 Samuel 10:1-12, *RSV*).

### **Matthew 22:1-14 - Parable of the Wedding Feast**

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.’ But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.’ And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found,

both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."(Matthew 22:1-14, *RSV*).

### **Mark 1:9-12**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. (Mark 1:9-12, *RSV*).

### **Acts 2:1-18**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy'. (Acts 2:1-18, *RSV*)

### **Acts 8:14-17**

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17, *RSV*).

### **Acts 10:44-48**

While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days." (Acts 10:44-48, *RSV*)



**Acts 19:1-6**

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said, 'No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They said, 'Into John's baptism.' And Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (Acts 19:1-6, *RSV*).

## APPENDIX II: SOME PRIMARY TEXTS IN TRANSLATION

### 1. From *Didascalia Apostolorum* (trans. Stewart-Sykes, 2009)

[Chapter 9]

[Honour]...the bishop through whom the Lord gave you the Holy Spirit, through whom you have learned the word and come to know God, and through whom you have been made known to God, through whom you were sealed, and through whom you have become sons of light, through whom in baptism, through the imposition of the bishop's hand, the Lord bore witness of each of you, as His holy voice was heard saying, 'You are my son, this day I have begotten you'. Therefore, man, know your bishops, those through whom you are become a son of God, and the right hand, your mother. And love him who, after God, is become your father and your mother, for whoever despises his father and mother shall die with the death. You then should honour the bishops, who have set you free from sin, who have begotten you anew through the water, who filled you with the Holy Spirit, who nourished you with the word as with milk, who raised you with teaching, and confirmed you with admonition, who made you participants in the holy eucharist of God, and made you share as joint heirs in the promises of God.

[Chapter 16]

So, bishop, appoint for yourself fellow-workers in almsgiving, assistants who may co-operate with you towards life. You are to choose and appoint deacons from all the people who are pleasing to you, a man for the administration of the many things which are necessary, a woman however for the ministry of women, since there are houses where you cannot send a deacon to the women because of the pagans but you can send a deaconess, and in many other matters there is need for an office of deaconess. In the first instance it is required that when women go down into the waters that they should be anointed with the oil of anointing by a deaconess as they enter the waters. When there is no woman present, and particularly no deaconess, it is necessary that he who baptizes should himself anoint her who is being baptized. But if a woman is present, and particularly a deaconess, it is not right that a woman should be seen by a man. But anoint the head alone, with a laying on of a hand. As in ancient times the priests and kings of Israel were anointed so you should do the same, anointing the head with a laying on of a hand, of those who come to baptism, both men or of women and subsequently, whether you yourself baptize or command deacons to baptize, or presbyters, a woman deaconess, as we said above, should anoint the women. But a man should pronounce over them the invocation of the divine names in the water.

### 2. From *The Acts of Thomas* (trans. Klijn, 2003)

[Chapter 25]

Judas says: "I Praise you, our Lord Jesus the Messiah, who is alone the God of truth, and there is no other, and you know whatever man does not know. You, whose mercy is upon man, whom you have willed and made— and they have forgotten you, but you have not neglected them— receive the king and his brother, and **unite them to your fold, and anoint them, and purify them from their uncleanness**, and guard them from the wolves, and feed them in your meadows, and let them drink of your fountain, which is never turbid and the stream thereof never fails; for, lo, they beg of you and supplicate, and wish to become servants of you, and to be persecuted by your enemy, and to be hated for your sake. Let them therefore have boldness in you, and be confirmed by your glorious mysteries, and receive of the gifts of your gifts".

