

The Papal System – X. Confirmation



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This sacrament had no existence, in any form, until the end of the second or the beginning of the third century; and then it appears simply as a part of baptism, as the completion of that solemn rite.

Tertullian says: "From thence, having gone forth from the bath (of baptism), we are anointed with a blessed unction according to the primitive regulation." And, again: "Thus the unction comes carnally upon us, but it profits spiritually, as the act of baptism itself is carnal, because we are immersed in water; the effect is spiritual, because we are freed from sin; after this, there is imposition of hands, invoking the Holy Spirit by the benediction."

Here the imposition of hands and the unction were but ceremonies belonging to baptism. In the life of St. Basil, it is recorded that: "Maximus, the bishop, baptized him and Eubulus, and clothed them with the white garments, and, anointing them with the holy chrism, gave them the communion." Here, the baptism and confirmation are parts of a whole. And even children were confirmed with the chrism and imposition of hands, as soon as they were baptized, as Gennadius clearly asserts: "If they be little children that are baptized, let those who bring them answer for them according to the custom of baptizing; and then, confirmed by the imposition of hands and chrism, let them be admitted to the mysteries of the eucharist." Here, again, confirmation immediately follows baptism.

This is the Custom of the Greek Church today.

Says Dean Stanley: "The imposition of hands is still continued at the baptism of children, as of adults. Confirmation with them is simultaneous with the act of the baptismal immersion." Nor is its administration limited to bishops. Every priest can confirm those whom he baptizes in the Greek Church. This is the way confirmation was practiced when first introduced into the Church, and for many hundreds of years after. The separation of confirmation from baptism is supposed by Riddle to have commenced in the Western Church, in the beginning of the seventh century, but not to have been permanently completed till the thirteenth. The ceremonies of ancient confirmation were

the anointing, the sign of the cross, imposition of hands, and prayer.

Modern Romish Confirmation.

Says the Council of Trent: "If any one shall affirm that the confirmation of the baptized is a useless ceremony, and not rather a true and proper sacrament let him be accursed."

Statements of the Catechism of Trent about Confirmation.

Pars ii., caput iii., quest. 2... . "The person baptized, when anointed with the sacred chrism by the bishop, the unction being accompanied with these solemn words: *I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, begins to be settled in firmness by the strength of a new virtue, and thus to become a perfect soldier of Christ (*novae virtutis robore firmior, atque adeo perfectus Christi miles esse incipit*)."

Quest. 7. "This is called chrism, a word borrowed from the Greek language, which is appropriated by common usage among ecclesiastical writers to signify that ointment only, which is composed of oil and balsam, with the solemn consecration of the bishop."

Quest. 14. "Sponsors are also added, as we have already shown to be the case, in baptism; for if they who enter the fencing lists have need of some one through whose skill and advice they may be taught by what thrusts and passes they may destroy an enemy, while they remain unhurt, how much more will the faithful require a leader and monitor, when, covered and fortified by the strongest armor, through the sacrament of confirmation, they descend into a spiritual contest, in which eternal salvation is the proposed reward."

Ques. 17. "It is most proper to delay this sacrament at least to seven years."

Quest. 19. "For those who have been *made Christians by baptism*, as if new-born infants, have a certain tenderness and softness; and afterward, by the sacrament of chrism, they become stronger against all the assaults of the flesh, the world, and the devil, and their minds are altogether confirmed in the faith, for confessing and glorifying the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, from which strength the name itself originated, as no one will doubt."

Quest. 23. "They, therefore, who are confirmed by the Holy chrism are anointed on the forehead; for, *by this sacrament*, the Holy Spirit pours himself upon the minds of the faithful, and increases strength and fortitude in them, that they may be able to fight manfully in the spiritual contest, and resist their most implacable foes."

From the title of the question in the Catechism, we are taught that chrism is applied to the forehead in the form of a cross.

Quest. 25. "Then the person who is anointed and confirmed receives a gentle slap on the cheek from the bishop, that he may remember that he ought to be

prepared, as a brave wrestler, to bear, with invincible courage, all adverse things for the name of Christ. Lastly, moreover, the peace is given to him, that he may know *that he has attained the fullness of heavenly grace, and the peace which surpasses all understanding.*"

This would be a wonderful unction, and an astonishing imposition of hands, if from both we received the Holy Spirit and the peace of God that passes all understanding. It is, however, not by works-of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saves us; being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Supposed Scripture Authority.

The Catholic Church quotes Acts viii. 14-18, as proof that by laying on of hands the Holy Spirit was bestowed; and, truly, so he was, but it was his miracle-working powers which were conferred. At the 18th verse, it is said: "When Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands he may receive the Holy Ghost." Now, Simon saw nothing of the peace, faith, praying power, and spiritual enjoyments and privileges of these men; he cared nothing about such matters; he wrought pretended miracles himself; he saw that the Holy Spirit enabled these persons to perform wonders, and he wanted to buy this astonishing agency. The imposition of hands here simply gave the power of working miracles, and not the blessings of any sacrament. Chrism and the imposition of hands were employed in the times of the apostles, but never as parts of the sacrament of confirmation. The papal sacrament of that name had no existence for many centuries after Christ; it is A HUMAN INVENTION.

(To be continued.)

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