ABSTRACT

Why is there so much confusion around confirmation?

Articles, books, essays and lecture notes abound on the topic of confirmation. Where does it come from? What does it mean? What is its purpose? Why do we bother? For Anglicans these questions have been bubbling up for the past century, but they really gained focus following the introduction of direct admission to communion for baptised but unconfirmed children in the early 1970s. This removal of confirmation as the gateway to the eucharist threw into sharp contrast the lack of clarity around its meaning and purpose. As the numbers of confirmands plummeted the calls for a renewal of the rite became stronger, but what precisely is it that might be renewed?

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the two separate sources of confirmation and the ways in which Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the architect of the first Anglican Prayer Books, brought them together to create a rite that might cater for the different factions of the church of his day. In this work we show that the result of this merger was that much of the confusion surrounding confirmation in the present day has been there from the beginning.
I first seriously encountered the “confirmation conundrum” whilst studying liturgy in the 1990s. At the time I was intrigued that this sacrament-come-ritual had staggered its way through more than a millennia and a half of church history, yet still its meaning and purpose was unclear, while its potential seemed vast.

Since that time I have undertaken various studies of the development of confirmation through the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first. I have written about its uses and misuses, suggested ways in which it might be reclaimed and renewed, and undertaken a major survey of the state of the rite in the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia some forty years on from the removal of the so-called “confirmation rubric” from the church’s rules. What has become clear is that there is still little that is clear, and at some point someone will really need to work on a theology of confirmation that appropriately fits with the realities of the contemporary context. Because I believe that we can only look to the future with a firm grasp on the past, this work might hopefully pave the way for such an effort.

My gratitude goes to my supervisor, the Reverend Dr Christopher Holmes, for his patient guidance through what has turned out to be a somewhat longer road than hoped. I am also very grateful to the St John’s College Trust Board for their financial assistance, my parish, St Peter’s Willis Street, for their encouragement and understanding, and Sheila and Priscilla Williams for generously making their beach house available as a study haven. I must thank my wife, the Reverend Dr Kirsten Dawson, for both her patience and proof-reading skills, and all who have helped, encouraged and supported on the way. The list could go on and on … and it has all been most appreciated.

Brian Dawson
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Introduction

“Egon Spengler: There’s something very important I forgot to tell you.

Peter Venkman: What?

Spengler: Don’t cross the streams!

Venkman: Why?

Spengler: It would be bad.

Venkman: I’m fuzzy on the whole good/bad thing. What do you mean, “bad”?

Spengler: Try to imagine all life as you know it stopping instantaneously and every molecule in your body exploding at the speed of light.”¹

In the history of the church few issues have been both so generally ignored and widely debated as those surrounding confirmation. Often described as a sacrament in search of a meaning, the truth is that confirmation has attracted a myriad of meanings and understandings, so many in fact that when the Roman Catholic church overhauled its approach to Christian initiation in the twentieth century, “The reform of confirmation had to be considerable, even radical, lest the entire coherence of the initiatory reform crumble under the ambiguities and paradoxes which had grown up around this sacrament.”²

The problem is that among the many and varied approaches to and models of confirmation that have sprung up over the centuries there lie massive contradictions. In some cases these have arisen from a genuine attempt to revive what is often the forgotten rite of the church, but statistics over the past thirty years – in New Zealand and elsewhere – suggest these efforts have been

¹ Harold Ramis and Bill Murray in Ghostbusters by Ivan Reitman (Producer/Director) Columbia Pictures, 1984.

² Aidan Kavanagh, Confirmation: Origins and Reform (New York: Pueblo, 1988), 89.
largely in vain, with a decline of nearly 90% in confirmation numbers over a thirty year period.³

Other approaches to confirmation have arisen from scholarly efforts to uncover the true origins of the rite. As we shall see below, this is not as easy as it may sound, with confirmation undergoing a number of radical shifts over the past two millennia. Even in the five hundred years since the reformations of the sixteenth century, understandings of confirmation among the churches have shifted radically at times. Arthur Repp, tracing the history of the rite in the Lutheran tradition, has identified six distinct models of confirmation, all of which have been evident within Lutheranism, often at the same time:

These may be characterised, for want of better terms, as catechetical, hierarchical, sacramental, traditional, pietistic, and rationalistic. The first four made their appearances in the 16th century, while the last two appeared in the 17th and the 18th century. In practice it is difficult to find these types in pure form, except perhaps in the initial stages. In a given instance it is more likely that a particular practice was influenced by more than one tendency.⁴

The existence of so many, often contradictory, models and meanings for confirmation has inevitably led to still more confusion, but for Anglicans the greatest shift came when the 1968 gathering of bishops at Lambeth resolved “that each province or regional Church be asked to explore the theology of baptism and confirmation in relation to the need to commission the laity for their task in the world, and to experiment in this regard.”⁵ The specific areas of


⁴ Arthur C. Repp, Confirmation in the Lutheran Church (St Louis: Concordia, 1964), 21.

experimentation recommended included separating admission to communion from confirmation, and administering baptism and confirmation together, including for infants.\(^6\) New Zealand was the first Anglican province to begin this experimentation process, with children being admitted to communion prior to confirmation as early as 1970, and within little more than a decade this was the norm in the majority of dioceses.\(^7\)

The direct admission of children to the table meant that for the first time in four and a half centuries confirmation was no longer the official gateway to communion, and it quickly became clear that for the vast majority \textit{that} had been its true meaning. Stripped of its primary role, confirmation began to languish in the back of clergy minds. For a time church schools maintained the focus, but within a generation those numbers too had sharply declined.

While disinterest reigned in many pews, at an academic level the decline sparked renewed efforts to understand and define confirmation. In general this followed the pattern of the previous century of studies and focused on the earliest examples we have of Christian initiation, most of which, as we shall see, have come under question. Many of the innovations that have appeared in the past few decades have shown this influence, often centred on baptism and catechesis. Much of the debate has surrounded the sequence of the traditional rites of initiation (baptism-confirmation-communion) and the appropriate age for confirmation in particular. In this regard at least, contemporary conversations have mirrored their ancient forebears.

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\(^7\) For more on this see Dawson & Dawson, \textit{An Anglican Resource}, 21-22
It is interesting that, in general terms, the Anglican search for a new life for confirmation has largely ignored its sixteenth century denominational beginnings, opting to focus instead on its supposed genesis in the early church. Even those studies that have taken into account the work of the prime architect of Anglican liturgy, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, have often assumed that he too was drawing from the earlier period. There is, as we shall see, some truth in this, but even if Cranmer does look to the early church for his inspiration (and we shall see that he does, but not necessarily with any accuracy), that was only one source of what would become Anglican confirmation.

The contention of this thesis is that confirmation in the Anglican tradition is the product of two distinct streams: one, the product of the disconnected Roman rite of baptism that evolved from the fifth and sixth centuries into the medieval sacrament described by Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas among others, and the second the catechesis-driven rite of “confirmation” as developed and practiced by the Jednota Bratrská in fifteenth century Bohemia. David Holeton, as we shall see below, believes this second stream to be the source of what became “reformed confirmation” for the emerging churches on the Continent.8

We shall see below that Cranmer was exposed to this “second stream” through his connections with prominent reformers, including Martin Bucer. However, as Archbishop of Canterbury and a scholar, Cranmer was also very familiar with the inherited medieval rites and faced great pressure from traditionalists determined to see them maintained. Whether from a desire to hold together the disparate parties in his church, or a personal belief in the

value of both, Cranmer melded together the old and the new to create a version of confirmation that could not be ascribed completely to either. This work will attempt to show how that happened and its impact.

We shall explore these points below:

- In chapter one, we will begin by offering a brief overview of the historical development of confirmation in the western church through to the late middle ages. This is a subject well covered elsewhere so ours will be a brief excursion only.

- Next, in chapter two, we will look at the emergence of the “second stream” of confirmation, focusing heavily on fourteenth and fifteenth century Bohemia, the influence of Wyclif, the rise of Hus and the Utraquist movement, and the beginnings of a new approach to confirmation with the Jednota Bratrská. We will then explore briefly each of the major players in the continental reforms of the sixteenth century.

- In chapter three of this work we will focus on Cranmer, his personal theological development, and his early work, before examining the initiation rites in the first three Anglican prayer books. It will have become clear by this point that exploring confirmation without baptism is a wasted effort. Regardless of whether the two are seen as linked in terms of purpose or function, they remain connected and must be approached accordingly.

- Finally, in the conclusion to this work we shall look briefly at where Cranmer leaves us and how that might inform the future of confirmation for Anglicans.
This work will only take us to the end of the sixteenth century. By that point the structure of Anglican confirmation had been built and notwithstanding some additions over the years, it would remain more or less as it was until the production of the new Episcopalian Prayer Book in the United States in 1979. “Neither Catholic nor Reformed” has been the catchcry of Anglicans for centuries, and in the confirmation rites of Cranmer’s prayer books we find that writ large. As this work will show, Cranmer did indeed dare to “cross the streams”, the results of which we are still experiencing.
CHAPTER ONE
From Rome, With Love

“Conversion, the water-bath, and the gift of the Spirit must never be separated from one another; otherwise all sorts of distortions arise.”

Almost anyone with a basic knowledge of the subject can describe the development of confirmation in the first few centuries of the church. First, there was baptism, the full and final point of initiation, done by a bishop, which included some hand-laying and anointing. As the church got bigger, and more widely dispersed, bishops could not get to everyone so priests started baptising and a bishop would come along later and finish things off. After a while what began as a matter of convenience became the norm and voila! Confirmation was born.

It is a simple story, and one that contains elements of truth, yet it fails to adequately convey the complexities and variations that existed virtually from the beginning. Far from finding a coherent, universal model of initiation in place, a brief survey of the early church reveals differences in policy and practice, even in New Testament times.

Christian Initiation and Confirmation in the Bible

There is little point in searching for evidence of the origins of confirmation in the Bible. As we shall see below, such evidence is dubious at best and more often than not relies heavily on reading modern actions into ancient texts. As with all explorations of confirmation, to find the beginnings you must start with baptism.

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Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)

The one who believes and is baptised will be saved. (Mark 16:16)

It is easy, is it not, to understand why Christians continue to baptise people? It is, as the above verses show, in direct obedience to the words of Jesus himself. Such a position is at odds, however, with the evidence contemporary scholarship has provided. We know, for example, that the final verses of Mark 16 are almost certainly a much later addition to the text, possibly added with the intention of bringing Mark into line with other emerging gospels. Similar difficulties have been raised with the Great Commission in Matthew. Certainly the Trinitarian language used in Matthew’s baptismal formula is at odds with the various examples in the Acts of the Apostles, where baptism is consistently administered only in the name of Jesus.²

So where did Christian Initiation come from? Baptism in the New Testament, of course, begins with John the Baptist. Several suggestions have been made as to the source of the baptism John administered. One is that it is a development of the rituals performed by the Jewish religious community, the Essenes, in the century before and after the birth of Jesus. These rituals are found in references in the Dead Sea scrolls and the writings of Josephus. From these sources it is clear that “ritual washings, immersions, or ritual baths were a common practice.”³ Another theory is that John’s baptism has its origins in the practice of proselyte baptisms in Jewish custom. Here a convert to Judaism is ritually

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washed as a symbol of “inner conversion or transformation” which bears a strong resemblance to Christian baptism. Aidan Kavanagh, however, dismisses both suggestions, stating that:

John’s baptism of repentance is preparatory for the messianic work. It is not a means of making gentiles Jews, as was proselyte baptism, nor is it wholly bounded by the bathing ablutions of the Essene ascetics at Qumran. It is its own distinctive thing, subsequently viewed by New Testament authors as the opening of a new order of things without actually being included in it.

Kavanagh and others believe that, with John’s baptism being unique, it is the baptism of Jesus himself that provides the genesis of Christian baptism.

And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased”. (Matthew 3: 16-17)

Two elements from this event have been a hallmark of Christian baptism through the ages;

(1) possession by the Spirit; and (2) consciousness of the sonship of God. Just as Jesus was anointed with the Spirit, so his followers will be given the same Spirit. Just as Jesus was declared to be the ‘beloved Son’, so his followers will be declared to be sons and daughters of God.

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6 Austin, The Rite of Confirmation, 4.
But why did water baptism continue? As Gerard Austin states, surely an antithesis between water and Spirit is established in John’s declaration at the Jordan:

I baptise you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am now worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (Matthew 3:11)

A point seemingly backed up by Jesus himself in a post-resurrection appearance when he says, “John baptised with water, but before many days you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:5). 

Austin and Kavanagh both believe that the answer to this seeming puzzle is the early church’s view of initiation as primarily about the Holy Spirit. The significance of this focus on the giving of the Spirit becomes evident when we begin to consider what happens when the various parts of the initiation rite become disconnected. Many of the questions around the role of the Spirit and baptism centre on the Acts of the Apostles, where “we find a multiplicity of patterns” of initiation which provide a challenge to anyone wishing to offer a definitive view.

One element of initiation rites in Acts, which bears some significance for our subject, is the post-baptismal rite of hand-laying. In Acts 8:14-17 this is specifically connected to the giving of the Holy Spirit. The story focuses on several Samaritan converts who are baptised by Philip in the name of Jesus, but have yet to receive the Holy Spirit. It is only when Peter and John – apostles

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7 Ibid., 5.
9 Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation*, 6
from Jerusalem – lay hands on them and pray that the Holy Spirit finally comes on them. The presence of the Jerusalem apostles may be significant here, but a similar event occurs in Acts 19:1-7 when Paul first baptises a group of twelve Ephesians who have been previously baptised with John’s “baptism of repentance” and then lays hands on them. It is at this latter point that the Spirit is given. However, while these two examples may offer a glimpse of a later two-stage initiation rite, they are only two examples amidst various others, leading at least one scholar to suggest that rather than look for evidence of emerging uniformity it “may be better to see Acts as witness to a variety of ritual practices rather than a progression of fixed forms.”

The varying ways and points at which the Spirit is given in Acts have been carefully studied and explored by many scholars, some of whom have found in them biblical evidence for the roots of confirmation. Certainly, as we shall see later, the role of the Jerusalem apostles in the giving of the Spirit to the previously baptised Samaritans in Acts 8 has had a dramatic influence on initiation theology and practice through the centuries. It would be reckless however, to claim that from these few points we can discern the origins of confirmation.

Some regard the separation of water and Spirit in Acts as an editorial tool, used to highlight the importance of the apostles themselves. Reginald Fuller has argued that the Acts 8 incident in particular is an indication of the author’s editorial focus on “subordinating each successive new stage in the Christian mission to the Jerusalem church and its apostolate.” Gerard Austin builds on this and notes that others have maintained that we actually find two distinct

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theologies of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, one Lucan and the other Pauline. Austin goes on to argue that it is the Pauline view that should most influence our contemporary theology, as Luke’s “is dominated by the early enthusiastic understanding of the first Christians ... In Paul’s eyes the Spirit is the fundamental mark of belonging to Christ, and the gift of the Spirit is the result of baptism”.  

While it may be true that hand-laying rites emerged in some early Christian communities separately to baptism, there is no evidence to suggest it was widespread in New Testament times, or that it became a universal practice in the early church. Its absence from what would become the eastern church is particularly important; as Maxwell Johnson writes, “if postbaptismal pneumatic handlaying was an ‘apostolic’ initiatory practice, one would expect to find it as a universal feature within the later initiation rites of both East and West,” which it most certainly was not.

If Christian baptism, therefore, finds its roots in the baptism of Jesus and the later understandings of Luke and Paul, it is in this baptism – and especially its focus on the gift of the Holy Spirit – that the origins of confirmation lie.

The Early Church

If the New Testament shows multiple models of baptism already in place during Paul’s time, it appears the situation grew even more complex over the following century. In Tertullian’s De Baptismo (c.200 C.E.) we find a clear two-fold rite emerging with a water-bath and anointing followed by the laying on of hands. Tertullian makes it clear that it is the second part that invokes the Spirit;

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12 Austin, The Rite of Confirmation, 9.

13 Johnson, Rites of Christian Initiation, 25.
“in the water we are made clean by the action of the angel, and made ready for the Holy Spirit.” There is no suggestion from Tertullian, however, that the anointing and hand-laying should be seen as belonging to a separate rite; both together form the rite of baptism.

After Tertullian most scholars call on the evidence of the *Apostolic Tradition*, attributed to Hippolytus of Rome. Here we find a full description of baptism, culminating in the anointing by a priest and then followed immediately by an episcopal laying on of hands (although not necessarily over each candidate), a further anointing (of the hand) and a signing on the forehead (sealing). The entire event (described in its totality as baptism) leads to a celebration of the Eucharist and from a liturgical vantage point it is clear that this is an essential part of the whole.

It is these passages in the *Apostolic Tradition* that have become central to our understanding of the origins of Christian Initiation, especially in the West. Virtually all later western developments follow in its footsteps and contemporary liturgical revision has been based on the foundations provided in its pages. But while the majority of scholars still hold to the authenticity of the work, since the latter half of the twentieth century there has been a rising tide of dissent. Scholars such as A.F. Walls, Marcel Metzger, Jean Magne and Paul Bradshaw have questioned the authenticity of the claims made of this seminal text. Such questions have put in doubt what was once thought incontrovertible, and Bryan Spinks has gone so far as to describe the *Apostolic Tradition*...
Tradition today as “something of an albatross”.\textsuperscript{17} So what are the implications of questioning the Apostolic Tradition’s provenance?

The Apostolic Tradition is chief among several church orders brought to light in the course of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{18} These ancient texts all bore similarities to the Apostolic Constitutions, first published in 1563. The first discovery of what would become the Apostolic Tradition was an incomplete Ethiopic version included in a 1691 study of Ethiopia by Job Leutholf.\textsuperscript{19} An older – eleventh century – translation of the same material in Sahidic Coptic surfaced later and a Bohairic Coptic version was provided in 1804. None of these earlier versions carried a title or author. In 1891 Hans Achelis produced a German translation which he termed the ‘Egyptian Church Order’.

It was for some years assumed that this unnamed work was a descendant of one or more of the other church orders rather than their source. In 1906 this was questioned by Eduard von der Goltz who proposed that the so-called ‘Egyptian Church Order’ might in reality be a hitherto lost document by Hippolytus of Rome. This theory was developed further by Eduard Schwartz in 1910 and, independently, by Richard Connolly in 1916:

Since that time 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. The questions of its identity, authorship, date, and provenance cannot, however, be considered definitively settled.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Spinks, Early and Medieval Rituals, 28.

\textsuperscript{18} For a full account of the history of the Apostolic Tradition see Bradshaw, Johnson & Phillips, Apostolic Tradition, 1-9.

\textsuperscript{19} See Bradshaw, Johnson & Phillips, Apostolic Tradition, 1.

\textsuperscript{20} Bradshaw, Johnson & Phillips, Apostolic Tradition, 4.
The first problem is that, other than a few fragments, there is no surviving Greek text of the work and attempts to reconstruct the original from various different (and divergent) translations are paraphrases at best. While many are happy to assume that such reconstructions are, substantially at least, true to the original, others argue that they include later editorial embellishments designed to bring what is described more into line with present doctrine and practice.\textsuperscript{21}

Further issues exist with the place of origin and authorship, with little evidence within the work itself to support either. Hippolytus was declared the author based primarily on the attribution to him of two later church orders, both seemingly derived from the *Apostolic Tradition*, and the inclusion of this title in a list of works inscribed into the base of a statue discovered in Rome in 1551. This statue itself is shrouded in controversy, and may or may not be of the Hippolytus it was assumed to be. As for place of origin, that rests entirely on the identity of the supposed author.\textsuperscript{22} It cannot be said with a fair degree of certainty, therefore, that the *Apostolic Tradition* is what we have thought it to be. Nevertheless, it still offers an early insight into the initiation processes of at least one part of the church, which is more than we get elsewhere.

From the late third century onwards the amount of source material grows and in it we find a striking variety of practice and understandings attached to initiation rites, although there is a similar array of ritual elements in most. It would be wrong to claim, however, that those similarities signify a common approach to baptism.\textsuperscript{23} By the fifth century the desire for some kind of uniformity was evident. The Council of Orange in 441 included discussions on

\textsuperscript{21} Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins*, 89-90.

\textsuperscript{22} See ibid., 89-92, and Bradshaw, Johnson & Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 2-17.

\textsuperscript{23} Johnson, *Rites of Christian Initiation*, 85.
the wide variation in baptismal practice, and its outcomes included an instruction to avoid “repeated chrismation” which appears to have been sparked by activities in some rural areas.\textsuperscript{24} Gabriel Winkler suggests that this was an issue arising from a visiting bishop \textit{ratifying} an earlier baptism (performed by a priest) and in the process anointing those who had already been anointed at baptism.\textsuperscript{25} If this was the case then we \textit{may} be witnessing a very early example of confirmation, but to suggest a definitive point where the initiation rite is separated would be going too far.

There is some question as to whether this \textit{ratifying} was a hand-laying or anointing.\textsuperscript{26} Whichever it was, there is other evidence of delayed post-baptismal hand-laying by bishops in the same time period. Jerome mentions bishops laying hands on converts in rural areas who had been baptised by others, and notes that these events included prayers for the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{27} Of greater significance though is a Gallican text from the fifth century that offers clear reference to a post-baptismal hand-laying as a regular part of the initiation rites. This text comes to us in the form of a sermon for Pentecost attributed to a bishop of Riez in southern Gaul by the name of Faustus.

In his sermon Faustus, a former abbot who became bishop of Riez in 458, offers what is commonly recognised as the first doctrinal statement of a separate ‘confirmation ceremony’ involving the laying on of hands by a

\textsuperscript{24} Austin, \textit{The Rite of Confirmation}, 13.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.

Faustus states that baptism is a “regeneration to life” while confirmation is an “augmentation” of baptism to strengthen for battle and the “struggle of human life”.

What the imposition of the hand bestows in confirming individual neophytes, the descent of the Holy Spirit gave people then in the world of believers … the Holy Spirit, who descends upon the waters of baptism by a salvific falling, bestows on the font a fullness toward innocence, and presents in confirmation an increase for grace. And because in this world we who will be prevailing must walk in every age between invisible enemies and dangers, we are reborn in baptism for life, and we are confirmed after baptism for the strife. In baptism we are washed; after baptism we are strengthened. And although the benefits of rebirth suffice immediately for those about to die, nevertheless the helps of confirmation are necessary for those who will prevail. Rebirth in itself immediately saves those needing to be preserved in the peace of the blessed age. Confirmation arms and supplies those needing to be preserved for the struggles and battles of this world. But the one who arrives at death after baptism, unstained with acquired innocence, is confirmed by death because one can no longer sin after death.

For Faustus, then, baptism was a matter of passive reception, with no real involvement from those being baptised, while confirmation requires human effort. This position, contained in the primary section of Faustus’ sermon, would become the foundation for the later theology of confirmation in the western church.

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28 Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation*, 14. Austin notes that this does not include recorded cases of rebaptism or the reception of ‘heretics’. Leo the Great went on to use the term ‘confirmation’ in regards to the laying on of hands for reception of the Spirit where they had been previously baptised. Austin argues that technically what Pope Leo was referring to was not confirmation but because this terminology was used the waters were further muddied (16).