[Chapter 27]

And when they had entered into the bath-house, Judas went in before them. And our Lord appeared to them, and said to them: "Peace be with you, my brothers". And they heard the voice only, but the form they did not see, whose it was, for till now they had not been baptized. **And Judas went up and stood**

**upon the edge of the cistern, and poured oil upon their heads,** and said: “Come, holy name of the Messiah; come, power of grace, which is from on high; come, perfect mercy; come, exalted gift; come, sharer of the blessing; come, revealer of hidden mysteries; come, mother of the seven houses, whose rest was in the eighth house; come, messenger of reconciliation; and communicate with the minds of these youths; come, Spirit of holiness, and purify their reins and hearts”. **And he baptized them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Spirit of holiness.** And when they had come up out of the water, a youth appeared to them, and he was holding a lighted taper; and the light of the lamps became pale through its light. And when they had gone forth, he became invisible to them; and the Apostle said: “We were not even able to bear your light, because it is too great for our vision”. And when it dawned and was morning, he broke the Eucharist and let them partake of the table of the Messiah and they were glad and rejoicing. And when many were added and were coming to the refuge of the Messiah, Judas did not cease to preach and says to them... [this is followed by his sermon].

[Chapter 49]

**And [Judas Thomas] laid his hand upon them and blessed them,** and said to them: “May the grace of the Lord be upon you for ever and ever, Amen”. And the woman begged of him and said to him: “Apostle of the Most High, **give me the seal of my Lord,** that the enemy may not again come back on me”. **And he went to a river which was close by there, and he baptised her in the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit of holiness,** and many were baptised with her. And the Apostle ordered his deacon to make ready the Eucharist; and he brought a bench thither, and spread over it a linen cloth; and he brought (and) placed upon it the bread of the blessing.

[Chapter 121]

And when Narkia had brought (them), Mygdonia uncovered her head, and was standing before the holy Apostle. **And he took the oil, and cast (it) on her head, and said: “Holy oil, which was given to us for unction, and hidden mystery of the cross, which is seen through it— you the straightener of crooked limbs, you our Lord Jesus, life and health and remission of sins,— let your power come and abide upon this oil, and let your holiness dwell in it”.** **And he cast (it) upon the head of Mygdonia, and said: “Heal her old wounds, and wash away from her sores, and strengthen her weakness”.** **And when he had cast the oil on her head, he told her nurse to anoint her, and to put a cloth round her loins; and he fetched the basin of their conduit. And Judas went up (and) stood over it, and baptized Mygdonia in the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit of holiness.** And when she had come out and put on her clothes, he fetched and broke the Eucharist and (filled) the cup, and let Mygdonia partake of the table of the Messiah and of the cup of the Son of God.

[Chapter 157]

And when he had prayed thus, he said to Mygdonia: “My daughter, strip your sisters”. And she stripped them and put girdles on them and brought them near to him. And Vizan came near first. **And Judas took oil and glorified (God) over it and said:** “Fair Fruit, that is worthy to be glowing with the word of holiness that men may put you on and conquer through you their enemies, when they have been cleansed from their former works,—yes, Lord, come abide on this oil, as you abode on the tree and they who crucified you were not able to bear your word. Let your gift come which you breathed on your enemies and they went backward and fell upon their faces and let it abide upon this oil over which we name your name.” **And he cast it upon the head of Vizan and then upon the heads of these (others) and said: “In your name Jesus the Messiah, let it be to these persons for the remission of offences and sins and for the destruction of the enemy and for the healing of their souls and bodies.”** And he commanded Mygdonia to anoint them and he himself anointed Vizan. And after he had anointed them, he made them go down into the water in the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit of holiness.

### 3. From Chrysostom's *Baptismal Instructions* (trans. Harkins, 1963, pp. 51-53)

[Second instruction, sections 22-27]

22. After that contract of renunciation and attachment, after you have confessed His sovereignty and by the words you spoke have attached yourself to Christ, in the next place, as if you were a combatant chosen for the spiritual arena, **the priest anoints you on the forehead with the oil of the spirit and signs you** [with the sign of the cross], saying: "So-and-so is anointed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

23. The priest knows that henceforth the enemy is furious, grinds his teeth, and goes about like a roaring lion when he sees those who were formerly subject to his sovereignty in sudden rebellion against him, not only renouncing him, but going over to the side of Christ. Therefore, the priest anoints you on the forehead and puts on you the sign [of the Cross], in order that the enemy may turn away his eyes. For he does not dare to look you in the face when he sees the lightning flash which leaps forth from it and blinds his eyes. Henceforth from that day there is strife and counterstrife with him, and on this account the priest leads you into the spiritual arena as athletes of Christ by virtue of this anointing.