It should be noted, however, that much like the foundational source for baptism – the *Apostolic Tradition* – this sermon too has been questioned in terms of its date and authorship. Both Johnson and Winkler date the sermon as later than the mid-fifth century and suggest it is actually a justification for the imposition of Roman rites on Gaul as a result of the Carolingian reforms.\(^1\) This would suggest a ninth century date, which raises further questions as to when the more formal divide between baptism and confirmation actually appeared. Added to the question of when, as we shall see below, is the further complication that will arise when Faustus’ sermon is imbued with supposed papal authority.

These questions concerning the primary source documents for details about Christian initiation in the early church will become significant when we consider the later development of the reformed rites. Remaining in the fifth century for now however, and at the dawn of the medieval period, we can see that while in Rome, Milan and North Africa the norm for Christian initiation was still a unified rite culminating in the eucharist, albeit with some local differences of order and personnel, in Gaul and Spain it is possible that it was becoming common for the baptism (involving an anointing, water-bath, and post-baptismal second anointing) to be a stand-alone liturgy *confirmed* or *perfected* in a later visit by the bishop.\(^2\)

**The Medieval Church**

If its first six centuries saw the church through to adolescence, it was the period between the seventh and sixteenth in which it came of age. In the west the liturgical developments of the medieval period were shaped by two

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\(^2\) Johnson, *Rites of Christian Initiation*, 157-158.
contrasting factors: the almost universal spread of Roman influence, given major impetus by the ninth century reforms of the Emperor Charlemagne, and the rise of scholastic theology led by Lombard, Bonaventure and Aquinas in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. By the beginning of the seventh century it was commonly understood that it was within the context of the post-baptismal anointing (or sealing) that the Holy Spirit was received, and that the overall act of initiation culminated in the eucharist. This pattern of baptism, sealing, and communion is clear in the descriptions offered by Innocent I and John the Deacon.

Pope Innocent I offers a helpful glimpse of initiation rites in Rome in the early fifth century in his letter to Bishop Decentius of Gubbio, a town in Perugia north of Rome, circa 416. At the time great efforts were underway to ‘Christianise’ Roman culture and language, paganism having finally been outlawed in 395. At the same time Italy was facing military invasions, with Rome itself being sacked by the Visigoths in 410. In the face of tremendous odds the church committed itself to commending Roman liturgical practices to churches outside the city, and it is this that Innocent I is doing in his letter.

Innocent asserts that it is imperative that only bishops are involved in any post-baptismal rituals. He offers two reasons for this. Firstly, “it enhances the bishop’s unique and indispensible role as the focus of unity”\(^\text{33}\) in the face of ongoing violence, and as “the touchstone of continuity with Western Christianity’s past.”\(^\text{34}\) Secondly Innocent cites both “ecclesiastical custom” and the example offered by the Apostles Peter and John in Acts 8.\(^\text{35}\)

\(^{33}\) Kavanagh, Confirmation, 56

\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 57.
Wainwright notes that in this Innocent follows what would become a trend in the Roman rite in focusing on anointing and consignation and playing down the hand-laying, but also acknowledging the influence of Acts 8 and 19, thus ensuring the practice of hand-laying itself is maintained.\footnote{Geoffrey Wainwright, \textit{Christian Initiation} (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1969), 92.} Precisely how much of an “ecclesiastical custom” Innocent was referring to is hard to say. Given the nature of the letter, its contents, as Kavanagh states, are more “propaganda” than “a serene and objective articulation of doctrine”.\footnote{Kavanagh, \textit{Confirmation}, 58.} Certainly, however, if it were not already a custom in Innocent’s time, it soon would be.

A second letter that has proved influential in the history of Christian initiation is that of John the Deacon – possibly later Pope John I – to a layperson, Senarius, circa 500. Little is known of either character, but it is supposed that John was a deacon in Rome. His letter responds to a series of questions posed by Senarius about the Roman rites of initiation.\footnote{Full text of the letter in E. C. Whittaker, \textit{Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy}, Revised and expanded by Maxwell Johnson 3rd ed (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), 280.} While there are missing elements – John assumes a certain level of knowledge on the part of Senarius – this letter is one of the fullest descriptions we have from the period, offering an overview of both the catechumenal process and initiation rites in Rome at the beginning of the sixth century.

Of particular interest in this study is John’s description of what happens immediately post the three-fold immersion of baptism:

\ldots [the candidate] is next arrayed in white vesture, and his head anointed with the unction of the sacred chrism: that the baptised person may understand that in his person a kingdom and a priestly mystery have met. For priests and princes used to be anointed with

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
  \footnotesize
  \item[37] Kavanagh, \textit{Confirmation}, 58.
\end{thebibliography}
the oil of chrism, priests that they might offer sacrifices to God, princes that they might rule their people. For a fuller expression of the idea of priesthood, the head of the neophyte is dressed in linen array, for priests of that time used to deck the head with a certain mystic covering. All the neophytes are arrayed in white vesture to symbolise the resurgent Church, just as our Lord and Saviour himself in the sight of certain disciples and prophets was thus transfigured on the mount.\(^39\)

While John’s letter concurs with items found in other sources – prebaptismal exorcisms, communion, post-baptismal anointing, the participation of infants in all the rites – it does not mention any of the episcopal post baptismal rites noted by Innocent I and elsewhere. There is specific reference to the requirement that the bishop consecrate the chrism used for the post-baptismal anointing, but there is no mention of the bishop doing the anointing, or any hand-laying.\(^40\)

Johnson, however, notes that there is some mention of episcopal acts in John the Deacon’s letter:

> John, however, certainly does know the existence of the episcopal ceremonies of handlaying and (second) chrismation but questions their need. In chapter 14, in fact, when asked about the necessity of these ceremonies with regard to salvation, he responds by saying that all that is necessary is given already in the rites as he has described them.\(^41\)

This point is significant, especially given what was to come. John’s refusal to advocate for the episcopal rites, as late as the early sixth century, suggests that even in Rome there was still no “single dominant pattern” of Christian initiation.\(^42\)

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\(^39\) Whittaker / Johnson, *Documents*, 211.


\(^41\) Johnson, *Rites of Initiation*, 133.

\(^42\) Ibid.
Leaving aside potential differences in personnel, the initiation rites described by Innocent and John remain primarily integrated ceremonies. However the very act of defining individual sections could be said to have begun the process of separation, a process that would gain momentum throughout the early medieval period during which, as Gerard Austin has noted, the “overall trend was a movement to separate confirmation from baptism.” The whole of the western church, including Anglo-Saxon England, would feel the impact of this trend, but before shifting focus to that point it is important to note the influence of two medieval powerhouses in the field of liturgical development: Rome and Gaul.

**Rome**

Christmas Day 800 C.E. marked a turning point in history. When Pope Leo II proclaimed the Frankish leader Charles the Great (Charlemagne) Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire it heralded an unprecedented series of reforms focused on bringing both order and uniformity to the far flung edges of the Empire. Liturgy was a key tool in Charlemagne’s policy of reform, which is not to say that his motives were entirely religious. Charlemagne’s liturgical reforms were part of a much wider policy of control, and enforcing uniformity in Christian initiation in particular was a significant component in the advancement of that policy.

The rite of baptism played a crucial role in the Carolingian world with its great divide between the baptised and unbaptised: the faithful and the infidels. Baptism established one’s identity in society and membership in the church … Charlemagne took advantage of baptism as an exchange of lords. The name acquired by baptism, ‘fidelis’, was the name for a vassal. In one of the more infamous acts in Christian history, he forced-baptised people he conquered in order

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43 Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation*, 17.
that they would keep the fealty owed him by their act of submission.\footnote{Susan A. Keefe, Water and the Word: Baptism and Education of Clergy in the Carolingian Empire, Vol. 1 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 3.}

In Charlemagne’s hands, therefore, Christian initiation became a form for Romanising unruly populations, and his primary tools were the liturgical rites themselves.

It should be noted, however, that Charlemagne’s liturgical reforms were not mandated by Rome. The Roman rite was already dominant in much of the West, as Maxwell Johnson notes:

[I]t was quite natural in the West for pilgrims to go to Rome, visit the holy places, attend papal liturgies in the great Roman basilicas, and to begin copying at home what they had seen and experienced there. In other words, western Europe was quite favourably disposed toward Rome and its liturgy in general even before Charlemagne sought to make Roman practice normative for all.\footnote{Johnson, Rites of Christian Initiation, 178-179.}

Despite both the natural spread of Roman practice and Charlemagne’s reforms, universal adherence to the Roman rite was never accomplished. James White notes this was at least in part due to the difficulties of achieving “liturgical centralisation” prior to the invention of the printing press.\footnote{James F. White, A Brief History of Christian Worship (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 79.} This constraint aside, in terms of liturgy in general and Christian initiation in particular, the practices of Rome became a defining factor for medieval developments.
The Rite

The best sources we have of the early medieval Roman rites are the *Gelasian Sacramentary* (*Gelasian*), a seventh century collection of various liturgical rites, including initiation, for use by a presider, and *Ordo Romanus XI* (*Ordo XI*), an eighth century rubrical guide to the ceremonial contained in the *Gelasian*. The initiation rites in both sources confirm, in general, the structure of those found in earlier documents, including the now-questionable *Apostolic Tradition*, and the letters of both Innocent I and John the Deacon. However there are some variations, mostly in terms of rubrics and the timing and order of the catechumenal period and its associated rituals. Of particular significance is that the catechumens themselves are now primarily infants.\(^47\) While the structure of the rite described in both documents presupposes adult participants, the rubrics feature several references to “infants”, a word that sometimes refers to catechumens in general. Here, however, it is clearly meant to be infants as attested to by rubrics in *Ordo XI*, first instructing an acolyte to hold “one of the male infants in his left arm”\(^48\) and later describing the actions of a deacon, “Raising the infants in their hands …”\(^49\) It is thus certain that “infants” in this context refers to infants.

The significance of the growing trend towards infant baptism should not be understated. Both the *Gelasian* and *Ordo XI* illustrate the already established requirement for a bishop to provide the post-baptismal anointing. The growth in infant baptisms, accompanied as it was by a developing theology of baptism that called for the rite to be administered as soon as possible after birth,\(^50\) meant


\(^{48}\) English translation of documents in Whitaker, *Documents*, 201.

\(^{49}\) Whitaker, *Documents*, 203.

\(^{50}\) See Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation*, 17.
that two forms of separation were almost guaranteed; the first, a separation of baptism from Easter and / or Pentecost, and the second a separation of the post-baptismal anointing from the baptism itself.

Turning to the post-baptismal rites described in these documents, we find in the *Gelasian* that immediately following the baptism there is an anointing with chrism by a presbyter, followed by an episcopal hand laying. The rubric here is specific in terms of meaning: “Then the sevenfold Spirit is given to them by the bishop”. It is also clear that this involves the newly baptised being “sealed”, and that this sealing is found in the hand laying *not* the anointing.\(^51\) The words that accompany the hand laying are in the form of a prayer for the sevenfold Spirit which would become common in later centuries:

> Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast made thy servants to be regenerated of water and the Holy Spirit, and has given them the remission of all their sins, do thou, Lord, send upon them thy Holy Spirit the Paraclete, and give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and godliness, and fill them with the spirit of fear of God, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ with whom thou livest and reignest ever God with the Holy Spirit, throughout all ages of ages, Amen.\(^52\)

The bishop then performs a *second* anointing with chrism on the forehead, saying: “The sign of Christ unto eternal life.”\(^53\) Following this the rite continues with the reception of communion.

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\(^{51}\) Whitaker, *Documents*, 188.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.
An interesting addition to the *Gelasian* is a separate rite for the initiation of a “sick catechumen.” In this rite the catechetical rituals and scrutinies, already shorter than in earlier sources, are shrunk even further to form what Johnson described as “merely an extended introduction to the rite of baptism itself.” Of particular significance in this rite is that the presbyteral post-baptismal anointing is immediately followed by the reception of first communion, meaning the episcopal sealing and anointing were administered after first communion. The document does not elaborate, but it might be assumed that, if the sick catechumen lived, the bishop would eventually complete the initiation by administering the hand laying prayer and second anointing. It should also be noted that this rite is in a section of the sacramentary recognised as containing several Gallican additions. Certainly the pattern of baptism, first communion, and episcopal anointing was to become one of the various adaptations the Roman rite underwent in Gaul, and indeed it was specifically directed in instructions attributed to Alcuin of York, one of Charlemagne’s principal advisors. Referring to those just baptised Alcuin states, “if the bishop is there it is necessary that they be confirmed with chrism at once, and afterwards they receive communion. If the bishop is absent, they may receive communion from the presbyter.” This pattern of baptism-communion-confirmation would “become highly influential in the further development of the rites for infant baptism throughout the West.”

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54 Ibid., 193.
55 Johnson, *Rites of Christian Initiation*, 186
56 Ibid., 186-187.
Ordo XI follows a similar pattern, but with significant differences in the rubrics. We should note that Ordo XI is specifically concerned with ceremonials in the Diocese of Rome itself, which might explain the reference to “pontiff” rather than bishop within the post-baptismal rites. Fisher believes this is a literal reference to the pope, and is evidence that the pope himself was the “principal minister of initiation” at the time, although it is clear from other sources that not all Roman post-baptismal rites were conducted by the pope. Johnson, on the other hand, simply assumes “pontiff” to be another term for bishop. Whichever is the case, in Ordo XI there is no specific direction to lay hands on the newly baptised, with the rubric stating, “the pontiff makes a prayer over them, confirming them with an invocation of the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit.” Then follows an anointing with chrism with the rubric directing that, “Great care must be taken that this is not neglected, because at this point every baptism is confirmed and justification made for the name of Christianity.”

It is clear in these source documents that by the eighth century at least it was understood in Rome that baptism was completed by the anointing with chrism done by a presbyter immediately following the water-bath and confirmed by the imposition of hands and a second anointing with chrism by a bishop, and it is in this confirming that the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit are conferred. Key to understanding the theology behind these actions is the realisation that they represent a single, unified rite. Pre-baptism, baptism, and post-baptism rituals all fall within the same liturgical ceremony, with no suggestion that somehow the giving of the Holy Spirit is separate from baptism itself.

60 Johnson, Rites of Christian Initiation, 184.
61 Whitaker, Documents, 203-204. Italics mine.
62 Ibid., 204.
While the Roman rite described in the *Gelasian* and *Ordo XI* remains largely the same throughout the medieval period, later sources show ongoing development of the post-baptismal ceremonies. By the tenth century the *Romano-Germanic* pontifical continues to refer specifically to “confirmation” but features a change in the actions associated to it:

The bishop raises his hand over the heads of the newly baptised infants (collectively) and prays for the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit. He then makes the sign of the cross with chrism on the forehead of each, praying, “I confirm and sign you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

In the *Roman Pontifical of the Twelfth Century* practice shifts again, to an individual imposition of a hand by the bishop before the prayer. This source also contains the first mention of a chrism prayer that would be used for centuries to come: “I sign thee with the sign of the cross and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

A century later the *Pontifical of William Durandus*, the bishop of Mende in southern France, reveals that the individual hand-laying has vanished, replaced by an imposition of both hands before the prayer. Following chrismation this source instructs, “And then he gives him a light blow (*alapa*) on the cheek, saying, ‘Peace be with you.’” This action would take on new significance in later years and represents an intriguing movement from the traditional kiss, or sign, of peace to something that would help shape later understandings of the emerging rite it falls within.

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64 Ibid., 22.
65 Ibid.
Despite these developments, the Roman rite of Christian initiation remained surprisingly coherent during the course of four centuries. It also continued to be, with the exception of the rite for the initiation of a “sick catechumen,” a complete, integrated liturgical rite, regardless of whether the candidate was an infant or an adult.

From the 8th to 12th centuries the Roman rite of initiation underwent little change; most of the ceremonies of the Gel. and Ordo XI have been preserved, the pattern of the rite is unchanged, and its integrity unimpaired, baptism, confirmation and first communion still being, as in primitive times, three parts of one coherent whole.66

Gaul

It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of Gaul in the history of the development of Christian initiation. In Gallican liturgy we find a distinct alternative to the rites of Rome, although it can be tempting to try to “read” Gaul through Roman eyes.67 The earliest references to the term “confirmation” are found in the fifth century Gallican councils, but it is important to note that the term is used here in a technical sense. While we find clear references to the necessity for bishops to “confirm” a baptism, these appear to refer specifically to the requirement that a bishop approve that the baptism was done validly, rather than actually participate in the rite, or any post-baptismal rites, himself.68

Three Gallican sources offer us a clear view of liturgical practice in the early middle ages: the Missale Gothicum from the seventh century, the Missale

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67 On the dangers of this see Winkler, Original Meaning, 212.

68 Quinn, Confirmation Reconsidered, 226-229. Not all agree with Quinn on this matter. Many argue that what we see in medieval Gallican liturgical rites is in stark contrast to the earlier conciliar evidence. See Johnson, Rites of Christian Initiation, 197.
Gallicanum from the early eighth century and the Bobbio Missal from later in the same century. There are also various ninth century commentaries, possibly commissioned by Charlemagne, focused on addressing issues raised in a questionnaire he had posed to bishops, and finally the Hadrianum Sacramentary, requested of Pope Hadrian by Charlemagne as a manual for liturgical practice throughout the empire. The three major Gallican liturgical texts, and the various resources focused on correcting them, suggest a diversity of practice, which history shows strongly resisted multiple attempts to achieve uniformity.\(^{69}\)

Turning to the Gallican initiation rites themselves, there are significant differences between what we find in the key liturgical sources and those of Rome. Gabrielle Winkler has highlighted the possible Syrian influence on the Gallican tradition, especially present in a strong pneumatic focus. This is particularly true of the Bobbio Missal which features a pre-baptismal rite entitled “Order for Making a Christian” that includes the presbyter breathing into the mouth of the candidate and saying, “receive the Holy Spirit, may you guard him in your heart.” This forms part of what Winkler believes to be a Johannine theology of new birth (from John 3) underpinning the Gallican initiation rite, in contrast to the Pauline theology of the death and burial of Christ evident in the Roman rite. Further Syrian influences are possible in the inclusion of the pedilavium, a foot washing ritual associated with Syrian initiation rites (among others).\(^{70}\)

What is not found in any of the pre-ninth century medieval Gallican rites is a second post-baptismal anointing or episcopal hand-laying. All contain a single

\(^{69}\) For more see Spinks, Early and Medieval Rituals, 117.

\(^{70}\) Winkler, Confirmation or Chrismation in Johnson, Living Water, 205-208.
anointing, immediately post-baptism, but there is no instruction that this need
be administered by a bishop.

In sum, none of the Gallican sacramentaries includes a rite of
episcopal confirmation, nor have we any evidence requiring us to
assume that such a rite was customarily added to the extant
baptismal rites, nor that the administration of the single Gallican
post-baptismal anointing was confined to bishops.71

Traditional scholarship, taking the *Apostolic Tradition* as a starting point, has
assumed that the earliest (and normative) universal practice was a separate
hand laying and, in some cases, anointing by a bishop after a first anointing, and
that the early medieval evidence from Gaul (as well as Spain and Milan)
represents a later departure from this norm. Scholars have tended to suggest
this is further evidence of a separation of initiation rites, probably due to the
rise in infant baptisms and the impossibility of regular episcopal visitations. In
areas such as Gaul, these scholars have argued, the later enforcement of the
Roman practice of episcopal confirmation represented a return to original
practice rather than the imposition of something new.72 More recent thinking,
however, has challenged these suppositions. Gabriele Winkler has posited that
the pattern seen in eighth and ninth century Gallican liturgies, which Winkler
claims display a clear Syrian influence, represents the original structure of the
rites:

[O]ne must seriously doubt whether the initiation rites represented
by these documents ever included any postbaptismal rite other than
the one anointing, performed either by a bishop or a presbyter. There
probably never was a separate laying on of the hand combined with
a second anointing reserved to the bishop … these liturgical


72 For an example of this argument see Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, 53-55.
formularies reflect an archaic shape of initiation rites where either the bishop or the presbyter could confer baptism, including the postbaptismal anointing.\(^{73}\)

It stands to reason then that if there was never a pattern of compulsory post-baptismal episcopal hand laying or anointing, the understanding in Gaul (and elsewhere outside Rome) was that baptism was complete at the point of the first (usually presbyteral) anointing, including the conferring of the Holy Spirit, and that this remained the case until at least the tenth century.\(^{74}\) The implication is that it was the Roman rite, rather than those of Gaul, Spain, Milan and elsewhere, that was the exception. Only in the liturgical documents of Rome do we find a universal insistence on an episcopal hand laying or anointing in the early middle ages, a situation that would dramatically change later.

**Anglo-Saxon Britain**

There is little in the way of liturgical source material from the Romano-British Church, but what there is suggests a strong similarity with the Gallican tradition.\(^{75}\) The late eighth century *Stowe Missal* is the earliest example emerging from the British Isles. Although of Irish origin, there is evidence that it was used throughout Britain prior to the arrival of Augustine, and Fisher suggests it may have continued in use in Ireland until as late as the twelfth century.\(^{76}\) There is a clear Roman influence in the language, but structurally the ritual pattern echoes the Gallican *Bobbio Missal*, including a single post-baptismal anointing.

\(^{73}\) Winkler, *Confirmation or Chrismation*, 208.

\(^{74}\) Johnson points out that alongside this lies the evidence of earlier local councils which demanded the use of episcopally consecrated chrism in post-baptismal anointing. This requirement, which remains the norm in the Eastern Church, does serve to maintain an episcopal role in all baptisms, if not an episcopal presence. Johnson, *Rites of Christian Initiation*, 200.

\(^{75}\) Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals*, 125.

\(^{76}\) Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, 94.
It would appear that this was the practice at the time of the Anglo-Saxon mission in the eighth century. Not surprisingly, given that mission came directly from Rome, later evidence conforms to the Roman rite and the historian Bede indicates this was an early focus of the mission. Bede records a council called by Augustine of Canterbury with a group of British bishops and scholars during which he called for them to adopt a variety of Roman rites and in particular “to fulfil the ministry of Baptism, by which we are born again to God, according to the custom of the holy Roman Apostolic Church”.77 Much debate has taken place over the meaning of the instruction, and especially the term *compleatis* translated above as “fulfil”. Some have suggested this referred to the number of baptismal immersions being done (one instead of three) or the failure to name all three members of the Trinity in the baptismal formula. Others, however, believe it refers to the lack of any post-baptismal anointing.78 Certainly, if the English church was following similar patterns to Gaul, Spain and Milan, as appears to be the case in the *Stowe Missal*, the absence of a second, episcopal anointing would not be unexpected. However precisely because this pattern is common in other regions it is unlikely it would have resulted in a baptism being considered invalid. It is far more likely, therefore, that the omission is of *any* post-baptismal anointing whatsoever, a practice possibly connected to a shortage of oil at a point when both British and Irish churches were effectively cut off from continental Europe.79

The Venerable Bede also provides other evidence of eighth century Anglo-Saxon initiation rites, while the *Vercelli Homilies* and the homilies of Aelfric and Wulfstan offer us a glimpse of those in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

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79 Ibid.
Forgiveness of sins is the clear purpose of baptism according to Bede in his *Homilies on the Gospels for Advent*. Focusing on Mark 1, Bede links the baptisms of John the Baptist and Jesus with the purification of our baptism which enables fellowship with Christ.\(^80\) In relation to the Holy Spirit, Bede saw baptism as a preparation for the Spirit, and, “Through the anointing of the sacred chrism we are signed with the grace of the Holy Spirit.”\(^81\) Here Bede clearly links the post-baptismal anointing with the gift of the Holy Spirit, but he does not specify which anointing – is it the first (original) anointing, possibly by a presbyter, or the second (Roman) anointing by the bishop? What is definitely in stark contrast to Rome is the insistence that it is the anointing, and not a hand laying, that confers the Spirit.

Two hundred years later, Aelfric makes no specific mention of the post-baptismal rites, while Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, describes the post-baptismal anointing as signifying “the Christian crown which he receives in heaven.”\(^82\) Of significance in Wulstan’s homily is the attention he pays to teaching and the role of parents in instructing their baptised children. He calls for all to learn the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed, preferably in Latin, but otherwise at least in English.\(^83\) This eleventh century focus on instruction may perhaps be seen as an early precursor to what would become a major element of initiation, and particularly confirmation, in later centuries.

In later centuries we have some Anglo-Saxon sources which reflect the influence of the mission from Rome, in particular the *Hadrianum*. From the eleventh century we have three documents: the *Leofric Missal* (although its

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 129.

\(^{81}\) Ibid., 131.

\(^{82}\) Ibid., 132.

\(^{83}\) Ibid., 132-133.
baptismal rite is actually from the tenth), the Missal of Robert of Jumieges, Archbishop of Canterbury in the mid-eleventh century, and the Winchcombe Sacramentary. All these documents include both a post-baptismal anointing and handlaying with prayer for the sevenfold gift of the Spirit, although it is unclear whether these take place immediately post-baptism or are delayed until a bishop is present. The Missal of Robert of Jumieges contains a rubric directing that the baptised be communicated and anointed with chrism “if a bishop is present”. The same rubric appears in several twelfth century pontificals. Fisher is certainly convinced that this indicates that the conclusion of the rite was often delayed, and sometimes by a considerable time.

Thus by the twelfth century all the Churches of the British Isles used an initiatory rite, fashioned on the Roman model, with confirmation strictly reserved to the episcopate; but the price of this Romanisation was a disintegrated rite of initiation, because owing to the size of dioceses there was no likelihood of a bishop being present even at all the Paschal initiations, much less at those which took place at other times of the year.84

This move towards the Roman rite was clearly not adopted universally. As elsewhere in the west, it is clear from the proceedings of various councils that church authorities struggled with the ongoing neglect of the post-baptismal rites in the general populace. The thirteenth century Constitutions of Richard Poore declared that “if through parental negligence a child was not confirmed by the age of five, his father and mother should be denied entry into the church” until the issue had been rectified.85 The Council of Worcester in 1240 restated this position, but acknowledged that the problem may be caused by lack of episcopal access.86 Some tried to reduce the gap between baptism and

84 Fisher, Christian Initiation, 95.
85 Ibid., 137.
86 Ibid.
confirmation further. In the mid-thirteenth century Richard of Chichester ordered the presentation of children by the age of one, while the Council of Exeter some three decades later raised that age to three. The Statutes of John of Liege in the same year made the maximum age seven, which is of interest because less than a decade earlier the Council of Cologne had set the same age as the minimum for confirmation.\textsuperscript{87}

The true state of confirmation at this point is probably indicated by the findings of the Council of Lambeth led by Archbishop Peckham in 1281. The proceedings of the council show “that a very large number of people had grown old in evil ways without having received the grace of confirmation” – a situation famously described by Peckham as “damnable negligence”.\textsuperscript{88} The council responded by declaring no one was to be admitted to the eucharist (“save when in danger of death”) “unless he had been confirmed, or had been reasonably prevented from receiving confirmation.”\textsuperscript{89} The result, it appears, was the opposite of that intended; instead of an increase in confirmands, there was a stark decrease in communion numbers.

**The Rise of Scholastic Theology**

From the twelfth century onward we see a marked change in the approach to liturgical rites. In overly simplistic terms it could be said that the trend to this point was to define the right way of doing things as the traditional – or oldest – way. The challenge, therefore, was to define traditional and argue it; a point we shall return to later. From the ninth century the traditional way became defined as the Roman way. In the twelfth century, however, a new trend emerged. The

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 137-138.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
scholastic theologians were no longer prepared to simply accept tradition, they wanted to define meaning.

The development of what would come to be called sacramental theology resulted in a shift away from a sense of understanding arising from the rite itself – that is the ritual sequence and text of a liturgy – to shaping rites to suit previously established definitions of meaning and function. Thus antiquity alone was no longer the deciding factor in whether or not a liturgy was fit for purpose. While sacramental theologies of sorts certainly existed before this point, it was the scholastic theologians who brought the discipline into the public sphere.

The impact of scholastic theology on Christian initiation must not be underestimated. Regardless of place or practice, and the significance placed on this set of actions or that, Christians had consistently believed that baptism in and of itself represented a “giving” of the Holy Spirit. As the Roman rite of initiation spread, with its emphasis on the post-baptismal episcopal rituals, it was those rituals that increasingly became associated with the giving of the Spirit, and as those rites began to become separated from the remainder of the baptism rite it was inevitable that issues would arise. It fell to the theologians to offer views on how this tension could be accommodated.

In the ninth century Alcuin of York was the first to suggest that, while the Holy Spirit was given in baptism, in the post-baptismal hand-laying there was a second giving of the Spirit, with the specific purpose of ensuring the recipient was “strengthened by the Holy Spirit in order to preach to others.” Rabanus Maurus, himself a student of Alcuin, stated that in the first (presbyteral) post-

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90 Ibid., 61
baptismal anointing the Holy Spirit became “indwelt” in the soul of the newly baptised, while the second (episcopal) anointing conferred the “sevenfold grace of the same Holy Spirit”. 91 These early beginnings of a theology of initiation were to lay the groundwork for the giants of sacramental theology, beginning with the twelfth century so-called “Father of Scholasticism”, Peter Lombard.

**Lombard (1100-1160)**

Peter Lombard, the twelfth century Archbishop of Paris, was the author of *Four Books of Sentences* which became the standard text for medieval theology. Lombard was a pioneer in the area of sacramental theology and in his *Sentences* he became the first to lay out and define seven distinct sacraments. His work was based on that of Hugh of St Victor, a fellow Parisian who wrote in the early twelfth century. Lombard took his predecessor’s work as a starting point and expanded upon it greatly, describing what he believed to be Old Testament sacraments (such as circumcision) and in his argument the more important New Testament sacraments. He posited that the seven New Testament sacraments could be divided into three groups:

> Now we come to the sacraments of the new Law: which are baptism, confirmation, blessing of bread, that is, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, ordination, marriage. Of which some offer a remedy against sin and confer assisting grace (*gratium adiutricem*), such as baptism; others that are a remedy only, such as marriage; others uphold us in grace and virtue, such as the eucharist and ordination. 92

Lombard, having already defined baptism as “a remedy against sin” and the conferring of “assisting grace” describes confirmation in very similar ways to

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91 Turner, *Sources of Confirmation*, 36.

Alcuin, as “the gift of the Holy Spirit for strength, who was given in baptism for forgiveness.”

**Bonaventure (1221-74)**

Just under a century later the Franciscan Bonaventure offered his *Commentaries on Lombard’s Sentences*. Discussing Lombard’s descriptions of the sacraments Bonaventure characterises them as “medicine for spiritual ills”, and baptism in particular “adjoined by grace looses us from punishment”. In his later work, the *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure describes baptism as “the door to the sacraments” and “remedy against original sin”. Then, building on past thought and introducing it in a way that would become instrumental in the development of a theology of initiation, “[Baptism] is for those entering the battle, whereas confirmation is for those fighting.”

In this reference to ‘battle” and “fighting” Bonaventure refers back to ideas expressed by others, and in particular to the author of the famous Pentecost sermon supposedly delivered by Faustus of Riez. Why refer to such a source? Simply because at around this point the sermon reappears, only now it is imbued with papal authority and described as the work of ‘Pope Melchiades’. The sermon was among a collection of supposed papal documents and Lombard, Bonaventure and Aquinas were all heavily influenced by these works. It would later be revealed that there was no Pope Melchiades and the documents were forgeries – hence their title, the *False Decretals* – the papal imprimatur had an effect however and the decretals, including Faustus’

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95 Ibid., 144.

96 Ibid.
sermon, were included in the twelfth century legal document, the *Decretum* of Gratian, which would become the foundation for canon law.\(^97\) Thus we see that the basis of confirmation theology was anchored, essentially, to a lie. But does it matter? That question will be explored further later.

Of great significance in the work of both Lombard and Bonaventure is a departure from the idea that the post-baptismal episcopal rites somehow initiated people into the church; the “justification made for the name of Christianity” described in *Ordo XI*. Employing their scholastic techniques, the goal was to understand this confirmation that Lombard had declared a sacrament, and define its meaning. The point of entry into the church, they both insist, lies squarely with baptism itself. The post-baptismal rites are focused on “the act of ‘gracing’ more deeply a person already baptised.”\(^98\)

**Aquinas (1225-74)**

If Lombard and Bonaventure sowed the seed, Thomas Aquinas brought in the harvest. Aquinas is the most influential and prolific of the medieval scholastics on the topic of confirmation. He writes about it in no fewer than four places; *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, in which he explored Lombard’s *Sentences*, *Summa contra gentiles*, *De articulis fidei et Ecclesiae sacramentis ad archiepiscopum Panormitanum*, and his most famous work, *Summa theologae*.

Aquinas approaches the sacraments with the view that they fall into the general category of ‘sign’.\(^99\)

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97 Johnson, *Rites of Initiation*, 209.


[Sacrament] can be applied to something for several different reasons: either because the thing concerned contains some hidden sanctity within it, so that, as applied to it, the term ‘sacrament’ is equivalent to ‘sacred secret’; alternatively the term ‘sacrament’ may be applied to something because it is related to this sanctity either as its cause or its sign, or in virtue of some other kind of connection with it. Now for our purposes when we speak of the sacraments we have in mind one specific connection with the sacred, namely that of a sign. And it is on these grounds that we assign sacraments to the general category of signs.¹⁰⁰

Building on Lombard and Bonaventure, Aquinas stated that the chief effect of sacraments is grace, with the question being whether the cause of the grace (the sacrament) is *principal* – producing grace by virtue of its form – or *instrumental* – producing grace “solely by virtue of the impetus imparted by the principal agent.”¹⁰¹ Aquinas believed that all sacraments are instruments of grace, with God being the principal agent. He concurs with Boniface that baptism is the “door” to the other sacraments, and necessary for salvation (unlike some other sacraments).

In his work on baptism Aquinas demonstrates little interest in the details of the liturgical rite. Unlike his predecessors, Aquinas did not believe that a strict adherence to the rite was essential for validity, although he does insist on the use of water, as the “proper matter” for baptism, and the triune formula of Matthew 28:19 because “Christ commanded that the sacrament of baptism be given with the invocation of the Holy Trinity. As a result, anything lacking in the full invocation of the Trinity destroys the integrity of baptism.”¹⁰²


¹⁰² Cited in ibid., 146.
Building on Lombard’s sentences, Aquinas differentiates between baptism and confirmation:

People also receive a spiritual life through baptism, which is spiritual regeneration. But in confirmation people receive as it were a certain mature age of spiritual life. For this reason Pope Melchiades says ‘The Holy Spirit who descend upon the waters of baptism in a salvific falling bestows on the font a fullness toward innocence. In confirmation it presents an increase for grace. In baptism we are reborn for life. After baptism we are strengthened.’ And therefore it is clear that confirmation is a special sacrament.103

The fact that Aquinas quotes the words of the supposed Pope Melchiades demonstrates how influential Faustus’ Pentecost sermon had become. Aquinas uses it as a base for his argument that the principal meaning of confirmation was “an increase for grace” in which the candidate is “strengthened” and brought to a sense of spiritual maturity. While Aquinas never matches this spiritual maturity with a specific age, his approach would prove highly influential in later centuries “in support of the practice of reserving the administration of confirmation to a particular age.”104 Such issues seem to have held no importance for Aquinas himself. Maturity, for him, involved being prepared

... for a spiritual battle outside one’s self ... Through the sacrament of confirmation a man is given spiritual power for activity that is different from that for which power is given in baptism. For in baptism power is received for performing those things which pertain to one’s own salvation in so far as one lives for oneself. In confirmation a person receives power for engaging in the spiritual battle against the enemies of faith.105


105 Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation*, 27.
On the Brink of Revolution

The implications of the work of Aquinas and other scholastics on the future of Christian initiation rites were massive. Prior to the rise of scholastic theology, confirmation was, for the most part, recognised as a completion of the baptismal process. The post-baptismal actions of anointing and hand laying, with their associated meanings of strengthening for struggle, were considered part of the initiation rite itself, albeit separated by significant periods of time in many places. Post-Aquinas however, these rites and meanings became attached to confirmation, now seen to be a totally separate rite focused not so much on initiation as Christian maturity. The giving of the Holy Spirit remained connected with baptism, but it was additionally connected to confirmation as an “increase of grace, [and] strength to live and fight the battles of the Christian life”. 106

Thus confirmation took on its own importance and significance as a stand-alone sacrament, separate from baptism. This is not to say that it was universally accepted or practiced, or that, even where it was accepted and practiced, the theological interpretations placed on it by Aquinas and others were adopted by clergy and laity alike; far from it. Repeatedly we find examples in the records of church councils and edicts of bishops of attempts to convince people of the importance of confirmation. Fisher notes that:

Some thirteenth century councils in England found it necessary to set an age limit by which children must have been confirmed, and to threaten parents with dire penalties if they failed to see that it was done. Thus the Constitutions of Richard Poore (c. 1217), after ordering the clergy frequently to warn their people to have their children confirmed, declared that, if through parental negligence a child was not confirmed by the age of five, his father and mother should be

106 Johnson, Rites of Christian Initiation, 211.
denied entry to the church until the omission had been made good; and a similar penalty was imposed on clergy who were negligent in this matter.\textsuperscript{107}

Fisher notes numerous other examples also, although the sheer repetition of the warnings suggests they made little difference. By the late Middle Ages confirmation had become both defined – thanks to the work of Lombard, Bonaventure and Aquinas – and neglected. Such was the state, with continuing regional variations, in most if not all of the western church.

\textsuperscript{107} Fisher, \textit{Baptism in the Medieval West}, 122.
CHAPTER TWO
Reason, Revolt and Reform

“Confirmation is taught and retained.”

If the latter portion of the Middle Ages had inherited a relatively settled pattern of Christian initiation, not all was so calm. In 1378 the Papal Schism sent shockwaves through the western church. Gregory’s XI’s return of the papacy to Rome from Avignon the previous year led to competing claims to the papal throne, throwing both church and state into tumult for some four decades. The virtual interchangability of ecclesial and political power in most of the west meant that, “No part of Europe escaped the shock of the so-called Papal Schism.”

J. K. Zeman has noted that this shock challenged any sense of security in the stability of the church at a time when that stability was usually the basis of political influence. The power of both church and state lay largely in the certainty provided by the papacy and clerics. That security was of far more significance than doctrine.

While the Schism did not impact on initiation issues directly, it did add fuel to the fire of those who would challenge the status quo. It also encouraged the shoring up of that status quo by its supporters, who went to great lengths to

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1 The Leipzig Interim (1548) cited in Turner, Sources of Confirmation, 25.


embed the work of the scholastic theologians in the life of the church. In terms of initiation theology this meant affirming the sequence developed from the time of Peter Lombard, namely four distinct sacraments, spaced at varying intervals and based on the age of the initiate. By the end of the medieval period the Council of Florence (1438-45) had enshrined this position in its Decree to the Armenians:

There are seven sacraments of the new law: namely, baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, ordination and marriage. These differ much from the sacraments of the old law. The latter did not cause grace but only served as a figure of the passion of Christ. Ours truly contain grace and confer it on those who worthily receive it. Of these, five pertain to the spiritual perfecting of individuals, the other two are ordained to the governing and increase of the Church. Through baptism we are spiritually reborn; through confirmation we are made to grow in grace and are strengthened in faith. When we have been reborn and strengthened, we are sustained by the divine nourishment of the eucharist ... All these sacraments are made complete by three things, namely things or matter, words or form, and the person of the minister performing the sacrament with the intention of doing what the Church does. If any of these is absent, the sacrament is not complete. Among these sacraments there are three – baptism, confirmation, and ordination – which impose on the soul indelibly a character, a certain spiritual sign, distinguished from all others. These are not repeated for the same person. The other four do not impose a character and allow repetition.¹

The Decree goes on to clarify further the individual sacraments, and concerning confirmation it states:

The second sacrament is confirmation; its matter is chrism, made from oil – which signifies the lustre of conscience – and from balm – which signifies the fragrance of a good reputation – blessed by a bishop. The form is: “I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I

¹ James F. White, Documents of Christian Worship – Descriptive and Interpretive Sources (London: T&T Clark, 1992), 128-129.
confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” The ordinary minister is the bishop. Now, although a simple priest has the power to confer other anointings, no one but a bishop should confer this anointing. For we read that it was only the apostles, whose place the bishops hold, who were accustomed to give the Holy Spirit through an imposition of hands, as is clear from the Acts of the Apostles … The effect of this sacrament is that in it the Holy Spirit is given, as he was given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, to strengthen Christians to confess fearlessly the name of Christ.⁵

The Council of Florence’s appeal to The Acts of the Apostles (and in particular Acts 8) includes a point that, although not listed in the Decree to the Armenians’ requirements to ensure the validity of a sacrament, had been a frequent addition to such lists since the time of Thomas Aquinas.⁶ Alongside matter, form and intent, proof of divine or dominical institution was commonly insisted on, and would prove to be of major significance as the Protestant Reformers radically overhauled the sacramental system they inherited from their forebears.

Despite the amount of time, energy and academic effort that had gone into confirmation, it still became the “great neglected sacrament of the Middle Ages.”⁷ This would seem to match up with the view that liturgy in general had reached a state of serious decline by the late Middle Ages, but such a view has been the subject of much debate.⁸ Baptism, for example, appears to have been almost universally both available and practiced, and with remarkable uniformity.

⁶ Johnson, Rites of Christian Initiation, p 230.
⁷ Ibid.
The sacrament was available to every child in Christendom. No one was denied baptism regardless of social status, education, the legitimacy of one’s birth, or the moral standing of one’s parents. Baptism was free to all … The rites spoke very well of both the unity and the variety of the Church. There was local variety, but it was nevertheless clearly the same rite whether in Sicily or Norway, Ireland or Finland.⁹

Clearly, while officially Christian initiation involved four sacraments spaced over time, only the first of these was practiced in almost all cases.

Of particular significance on the eve of the Reformation, it should be noted that the ancient prerequisite to baptism, catechesis, had all but vanished. Whilst never practiced to a universal norm, some form of baptismal preparation, involving both instruction and a variety of rituals, was a basic expectation throughout the early church. As infant baptism became the norm, and the various pre-baptism rites were consolidated into a single rite, either at the church door or within the baptism liturgy itself, catechesis shifted to the period between baptism and confirmation. Far from being a rigorous time of preparation and testing, however, more often than not if any instruction at all were given, it was of a cursory nature at best. This lack of catechetical emphasis is clear in a post-baptism rubric in the influential Sarum Rite:

If a bishop is present he [i.e., the newly baptised] must be immediately confirmed and next communicated, if his age require it … If he be an infant let the father and mother be enjoined to preserve their child from fire and water and all other dangers until the age of seven years: and if they do it not, the godfathers and godmothers are held responsible. Likewise the godmothers should be enjoined to teach the infant the Our Father, and Hail Mary, and I believe in God, or

cause them to be taught them … and that the infant be confirmed as soon as the bishop comes within a distance of seven miles.\textsuperscript{10}

So, despite the ongoing focus on baptism, other aspects of Christian initiation were much neglected. The situation was ripe for change, but in reality the seeds of that change had been planted years earlier.

**Wyclif**

The fourteenth century English philosopher and theologian John Wyclif is usually woefully ignored in studies of liturgy, despite his wide-ranging influence on reformers to come.\textsuperscript{11}

Born in Yorkshire around 1330, Wyclif was educated at Oxford where he initially studied philosophy, specialising in the realist tradition, and gained a Master of Arts in 1360. From there he went on to study theology and became a doctor of divinity in 1372. His time at Oxford was clearly formative and he was obviously valued by the university, which in later years would offer him protection “even after most of its members had parted company with his increasingly radical ideas.”\textsuperscript{12}

Wyclif’s appointment by King Edward III to the royal living of Lutterworth in 1374 shows he was not always considered a revolutionary figure. Indeed, for much of his career Wyclif’s benefactor was John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and following the death of Edward III, Protector of the young Richard II,

\textsuperscript{10} Johnson, *Rites of Christian Initiation*, 232.

\textsuperscript{11} Note, for example, that in the 600 page *The Study of Liturgy* Wyclif receives only one cursory mention, with absolutely no discussion of his influence. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold SJ and Paul Bradshaw (ed), *The Study of Liturgy: Revised Edition* (London: SPCK, 1992), 481.

effectively making him ruler of the nation for a time. Gaunt’s patronage and the support of Oxford shielded Wyclif for a time as his statements became more outrageous.

In essence, Wyclif wanted the church to return to its pre-Constantinian state, freed from the bondage of political power and, significantly in Wyclif’s mind, wealth. It was at least in part his desire to see the church stripped of its riches that eventually brought Wyclif into conflict with both religious and civil authorities.

In 1377 Wyclif was asked to provide an opinion on whether it was lawful for England to withhold payments normally made to Rome. Consistent with his views on the church and wealth he responded in the affirmative, earning the wrath of Pope Gregory XI in the process. In all, five papal bulls were issued against Wyclif, none of which had any discernable effect other than to encourage him to further criticise the papacy. The following year Wyclif welcomed the Papal Schism, describing it as a prelude to the complete and proper destruction of the papacy. That same year he was charged with heresy, and although he was never committed for trial Wyclif chose that point to formally retire from Oxford.

In 1381 Wyclif stepped back from public life and returned to Lutterworth where he focused on publishing a series of attacks on church corruption in the financial, moral and theological sense. It was around this time that he launched an attack on the traditionally held views on the eucharist, specifically against the key eucharistic doctrine of transubstantiation. This was the last straw for most. John of Gaunt and most of his other main supporters finally abandoned him. Soon after, Wyclif and his followers were blamed, probably unfairly, for
the Peasant Revolt that resulted in the violent suppression of those wanting reform. In 1382 all of his writings were banned.

The ban failed to prevent him continuing to write however. Wyclif briefly addressed confirmation on several occasions. At one point he included the rite in a list of alleged episcopal abuses, suggesting that bishops deliberately reserved for themselves certain functions that could be done by presbyters, in order to benefit financially. Wyclif backed up this suggestion by claiming that in the early church presbyters could both confirm and perform ordinations of deacons, thus dating the separation of baptism from confirmation to the pre-Constantinian era. Unlike later reformers, however, Wyclif did not suggest that this separation was intended to allow for a period of catechesis, or for the person being confirmed to reach an age where a personal declaration of faith was possible.\(^\text{13}\)

In his *Trialogus* published in 1383 Wyclif further attacks confirmation on scriptural grounds. Writing in the form of a conversation between the fictional characters Alithia and Phronesis, Wyclif strongly criticises what he calls “the third sacrament” as being without biblical foundation.