24. Next after this, in the full darkness of the night, he strips off your robe and, as if he were going to lead you into heaven itself by the ritual, **he causes your whole body to be anointed with that olive oil of the spirit, so that all your limbs may be fortified and unconquered by the darts which the adversary aims at you.**

25. **After this anointing the priest makes you go down into the sacred waters**, burying the old man and at the same time raising up the new, who is renewed in the image of his Creator. **It is at this moment that, through the words and the hand of the priest, the Holy Spirit descends upon you.** Instead of the man who descended into the water, a different man comes forth, one who has wiped away all the filth of his sins, who has put off the old garment of sin and has put on the royal robe.

26. That you may also learn from this that the substance of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, baptism is conferred in the following manner. When the priest says: "So-and-so is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," he puts your head down into the water three times and three times he lifts it up again, **preparing you by this mystic rite to receive the descent of the Holy Spirit** [...]

27. [...] **straightway** after they have come up from the waters, they are **led to the awesome table** heavy laden with countless favors, where they taste of the Master's body and blood, and become a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit.

### 4. From Theodore of Mopsuestia's sermons *On Baptism* (trans. Mingana, 1933, pp. 16-70)

[Chapter II]

[...] He, therefore, who is desirous of drawing nigh unto baptism comes to the Church of God through which he expects to reach that life of the heavenly abode...where he is received by a duly appointed person [the registrar]...[A] specially appointed person, who is from the city [*i.e.*, the Church] in which [the candidate] is going to be enrolled and who is well versed in its mode of life, conducts him to the registrar and testifies for him to the effect that he is worthy of the city and of its citizenship and that, as [the candidate] is not versed in the life of the city or in the knowledge of how to behave in it, he himself would be willing to act as a guide to his inexperience [...] This rite is performed for those who are baptised by the person called godfather, who [...] bears witness to what the catechumen has done and to the fact that he has prepared himself in the past to be worthy of the city and of its citizenship.

[...] through the gift of the holy baptism you are separating yourselves from the servitude of the Tyrant, which all our fathers from the time of Adam downwards received, and in which they lived. This, however, goads Satan to fight fiercely against us, so much so that he did not even desist from fighting against our

Lord because he believed Him to be a mere man on account of His resemblance (to men), and thought that by his stratagems and temptations he might detach Him from the love of God.

Because you are unable by yourselves to plead against Satan and to fight against him, the services of the persons called exorcists have been found indispensable, as they act as your surety for Divine help. They ask in a loud and prolonged voice that our enemy should be punished and by a verdict from the judge be ordered to retire and stand far, so that no room and no entry of any kind might be left to him from which to inflict harm on us, and so that we might be delivered for ever from his servitude, and allowed to live in perfect freedom, and enjoy the happiness of our present enrolment. You are doubtless aware of the fact that when a case is being judged before a judge and when a litigant shouts that he is innocent, and complains of a dire and cruel servitude in which he had lived, and contends that a powerful man had forcibly and unjustly brought him under his rule, it is necessary that when the case is being judged this same litigant should remain silent, so that he might by his demeanour and behaviour induce the judge to have mercy upon him. Another man, in the person of the advocate, will demonstrate to the judge the truth of the complaint of those who contend that they are ill-treated, and will invoke also the laws of the kingdom in order that through them he may redress the wrong that was done.