For its foundation does not seem to me sufficiently proved from Acts viii … From that text it is generally concluded that besides the baptism with which people are baptised, there ought to be added as well apostolical confirmation, because the apostles acted thus. But this confirmation seems to be too uncertain, since it could probably be said, that, although baptism in the name of Jesus Christ was at the time valid, in so far as that name had been sufficiently proclaimed, yet, when the proclamation of the name had been accomplished, it was necessary to return to the form of words in the gospel, and so those who had thus only been baptised in the name at Samaria had

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\(^{13}\) For a further commentary on Wyclif’s statements see Holeton, *Fifteenth Century Origins*, 84-85.
to be baptised lawfully, just as those baptised with the baptism of John or another unlawful baptism had without danger to be baptised again ... in that text it is said that Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit, and if they had not received him before, how had they before been lawfully baptised? ... And, as for the oil with which they anoint children, and the linen band which is wound around their heads, it seems that this is a frivolous rite which cannot be derived from scripture. So too it seems that that confirmation which was introduced apart from the apostles is a blasphemy against God, because it continually asserts that bishops give the Holy Spirit anew or strengthen and confirm the gift ... But the apostles do not dare to speak thus, but they pray for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit from God ...¹⁴

In focusing on baptism Wyclif stood with scholars both before and beyond himself, but in calling for episcopal hand-laying to take place at baptism rather than at confirmation as if such had not happened since apostolic times, he shows himself unaware of contemporary pontificals. Rubrics at the time demanded that such actions be the norm at any baptism conducted by a bishop at the Easter Vigil. David Holeton notes that, in theory at least, this should extend the demand to every baptism, a fact Wyclif is clearly unaware of.¹⁵

While such strongly worded critiques of the traditional church continued to raise the ire of the authorities, in England Wyclif’s most significant role was actually in the field of scripture translation. In the early 1380s Wyclif led the movement calling for a translation of the bible in the vernacular. It is unclear how much actual translation Wyclif did, but his efforts were crucial in securing the English language bible that eventually bore his name.


¹⁵ Holeton, Fifteenth Century Origins, 97-98. Holeton also notes that this practice was followed at the baptism of Elizabeth I and was likely the case at royal baptisms in Bohemia during Wyclif’s lifetime.
Towards the end of his life Wyclif provided the impetus for a new group demanding reform. The Lollards began at Oxford but rapidly gained support from a wide cross-section of society. Initially motivated by Wyclif’s calls for an end to clerical corruption and a return to a simpler, poorer, church, Lollardy quickly moved beyond Wyclif and by the end of the fourteenth century there was little of his scholastic approach evident in their publications. In the *Twelve Conclusions* presented to parliament in 1395, not just the church of Rome but the entire clerical system was rejected, along with transubstantiation, vestments, clerical celibacy, prayers for the dead, pilgrimages and confession. While the claim that Wyclif and his Lollards “anticipated many of the key doctrines of Protestantism” may be somewhat overblown, it is certainly true in part.\(^\text{16}\)

The Lollard uprising in 1414 followed the passing of the first English statute allowing for the burning of heretics (in 1410). The revolt was quickly put down and resulted in severe reprisals which ended any overt Lollard political influence. The movement remained mostly underground attracting primarily tradespeople and artisans, but also a small number of clergy, until the English reformation of the sixteenth century.\(^\text{17}\)

Wyclif himself died following his second stroke in 1384. Such a natural death was not to be his final end though. The Council of Constance declared Wyclif a heretic in 1415, reiterated the ban on his writings, and ordered his remains exhumed and burnt. Wyclif would not be the only one condemned at Constance.


\(^{17}\) Ibid., 50-53
Prague

The Bohemian capital of Prague found itself at the centre of controversy and upheaval in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, beginning with the accession of the Bohemian king Charles I to the role of Holy Roman Emperor in 1346. Suddenly the capital not only of the nation, but the entire Empire, Prague soon became “The first city North of the Alps to boast a university” in 1348, making it a major centre for philosophers and theologians, a factor that would prove significant in later years.

Heavily populated by German migrants as well as Czech natives, Bohemia was no stranger to calls for reform. Waldensian ideas and practices arrived in the country primarily via German settlers in rural areas. Condemned by the church, “Waldensians survived only as isolated groups of secret believers” in stark contrast to the “missionary thrust” of the original Waldensians in France and Italy, but their influence remained and was most likely a factor in the later development of Hussite, and especially Táborite, theology.

Liturgically Prague was also the centre of calls for reform. In the second half of the fourteenth century Bohemia experienced a form of indigenous liturgical reform “focused initially on the frequent reception of the eucharist … [and] in time, widened … to include such matters as the restoration of the lay chalice, the communion of all the baptised, vernacular liturgy and popular hymnody”.

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18 Zeman, Restitution and Dissent, 10.
19 Ibid., 12.
20 Ibid., 13.
While outside influences may have provided some impetus, it was the impact of Czech reformers that led to real change, beginning with John Milič, dubbed “the Father of the Hussite Reformation” by many historians. Milič employed a form of apocalyptic preaching with both pope and emperor cast at times as the antichrist. Understandably this proved unpopular with the religious authorities and Milič was charged with heresy more than once. Choosing to shift his focus, and most probably save his life, Milič turned to what he considered the worst moral excesses of the church in general, and while avoiding further direct attacks on the seats of political and religious power, continued to earn the wrath of others. His personal charisma and commitment to a life of simplicity attracted others to follow him however, and thanks to the assistance of the very Emperor he had termed “antichrist” Milič established a community in a former brothel (gifted by Charles) which he named “Jerusalem”.

When Milič died of natural causes in Avignon (the papal seat) in 1373 while defending himself against further charges, Jerusalem was disbanded. Although some of his followers remained, “much of the old dynamism must have been lost, for the Miličian clergy were thrust out of their positions, persecuted and dispersed.” Such was the scene when one of Milič’s former followers, Matthew of Janov, returned to Prague from the University of Paris in 1381. Matthew resisted the temptation to pursue an academic course and instead followed very much in Milič’s footsteps, calling for a simple – “true” – church, which in itself was far from heresy. Matthew went further though, decrying the post-Constantinian structure of the church and putting forward an anti-papalist – although carefully not anti-papal – line. With his powerful preaching, the

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22 Zeman, Restitution and Dissent, 11.

movement championed by Milič regained some energy, but it was the founding of the Bethlehem Chapel in 1391 by two local businessmen that really pushed things forward. Dedicated as a centre for preaching in the Czech language, the Chapel “was the first church building designated exclusively for preaching (in the vernacular) without the sacramental ministries of a typical parish church.”

While not quite the restitution of Jerusalem, the Bethlehem Chapel ensured Milič’s legacy would be continued.

The Papal Schism in 1378 had a severe impact on the seat of the emperor. Václav IV had succeeded Charles earlier that year and was soon embroiled in a dispute with the Archbishop of Prague, Jan of Jenštejn. This and other problems led to Václav being deposed as emperor in 1400, although he retained his position as King of Bohemia. The downfall of the emperor “further contributed to the growing instability in Bohemian political affairs” as Václav chose not to accept his deposing easily. The former emperor was eventually arrested in 1402 at the order of Sugismund, King of Hungary, who wanted the Bohemian crown for himself. Meanwhile Ruprecht of the Palatinate succeeded Václav as Holy Roman emperor, which along with the aforementioned factors made for uncertain political times in central Europe.

If politics made life uncertain, religion at the beginning of the fifteenth century was even shakier. The Papal Schism split the church between factions supporting each of the two competing pontiffs, and a third, Alexander V, elected in 1409 at the Council of Pisa as an alternative to both. None of the three resigned and, Alexander was dead within a year. His replacement as the third

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would-be pontiff was John XXIII, “with the support of France, England, Italy, Scandanavia and the bulk of the Empire behind him.”

In Prague, despite the calls for simplicity and poverty from the likes of Milič and Matthew of Janov, the power of the church was considerable. An estimated twenty-five to fifty percent of Bohemian land was owned by the church, and the sheer number of clergy added to the church’s influence. Thomas Fudge notes that the Cathedral alone had between 200-300 clerics, while in the city itself “there were 330 secular priests, 400 monastic clergy and 1,200 clerics studying at the Charles University.” These factors, placed alongside the Papal Schism and wider political turmoil, “exacerbated the climate of religious discontent”.

The Papal Schism also had the effect of making study in Paris less attractive. France had long been a popular destination for Czech students, who were now looking further afield to the English universities. The connection was further strengthened in 1382 when Anne of Bohemia, sister of the king and emperor, married King Richard II. English universities were keen to capitalise on the trend, and encouraged Czech visitors whenever possible. In 1388 a scholarship was established to support a Czech student at Oxford. The teachings and ideas of John Wyclif were still alive and well at Oxford four years after his death and it was inevitable that the Czech students, familiar already with challenges to the established church at home, would be tempted to explore Wyclif’s works further. Howard Kaminsky describes the result:

26 Ibid., 11.


By about 1390 Wyclif’s philosophical works had begun to reach Prague, where their philosophical realism found soil that had already been prepared by a Thomist revival among the Dominicans, whose Parisian college had been transferred to Prague in 1383 because of the schism. At the same time, however, the increase in numbers and quality of the Czech members of the university, restricted to the Bohemian nation, was generating constant conflict over power and place with the Germans, dominant in the other three nations. Since Ockhamite nominalism was the doctrine of most of the Germans, the Czechs had an understandable inclination to embrace Wyclifism. It was not only opposed to nominalism: it had also the prestige of an import from the more advanced or at least more venerable scholarly circles of the west.29

Hus

In the 1390s a young Czech student, John Hus, was one of many who earned money by copying Wyclif’s works. Born into a working class family in southern Bohemia Hus arrived in Prague around 1390 to study. By 1394 he was teaching at the university and in 1401 Hus became dean of philosophy. The following year he was appointed as rector of the Bethlehem Chapel and quickly established himself as a leader of the reform movement.

This is not the place to fully canvas the various arguments surrounding the influence Wyclif had on Hus.30 It undeniable that there was some influence – it would have been all but impossible to avoid Wyclif’s works in Prague at the time – but precisely how much is a matter of debate. It would be entirely false, however, to describe Hus as the originator of the movement for reform in

29 Kaminsky, Hussite Revolution, 24.

30 For a good discussion of Wyclif’s influence on Hus and his followers see, Vilém Herold, “How Wyclifite was the Bohemian Reformation?” The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice 2, Papers from the XVIIIth World Congress of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences, Brno (1996): 25-37.
Bohemia. As has been noted, in the persons of Milič and Matthew of Janov, along with others:

Hus had many forerunners ... He was first and foremost their successor and only secondarily Wyclif’s disciple. What he added to their achievement was not new doctrine, either on his own or Wyclif’s account, but the courage of the convictions which he had gained from them. He translated these from being the property of a small band into becoming the standard of a national movement.31

In 1403 John Hübner, a German professor at the university in Prague, presented a list of forty-five Wyclifite works to the diocese with a request that they be condemned. The church authorities passed the list to the university masters for a judgment, where the German majority ensured all forty-five were banned from being taught or defended. Predictably, the result was precisely the opposite. Thus, armed with both the foundations laid by his predecessors and the rising popularity of Wyclifite thought, John Hus set out to demand change.

At the same time Hus accepted the rectorship of the Bethlehem Chapel, the archbishopric of Prague became vacant. When his replacement died suddenly before assuming the post the new archbishop was one Zbyněk Zajíc, a 25 year old who quickly formed a positive relationship with the also young Hus. It became evident that the archbishop was to be a friend of the reformers, and even took a leading role in the process. 32 A parting of the ways arrived when Alexander, as noted above, was elected as the would-be papal tie-breaker. Archbishop Zbyněk chose to support one of the three, Gregory XII, and insisted his clergy follow suit. However the king, Václav IV, had dropped his support for Gregory in 1408 and now supported Alexander’s successor, John XXIII. Hus


32 Fudge, The Magnificent Ride, 65.
and most of his supporters, already facing strained relationships with their superior, chose to also support John, leading to conflict with the archbishop. By the end of 1408 Zbyněk had shifted from being a staunch supporter of reform to open opposition.

Like his predecessors, Hus focused his calls for reform on personal morals and the shape of the church. While sharing Wyclif’s concept of the church as the elect – or predestination – Hus chose to take the pragmatic view that “one can never be certain that one is predestined.” In the more theologically radical area of eucharistic doctrine Hus disagreed with Wyclif, but the die, it seems, was cast.

Following the issuing of a papal bull condemning Wyclif’s works in 1409 Zbyněk established a commission to examine the influence of Wyclif’s heresy in Prague, with the clear intention of crushing the movement for reform. Zbyněk also banned preaching in private chapels, a clear attempt to shut down the Bethlehem Chapel. Hus fought back, denouncing the commission from the Chapel pulpit and taking copies of Wyclif’s writing directly to Zbyněk asking that he “point out their errors and heresies.” He also prepared an appeal to John XXIII in which, among other points, he suggested the original bull, from Alexander, “had been obtained through bribery and dishonesty on the part of Zbyněk.” On the preaching ban Hus argued that the Bethlehem Chapel had been founded with the approval of the former archbishop and thus was not “private”. Zbyněk responded by burning around 200 copies of Wyclif’s works and officially excommunicating Hus and his followers, who promptly ignored him and continued as they had done previously. Hus gathered supporters at

33 Zeman, Restitution and Dissent, 15.
34 Fudge, The Magnificent Ride, 72.
35 Ibid.
the university to mount a series of defences of Wyclif’s works with Hus himself closing the sessions with a sermon based on the English radical’s sermons.

What followed was a series of to and fro moves designed by Zbyněk, on the one hand, to unseat Hus and bring down the movement for reform, and by Hus, on the other, to further the work for change already begun. In 1411 it seemed the matter was finally settled when Zbyněk died suddenly, aged 34. With the archbishop dead it might be assumed that his personal disputes with Hus would die with him, but a combination of the proceedings Zbyněk had set in place continuing without him and the shift from the reformers challenging only the religious authorities to the inclusion of secular political powers meant Hus would continue to face danger.

The major shift came when Hus and his supporters spoke out against the selling of indulgences to fund a new crusade. Hus condemned the practice harshly, resulting in a split emerging in the reform movement. Two in particular, Štěpán Páleč and Hus’ former teacher Stanislav of Znojmo shifted from being staunch supporters to leaders of the opposition to reform. The dispute shifted from arguments over theology to fighting in the streets, with several reformers summarily executed for their actions. “The bodies of the victims were carried to the Bethlehem Chapel while throngs sang the hymn, ‘these are the martyrs, these are the holy ones, who for the gospel of God offered their lives and have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb’”.36 The movement had its first martyrs, and they would not be the last. Reform turned to revolt as violence broke out in the streets of Prague, lasting for several days. The king warned of dire consequences if the protests continued. Hus was once again censured and excommunicated, and in 1412 it was ordered that:

36 Ibid., 80.
No one belonging to the household of faith was furthermore to have anything to do with Hus. No one, under pain of ecclesiastical censure was to speak to the heretic, give him food or drink or shelter. No one was to sell him anything of buy any article he might sell. In any town or city where he might seek shelter, that vicinity was declared under interdict for a period of up to three days after Hus departed. If he were to die, he was not to be buried, and if perchance he had already been buried he was to be exhumed from consecrated ground. 37

The sentence was publicly pronounced in Prague on 18 October resulting in crowds gathering to support Hus. He had plenty of public support, but none from church or state, and only a few masters still backing him at the university. Hus refused to follow the directives of the censure, taking the unprecedented step of appealing to God. He continued to preach, leading to a papal order that the Bethlehem Chapel be demolished. Despite attempts, the building remained upright and in response the whole of Prague was placed under interdict, this time with no royal intervention. Unwilling to see the city left without the services and sacraments of the church, Hus went into voluntary exile.

Hus’ departure from Prague, far from signalling the defeat of reform, “turned out to be a signal for the victorious march of revolutionary forces.” 38 No longer confined to the Bethlehem Chapel, Hus preached to large outdoor assemblies, and away from the scholarly precincts of the university his words were even more successful at reaching the general populace. By the time Hus was eventually convicted of heresy by the Council of Constance – the same Council that condemned Wyclif – and burned at the stake on 6 July 1415 he was already a hero to the people of Bohemia and following his death “was canonised in the popular imagination and his evolving sainthood became a key

37 Ibid., 80-81.

38 Zeman, Restitution and Dissent, 17.
component in the Hussite reformation.”³⁹ What was intended to bring an end to the stirrings of rebellion in Bohemia actually unleashed an all-out revolution; “The storms of the Hussite age broke with unrelenting ferocity. Bohemia was convulsed for eighteen years against a backdrop of blood and fire.” Religiously, of course, those convulsions would last much longer.⁴⁰

**Hus and Confirmation**

Hus may have set in train a revolution, but he said very little about confirmation. It is clear that, while broadly accepting many of Wyclif’s views, Hus did not agree wholesale with the English reformer’s sacramental points. What Hus did do, according to David Holeton, was create a “contextual distance” between himself and Peter Lombard.⁴¹

Like most of the scholastic theologians, Lombard had assumed that the gap between baptism and confirmation would be relatively brief; days, weeks, months or maybe a year. Infant confirmation was his presumed norm. Hus, however, lived in a context where the gap was usually measured in years. This was partly a result of the size of his archdiocese and the small number of bishops, but it was also due to a “general disinterest” in confirmation among the populace.⁴² For Hus, therefore, the norm was that confirmation, when celebrated at all, was conferred on older children and even adults. Thus he could refer to confirmation as “a sacrament for those of intellectual understanding, founding it upon a curious citation from Rom. 10:10: ‘he who

³⁹ Fudge, *The Magnificent Ride*, 90.


⁴² Ibid., 86.
believes through the faith of baptism [rather than Paul’s ‘belief with the heart’] to justification will confess with the mouth [at confirmation] and be saved.”

Hus makes no suggestion that the interval between baptism and confirmation should include any form of instruction or catechesis. Elsewhere in his Sentences he affirms most of contemporary practice, including the use of chrism and the sign of the cross, but describes confirmation as “a sacrament of character; which may, in the absence of a bishop, be performed by a presbyter.” This latter point seems to echo Wyclif’s belief that presbyteral confirmation was common in pre-Constantinian times.

Hus’ views on confirmation are largely affirmed by another Prague reformer, Tomáš of Štítný, a lay contemporary of Matthew of Janov who had arrived in Prague in 1381. Tomáš wrote extensively on civil and religious matters, but received little attention at the time. This was in part because he wrote in Czech rather than Latin and partly because he was neither a cleric nor a university graduate.

Tomáš authored a commentary on the sacraments that includes a brief chapter on confirmation. In language reminiscent of Faustus’ Pentecost sermon, Tomáš, like Hus, appears to accept the traditional form of confirmation but describes it as “given by a bishop to a person who is baptised and is able to think for himself … the one who is confirmed acknowledges those

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43 John Hus, Super IV Sentences IV cited in ibid.

44 Holeton, Fifteenth Century Origins, 86.

45 Both Wyclif and the Hussites appealed to this as the ‘golden age’ of the church. It is significant to note that they equate a shift in sacramental power with a shift away from simplicity in the church.
responsibilities which his baptismal sponsor acknowledged for him, namely that he will always keep his true faith.”

The position Tomáš outlines, which corresponds closely with Hus, is remarkably similar to that which would form the basis of so-called ‘reformed’ confirmation more than a century later, namely: “it is for those who are of age (can think for themselves) and involves a personal acknowledgement of the vows made on their behalf at baptism.” It is notable, however, that neither Tomáš or Hus make any mention of the Holy Spirit in relation to confirmation, either as a point of reception or ‘strengthening’, and nor do they suggest any form of educational requirement leading up to it. In this they appear to fall short of where the later reformers would take things and out of step with the understandings formulated by the scholastic theologians. Confirmation in early fifteenth century Bohemia, it could be said, was once again at a point of transition.

The Táborites

Howard Kaminsky described the events in Bohemia following the death of John Hus as, “a movement for reform, which then became a revolt: both then becoming wider and deeper, the reform passing into reformation, the revolt into revolution.” The reforms ushered in by those events led to nothing less than a new Bohemian church: the Utraquists (or Calixtines) so called because of their insistence of the restoration of the lay chalice (from the Latin sub utraqum

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46 Tomáš of Štítný, Chapters Concerning the Seven Sacraments cited in Holeton, Fifteenth Century Origins, 86.

47 Ibid.

specie), a symbol of which the Hussite ‘Warriors of God’ had emblazoned on their shields in battle.

The Utraquists rejected papal authority and placed power in local – often lay - hands instead, but they retained most of the Roman liturgical and sacramental practices as they had been (with the exception of the eucharist, which they enhanced in priority and restored the lay chalice). Doctrinal matters were placed in the hands of the University at Prague, and later in synodical councils. Kaminsky has argued that the degree to which Ultrasquism split from Rome depended largely on the class status of those involved. Regardless, the retention of Roman sacramental rites produced a particular problem in terms of ordination. Because the necessity for ordinations to be carried out by a bishop with valid standing in the apostolic succession was not challenged, great, and occasionally dishonest, efforts were put into ensuring a continued supply of clergy.

There is in the Utraquist arrangements a foreshadowing of things to come, as J.K. Zeman notes:

With the sole exception of the sacramental power of ordination – which of course was indispensable to the life of the Church – the Utraquist Church functioned as a schismatic national Church. Apart from the cup for the laity and the use of the vernacular in worship, the degree of deviation from Roman doctrine varied greatly. With considerable justification, one might describe the Utraquist Church as a proto-Anglican Church, with uniformity in worship and breadth in doctrine.


50 See Zeman, *Restitution and Dissent*, 16.

51 Ibid.
While the Utraquists rejected Rome, they made no attempt to rid Bohemia of the Roman church. It remained as a small church in the nation, some parishes sitting outside Hussite areas and others located next door to Utraquist congregations. Zeman notes that this became a unique hope for the future:

The two “popular” Churches … lived side by side and gradually accepted religious dualism and mutual toleration. The Religious Peace of Kutná Hora (1485) guaranteed to individual persons of all classes, including the peasants, freedom to choose between the two communions. The principle of ecclesiastical dualism, soon to become pluralism, was recognised for the first time in modern European history.\(^\text{52}\)

Unsurprisingly within such a broad church, sectarian dissent was evident, especially in the early days of the reformation. Most were small groups based around specific leaders and did not last long. A few, such as the Adamites and Pickarts, were bigger and more organised. These groups were dealt with harshly, their leaders killed and persistent followers hunted down and burnt. Although there is evidence for ongoing Adamite and Pikart activity, by the early 1420s sectarian dissent had ceased to play a significant role in Bohemian society.

Alongside the sectarian groups there were others who represented the more radical edge of the organised church. Chief among these were the Táborites, a group originating in southern Bohemia where those who believed the Utraquist church was not going far enough in its reforming efforts gathered outside the churches, on open hilltops. The foremost of these groups met on a hill they renamed ‘Mount Tábor’ “after the mountain in Galilee where Jesus was

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\(^{52}\) Ibid.
supposed to have spoken with his disciples and to have appeared to them after his death.”

The primary focus of the Táborites was to push Ultraquism into further reforms, and to hold the church true to the ‘law of God’ which became a key concept for the Hussites. It has been noted that there was never any intention at the beginning for the Táborites to stand outside or split from the Utraquists, in time such a split became inevitable – especially when the group elected its own bishop – and if the Táborites themselves did not consider themselves a sectarian group, many within the church did.

Of primary interest to this study is the position of the Táborites on baptism and confirmation. This was outlined in a 1431 debate between masters of the University at Prague, led by Jan Rokycana, later to become the Utraquist Archbishop of Prague, and a group of Táborite priests, led by Miluláš of Pelhřimov. At the beginning of the debate Rokycana presented a list of seven “errors” he accused the Táborites of following. “First among these was that the Táborites did not observe all the sacraments – here naming unction and confirmation.” Rokycana accused the Táborites of calling confirmation ‘frivolous’ and describing it as ‘a work of the devil’, “while the chrism they called ‘corrupt and fetid,’ language which has a particular Wyclifite ring to it.”

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53 Kaminsky, Chiliasm and the Hussite Revolution, 45.

54 See Fudge, The Law of God


56 Holeton, Fifteenth Century Origins, 87.

57 Ibid. Holeton notes that this is unsurprising given the common espousal of Wyclifite points among the Táborites and the presence among them of an Englishman who had been a student of Wyclif himself, Peter Paine. (See ibid., 99)
Rokycana argued the official church position on the usual scholastic points, while Miluláš rejected that position entirely. Condemning contemporary church practice, using Wyclif, scripture and scholastic examples, he then put forward a dramatically simplified rite of baptism, devoid of almost all the medieval ceremonial, and recommended “that the ‘corrupt’ medieval rites of confirmation be allowed to pass away and, in their stead, proposed the restoration of what they called ‘the sacrament of the imposition of hands.’”

Miluláš justified this hand-laying sacrament by linking it to the same passage Hus had referred to from Romans 10:10 (albeit with an accurate citation in this instance). He argued that the hand-laying was required to provide spiritual strengthening after baptism and found its origins in Mark 10:16, where Jesus lays hands upon children, and the apostolic actions in Acts 2 and 19. He also appealed to the work of Aquinas and Pope Innocent V, both of whom had noted the confirmation had its origins in the church and could not be said to have been instituted by Christ. The key to his argument was Innocent V’s position that “Confirmation, in so far as the imposition of hands goes, has its origins in the apostles; but in so far as the chrismation goes, it has its origins in the church.”

Holeton notes that, despite the clear Wyclifite influences elsewhere in the Táborite’s arguments, there is nothing of the English radical in their proposed hand-laying rite. Indeed it would have seemed unacceptable to Wyclif, “accepting, as it did, a separation in time between baptism and hand-laying,

58 Ibid., 87-88.

59 Holeton notes how profoundly the Pentecost sermon supposedly by Faustus of Riez had impacted on medieval language “for there is nothing essentially biblical in relating strengthening and confirmation.” Ibid., 99.

60 Pope Innocent V, Commentary of the Sentences cited in ibid., 88.
and claiming for it sacramental status, for which Jesus’s own ministry as recorded in the gospels and apostolic practice as recorded in Acts were invoked as biblical proof-texts for the ‘restored’ rite.”

In the suggested rites propagated by the Táborites in 1431 we catch a glimpse of the beginnings of what confirmation would look like following the continental reforms a century later; but there are significant differences. While the claim of an ancient apostolic rite of hand-laying would be widely repeated, conferring it with sacramental status would not. There is no evidence that the Táborites ever actually practiced this rite – we have no surviving Táborite liturgical texts – and given that the defeat of their armies at the Battle of Lipany just three years later saw the Táborites severely restricted to the point that they had all but disappeared by the second half of the fifteenth century, it is quite possible that the rite remained unused, or at least very short-lived. The theory remained however, and proved influential on a young man who would have great influence on the development of Bohemian religion.

Chelčický

Petr Chelčický would have observed the 1431 debates with great interest. An Utraquist monastic, Chelčický demonstrated radical insights into both theological and social matters that would have a major effect on Bohemian life. At least in part as a response to the debates Chelčický wrote Instruction on the Sacraments in which, while falling largely on the Táborite side in overall tone, he challenged both the positions at various points and disagreed strongly with both Utraquist and Táborite stances on infant baptism.

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61 Ibid.
Baptism, Chelčíčky argued, “is both chronologically and in principle preceded by faith born of the preached and heard Gospel.”\textsuperscript{62} It requires an acknowledgement of the Gospel and a personal statement of faith, thus “[b]aptising in ‘large numbers’ without this prerequisite of singularity, as is traditionally done throughout Christendom, even including Hussite Bohemia where ‘all are baptised all the time’ and ‘the body of Christ and his blood are given to all, is a vestige of a detrimental clerical poison and error.”\textsuperscript{63} This complete rejection of infant baptism stood at odds with the Utraquist moves to reinstate infant communion.

To reinforce his argument Chelčíčky appealed to Dionysius the Areopagite, believed by most at the time to be a direct disciple of the Apostle Paul, who, in a recorded conversation with a ‘Timothy’ – supposedly Paul’s companion – had emphasised the importance of catechesis and the educational responsibility to prepare candidates for baptism. Just a few decades later it would be revealed that Pseudo-Dionysius (as he became known) was actually a Christian Neo-Platonist writing in the late fifth or early sixth century. Thus the views and practices he perpetuates as being of the first century are in fact based on events several hundred years later.

The reliance on material believed to be of a much earlier origin than it actually was is of utmost importance in our consideration of the roots of reformed confirmation. While the concept of a “forgery” is relatively modern (it was not considered unusual or inappropriate in antiquity for a writer to assume for themselves another’s identity in their role as conveyors of tradition), the fact


\textsuperscript{63} Molnár, \textit{Petre Chelčíčky’s}, 185. Here Chelčíčky refers to his view that the sacraments in general, while occasionally useful, are not essential to salvation (a view he shared with the Táborites) and were often simply used as a way to enforce the power of the church and clericalism.
that large sections of initiation theology came to be based on two such works – the Pentecost sermon attributed latterly to Faustus of Riez but at the time believed to be by a Pope Melchiades, and the work of Pseudo-Dionysius – raises serious questions about the foundations upon which the rite came to be built. We shall return to this point later.

On confirmation, Chelčický is blunt in rejecting its sacramental status. Here he stands in agreement with the Táborite position in dismissing the rite as being without scriptural warrant. Like the Táborites, however, and drawing once again on the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, Chelčický argues for a rite of hand-laying. For Chelčický this was a way forward for those baptised as infants. In his writings he “allowed that the infants of believing parents could be baptised on the condition that those children would then be entrusted to a good teacher who would assure their education in the faith” following which, at a later date, they would be fully initiated through a rite of hand-laying.64

Like Miluláš, Chelčický too argues that this form of hand-laying, for which he maintained the name “confirmation”, represented an early church practice. He claimed to have heard about it from none other than Hus’ former teacher turned opponent, Stanislav of Znojmo:

According to Chelčický, Stanislav recounted the time in the apostolic church when (believing) parents had their children baptised, raised them as best they could according to God’s will, and when they were old enough, brought them to the bishop who taught them all things necessary for salvation. Having undertaken to follow those teachings and walk in the way of Christ, the bishop confirmed the adolescent giving him/her a light buffet to show that Christians must be prepared to turn the other cheek. Those unwilling to make the

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64 Holeton, Fifteenth Century Origins, 90.
required promises were expelled from the community so that the devil would not have a means of access to it.\textsuperscript{65}

Thanks to Chelčický’s appeal to a supposedly unquestionable source the foundations were laid for a radically new understanding of confirmation to emerge. The myth of a delay between baptism and confirmation in apostolic times, with a period of catechesis followed by a personal statement of faith and commitment to the church, would prove to be a key factor in the developments that followed. Moreover the possibility of expulsion from the community for those who refused or were unable to make the required statements suggests an age for confirmation not earlier than adolescence. But who would be the first to put these theories into practice? Chelčický himself never did, or at least there is no evidence to suggest such, and his monastic lifestyle makes it even less likely. It would be another three decades, then, before a group emerged that would not only put Chelčický’s thoughts into practice, but actually shape a version of confirmation that was undeniably dissimilar to what had gone before.

**The Bohemian Brethren, or, Jednota Bratrská**

The Jednota Bratrská\textsuperscript{66} are in some ways an offshoot of the Taborité, although in other ways they stood opposed to core Taborité doctrine, which was to an extent appropriate as they really did represent the realisation of Chelčický’s dream. There is perhaps further irony in that their initial leader, Řehoř (Gregory) of Prague, was in fact the nephew of Jan Rokycana, who had represented the university masters at the debates with the Taborité in 1431. In 1457 Řehoř led a small group of men to the area of Kunvald (or Kunevald) in

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} There are various names for the group; *Bohemian Brethren* is common, as is *Unitas Fratrum*. For the purposes of this work we shall be drawing heavily from the research of David Holeton, who chooses the Czech language term *Jednota Bratrská* (Unity of the Brethren) so we shall do likewise.
Eastern Bohemia. There they established a community focused on the question, “Where and how can we find full assurance of salvation?”  

They separated themselves from the Utraquist church – although not for any major doctrinal reasons – and devoted themselves to seeking an answer. Inspired by Archbishop Rokycana himself, the new community wanted to make real the ideas of a reformed church transforming society that they had heard in his sermons but seen little evidence of in reality. In this way, removing themselves from society to focus solely on a spiritual quest, the Jednota strongly resembled the actions of those in the monastic tradition for over a thousand years, yet another irony given the “anti-monastic tenor of the Bohemian reformation.”

What began as a small religious community served by a chaplain (who was also the local Utraquist priest), developed over a decade into a church in its own right, with its own distinct set of doctrines and practices. This was in part due to suspicion on the part of the Utraquist church and concern from the civil authorities. As the Jednota drifted apart from the Utraquists both geographically and in terms of organisation, so they began to disagree over areas of practice and teaching. Mostly the split was due to a genuine zeal for reform in the Jednota which gradually shifted them further from their roots.

In many ways the Jednota are an excellent example of both how far – and swiftly – the Bohemian reformation moved beyond Hus, and how much his influence continued.

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67 Zeman, Restitution and Dissent, 22.
68 Holeton, Church or Sect, 10.
69 Ibid., 11.
The differences between Hus, who tried so desperately to convince the Council of Constance of his orthodoxy, and the simple brother who sought to live by the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount are so great that it is easy to overlook Hus’s influence on the Unity’s doctrine. Perhaps his most important contribution was his insistence that the only true head of the church is Christ. Though Hus and the Brethren differed on the role of secular authority in the church, they agreed that the primary authority for Christians is the law of Christ as revealed in scripture. Most important, Hus demystified the institutional church and showed that it is a human institution in need of constant reform and accountability, both to God and to the people it serves ... It was in part because Hus provided resources for the laity that someone like Gregory was confident in his ability to recreate the church of the apostles.70

In terms of the sacraments, the Jednota retained all seven, but gave to some new meaning and intent.71 In this regard they remained in sync with the traditional church and rejected the positions of those, like Chelčický and the Taborités, who had suggested confirmation and unction were not sacraments. This may have been a point in common with the Utraquists, but it would not stop sacramental theology proving a sticking point between them later.

That tensions arose is clear in the number of apologies written by the Jednota to explain their position. Thanks to those writings we have a relatively clear picture of sacramental practice among the Jednota, including their initiation rites, which show the clear influence of Chelčický.72

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71 The Jednota would finally reduce their accepted sacraments to two in 1528 following contact with Martin Luther.

72 These apologies are all in Czech but cited in English in Holeton, *Fifteenth Century Origins*, 92-93.
Whilst rejecting Chelčický’s ban on infant baptism, the Jednota had adopted much of his heavily revised model for confirmation. In 1468 we read that the Jednota required three sponsors for each infant to be baptised, who then had the responsibility of instructing the child and, “when the child is grown up and can answer for himself,” presenting the child to the pastor (not bishop) who “is then to question the candidate as to his intention to persevere in the way of Christ and the faith of the apostles.” Once satisfied the pastor “shall receive him into the congregation and by the imposition of hands confirm him, and pray that God will give him strength.”

Here we have a clear picture of a rite of affirmation of promises, reception into membership, and hand-laying with a prayer for strengthening – all gathered up under the term “confirmation”. While the laying on of hands and strengthening mirror aspects of medieval confirmation, there is little else here that resembles the sacrament inherited from the scholastic theologians. In the Jednota version of confirmation we see a first example of what would, over the coming century, come to be regarded as the reformed rite.

More evidence of the rationale behind the Jednota’s approach is found in an apology from 1503. Clearly identified as a pastoral rite (although still considered a sacrament), the practice is defended as apostolic. Scriptural foundation is cited from Acts and Mark – as per the arguments of Chelčický – and again Pseudo-Dionysius’ apology for the baptism of infants is cited as evidence of what was believed to be a clear apostolic approach.

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73 Cited in ibid., 92. Holeton notes there is no mention of Chelčický’s suggestion that those unable or unwilling to make the required promises should be expelled from the community.

74 Cited in ibid.
We find further details of Jednota practice in a seventeenth century history of the movement which recounts details from a service for the reception of novices into the Church.\textsuperscript{75} It includes an exhortation at the end of the order of baptism which reminds parents of their obligation to “carefully instruct the child until they can with approval set him, religiously educated and rightly brought up, in the presence of the church, and commend him to the pastoral care of the ministers.”\textsuperscript{76}

David Holeton has noted that in the Jednota practice of confirmation we see not only what would become common in the churches of the “Second Reformation” of the sixteenth century, but also the problems it presents:

In the two apologies, the candidate is said to be received either “into the congregation” or “into the fellowship of the church.” This does serious violence to the biblical (and catholic) understanding of baptism as incorporation into the Church – something that was fiercely maintained by Ultraquism’s insistence that all those baptised (regardless of age) were to receive the eucharist as the weekly ongoing sign of their membership in the Body of Christ, the church. The Jednota were surely conscious of this, for they ceased to communicate infants and young children from the time of their break with Ultraquism.\textsuperscript{77}

Of significance is that the understanding and practice of confirmation carried by the Jednota into the sixteenth century remained firmly grounded in the myth of apostolic roots. The work of Pseudo-Dionysius is the clear example of this, and continued to be cited as a chief justification for the Jednota’s actions. But the language used in their rites and rationales also reflected Faustus’ Pentecost

\textsuperscript{75} Amos Comenius, \textit{Historia Fratum Bohemorum} cited in Fisher, \textit{The Reformation Period}, 166.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{77} Holeton, \textit{Fifteenth Century Origins}, 93.
sermon, by this stage revealed not to be of papal origin with questions raised about its true date and authorship. These connections to what was commonly accepted to be an authentic view of the early church gave the Jednota’s revised rite an aura of authenticity it would otherwise be unlikely to receive. What helped, of course, as Holeton notes, is that there was a “relatively low level of popular attachment to confirmation in the late middle ages” so thus a common lack of interest in whether the rite was changed or not among the general populace. This “apathy leads to ignorance” approach has time and again allowed radical changes to confirmation understanding and practice with little in the way of challenge.

The Jednota Bratrská and the Sixteenth Century Reformations

While none of the key players in the reformations of the sixteenth century directly acknowledged either Hussite or Jednota influences, it is extremely difficult to imagine that the events in Bohemia over some two hundred years failed to inform the decisions of those who were about to set the rest of Europe alight. Debate will, of course, continue as to just how direct the road from Wyclif to Hus to Erasmus to Bucer to Luther and beyond really was, but the fact remains that, in terms of confirmation at least, the pastoral rite with a strong catechetical emphasis practiced by the Jednota looks remarkably like the rites that emerged over the next fifty years.

The question remains, however, as to whether the rite of confirmation that emerged from Bohemia in the early sixteenth century was really a whole new tributary with no relation to the river that had flowed from the early church to the medieval scholastics. Let us draw some comparisons:

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78 See Johnson, Rites of Christian Initiation, 209.

79 Holeton, Fifteenth Century Origins, 94.
Did the Jednota consider confirmation a sacrament? Yes. It was not until after their meetings with Luther in the mid 1520s that the Jednota abandoned the seven traditional sacraments – and with them any hope of reconciliation with the Utraquists – in favour of the two dominical sacraments adopted by the other European reformers. It may have looked different, but confirmation was still regarded as a sacrament.

Was the Jednota form of confirmation a gifting of the Holy Spirit? Here the Jednota walked what David Holeton describes as “a very narrow theological line.” In the 1503 apology the point is made that “there may come [to the confirmand] an increase of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for steadfastness and the warfare of the faith” which is remarkably close to the Roman understanding that the Holy Spirit was “gifted” in some way in confirmation. Close, but perhaps not identical? The line, however, remains thin, especially with the language of “strengthened” and “fight” sounding very similar to the words of Faustus’ sermon, “in baptism we are born to life, in confirmation we are strengthened to fight”, words echoed by Thomas Aquinas, with the concept of preparing for spiritual battle sounding very Aquinas-like also.

Did the Jednota see confirmation as “an increase of grace”? There is no mention of such an increase, although Aquinas paired the term with a “strengthening … for a spiritual battle outside one’s self” which we have already seen formed part of the Jednota’s understanding.

So there are connections between the Jednota rite of confirmation and the sacrament inherited from the scholastic theologians. The crux of the difference,

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80 Ibid., 93.
81 Ibid 93-94.
82 Austin, The Rite of Confirmation, 27.
however, rests on the accepted belief that Jednota confirmation found its roots in a mythical apostolic sacrament of hand-laying which followed a period of instruction and a personal statement of faith; in this the Jednota, while believing they were adopting something very old, actually created something completely new. They may have swum in the Roman pond, but what flowed from their contributions was a completely different stream.

The Sixteenth Century Reformers

Erasmus of Rotterdam, the great humanist, was the first to incorporate the work of both the Utraquists and the Jednota into his reformist writings. In the early fifteenth century Erasmus met with members of both groups to learn about their practices, and in various writings and correspondence he advocated for a greater emphasis on Christian education for those baptised as infants, leading to a formal examination prior to confirmation. It was in 1522 that Erasmus most clearly laid out his concerns in his *Paraphrase on St Matthew’s Gospel*:

> It seems to me that it would be not moderately conducive to this matter if boys who are baptised, when they arrive at puberty, were ordered to be present at discourses of this sort, in which it is clearly declared to them what the baptismal profession involves. Then they should be carefully examined in private by approved men whether they sufficiently retain and remember the things which the priest has taught. If they be found to retain them sufficiently, they should be asked whether they ratify what their godparents promised in their names at baptism. If they answer that they ratify them, then let that profession be renewed in public at a gathering of their equals, and that with solemn ceremonies, fitting, pure, serious, and magnificent, and such things as become that profession, than which there is none more sacred … These thing indeed will have greater authority if they are performed by the bishops themselves, not by the parish priests, or by hired suffragans. ⑧³

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1522, of course, was two years after Martin Luther’s stinging attack on the medieval sacramental system in his highly influential *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. It was still a year, however, before Luther argued in a similar vein.

Erasmus, it should be noted, was primarily interested in adding to the traditional Roman rites rather than reforming them. Thus it could be argued that he was merely continuing the development of the sacramental rites in a vein similar to that of the scholastic theologians. Others, however, were not so much interested in developing those rites as they were in changing or dismissing them entirely.

**Luther**

As we have seen, by the time Luther began his reforming work the seeds of change had already been sown when it came to Christian initiation. Those seeds would bloom dramatically following Luther’s sustained attack on what he perceived to be the unjust “captivity” of the sacraments in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*.

James White has described the 1520 publication of *The Babylonian Captivity* as “a genuine paradigm shift, for it completely undercuts the ground on which the whole medieval sacramental system stood.”[^84] This undercutting begins with Luther’s rejection of the notion of seven sacraments as developed by the scholastic theologians:

> To begin with, I must deny that there are seven sacraments, and for the present maintain that there are but three: baptism, penance, and the bread.^[85]

[^84]: White, *Protestant Worship*, 36-37.

The foundation of this radical culling of the sacraments is Luther’s own development of the “necessary elements” of a sacrament as determined by the scholastic theologians. As already noted, since Aquinas it had been common to add to matter, form and minister the additional requirement of divine or dominical institution. In *The Babylonion Captivity* Luther largely dismisses the first three requirements and demands that only those rites which could be shown to contain “the divine promise” could be deemed to be true sacraments. Luther often refers to these promises as “signs”, which “have attached to them a word of promise, requiring faith.” Thus what is important in baptism, for example, is not the matter (water), form (liturgy) or minister (bishop / priest), but the fact that it has been instituted by God.

It is clear that Luther is developing this approach throughout the writing of *The Babylonian Captivity*. Thus, having included penance as a valid sacrament at one point, later in the same treatise he dismisses it:

... it has seemed proper to restrict the name of sacrament to those promises which have signs attached to them. The remainder, not being bound to signs, are bare promises. Hence, there are, strictly speaking, but two sacraments in the church of God – baptism and the bread. For only in these two do we find both the divinely instituted sign and the promise of forgiveness of sins.

Throughout *The Babylonian Captivity*, and an earlier work, *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* (1519), Luther is at pains to stress the importance of faith.

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87 Ibid.

88 Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, 127.
Thus it is not baptism that justifies or benefits anyone, but it is faith in that word of promise to which baptism is added. This faith justifies, and fulfilts that which baptism signifies.\textsuperscript{89}

In \textit{The Babylonian Captivity} Luther stresses the point further:

For unless faith is present and is conferred in baptism, baptism will profit us nothing; indeed, it will become a hindrance to us, not only at the moment that it is received, but throughout the rest of our lives. That kind of unbelief accuses God’s promises of being a lie, and this is the greatest of all sins.\textsuperscript{90}

In this we find the truly radical nature of Luther’s views on the sacraments; the reduction from seven to two sacraments, while a major shift in thinking and practice, can be seen, as has been noted, as bringing “to a logical conclusion one possible development of the late medieval concept” namely, that to be valid a sacrament must have been instituted by Christ.\textsuperscript{91} Luther’s development of the role of faith, not just in sacramental theology but in the very nature of salvation, leads to the aforementioned “paradigm shift” wherein Luther can claim faith to be so essential a part of a sacrament that the sacrament itself becomes superfluous to salvation.\textsuperscript{92} This is not to say, of course, that Luther (unlike some who would follow him) wanted to dismiss the importance of the sacraments. It is clear that he considered baptism and eucharist essential, but not because of their matter, form or minister, but because of the promises of God they signified. Whatever salvific power they contained came solely from that promise and the believer’s ongoing faith in it.

\textsuperscript{89} Luther, “The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism”, in \textit{Luther’s Works} vol 36, 66.

\textsuperscript{90} Luther, \textit{Babylonian Captivity}, 59.

\textsuperscript{91} White, \textit{Protestant Worship}, 38.

For no sin can condemn him save unbelief alone. All other sins, so long as the faith in God’s promise made in Baptism returns or remains, are immediately blotted out through that same faith, or rather through the truth of God, because he cannot deny himself if you confess him and faithfully cling to him in his promise.93

Having clarified which rites he considered to be true sacraments, Luther turned his attention to those others which he did not, including confirmation.

It is difficult to understand what the Romanists had in mind when they made the sacrament of confirmation out of laying on of hands … Why have they not made a “confirmation” out of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper? It is written in Acts 9, “And he took food and was strengthened”; and in Psalm 104, “And bread strengthens man’s heart.” On this reasoning, confirmation would include three sacraments – the supper, ordination, and confirmation itself. But this argument suggests that anything whatever that the apostles did was a sacrament; but in that case, why did the Romanists not make a sacrament of preaching?