In this same way when the words called the words of exorcism are pronounced you stand perfectly quiet, as if you had no voice and as if you were still in fear and dread of the Tyrant, not being in a position even to look at him on account of the great injustice which he did to you and to your fathers, in the fact that he led you into captivity, brought you into a dire and cruel servitude, and inflicted upon you wounds that leave indelible scars, through the punishment of death which he placed in your midst; and in the fact that he has been for a long time the master of the servitude which you, with your own hands, brought upon yourselves. You stand, therefore, with outstretched arms in the posture of one who prays, and look downwards and remain in that state in order to move the judge to mercy. And you take off your outer garment and stand barefooted in order to show in yourself the state of the cruel servitude in which you served the Devil for a long time, according to the rules of captivity, and in which you did all his work for him according to his requirements. Your aim in this posture is also to move the judge to mercy, and it is this picture of captivity that is implied in the words of God who spoke thus through the prophet Isaiah: “Like as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years in order that he might become a sign for the Egyptians and Ethiopians, so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians and Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot.”

You stand also on garments of sackcloth so that from the fact that your feet are pricked and stung by the roughness of the cloth you may remember your old sins and show penitence and repentance of the sins of your fathers, because of which we have been driven to all this wretchedness of iniquities, and so that you may call for mercy on the part of the judge and rightly say: “You has put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness.”

[...] When the time for (the reception of) the sacrament draws near and the judgment and fight with the Demon—for the sake of which the words of exorcism have been used—are at an end; and when by God’s decision the Tyrant has submitted and yielded to the shouts of the exorcist and been condemned, so that he is in nothing near to you and you are completely free from any disturbance from him; and when you have possessed the happiness of this enrolment without any hindrance—you are brought by duly appointed persons to the priest, as it is before him that you have to make your engagements and promises to God. These deal with the faith and the Creed, which by a solemn asseveration you declare that you will keep steadfastly[...]

[Chapter III]

*[Theodore describes in detail the abjuration of Satan and the profession of faith, and the posture and dress of the candidate who performs them, and then continues:]*

When you have, therefore, made your promises and engagements, the priest draws near to you, wearing, not his ordinary garments or the covering with which he was covered before, but clad in a robe of clean and radiant linen, the joyful appearance of which denotes the joy of the world to which you will move in the future, and the shining colour of which designates your own radiance in the life to come, while its cleanness indicates the ease and happiness of the next world.

He depicts these things to you by means of the garments in which he is clad, and by the hidden symbol of the same garments he inspires you with fear, and with fear he infuses love into you, so that you may through the newness of his garments look into the power which it represents. And he signs you on your forehead with the holy Chrism and says:

“So-and-so is signed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

He offers you these firstfruits of the sacrament, and he does it in no other way than in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Where you expect to find the cause of all the benefits, there the priest also begins the sacrament. In fact, it is from there that the priest draws you near to the calling towards which you must look, and in consequence of which you ought to live above all things according to the will (of God). The sign with which you are signed means that you have been stamped as a lamb of Christ and as a soldier of the heavenly King. Indeed, immediately we possess a lamb we stamp it with a stamp which shows to which master it belongs, so that it may graze the same grass as that which the rest of the lambs of the owner graze, and be in the same fold as that in which they are. A soldier who has enlisted for military service, and been found worthy of this service of the State because of his stature and the structure of his body, is first stamped on his hand with a stamp which shows to which king he will henceforth offer his service; in this same way you also, who have been chosen for the Kingdom of Heaven, and after examination been appointed a soldier to the heavenly King, are first stamped on your forehead, that part of your head which is higher than the rest of your body, which is placed above all your body and above your face, and with which we usually draw near to one another and look at one another when we speak. You are stamped at that place so that you may be seen to possess great confidence [...]

Immediately after your godfather, who is standing behind you, spreads an orarium of linen on the crown of your head, raises you and makes you stand erect. By your rising from your genuflexion you show that you have cast away your ancient fall, that you have no more communion with earth and earthly things, that your adoration and prayer to God have been accepted, that you have received the stamp which is the sign of your election to the ineffable military service, that you have been called to heaven, and that you ought henceforth to direct your course to its life and citizenship while spurning all earthly things.

The linen which he spreads on the crown of your head denotes the freedom to which you have been called. You were before standing bareheaded, as this is the habit of the exiles and the slaves, but after you have been signed he throws on your head linen, which is the emblem of the freedom to which you have been called. Men such as these [...] are in the habit of spreading linen on their heads, and it serves them as an adornment both in the house and in the market-place.

After you have been singled out and stamped as a soldier of Christ our Lord you receive the remaining part of the sacrament and are invested with the complete armour of the Spirit, and with the sacrament you receive participation in the heavenly benefits.

[Chapter IV]

[...] We know that death has been abolished a long time ago by Christ our Lord, and we draw near to Him and are baptised with such a faith because we desire to participate in His death, in the hope of participating also in the resurrection from the dead, in the way in which He himself rose. This is the reason why, when at my baptism I plunge my head I receive the death of Christ our Lord, and desire to



have His burial, and because of this I firmly believe in the resurrection of our Lord; and when I rise from the water I think that I have symbolically risen a long time ago [...]

If you say that the greatness of the symbols and of the signs is in the visible water, it would be an unimportant affair, as this has already happened before, but because this second birth, which you receive now sacramentally as the symbol of an earnest, is accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit, great is the Sacrament which is performed and awe-inspiring and worthy of credence is the virtue of the symbols, which will also without doubt grant us to participate in the future benefits [...]

You draw, therefore, near to the holy baptism, and before everything you take off your garments. As when Adam was formerly naked and was in nothing ashamed of himself, but after having broken the commandment and become mortal, he found himself in need of an outer covering, so also you, who are ready to draw near to the gift of the holy baptism so that through it you may be born afresh and become symbolically immortal, rightly remove your covering, which is a sign of mortality and a reproving mark of that (Divine) decree by which you were brought low to the necessity of a covering.

After you have taken off your garments, you are rightly anointed all over your body with the holy Chrism: a mark and a sign that you will be receiving the covering of immortality, which through baptism you are about to put on. After you have taken off the covering which involves the sign of mortality, you receive through your anointing the sign of the covering of immortality, which you expect to receive through baptism. And you are anointed all over your body as a sign that unlike the covering used as a garment, which does not always cover all the parts of the body, because although it may cover all the external limbs, it by no means covers the internal ones—all our nature will put on immortality at the time of the resurrection, and all that is seen in us, whether internal or external, will undoubtedly be changed into incorruptibility according to the working of the Holy Spirit which shall then be with us.

While you are receiving this anointing, the one who has been found worthy of the honour of priesthood begins and says: “So-and-so is anointed in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” And then the persons appointed for this service anoint all your body. After these things have happened to you, at the time which we have indicated, you descend into the water, which has been consecrated by the benediction of the priest, as you are not baptised only with ordinary water, but with the water of the second birth, which cannot become so except through the coming of the Holy Spirit (on it). For this it is necessary that the priest should have beforehand made use of clear words, according to the rite of the priestly service, and asked God that the grace of the Holy Spirit might come on the water and impart to it the power both of conceiving that awe-inspiring child and becoming a womb to the sacramental birth [...]

When the water has been prepared for this [to become a “reverential womb for the second birth”] and has received such a power by the coming of the Holy Spirit, you plunge into it hoping to receive from it benefits such as those (described above), and an awe-inspiring salvation. It is right for you, therefore, to think that you are going into the water as into a furnace, where you will be renewed and refashioned in order that you may move to a higher nature, after having cast away your old mortality and fully assumed an immortal and incorruptible nature. These things dealing with birth happen to you in the water because you were fashioned at the beginning from earth and water, and having fallen later into sin you assumed a thorough corruption through the sentence of death [...]