... O would that there were in the church the kind of laying on of hands that obtained in the time of the apostles, whether we preferred to call it confirmation or healing! But nothing of this remains nowadays except what the Romanists have devised to embellish the duties of bishops, lest they be entirely without function in the church ... our present enquiry has to do with the nature of the sacraments of divine institution, and we find no reason for enumerating confirmation among them. What is required above all else for constituting a sacrament is that it should be accompanied by a divine promise, and this, of itself, calls for our faith. But nowhere do we read that Christ gave a promise in regard to confirmation, although he placed his hands on many people ... For these reasons, it is enough to regard confirmation as a rite, or ceremony, of the church ...

93 Luther, The Babylonian Captivity, 60.

94 Ibid.
Luther, therefore, whilst rejecting confirmation as a sacrament, was prepared to regard it as a “rite” or a “ceremony.” That acceptance, however, was not of a confirmation rite as practiced by the medieval church. Luther’s high theology of baptism put him at odds with any notion that confirmation might complete or add to it. If there were to be a confirmation rite it would have to be reformed in such a way that it “did not infringe upon the gift and promise of baptism” and he continued to insist that confirmation was without any scriptural basis and therefore unnecessary, a subject he returned to in a sermon in 1523.

In 1522 Luther had his first contact with the Jednota. The following year he preached a sermon in which he advocated for a practice very similar to that offered by the Jednota and with a strong resemblance to that suggested by Erasmus. As David Holeton notes:

It is impossible to know if Luther’s ideas for reformed confirmation emerged from his conversations with members of the Jednota or if he drew it from his reading of Erasmus. Whatever the case, there is little doubt that the inspiration for Luther’s confirmation lies in the Jednota.

Two years after The Babylonian Captivity Luther returned to confirmation again in a work focused on the Epistle to Titus.

You hear: the water, that is the bath: you hear: to be born again, that is the regeneration and the renewal, and the Spirit, whom here St Paul interprets as the Holy Spirit. And here it is to be noticed that the apostle knows nothing of the sacrament of confirmation. For he teaches that the Holy Spirit is given in baptism, as Christ also teaches, indeed in baptism we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that the apostles laid their hands on the

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95 Johnson, Christian Initiation, 271.

96 Holeton, Fifteenth Century Origins, 95-96.
heads of the baptised, so that they might receive the Holy Spirit, which is analogous to confirmation; but there it happens that the Holy Spirit is given with outward signs and causes men to speak in many tongues in order to preach the gospel. But this was a temporary measure and does not continue any more.\textsuperscript{97}

It was in the same year, 1522, that, in a sermon on marriage, Luther famously described confirmation by bishops as ‘monkey play’ and ‘deception’ before going on to note that a rite of confirmation could be helpful, under certain conditions:

I allow that confirmation be administered provided that it is known that God has said nothing about it, and knows nothing of it, and that what the bishop’s allege about it is false. They mock our God in saying it is a sacrament of God, when it is merely a human invention.\textsuperscript{98}

The following year Luther returned to the subject, going even further and acknowledging a potential positive:

Confirmation as the bishops want it should not be bothered with. Nevertheless we do not fault any pastor who might scrutinise the faith from children. If it be good and sincere, he may impose hands and confirm.\textsuperscript{99}

Note Luther does not suggest replacing confirmation with a scrutiny of the children’s learning. Indeed his pattern of scrutiny followed by confirmation has much in common with a far earlier form of confirmation than that which he would have been used to. What is clear, however, from the writings of Luther and other reformers is that they considered the scrutiny more important than

\textsuperscript{97} Luther cited in Fisher, \textit{The Reformation Period}, 172.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.

the confirmation itself. The confirmation rite represents a culmination of a period of instruction, and an opportunity to test how closely that instruction has been followed. This, then, becomes the point of the service: an examination of those being presented and a celebration of their learning. In this we see a close resemblance between what Luther might have made of confirmation and the work of John Hus and the Bohemian Brethren.

Luther may have seen some potential in a rite of confirmation, but he never developed such a rite himself. He did, of course, produce his own baptism liturgies and both a Longer and Shorter Catechism. In those works Luther made clear where his priorities lay, “namely, that the children of the faithful should be baptised in early infancy and afterwards fully instructed in the faith before they were admitted to adult membership of the Church with the right to participate in Holy Communion.” We can see how this focus continues in a later service, the 1533 Brandenburg-Nuremberg Church Order, which, although probably without input from Luther himself, offers an insight into developing Lutheran thought and practice:

When the people present themselves, the ministers shall discreetly ask them, as they have opportunity, whether they know the ten commandments, the creed and the Lord’s prayer, whether they have a right understanding of the holy sacrament and know what it will profit them if they receive it worthily ... They shall further enquire whether the people understand all these things, so that they might discover whether they are being improved through the preaching of the catechism ... And when they see and recognise that somebody has an understanding of the Christian faith and leads a virtuous life, it is not necessary that such a person should be questioned afresh.

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100 It should be noted that, by his own acknowledgement, Luther had read the Catechism of the Jednota Bratrská before writing his Longer and Shorter Catechisms. See Craig D Atwood, “Catechism of the Bohemian Brethren” Journal of Moravian History 2 (2007): 91.

every time as though he were a stranger, but he may be allowed to come to the holy sacrament whenever he presents himself without being questioned again.  

Whether he was building in the work of the Jednota or Erasmus, or perhaps seeking to expand them both, Luther began stressing the importance of intentional catechetical instruction early in his reforms. By 1523 he was arranging regular instruction for children and using his sermons as educational tools. By 1531 Luther’s catechisms had provided a standard programme of instruction for reformed churches. This focus on catechetical instruction prior to admission to full church membership and communion became a hallmark of the sixteenth century reformation and while, as we shall see, not all the reformers chose to include a ceremony of “confirmation” to mark the conclusion of such instruction, thanks to the links drawn by Luther, Erasmus, the Jednota, Hus and Wyclif, catechesis would become a defining factor within the reformed development of confirmation.  

Calvin  

Where Luther had merely dismissed confirmation as unnecessary, Calvin was savage in his condemnation:  

I confess quickly that I am not of the number of those who think the ceremony of confirmation is idle, as it is observed under the Roman papacy. Rather, I number it among the most deadly tricks of Satan. Let us remember that what they make a sacrament is never entrusted

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102 Ibid.  

103 For more on the development of catechetical instruction in the sixteenth century see Old, *Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite*, 179-200. Old notes that in this respect the Protestant Reformation was also highly influential in Roman Catholic circles, with “the catechetical reform [becoming the] one reform in which Catholics soon joined Protestants.” Ibid., 200.
to us in the scripture, not by this name, not with this rite, not with this meaning.\textsuperscript{104}

It is clear that Calvin shared Luther’s opinion concerning the scriptural basis of confirmation; however his disdain for the rite, at least as it was practiced in the early sixteenth century, was based more on two other factors.

How will they assure us that their chrism is a vehicle of the Holy Spirit? We see oil, that is, a thick and greasy liquid, and nothing more. “Let the word be added to the element,” says Augustine, “and it will become a sacrament.” Let them, I say, produce this word if they would have us see anything more in the oil than oil.\textsuperscript{105}

This attack on the use of chrism features strongly in Calvin’s complaints, described variously as “that rotten oil,”\textsuperscript{106} “filthy oil”\textsuperscript{107} and “oil polluted with a lie of the devil” used in confirmation to deceive “the minds of the simple by shrouding them, as it were, in darkness.”\textsuperscript{108}

Added to his judgments about the use of chrism is Calvin’s criticism of confirmation as detracting from baptism.

What was truly given in baptism, is falsely said to be given in the confirmation of it, that [Satan] may stealthily lead away the unwary from baptism. Who can now doubt that this doctrine, which

\textsuperscript{104} Calvin, Antidote to the Council of Trent, On Confirmation, 1 (1547) cited in Turner, Sources of Confirmation, 46.


\textsuperscript{107} Calvin, Tracts containing Antidote to the Council of Trent; Antidote to the Canons on Confirmation cited in Fisher, The Reformation Period, 255.

\textsuperscript{108} Calvin, Institutes 4, 952.
dissevers the proper promises of baptism from baptism, and transfers them elsewhere, is a doctrine of Satan?\textsuperscript{109}

In common with most of the sixteenth century reformers, Calvin despised the idea that baptism was not full and complete in and of itself, and much of his criticism of confirmation, seen as a completion or addition to baptism, was based on this high view of the sacrament.\textsuperscript{110} Calvin, however, went further than others, including Luther, in drawing out the problematic relationship between baptism and confirmation. This intense focus, a feature of Calvin’s systematic approach to theology, reveals his great love of baptism and “a much higher [than other reformers] appreciation for the sacraments as vehicles of God’s grace and mercy for human beings.”\textsuperscript{111}

Like many of the Reformers, Calvin calls on the work of Pseudo-Dionysius as evidence of an early church rite of catechesis. In the original version of his \textit{Institutes}, published in 1536, Calvin wrote:

I sincerely wish that we retained the custom, which I have stated was practiced among the ancients before this abortive image of a sacrament made its appearance. For it was not such a confirmation as the Romanists pretend, which cannot be mentioned with injury to baptism; but a catechetical exercise, in which children or youths used to deliver an account of their faith in the presence of the church.\textsuperscript{112}

As we are seeing, this myth of an apostolic rite of hand-laying following a period of catechesis was widely accepted by the reformers and heavily shaped their approach to confirmation. While Calvin chose to dispense with the rite, he

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{111} Johnson, \textit{Rites of Christian Initiation}, 249.

\textsuperscript{112} Calvin cited in Fisher, \textit{The Reformation Period}, 258.
too placed emphasis on catechesis as a preparation for a personal declaration of faith among the young.

**Zwingli**

If Luther and Calvin represented the acceptable face of the Sixteenth Century Reformation, Ulrich Zwingli symbolised its radical heart. From his base in Zurich Zwingli was an eager student of reformed thinking. He corresponded with Erasmus and was familiar with Luther, but believed neither went far enough in their thinking.

As well as arguing for the elimination of images and music in churches, Zwingli stripped the liturgy of all but its most basic elements. His was a truly *sola scriptura* stance, and if there were no scriptural mandate it was not to be included in the people’s worship.

In rejecting the sacramental theology of both the medieval church and to a large extent Luther, Zwingli focused heavily on his understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit, as the source of an “interior baptism ... which was possessed by all who had faith in Christ, regardless of whether they had received water baptism or not.”

Maxwell Johnson notes that while Zwingli’s approach to the sacraments in general might suggest an anti-infant baptism bias, the reverse is actually the case. Zwingli defended infant baptism on a variety of points, not least of which was its perceived scriptural warrant in Jesus’ act of blessing children in Mark 10. Again, however, even in his defence of infant baptism Zwingli

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114 Johnson, *Christian Initiation*, 244.
demonstrates the low priority he places on the sacrament in general by arguing its validity but offering no points in favour of its necessity.\footnote{Fisher, The Reformation Period, 130.}

In 1525 Zwingli undertook his own, quite drastic, revision of the baptismal rite, dubbing it a rite of ‘infant dedication’ within which one was placed within the ‘covenant community’.\footnote{White, Protestant Worship, 59-61.} Confirmation was rejected outright due to its lack of scriptural foundation.

**Bucer**

Martin Bucer has often been dubbed “The Father of Protestant Confirmation,” although as we have seen, that honour might better belong to Petr Chelčický or the Jednota. Bucer himself had contact with the Jednota – in 1530 he engaged in correspondence with them regarding hand-laying – and thus the connections with Bohemia continue.

A former Dominican Priest, regular correspondent with Erasmus of Rotterdam, and one time tutor of John Calvin, Martin Bucer arrived in Strasbourg in 1523 at a time of great change. Strongly influenced by Erasmus both in terms of his humanist views and his approach to the sacraments, Bucer faced a strong challenge from the Anabaptist presence in Strasbourg to defend his church’s initiation practices, and in particular infant baptism.\footnote{Fisher, The Reformation Period, 174.} In response he developed “an order for public confession of the faith with hand-laying and prayer” for children baptised as infants to undergo following the appropriate
period of instruction and once they reached the age when Anabaptist children were baptised.\textsuperscript{118}

Bucer's response to criticism over baptism highlights the significance he placed in the sacrament, something he shared with his fellow reformers, even though there was much else they disagreed on. Bucer went so far as to suggest that any reformation of the church had to begin with baptism:

Our principal reformation is with baptism, since we by the Word teach that the exterior baptism is to be held as a sign of the proper baptism of Christ, that is, of the interior cleansing, rebirth and renewal ... and that the washing away of sins and the renewal of the Spirit of all should only be attributed to Christ, who by his Spirit makes the elect pure, believing and blessed.\textsuperscript{119}

Bucer put his concerns into action in Strasbourg, and in the earliest available baptism prayer from that period we find a point vital to understanding where he takes confirmation.

Almighty eternal God, merciful Father, seeing that the righteous shall live by faith alone and seeing that it is impossible to be pleasing to you except by faith, so we pray you would grant the gift of faith to this child, who is of your creation. Seal and confirm him by the presence of the Holy Spirit in his heart, according to the promise of your Son …\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid. There has been a great deal of debate as to whether this work ever existed. Repp assumes it did not (Repp, \textit{Confirmation in the Lutheran Church}, 28-30), as does Old, although acknowledging the debate (Old, \textit{Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite}, 209), while Fisher stands his ground, although acknowledging it is unlikely the rite was ever used by Bucer at Strasbourg.


\textsuperscript{120} Old, \textit{The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite}, 234.
The invocation of the Holy Spirit in this prayer, and especially the use of the term “seal and confirm,” shows a distinct departure from medieval church practice. Here Bucer appears to go to lengths to make clear that it is in baptism that the Spirit is given in total, with no ‘sealing’ required at confirmation.

Unlike some of his fellow reformers, however, Bucer did not reject confirmation, and nor did he seek to reinterpret it entirely from its past form. While Fisher doubted that Bucer’s reformed rite was ever actually used in Strasbourg during his time there, and suggested that there is no clear evidence for any rite of confirmation having been used there in the sixteenth century, he does note one exception: a service used in St Nicholas’ church in Strasbourg somewhere around 1550, a point after Bucer left the city. While there is no definitive evidence that the liturgy used was his, Fisher writes that it “breathes the spirit” of Bucer.121

The liturgy begins with a foreword in the form of a defence of infant baptism, whilst also acknowledging the neglect of catechesis:

“the result has been that, when children have fallen into bad ways, been brought up without any fear of God, and have neither known nor understood the principal articles and the foundation of the Christian religion, it has been impossible for the parish priests and curates to induce even a modicum of discipline and order into the lives of such rough and uncomprehending people, so that the church may be preserved from open crimes and sins.”122

The answer to this dire situation, the foreword states, is a return to “an old practice among God’s people in the Old Testament, as also in the early Christian church” in which, following circumcision or baptism as infants,

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122 Ibid., 175.
children were “instructed and taught with special care and earnestness” the law or “the chief articles of Christian doctrine.” Following this instruction was a public rite of hand-laying and prayers with a profession of faith. “Such a Christian and altogether necessary ceremony is once more provided in the church.”

What follows is the outline of a programme of preparation for confirmation following an unspecified period of instruction:

First, the week before the Sunday on which the children are to be presented they come to church for an hour each day and there recite the whole catechism in order, so that, well practiced, they may not falter anywhere: and then on the Sunday morning in the sermon the pastor gives notice that any children who have now learnt their catechism will in the afternoon make profession of their faith, and admonishes the whole congregation diligently to come to hear them, but in particular he admonishes the children’s parents and their godfathers and godmothers who had them at their baptism and in their name promised and vowed that when they had grown up and come to the age of reason they would make such a profession of their faith before the church.

Secondly, about one o’clock in the afternoon one of the church bells is rung for a quarter of an hour for a first warning, after which the church minister reads two or three chapters of the bible together with

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123 Ibid.

124 The point at which this ‘age of reason’ is reached has been the subject of debate for many centuries. For Bucer, as with other reformers, it was the point where a child could successfully learn and recite a set series of creeds, prayers and catechetical questions, usually around the age of seven. On this point Roman Catholics and Reformers were in general agreement. See Paul Turner, *Ages of Initiation: The First Two Christian Millennia* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 34-36.

125 This focus on the role of godparents and their role in baptism appears to be unique to Bucer among the early reformers. The effect, however, was long lasting, with an emphasis on the role and responsibilities of godparents or sponsors becoming a common feature in reformed baptismal rites. See Johnson, *Christian Initiation*, 247.
the summaries of Veit Dietrich [a German scholar and theologian, and close friend of Martin Luther] from the altar.

Thirdly, when the reading is over, the bells are rung together. In the meanwhile the boys and girls who are being presented should already have assembled, and each one should have modestly have taken the place appointed and assigned to him during the previous week.

Fourthly, after the bells have run, the whole congregation present sings “Come, Holy Ghost”. Then the pastor says from the altar the prayer beginning, *Almighty God, merciful Father, who hast thy holy angel …* together with the *Our Father.*

Fifthly, the pastor says …126

The remainder of the liturgy outlines the rite itself. The focus is very much on the fulfilment of an educational process. The children are reminded that, at their baptisms, their parents and godparents “promised and vowed to bring you up at home in the fear of God, and to teach you, as soon as you were of an age to understand, the ten commandments, the articles of the Christian faith, the Our Father, and all other things which every true Christian ought to believe and know.”127 The completion of this catechetical process is a new presentation in the church “so that you might confess your faith publicly and so submit yourselves willingly to the discipline and order of the church as devout children.”128

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127 Ibid., 176.

128 Ibid.
Each child is then asked six questions, following which they turn to the ten commandments and then each child is expected to “thoroughly recite the exposition of each article [of the catechism].”\textsuperscript{129}

The pastor then outlines the ongoing expectations on those being presented, including a continued attendance at catechism classes on Sundays, that they might “learn your duty to your neighbour … remember and understand all the better everything else that you hear preached, to read the holy scriptures … with greater profit and benefit, and to recognise and discern all false doctrine.”\textsuperscript{130}

Thus far the liturgy bears close resemblance to the declarations of faith and catechesis developed by Luther and Calvin, but a strong departure follows:

“[S]ince there is only one Christian church which has God’s word pure and undefiled together with the true use of the holy sacraments, into which you were incorporated in holy baptism, and in which you are now to be confirmed as its true members through the laying on of hands, you shall promise and vow that you will always cleave to this Christian church, hate and shun the Popish church, and keep yourselves from all other assemblies and sects and everything that is contrary to sound doctrine.”\textsuperscript{131}

There is no doubting then that this is intended to be a confirmation liturgy. Having heard these requirements, along with the exhortation to “faithfully act and live in accordance with” the principal articles of Christian doctrine, “freely and gladly submit” themselves to further instruction, and, in the event they sin, “surrender and submit” themselves to “the discipline, warning and

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 176-177.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 177.
punishment” of their superiors and the church, affirm their willingness to do as they have been exhorted.

Following instruction to those gathered that they “shall henceforth accept and recognise [those confirmed] as fellow members and heirs with yourselves of the Christian church,” the pastor then calls the congregation to prayer before stretching “out his hand over them” and praying. This changes, however, in Bucer’s next confirmation liturgy, prepared for Philip, Prince of Hesse, in 1538.

Although inclined towards the views of Zwingli himself, Philip was concerned with the unity of the reformed churches. Faced with rising antagonism from the Anabaptists, he invited Bucer to assist him in reaching some agreements with them. It appears Bucer had remarkable success, and among other things this resulted in the preparation of the Ziegenhain Order of Church Discipline, an attempt to regulate congregational life, thus introducing a programme of church discipline that Bucer believed would counter the Anabaptist criticisms of the church.

The liturgical structure of the church was of special importance in the Order, which included a rite by which children were to be received into the congregation. Given the official nature of the Order this is arguably the first authorised reformed confirmation rite.

The liturgy, as recorded in the Order reads:

132 Ibid., 178.
Such children who through catechetical instruction (\textit{Catechismos}) are sufficiently advanced in Christian knowledge to be permitted to go to the Lord’s Table shall on a high festival such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, at the instance of the elders and preachers, be presented by their parents and sponsors to the pastors in the presence of the congregation in a place designated in the churches for that purpose. The elders and all other ministers of the Word shall stand about the pastor, who shall then examine these children in the chief articles of the Christian faith. When they have answered the questions and publically surrendered themselves to Christ the Lord and His churches, the pastor shall admonish the congregation to ask the Lord, in behalf of the children, for perseverance and an increase of the Holy Spirit, and conclude this prayer with a collect.

Finally the pastor shall lay his hands upon the children, thus confirming them in the name of the Lord, and establish (\textit{bestetigen}) them in Christian fellowship. He shall thereupon also admit them to the Table of the Lord, adding the admonition that they continue faithfully in the obedience of the Gospel and readily receive and faithfully heed Christian discipline and reproof from each and every Christian, especially from the pastors.\footnote{Repp, \textit{Confirmation in the Lutheran Church}, 31-32.}

In this rite we find, for the first time, a combination of the testing of Christian knowledge, public profession of faith, and admission to Holy Communion. Repp states this as evidence of Luther’s influence on Bucer,\footnote{Ibid., 32} and such is certainly possible, although we might note that the association between confirmation and admission to communion had already existed for some three hundred years by this point.

A year later, in 1539, the \textit{Ziegenhain} confirmation order was further developed in the \textit{Church Order of Cassel}. While the \textit{Order} does not contain any actual formularies, it does include in the appendix a complete text for an “Order for Confirmation and the Laying on of Hands.” Similar in structure to
the earlier rite, this service expanded several points, and crucially outlines the prayer the pastor is to offer prior to the hand-laying. Whilst covering a lot of ground, the prayer includes a request that God “strengthen his work already begun” in the candidates, and “increase to them his Holy Spirit.” Olds notes the significance of this point:

One notices how clear the prayer is on this matter. The prayer asks for the strengthening and increase of the Holy Spirit who has been at work in the child since baptism. The prayer elaborates at some length on the gifts of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{135}

This focus on strengthening and gifts of the Holy Spirit cannot help but draw comparisons with the medieval rites, and those comparisons are even clearer in the rubric following the prayer, which instructs the pastor to lay hands on the child and say, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit, Refuge and Protector against all harm, Strength and help for all good, from the hand of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{136}

References to the Holy Spirit sealing and being received may cast a sacramental hue over the Cassel Order, but there are other aspects introduced as well, of a much more reformed nature. Among them we find in the expositions a greatly expanded section on the role of the rite in imparting church membership, and the implications of such:

[The candidate is asked:] What does such fellowship of the church of Christ imply?

That I practice strict obedience to the Word of God by hearing it at the appointed times, particularly on Sundays when proclaimed by

\textsuperscript{135} Old, \textit{Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite}, 212.

\textsuperscript{136} Repp, \textit{Confirmation in the Lutheran Church}, 38.
the ordained ministers of the church; also by submitting with due humility to the reproof for sin on my part when administered by the elders or any other Christian and by making proper amends. Moreover that I instruct and restore my fellow Christian whom I may find in some sinful conduct or inform some other good Christians of the matter, who in my judgment are able to help those in error. Should these in error refuse to hear the church in the person of these pastors and elders, and are put in the ban in consequence, I will likewise treat them as excommunicated or heathen people.  

What emerges in these orders from the last 1530s is a reformed rite, yet one retaining enough of the medieval elements of confirmation so as not to be unrecognisable. Yet there is no doubt that that while some of the more traditional elements may be present, they are not the major points of the liturgy. A personal profession of faith and evidence of Christian education and preparation take centre stage in these services, along with an increasing concern for church order and discipline.