The priest stands up and approaches his hand, which he places on your head, and says: “So-and-so is baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” while wearing the aforesaid apparel which he wore when you were on your knees and he signed you on your forehead, and when he consecrated the water. It is in this apparel that he performs the gift of baptism, because it is right for him to perform all the Sacrament while wearing it, as it denotes the renovation found in the next world, to which you will be transferred through this same Sacrament. He says: “So-and-so is baptised in the name of



the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” in order to show by these words who is the cause of this grace. As he says: “So-and-so is signed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” so he says: “So-and-so is baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” All this is in harmony with the teaching of our Lord who said: “Go you and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” He shows by these words that all the cause of the good things is in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, an eternal nature and cause of everything, by which we were created at the beginning, and expect now to be renewed. It is not possible that one should be the cause of our first creation and another the cause of this second, which is higher than the first [...]

We do not name Father as one cause, and the Son as another cause, and the Holy Spirit as another cause still, but because these three form the one cause from which we expect the delight in the benefits which are looked for in baptism, we rightly make use of one invocation only with which we name the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit [...]

When the priest says “of the Father” you immerse, bow your head, but do not go out of the water; and when he says “and of the Son,” you immerse and bow your head likewise, but do not go out of the water; and after he has said “and of the Holy Spirit,” he has finished the complete call upon the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and so after immersing again and bowing your head, you go out of the water of baptism, which, so far as you are concerned, comes to an end, because, as you remember, there is no name left for you on which to call, as the cause of the expected benefits [...]

[...] John [the Baptist] had no power to confer the Spirit: “It is He that will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” In this he clearly revealed that it did not belong to him to confer the Spirit. His task was only to baptise with water in a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, **while it only belonged to our Lord to confer the Spirit, whom He conferred now upon us in baptism as the firstfruits of the future benefits**, which He will confer upon us in their entirety at the time of the resurrection, when our nature will receive a complete transformation into virtue. It is right for you, therefore, to know that you are baptised in the same baptism as that in which Christ our Lord in the flesh was baptised, and this is the reason why you are baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit [...]

When you go out (of the water) you wear a garment that is wholly radiant. This denotes the next world which is shining and radiant, and the life into which you had a long time beforehand moved through symbols. When you have received the resurrection in reality and put on immortality and incorruptibility, such a garment will be wholly unnecessary, but since now you do not possess these things in reality and have only received them sacramentally and symbolically, you are in need of garments. Of these you wear those which denote the happiness, which you have now received symbolically but which you will one day possess in reality.

After you have received the grace of baptism and worn a white garment that shines, **the priest draws near to you and signs you on your forehead** and says: “So-and-so is signed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” When Jesus came out of the water He received the grace of the Holy Spirit who descended like a dove and lighted on Him, and this is the reason why He is said to have been anointed: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because of which the Lord has anointed me,” and: “Jesus of Nazareth whom God has anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power”: texts which show that **the Holy Spirit is never separated from Him, like the anointment with oil which has a durable effect on the men who are anointed**, and is not separated from them. **It is right, therefore, that you also should receive the signing on your forehead** [...]

After you have received in this way a sacramental birth through baptism, you draw near to an immortal food, consonant with your birth, with which you will be nourished. You will have now to learn, at an opportune time, the nature of this food and the way in which it is presented to you.

**5. From Theodoret of Cyrus' *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* (trans. in Cope, 1990, pp. 300-301).<sup>248</sup>**

[Book V, chapter 18]

Now before those who sprinkle (began), the gift of holy immersion was sufficient to the faithful. For not only does it give the forgiveness of the old sins, but also it instills the hope of the good promises. It establishes the partners both of the Lord's death and the resurrection. It offers participation in the gift of the Spirit. And it shows forth sons of God, and not only sons, but also heirs of God, and fellow-heirs of Christ.