For Bucer a key concern in this regard was the challenge presented by the Anabaptists. But while much of his work is a response to that challenge, there is also evidence that some of the Anabaptist critique found its way into his own thoughts. In a letter to the Anabaptists of Münster, Bucer acknowledges

... it is appropriate that publicly, at least once in one’s life, one make a profession and affirmation of faith, that one renounce the devil, and surrender oneself to Christ. This could well be done after children baptised in infancy have grown and have regularly received catechetical instruction and Christian teaching and are prepared to make such an affirmation of faith. One could well revive that ancient practice, out of which confirmation developed, that the bishop laid

137 Ibid., 33.

138 Repp suggests that in placing such an emphasis on order and discipline Bucer “gave confirmation an emphasis more congenial to Zwinglian than to Lutheran theology” (an irony given the former rejected it outright). Ibid., 36.
hands on the baptised and conferred (mitlesteten) the Holy Spirit, following the example of the Apostles in Samaria. We read about this same usage in Jerome’s Dialogue against the Luciferians.\textsuperscript{139}

Here we see Bucer reaching for the compromise; how can infant baptism be retained whilst also providing for an essential individual profession of faith? We also, however, find the foundation of Bucer’s reforming of confirmation. For him, at the heart of the rite was the hand-laying. Finding scriptural evidence for the practice in a variety of situations, Bucer sees hand-laying as having a much broader use and significance than tended to be the case in the medieval church. Without that broad application the examples he cites in his letter to the Anabaptists make little sense, not having any relation to infant baptism as such.\textsuperscript{140}

For Bucer confirmation has its roots in the rituals of hand-laying found throughout scripture, but the question remains: did Bucer develop reformed rites of confirmation because he found scriptural warrant for them, or were they more an attempt to appease the Anabaptists? In his catechism of 1543 Bucer explained the purpose of the hand-laying in confirmation, acknowledging that it was not of dominical provenance, but “since Jesus and his disciples did find blessing in its use, it was proper that the church continue to use it in His name.”\textsuperscript{141}

There is also evidence, however, that Bucer, at one point at least, accepted the validity of the sacrament of apostolic hand-laying myth.\textsuperscript{142} As Amy Burnett

\textsuperscript{139} Old, Shaping the Reformed Baptismal Rite, 215.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 215-216.

\textsuperscript{141} Repp, Confirmation in the Lutheran Church, 39.

\textsuperscript{142} See Old, Shaping the Reformed Baptismal Rite, 213-215.
notes, Bucer’s recommendation here is based squarely on his belief “that the ceremony should imitate the practice of the early church, in which the child’s confession of faith would be followed by the imposition of hands by the bishop or pastor.”

He was not alone of course; many of the reformers, including Calvin, acknowledged such, some even, as the Jednota did, citing Dionysius as their justification. This is extraordinary. By the early sixteenth century the works of Pseudo-Dioysius had been revealed to be of much later origin that previously thought, so why would well educated and informed scholars like Bucer continue to follow this line? Bucer, of course, relies primarily on biblical evidence, but this is thin to say the least. It is hard to imagine that his continued acceptance of an early church rite of hand-laying was not based, at least in part, either directly or indirectly, on information that had been proven false. As with the Jednota, these beliefs would inevitably be passed on, and in Bucer’s case that meant beyond his own shores to the dawning reformation in England.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Birth of Anglicanism:

an English Reformation

“Cranmer could not know in 1552 that he was providing a vehicle for English worship which would remain almost unchanged for four hundred years; with his natural modesty and restraint, he might have been appalled by the responsibility if he had known.”

It is a vast oversimplification bordering on fallacy that the Reformation in England was less about theology than that on the Continent. While it is true that Henry VIII’s attempts to escape his ill-fated marriage to Catherine of Aragon were a significant factor in the religious (not to mention civil) upheavals of the 1500s, the ‘King’s Great Matter’ was at least as much about theology as it was politics, and quite possibly more. It was, in fact, the theology of the matter that embroiled the academic who would become Archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, in a struggle that would redefine both church and nation. It is a virtual certainty, however, that, even if the Catherine had borne an heir and Henry had lived on satisfied, the winds of change would have still rattled the windows of the Church in England, and while reform might have been slower it would still have come.

As with Europe, England had experienced the spread of humanist thought in the late fifteenth century, and in the first two decades of the 1500s the influence of Erasmus was clear, especially in the university colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. As with much of Europe, however, this did not automatically translate into reformation. Indeed, when Luther first swept onto the stage, Oxford and Cambridge played a large part in refuting his work, when Henry turned to their theologians for assistance with his own arguments against the

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Great Reformer, an act that earned him the papal title “Defender of the Faith.” This action alone indicates Henry’s personal conservatism, which would not have led him into reform without much persuasion.

This is not to say that England had been immune to calls for church reform prior to Henry’s divorce attempts. As we have seen above, from the mid-fourteenth century John Wyclif and the Lollards had been a constant presence in English theological debates. Lollardy in large part came to represent those dissatisfied with the distance between Church and people. This was evident by the sixteenth century, when Lollardy was still active as attested by numerous records of Lollard executions. Records show the movement remained popular primarily among the working classes, merchants and shopkeepers. This was a movement of commoners, with only a small number of clergy offering support.

Where the Hussites were known for action and rebellion, the Lollards were far more restrained. There were strong sermons and withering critiques, but they bore little in the way of reformative fruit; “the Lollards hoped and sometimes planned, but without results.”

Events in Europe in the early sixteenth century led to further calls for reform, no less in England than elsewhere. As Henry VIII leapt to condemn Luther, others were warming to his views. By 1520 Luther’s writings were widely read in both Oxford and Cambridge universities, and the desire for change was growing, although it would take another decade before the first attempt at liturgical reform was published. It remains true, however, that the shape of the

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3 Dickens, English Reformation, 53.

4 Aston, Faith and Fire, 23.
reformed English Church would differ starkly from that of most of its Continental equivalents. The great *via media* of the Church of England stems from an earnest attempt to maintain that which was of value from the medieval church and change that which was not. While it would be formalised in Elizabethan times, its foundations lay far deeper in the English mindset. This would lead to a softening of the reformation blows in many areas, sometimes against the earnestly held beliefs of those who would advocate for them. This was especially true in the case of liturgical reform, the chief architect of which was Cranmer.

**Thomas Cranmer**

The common view of Cranmer can perhaps be summed up in a quote from one of the few in-depth explorations of his theology: “By temperament Cranmer was cautious and conservative. He came slowly to his own convictions, and he did not attempt to press them hastily on others.” Yet this “cautious and conservative” man put his ordination at risk not once but twice by marrying in what appears to be some haste! Such are the risks of trying to define Thomas Cranmer too specifically.

There is still much debate as to precisely when Cranmer adopted reforming views. Certainly there would have been few if any thoughts of religious revolution in the mind of the young man who arrived to begin his studies at Cambridge in 1503. While this is not the place for an in depth biography of Cranmer, it is helpful to have a brief overview of his life.

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5 It would, in fact, follow far more closely the shape of reform in Scandinavia.


7 For an excellent biography of Cranmer see MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*. It is from this book that we will take our brief overview.
It took the youthful Cranmer a “surprisingly long time” to complete his BA – eight years in all. This did not stop him furthering his studies, and in 1515 Cranmer was awarded an MA before being elected to a fellowship at Jesus College. At this point we find Cranmer making what would not be the last surprising decision that threatened his entire future, when he married a girl we know only as Joan, somewhere between the years 1515 and 1519.

The decision to marry seems most out of character for the studious Thomas Cranmer. Despite being a layman still at this point, his marriage meant resigning the fellowship at Jesus College. Cranmer was fortunate to be offered a position as “common reader” at Buckingham College, at that point a Benedictine school at Cambridge which would later be re-founded and renamed as Magdalen College.

Tragedy struck the Cranmer family not long into the marriage when Joan died during the birth of their first child, along with the baby. While, as stated above, it is almost certain that the Reformation would have come to England regardless, the fact remains that had Joan lived the future of Cranmer, the church in England, and the nation itself would have looked very different.

Following his wife’s death Cranmer was readmitted to his fellowship at Jesus College where he devoted himself to his studies, turning at last to theology. Somewhere around 1520 Cranmer took Holy Orders and in 1526, some twenty-three years after beginning his studies, he was awarded a Doctorate of Divinity.

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8 MacCulloch, Thomas Cranmer, 19.

9 Prior to this Cranmer’s academic pursuits had followed a traditional arts course with an interest in philosophy.
Historians know little of Cranmer’s time at Cambridge, although Diarmaid MacCulloch has done more to piece it together than most.\textsuperscript{10} While earlier biographers have assumed Cranmer must have been sympathetic towards the material relating to reformation that was circulating through the university by the second decade of the sixteenth century, often citing his supposed connections to the famous White Horse Inn group as evidence, there is actually nothing to point to such sympathies.

Indeed the more one pieces together the scraps of evidence concerning Cranmer’s religious outlook in his Cambridge years, the less these seem to point to the later reformer: they resemble more the views of his lifelong conservative rival Stephen Gardiner at the same period. One could indeed argue that Gardiner showed more signs of reformist sympathies than Cranmer.\textsuperscript{11}

We get some indication of where Cranmer’s views lay in the notes he made in the margin of a work by Bishop Fisher attacking Luther, which he would have received sometime in the mid-1520s. The notes reveal that the younger Cranmer was no great fan of the German reformer, preferring Fisher’s argument instead.\textsuperscript{12} Other notes confirm Cranmer’s low view of Luther (an enmity which would later be returned to some degree) while seeming to show admiration for the great humanist, Erasmus.\textsuperscript{13}

Not all of Cranmer’s younger years were taken up with study however. By 1527 Cranmer was one of “the flock of Cambridge dons who had been talent-

\textsuperscript{10} See MacCulloch, \textit{Thomas Cranmer}, 16-37.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 24-25.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 27. Later notes in the same margin reveal that at some point these views were reversed.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 33
spotted by Cardinal Wolsey for diplomatic purposes.”\textsuperscript{14} In June of that year we know Cranmer met with King Henry VIII for what was probably the first time. This is significant because it proves Cranmer was already known to Henry before he became involved in the King’s Great Matter two years later.

Cranmer’s work for the king was exclusively focused on finding a solution for his marriage woes. Multiple attempts to win an annulment from the pope had thus far failed and it was Cranmer’s idea to request theological and legal opinions from a raft of English and Continental universities. This inevitably gave Cranmer contact with a wide range of European intellectuals.

In 1530 Cranmer was dispatched on an embassy to Europe to attempt meetings with both the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. During this time he was elevated to the post of Penitentiary-General of England. It was also around this time that Cranmer was awarded his first parochial appointment, the Rectory of Bredon in the Diocese of Worcestershire, a post which was “almost certainly Cranmer’s only cure of souls before he became Archbishop.”\textsuperscript{15} The parish was one of the four wealthiest cures in the diocese, well able to afford curates to do the work of running a busy church, and it is unclear how much time Cranmer actually spent in his parish. The plum appointment makes it clear, however, that Cranmer was regarded with great favour by his superiors.

In January 1531 Cranmer was one of six royal partisans chosen to meet with six opponents of the King’s attempts to end his marriage, headed by Bishop Fisher. The goal of the meeting was to find a compromise both camps could live with. In the end it was an unsuccessful attempt.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 49.
The extremely political nature of the King’s Great Matter inevitably exposed those working on it to a wide swathe of matters concerning both church and state. “In the course of the year [1531], many of those directly involved in the annulment business began to see more clearly the wider religious issues which lay behind it: among them was probably Thomas Cranmer.”

Whilst in Europe Cranmer made a point of contacting a number of Continental reformers, including Martin Bucer, who would go on to play a crucial role in Cranmer’s later projects. In part at least this was about more than just curiosity. It was clear that there was little progress in Rome with regards to the royal divorce, so Cranmer was keen to hear new ideas from those within the newly forming churches and theological institutions of Europe.

Cranmer’s first major contact with the Continental reform movement was a former monk and scholar, Simon Grynaeus who, since 1529, had been based at the University of Basel. Grynaeus was a friend of Erasmus, whom he considered a personal hero, and a supporter of the eucharistic theology of Zwingli. It seems, in fact, that Grynaeus had the ability to garner an impressively wide range of friendships, including Thomas More, Hugh Latimer, Cuthbert Tunstall, and the aforementioned Martin Bucer. Through Grynaeus Cranmer made contact with a variety of people and in particular formed close ties with the Swiss reformers.

Back in England Cranmer received yet another boost up the church hierarchy, although this one was to mark a significant shift. In September 1531 Cranmer was appointed Archdeacon of Taunton. It is ironic in a way that he gained this prize thanks to the good fortune of his contemporary, colleague and

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16 Ibid., 53.
17 See ibid., 60-67.
future opponent, Stephen Gardiner. Gardiner had relinquished the Archdeaconry following his appointment as Bishop of Winchester, the highest prize thus far dealt out to a member of the team working on the royal divorce. MacCulloch wonders whether it is possible that Cranmer’s appointment may even have been at Gardiner’s recommendation: “It was, after all, Gardiner who had brought Cranmer to the King’s attention in 1529.”

Even in 1531 there is little to suggest that Thomas Cranmer would become the hero of the English Reformation. He and Gardiner seem particularly in step with one another at that point. Indeed Lutheranism was still the prevailing reformation wind in England at the time, and Luther was well known as an opponent of the King’s desire to divorce Catherine, as were Luther’s supporters, including the Englishman William Tyndale. It is unlikely, therefore, that many of those involved in the proceedings would have felt drawn to the German reformer.

In 1532 Cranmer was again in Europe, although this time his goal was not to collect ideas from any universities. Cranmer had been entrusted with the tasking of seeking a direct audience with the Holy Roman Emperor, replacing the incumbent as ambassador to the Emperor’s court. At the same time Cranmer was out of the country Gardiner, now Bishop of Winchester, took the decision to stand against the king over the controversial issue of the Supplication against the Ordinaries. This was a bold and unexpected move by Gardiner and one which saw him begin a clear trajectory away from Cranmer. Both men, however, were to make surprising decisions at this time.

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18 Ibid., 67.
19 Ibid., 68.
20 Ibid., 69.
Cranmer’s position in Europe allowed him plenty of time to survey the religious and political landscape. Early in his time he paused in Nuremberg, a city that had been the first to embrace Lutheranism in 1521. It is clear that Cranmer took a close interest in the liturgical reforms made in the city and the theological reform from which they emerged. What is also clear is that this is the point where Cranmer first had contact with the so-called architect of those reforms, Andreas Osiander.\footnote{See ibid., 70.}

Osiander was “the only major Lutheran commentator to pronounce in favour of Henry VIII’s theological arguments for his annulment,”\footnote{Ibid., 71.} a fact that would have encouraged Cranmer’s friendship. In later years the contact between the Nuremburg reformer and the then-Archbishop would continue, until at least 1540, a fact not surprising given that in 1532, probably in July, Luther married Margarete, the niece of Osiander’s wife, Katharina.

Cranmer’s second marriage seems even more out of character than the first. Why would Cranmer, a vowed celibate priest, ambassador to the Holy Roman Emperor, clearly on track to a distinguished clerical career, risk everything to marry a woman he could not have known for more than a few months? Could his work on the King’s Great Matter have affected his views on matrimony? Could his contact with the reformist views of those such as Grynaeus and Osiander have had so much impact that he was this soon willing to dispense with the concept of clerical celibacy? We cannot know precisely what was going on in Cranmer’s mind, but it is clear that the summer of 1532 “marks a watershed moment in his thinking.”\footnote{Ibid., 72.}
The implications of his marriage must have weighed heavily on Cranmer’s mind when in October 1532 Henry decided to appoint him Archbishop of Canterbury following the death of Archbishop Warham. There is some conjecture as to when Cranmer actually learned of his appointment, and at what point the decision was made.\textsuperscript{24} He certainly made no attempt to hurry back to England, eventually arriving home in January 1533, without Margarete whom he had left in Nuremburg (she would quietly join him later), at which point his appointment was announced publicly, to the great amazement of many.

There is no question that Cranmer’s ascendency to the Archbishopric was a politically motivated appointment. He was a trusted supporter of Henry VIII, a point well supported by the positions he had already held, and by 1532 Henry would have been well aware of how essential it was to have a friend on the throne of Canterbury. As for Cranmer, his accounts of being reluctant to take up the position could be put down to their context within his later trial in 1555. His marriage, however, put him in a difficult and potentially dangerous position so his reluctance was most likely genuine.

Reluctant or not, by the time Thomas Cranmer took up the reins as Archbishop of Canterbury he had undoubtedly begun a steady journey into reformation thinking. How far down the road that thinking had gone is uncertain; at his trial in 1555 the judge, Bishop Brookes, questioned, “Who was thought as then more devout? Who was more religious in the face of the world? Who was thought to have more conscience of a vow-making and observing the order of the church, more earnest in the defence of the real presence of Christ’

\textsuperscript{24} See ibid., 75-77.
body and blood in the sacrament of the altar, than ye were?" 25 The new Archbishop may have had a German wife, reformist friends and hitherto unspoken sympathies for the path of reformation, but as he took his place in Lambeth palace none could guess just how much would change over the course of twenty years.

**Tyndale and Confirmation**

While Cranmer was preparing to take on the highest post in the church in England, radical reformer and devout Lutheran William Tyndale was honing his views on the rites of the church, including confirmation.

Tyndale was a contemporary of Cranmer, but chose a very different path to that of the future Archbishop. An early adopter of the views of Martin Luther, Tyndale is best known for his commitment to an English language Bible, the desire for which had been long associated with Lollardy. In 1524 Tyndale fled England and sought sanctuary with the Lutherans at Wittenberg. There he published his New Testament in English which earned him widespread condemnation in both England and Rome.

Tyndale’s comments on confirmation appear in his *Obedience of a Christian Man* in 1527 and *Answer to the Dialogue of Thomas More* in 1530. Both these, we should recall, fall well before Cranmer was showing any signs of interest in reform.

David Holeton notes that Tyndale’s proposals for the reform of confirmation bear striking resemblance to the Jednota’s model, which is perhaps not surprising when we consider that he was writing at a point not long after

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Luther’s main contacts with the Bohemian Brethren. Holeton also notes the “clear traces of Pseudo-Dionysius” in Tyndale’s work.26

Much of Tyndale’s critique of confirmation is connected to his dislike of bishops. “If [confirmation] have no promise, then it is not of God, as the bishops be not.”27 He saw the episcopal rite as just another example of the bishops keeping for themselves the power of the church. Later he takes up the apostolic myth, declaring that:

As for confirmation, it is no doubt but that it came this wise up, and that this was the use, which the word itself well declareth ... For the succour and help of young children, baptised before the age of discretion, to know the law of God and faith in Christ, was confirmation instituted, that they should not be always ignorant and faithless, but be taught the profession at their baptism. And this no doubt was the manner, as we may well gather by probable conjectures and evident tokens: when the children were six or seven years old, their elders brought them unto the priest or deacon in every parish, which officer taught the children what their baptism meant, and what they had professed therein, that is to wit, the law of God and their duty unto all degrees and the faith of our Saviour. And then, because it should not be neglect or left undone, an higher officer, as the archdeacon (for it hath not been, as I suppose, in the bishop’s hands always as now, neither were it meet), came about from parish to parish at times convenient; and the priests brought the children unto him, at eleven or twelve years old, before they were admitted to receive the sacrament of Christ’s body haply; and he apposed them of the law of God and faith of Christ, and asked them whether they thought that law good, and whether their hearts were to follow it? And they answered, Yea. And he apposed them in the articles of our faith, and asked them whether they put their hope and trust in Christ, to be saved through his death and merits. And they answered, Yea. Then confirmed he their baptism, saying “I confirm you, that is, I denounce and declare by the authority of God’s word and doctrine of Christ that ye be truly baptised within in your hearts

26 Holeton, *Fifteenth Century Origins*, 96.

and in your spirits, through professing the law of God and the faith of our Saviour, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen.” Which manner I would to God for his tender mercy were in use this day.28

It is impossible to say whether Tyndale’s work influenced Cranmer’s views on confirmation, but his emphasis here on post-baptismal catechesis and testing is certainly reflected in Cranmer’s later prayer book developments.

Cranmer and the Sacraments

By the mid-1530s Lutheranism was the dominant shape of any movement towards reform that existed in England. Change, however, was on the horizon.

The form of that change had its foundations in the relationship formed between Cranmer and Simon Grynaeus in 1531. Grynaeus from his base in Basel brought together a region taking in the upper Rhineland and northern Switzerland, encompassing towns representing “a series of civic reformations whose prominent figures were not susceptible to Luther laying down the law;”29 in particular these areas rejected parts of Luther’s sacramental theology, and especially his insistence on the Real Presence in the elements of communion.

In reformation terms Grynaeus brought together in Cranmer’s presence a powerful amalgamation that would later come to be known as ‘Reformed’ Christianity, in significant contrast to Lutheranism.

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They formed an east-west chain across central Europe: from Strassberg in the west, with Martin Bucer, Johann Sturm and Wolfgang Capito, through Grynaeus’s Basel and Bullinger’s Zürich, to St Gall in the east, where the Reformation was directed by the unique lay reformer-scholar Joachim von Watt.\textsuperscript{30}

This group of Reformed reformers would come to have significant influence over the years as the Archbishop began to put in place his plans. Liturgically it is possible those plans began as early as 1532 with Cranmer’s visit to Nuremberg and interest in the liturgical reforms in that city.\textsuperscript{31} Whatever the case was, however, with the first publications of reformed liturgical writings appearing in the mid-1530s\textsuperscript{32} it was inevitable the Cranmer would either by necessity or choice turn his attention to the sacraments at some point.

The fuse was lit in 1536 when Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester, preached to the Convocation of Clergy:

Last of all, how think you of matrimony? Is all well here? What of baptism? Shall we evermore in ministering of it speak Latin, and not in English rather, that the people may know what is said and done? What think ye of these mass-priests, and of the masses themselves? What say ye? Be all things here so without abuses, that nothing ought to be amended?\textsuperscript{33}

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\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 174.

\textsuperscript{31} Gordon P Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise: Thomas Cranmer’s Sacramental Theology and the Book of Common Prayer (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 55.

\textsuperscript{32} There is some disagreement over which was the first such publication. G.J. Cuming claims it was a Psalter translated by George Joye from a Latin version by Bucer. See G.J. Cuming, A History of Anglican Liturgy (London: MacMillan, 1969), 49. Gordon Jeanes, on the other hand, cites A Primer in English edited by William Marshall as the first published reformed liturgical resource, in 1534.

\textsuperscript{33} Latimer cited in Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 57.
\end{flushleft}
Latimer was saying what others were thinking and this combined with Henry’s attempts to forge an alliance with the Lutherans against Rome brought the demand for change into the eyes of the lawmakers.

On July 4th 1536 Bishop Edward Foxe returned from Saxony quite possibly bearing the first copy of the Wittenberg Articles to be seen in England. These Articles were the product of a meeting between Foxe and two others and key Lutheran leaders. Immediately upon Foxe’s return from Saxony “a motion was made in Parliament for the reformation of the state and ceremonies of the Church in imitation of what has been accomplished in that country.” This attempt at forcing reform came to nothing as another statute, formally ending papal authority in England, “ended with a clause affirming that the statute did not affect traditional ceremonies used in the Church.” Act of Parliament or not, the pace of reform was building.