For [immersion is] not like the crazy Messalians think, that immersion only imitates the knife, removing the antecedent sins. For if this was the only work of immersion, why do we immerse infants who have never tasted sin? For the mystery does not proclaim only this, but also more greater and perfect things. For it is a pledge of the intended blessings and [is] a type of the future resurrection, and [is] a fellowship of the Lord's suffering, and a participation of the Lord's resurrection. [Immersion is] the garment of salvation, and the tunic of gladness, the robe of illumination, and, more strongly, it is light. "For as many of you were immersed in Christ, have put on Christ," [Gal. 3:27] and "as many of us were immersed, were immersed into his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised through the glory of the Father, so also we will walk in newness of life. For if we have become united in the likeness of his death now also we shall be [united with him] in his resurrection" [Rom. 6: 3-5].

The divine apostle taught us to think about these things concerning the all-holy immersion, because we, who are being buried together with Christ, will share in the resurrection.

Certainly like a more mystical discourse it [sic] necessary, especially, we, who have written twelve other mystical chapters, then will send forth [sic] to those [who are] fond of learning, in that manner [the rest of the book].

**6. From Theodoret of Cyr's commentary on the Song of Songs, 1:2 (trans. Mason, 1893, p. 374).**

If you care for a more mystical meaning, remind yourself of the sacred initiation (μυσταγωγίας), in which those who are being initiated (τελούμενοι), after the renunciation of the usurper and the confession of the King, receive, as it were a kind of royal seal, the Unction of the spiritual ointment (πνευματικόν μύρον), - receiving in the ointment as a figure the invisible grace of the most Holy Spirit (ὡς ἐν τύπῳ τῷ μύτῳ τὴν ἀόρατον τοῦ παναγίου πνεύματος χάριν ὑποδεχόμενοι).

**7. From Origen's *Homilies on Leviticus* (trans. Barkley, 1990).**

[Homily 6, 2:5]

But you, too, who desire to receive holy baptism and to obtain the grace of the Spirit, first you ought to be cleansed by the law.

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<sup>248</sup> Pásztori-Kupán (2006) writes that this is the only English translation of book V, and that a critical edition of Theodoret's *Compendium* has yet to be issued.

[Homily 6, 5:2]

As we have already said often, you too can function as a high priest before God within the temple of your spirit if you would prepare your garments with zeal and vigilance; if the word of the Law has washed you and made you clean, and the anointing and grace of your baptism remained uncontaminated.

[Homily 9, 9:3]

And I do not want you to marvel that this sanctuary is open only to the priests. For all who have been anointed with the chrism of the sacred anointing have become priests, just as Peter also says to all the Church, “But you are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy people.” Therefore, you are “a priestly race,” and because of this you approach the sanctuary.

**8. From Origen’s *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (trans. Scheck, 2001, pp. 354-355).**

[Book V, 8:3]

For that reason we would more accurately read the text in the Gospel as, “Unless someone has been reborn from above, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” For this refers to being baptized in the Holy Spirit. For this reason, that baptism is confirmed to be “from above,” not unfittingly are even the waters, which are above the heavens and which praise the name of the Lord, linked to the Holy Spirit. And although all of us may be baptized in those visible waters and in a visible anointing, in accordance with the form handed down to the churches, nevertheless, the one who has died to sin and is truly baptized into the death of Christ and is buried with him through baptism into death, he is the one who is truly baptized in the Holy Spirit and with the water from above.

**9. From Origen’s *Homilies on Numbers* (trans. Scheck, 2009).**

[Homily 3, 1:2]

“For not all who are from Israel are Israelites” [Roman 9:6], nor are all who have been washed in the water immediately also washed by the Holy Spirit; just as, on the contrary, not all who are numbered among the catechumens are estranged from and devoid of the Holy Spirit. For in the Holy Scriptures I find that some catechumens were worthy to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and others who had received baptism were unworthy of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

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