The Wittenberg Articles of 1536 and the later Thirteen Articles of 1538 were both focused on international discussions with Lutherans as the key party. The Ten Articles produced in 1536 and then Institution of a Christian Man, commonly known as the Bishops’ Book, in 1537 “were primarily ‘domestic’ productions and not always sympathetic to Lutheranism, but they and the two sets of Articles belong together as part of the same process of English reform.”

The Ten Articles were “the first statement of doctrine for Henry’s Church.” Like the Wittenberg Articles they only include the sacraments accepted by Lutherans: baptism, eucharist and penance.

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34 MacCulloch, Thomas Cranmer, 165.
35 Ibid.
36 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 58.
With regards to baptism, the *Ten Articles* state:

As touching the holy sacrament of baptism, we will, that all bishops and preachers shall instruct and teach our people committed by us unto their spiritual charge, that they ought, and must of necessity believe certainly all those things which have been always by the whole consent of the church approved, received, and used in the sacrament of baptism; that is to say, that the sacrament of baptism was instituted and ordained in the New Testament by our Saviour Jesus Christ, as a thing necessary for the attaining of everlasting life, according to the saying of Christ. No man can enter into the kingdom of heaven, except he be born again of water and the Holy Ghost.

*Item*, That it is offered unto all men, as well infants as such as have the use of reason, that by baptism they shall have remission of sins, and the grace and favour of God, according to the saying of Christ, Whosoever believeth and is baptised shall be saved.

*Item*, That the promise of grace and everlasting life (which promise is adjoined unto this sacrament of baptism) pertaineth not only unto such as have the use of reason, but also to infants, innocents, and children: and, that they ought therefore, and must needs be baptised; and, that by the sacrament of baptism they do also obtain remission of their sins, the grace and favour of God, and be made thereby the very sons and children of God. Insomuch as infants and children dying in their infancy shall undoubtedly be saved thereby, and else not.\(^{37}\)

The document goes on to reaffirm the doctrine of original sin, emphasising the need for infants to be baptised as a result, stating boldly that baptism is unrepeatable, and refuting all statements of the Anabaptists.

Of great significance is the final section on baptism which, quoting John’s Gospel, asserts that baptism affects a full “gift of the Holy Ghost”.\(^ {38}\) There is, of

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\(^ {38}\) Ibid.
course, no mention of confirmation or any requirement for a new gift of the Spirit. The *Ten Articles* are for the most part simply an expansion of the *Wittenberg Articles*, and as such have a very clearly Lutheran leaning. The assertion of the scriptural foundations for baptism as a justification for its sacramental status, along with the insistence of the necessity of baptism, echoes the Lutheran stance on the sacrament, whilst specifically rejecting other reformation understandings.

There are some items from the *Wittenberg Articles* missing from the *Ten Articles*. In particular a number of additional statements underlining the necessity of faith as a perquisite for baptism are ignored, probably to soften the Lutheran nature of the document.

While not particularly radical, response to the *Ten Articles* was predictably mixed and it was followed a year later by the *Institution of a Christian Man*, commonly known as the *Bishops’ Book*, created as it was by Cranmer in consultation with the bench of bishops. Incorporating the *Ten Articles* (with minor changes), the *Bishops’ Book* reaffirms the seven sacraments and includes new sections for the remaining four. While maintaining the insistence that baptism, eucharist and penance are instituted by Christ himself, and therefore worthy of special sacramental status, the document describes confirmation, marriage, ordination, and unction as ‘inferior’ but still sacraments.

Of particular interest to this work is the section on confirmation. It begins with a reaffirmation of baptism as the most important of sacraments, through which people are “perfectly regenerated in Christ, perfectly incorporated and made the very members of his body, and had received full remission of their sins, and were replenished with abundance and plentifullness of the graces and
gifts of the Holy Ghost”. From the beginning, therefore, the point is made that baptism is complete in and of itself, and incorporates the gifting of the Holy Spirit. “Nevertheless it is conceded that the apostles, while recognising all this, gave the Holy Ghost by the laying-on of hands and prayer. This is explained by saying that many who had received the gifts of the Holy Spirit by baptism lost them by temptation.”

This extraordinary suggestion that the gift of the Spirit could somehow be lost was unique at the time. In this context it has the ring of a document trying to have “a bob each way;” affirming the adequacy of baptism alone (as per Lutheran and Reformed doctrine) but also retaining the traditional understanding that confirmation involves the conferring of the gifts of the Spirit. While insisting that confirmation is unnecessary for salvation, the Bishops’ Book recommends episcopal confirmation as expediency:

that is to say, they should receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as whereby they should not only be so corroborated and established in the gifts and graces before received in baptism, that they should not lightly fall again from the same but should constantly retain them, and persevere therein, and should also be made strong and hardy, as well to confess boldly and manfully their faith before all the persecutors of the same, and to resist and fight against their ghostly enemies, the world, the Devil and the flesh, as also to bear the cross of Christ, that is, to suffer and sustain patiently all the afflictions and adversities of this world; but also that they should attain increase and abundance of the other virtues and graces of the Holy Ghost.

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41 It would later be expanded and incorporated into the teaching of John Wesley among others.

42 Fisher, The Reformation Period, 221-222.
While the *Bishops’ Book* is the work of a committee (some 46 signatures appear at its end), it does give us a first glimpse of where Cranmer may have been leaning in terms of confirmation. Gordon Jeanes notes the language used is “obviously reminiscent of the later baptismal rite and the mention of the cross of Christ points in particular to the formula of signing the forehead.”

Around the time of the *Bishops’ Book* (and possibly in preparation for it) Cranmer and his fellow bishops addressed a series of questions about confirmation. In *Answers to Queries concerning Confirmation* the Archbishop offers his personal views, beginning with a strong assertion that “There is no place in scripture that declareth this sacrament to be instituted of Christ.” Cranmer goes on to argue that confirmation as practiced represents the “acts and deeds of the apostles” which were, referring to the evidence cited from Acts, “done by a special gift given to the apostles for the confirmation of God’s word at that time”, and said gift “does not now remain with the successors of the apostles.” Cranmer, in other words, rejects the notion of a scriptural warrant for confirmation as practiced in the church of his day.

Fisher provides the responses of both Cranmer and the other bishops to these questions, and it is clear the bench is split between those who believed confirmation to be handed down from either the apostles or Christ himself, and those who considered it instituted “only by the tradition of the fathers.” The split, however, was by no means even, with the majority of bishops clearly

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45 Ibid., 210-211.

favouring a traditionalist understanding while much of Cranmer’s support comes from the academics in attendance.

It is worth noting that within this conversation Bishop Hilsey of Rochester appeals directly to Pseudo-Dionysius to justify the use of chrism as having come “from the apostles.” He goes on to say:

Wherefore I suppose that this holy rite and godly ceremony began by holy fathers, to examine the faith of them that were baptised infants, when that they should come to years of discretion ... and then, through the word and prayer and imposition of hands, confirmed that faith which they did confess with their mouths. And this is in my judgment not to be despised, but to be allowed and approved, yea although that such ministers take thereunto holy oil, as they do now at this day.47

It is somewhat astounding that in the mid-1530s, some one hundred years after the works of so-called Dionysius were shown to be from a much later period than earlier claimed, they are still being cited as evidence in favour of a reformed view of confirmation stemming from apostolic times. It is hard to believe that scholars and senior clerics would have been unaware of the discoveries of the fifteenth century, so we must assume that either they dismissed those findings as untrue or unimportant, or the waters of doctrinal understanding run deep enough to wash over such issues. Whatever the case, the presence of arguments based on Pseudo-Dionysius in reformation era England suggest they probably played some part in the development of confirmation in the Prayer Books to come.

With regards to the “outward sign” of confirmation, Cranmer notes that while the church used chrism, “the scripture maketh no mention thereof.” He

questions the “efficacy of this sacrament” and states that, “The bishop in the name of the church doth invoke the Holy Ghost to give strength and constancy with other spiritual gifts unto the person confirmed, so that the efficacy of this sacrament is of such value as is the prayer of the bishop made in the name of the church.” In this Cranmer seems to suggest not so much that the sacrament is worthless, but that the use of chrism is at best unnecessary. This would certainly put him in a place of agreement with those having reformation sympathies.

The reference to “strength and constancy” demonstrates familiarity with the language of Aquinas, and Faustus before him. The potentially traditionalist nature of this inclusion is strengthened by the lack of any referral to a statement of faith “which, in the Bishops’ Book, harks back to baptism.” There are both similarities and differences, then, between the two. Jeanes describes it as a “difference of emphasis between Cranmer’s own statement and that of the Bishop’s Book, but no contradiction.” As for the other respondents, Fisher notes that there is a greater emphasis on the imposition of hands than is found elsewhere. He also points out that Cranmer’s answers were by far the most “radical” suggesting that by 1537 he had moved towards a Lutheran view, of confirmation at least.

Further evidence of Cranmer’s growing Lutheran sympathies may be found in another work, most likely dated shortly after the publication of the Bishops’ Book. De Sacramentis is an anonymous essay offering a positive response to the

49 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 62.
50 Ibid.
Lutheran concept, covered in the *Ten Articles*, that there are only three sacraments. While the document is in itself an interesting insight into the early stages of the reformation in England, Gordon Jeanes has suggested it is even more remarkable as it is most likely the work of Cranmer himself.\textsuperscript{52}

Jeanes believes a date of between 1537-1538 is most likely for the document, at a time when negotiations were continuing with the Lutherans, and it may well have been written originally in preparation for another meeting between Lutheran reformers and the English, this time in London in 1538. The English delegates took with them a draft formulary, the *Thirteen Articles*, based on both the *Wittenberg Articles* and the *Augsburg Confession*. The draft was never ratified, but at one point Cranmer wrote to Cromwell suggesting that some bishops were threatening to raise the issue of those sacraments not recognised by the Lutherans.

In the light of this threat, which Cranmer must have foreseen, it would be reasonable to suppose that the present document was written before the beginning of the negotiations, at least partly with the intention of persuading the conservative English bishops to concede the issue of the sacraments to the Lutherans.\textsuperscript{53}

The primary point of *De Sacramentis* is to provide arguments in favour of the Lutheran approach to the sacraments. In the negotiations the Lutherans and the English were at loggerheads over private masses, the withholding of the chalice from the laity and (ironically) clerical celibacy, all points on which Henry refused to budge. Included is a survey of patristic and later sources, as well as the more familiar territory of scripture and the apostles. In large part, albeit with a few differences, there are few points in the document that differ from


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 152.
those of the *Ten Articles* and the *Bishops’ Book*, if Cranmer is indeed the anonymous author; however, this is yet more evidence suggesting his own views were shifting rapidly away from the traditionalists and towards a Reformed, although not completely Lutheran, approach.

If *De Sacramentis* is the work of Thomas Cranmer it sits somewhat to one side of his usual way of working, which may explain his reluctance to put his name to it. In general Cranmer’s preferred *modus operandi* was to ask questions. We find numerous examples of questionnaires produced by the Archbishop through which the bishops were asked to submit their views on a wide variety of topics. This seems to have been a favourite method of Cranmer’s, which continued through to the late 1540s. It was also the way Cranmer himself entered the conversation: “Cranmer himself would answer the questionnaires, even on the occasions when it is very probable, from surviving draft sets of questions, that he himself had been their author.”

It is possible that this method of collecting answers was part of the political process Cranmer would undoubtedly have had to engage in to bring together the various factions surrounding him. By ensuring that it seldom looked too much like the Archbishop was forcing his own views on them, his opponents had a harder time on the attack.

Within a short time of its release there was talk of revising the *Bishops’ Book*. King Henry sent a draft revision to Cranmer and notes he made on it in January 1538 provide some insight into the Archbishop’s understanding of justification, “which he defends against Henry’s traditionalist position.”

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54 Jeanes, *Signs of God’s Promise*, 63.

55 Ibid. Ashley Null has suggested Cranmer’s theology was heavily influenced by his understanding of the concept of justification. See Ashley Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
prepared to stand up to the king, to a point, Cranmer also defended the distribution of the sacraments into major and minor categories, rejecting completely Henry’s suggestion that marriage, at least, should be included as a “major” sacrament. Henry had good reason for wanting the sacramental nature of marriage highlighted, while it is possibly that Cranmer may have had equally good reasons for wanting to downplay the subject, although officially at least he argues based on marriage not fitting the required definition of a major sacrament, in that it was not instituted by Christ.56

Although not directly pertinent to this study, one point of interest in Cranmer’s responses to the King’s notes is his comments on the eucharist. In his list of revisions, “Henry proposes that priests be described as having the power ‘to consecrate sacraments and to administer the same’.” Cranmer’s response offers an insight into the points at which his own eucharistic theology developed: “Consecration is called only of the sacrament of the altar: therefore it is more plain to thus: ‘to consecrate the body of Christ, and to minister the sacraments’.” In this use of the word ‘consecrate’ to describe the actions of a priest at the eucharist, Cranmer differs significantly from the way he would use it later.57

The late 1530s featured a haphazard series of liturgical shifts. Many can hardly be called reforms as they essentially continued the same ceremonies with a few revised understandings. Of most significance was the increasing use of the vernacular in worship, as called for by Bishop Latimer in his sermon of 1536.

56 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 64.

57 Ibid., 65.
In 1538 it was decided that a Bible must be placed in every church, and “that the Creed, Lord’s Prayer and Ten Commandments should be recited, and that no one be admitted to communion without having learned them.” This requirement bears a strong resemblance to those being formulated by the reformers on the Continent, and an equally strong likeness to the pre-confirmation requirements that would be enshrined in future Prayer Books.

The shift to the vernacular continued the following year with the publication of the Great Bible. Based on the work of Tyndale and Coverdale, the Great Bible proved instantly controversial, attracting wide criticism from conservative clerics, even more so following its reissue in 1540 with a bluntly reform-focused preface by Cranmer. The Bible would continue to be controversial, and in 1542 Cranmer brought together a group of bishops to present revisions, mostly attempting to incorporate parts of the Vulgate into the vernacular work, only to change his mind and, purportedly on Henry’s orders, pass the task to Cambridge and Oxford University scholars. What appears to have been a stalling tactic came to naught however with the passing of the Act for the Advancement of True Religion.

While biblical scholarship may have been active, little appears to have been happening in terms of true liturgical reform. Gordon Jeanes suggests that Cranmer, for his part, was making quiet moves in that direction: “Privately, Cranmer seems to have been engaged in composing draft forms of the daily office around this time, based largely on the work of the Spanish Cardinal Quinones but also with an eye to Lutheran examples.”

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58 Ibid., 66.
59 Ibid.
While the publication of the Great Bible may have been considered a major step forward on the road to reform, it was swiftly followed the passing by Parliament of the Act of the Six Articles, a brief formulary focused against the reformist effort. Firmly traditionalist in outlook, these latest Articles “upheld transubstantiation in all but name, communion in one kind, clerical celibacy, vows of chastity, private Masses and auricular confession.”\(^6\) A triumph for conservatives, it followed the breakdown of talks with the Lutherans, which resulted in what appeared to be a hardening of the King’s conservatism. To some it seemed the reformation was over before it really began, with Christopher Haigh describing the latter part of the 1530s as “Reformation Reversed.”\(^6\)

What seemed like a stop to reformation turned out to be just a pause, as work began in 1540 for what would come to be known after its publication three years later as the King’s Book. It is likely that the questionnaire Cranmer circulated in 1540 was part of the preparations for that work. Questions and Answers concerning the Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests posed a series of questions on both sets of issues. With regards to sacraments Questions were posed separately “about the nature and number of sacraments in scripture and in the ‘ancient authors’.” This immediately, as Jeanes points out, makes a distinction between them, and Cranmer makes it clear in his own responses that one carries more weight than the other:

I find not in the scripture the matter, nature, and effect of all these which we call the seven sacraments, but only of certain of them: as of baptism … of Eucharistia … of penance … Of the matter, nature and effects of the other three, that is to say, confirmation, order and

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\(^6\) Ibid., 76.

extreme unction, I read nothing in the scripture as they be taken for sacraments.  

Ashley Null has suggested that in the questions concerning penance, Cranmer shifts from a primarily Lutheran view to one more akin to those portrayed by Calvin, and seems to be veering away from the concept of three sacraments to just two. Perhaps the most notable point about the Questions is that while Cranmer did put his name to them, he did so with the addendum “that he did not ‘temerariously define’ his opinion. In part this was simple prudence, but it may also be the case that he was genuinely seeking a new definition of the Christian life, and was not in a position to make more categorical statements.”

In 1542 Henry ordered the Use of Sarum to be made the standard liturgy throughout England – “the first instance when this realm should have ‘one use’” – a move that signalled further changes to come. The following February it was ordered that a chapter of the Bible be read, in English, on each Sunday and feast day, without exposition, and this was followed by the Act for the Advancement of True Religion, “which restricted the reading of the Bible to the upper classes and banned all books ... which differed from the teaching set forth by the king’s authority.” And that ‘authority’ was to be found in a new publication, issued at the same time the Act came into force that brought together the long-awaited revisions of the Bishops’ Book. Officially entitled A

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63 Null, Doctrine of Repentance, 127-128.
64 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 80.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man, it became instantly known simply as the King’s Book.

Where the Bishops’ Book had contained traditionalist leanings, the King’s Book was almost universally conservative, “the exception being its highly dismissive treatment of purgatory.”67 There was no doubt that this represented a setback for Cranmer, and it was not his first. Prior to the release of the King’s Book, papers preparing for it had been debated by the bishops and in a major loss for Cranmer any concept of justification by faith alone was rejected, a key theological issue that the king refused to budge on. That said, not everything in the King’s Book was against Cranmer’s beliefs. Indeed it has been noted that there is a significant amount of phraseology in the King’s Book that makes its way into the rites of the Prayer Book.68 In baptism, for example, the King’s Book lists three effects: remission of sins, incorporation into Christ’s body, and grace, with a fourth, endowment with the graces and gifts of the Spirit, noted in the section on confirmation. All find expression in the 1549 baptism rite.69

Many of Cranmer’s responses to the King’s Book can be found in his Commonplaces. Of particular interest here are his comments on baptism, and Gordon Jeanes notes an especially crucial point in one of the Archbishop’s notes in a section quoting Augustine. In Cranmer’s comment that, “God helps our will in every good work, both before baptism and afterwards,” we can see a significant shift in his baptismal theology: “Cranmer has made an important step away from the principle of the instrumentality of baptism in salvation.”70

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67 MacCulloch, Thomas Cranmer, 309.
68 Cuming, History of Anglican Liturgy, 53.
69 See Spinks, Reformation and Modern Rituals, 66.
70 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 89.
This shift remains in stark contrast, however, with most of the Archbishop’s colleagues, and given Cranmer’s reliance on questionnaires as a tool to find agreement on difficult issues, we can see the tensions he was facing.

1544 was a significant point in the move to liturgical reform, with the publication of the first public service in English, the Litany. Intimately connected to processions, the English language Litany was connected to an English invasion of France, with special processions ordered in support. A year later it was ordered that this Litany be used for all processions, until processions themselves were banned in 1547, “leaving the Litany to be sung kneeling in church.”

In 1546 Cranmer displayed his penchant for politics when he worked with a committee to produce a list of services they recommended to the king be banned on the basis of their incompatibility with the King’s Book. These were mostly connected to the adoration of images and crucifixes, but also included bell ringing on All Hallows’ Day. MacCulloch outlines the careful – and somewhat duplicitous – approach to what was essentially an attempt to use the conservative King’s Book to advance the cause of reformation. Those advances must have looked more hopeful when later that year Henry directed Cranmer to prepare a new service of Communion. The somewhat surprising move came after discussions with Francis I of France in which it was proposed, “to have changed the Mass in both the realms into a communion.” As it was the plan

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71 See ibid., 93 for a comment on the significance of the Litany and Processions in sixteenth century English liturgical life.

72 Ibid.

73 MacCulloch, Thomas Cranmer, 351.

74 Ibid., 351-352.

75 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 94.
never came to anything as both kings died shortly thereafter. The potential for England to have had a reformed eucharistic liturgy in 1546 might be seen as a great loss for the reformation movement, but as Gordon Jeanes notes, “if Cranmer had managed to draft anything before Henry’s death, it would have been subject to the theological benchmark of the King’s Book.”\textsuperscript{76} This last is of particular importance, as it impacts directly on the preparations for the first Anglican Prayer Book.

The death of Henry VIII marks a watershed moment in the English Reformation. The new king, Edward VI, was only nine years old, but was already receiving an excellent Protestant education, thanks to the appointments of Dr Richard Cox and later Sir John Cheke as his tutors. Both would be leading figures in the reforms to come. It is clear that Edward’s assent to the throne signalled a sharp shift towards reform in Cranmer and it could well be asked whether the Archbishop was really a political chameleon, whose theology shifted to match the prevailing attitude of his monarch, or rather a dedicated reformer aware enough of his opponents’ strength to know his greatest chance of lasting success was to play a long and careful game. Whichever was the case, with a new king in place the pace of the reform was quickening.

When the legislation enshrining the \textit{King’s Book} in law was repealed in 1547 it appears work began in earnest on a new Prayer Book. Given that there were only two years between the death of Henry and the publication of the 1549 \textit{Book of Common Prayer (BCP)}, and the sheer scope of that work, even allowing for Cranmer’s prodigious output it seems unlikely that all it contains was written in that brief period. If, as has been suggested, a significant part of the 1549 BCP was penned, at least in draft form, between 1543 and 1547 it is likely it was done in accordance with the strictures of the \textit{King’s Book}. Jeanes even suggests

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
the possibility this may have applied to the communion service, potentially begun in response to Henry’s request in 1546.\textsuperscript{77}

That communion service may have been the backdrop in early 1548 for another of Cranmer’s famous questionnaires to the bishops, this time regarding a service of communion in the vernacular. Responses were mixed, but Cranmer had obviously moved ahead regardless. In March 1548 An Order of Communion was released, in English, and appointed for use at the upcoming Easter.

The next step fell in quick succession with the release of what came to be known as Cranmer’s Catechism. Based largely on the 1533 Nuremberg Catechism Sermons of Andreas Osiander, which in turn were based on Luther’s Small Catechism of 1529, Cranmer’s work was based on a translation by Justus Jonas and while the preface states that it has been “overseen and corrected” by the Archbishop, it is unclear just how much of a hand Cranmer played in its preparation. Such questions are exacerbated by the fact that a number of points in the Catechism do not seem to match up with Cranmer’s stated theology elsewhere.\textsuperscript{78}

The pace of reform continued in September 1548 when a group made up of bishops and scholars was gathered by Cranmer with the express task being “to decide upon ‘a uniform order of prayer’”.\textsuperscript{79} At this gathering the group was presented with a draft of Cranmer’s Prayer Book, and while subsequent reports show they were far from unanimous, assent was eventually given. The response when the new Prayer Book came to the House of Lords was split, with it

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{78} For a full exploration of Cranmer’s Catechism see D.G. Selwyn (ed), Cranmer’s Catechism (Appleford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978).

\textsuperscript{79} Dickens, English Reformation, 218.
passing ten votes to eight. Subsequently, “It was issued under the authority of the king in Parliament, and may have never been submitted to the Convocation of the Church.”\(^{80}\)

In approaching Cranmer’s first prayer book it is important to remember that he was the Archbishop of Canterbury. Thus, to some extent regardless of his own views, he had to represent both the views of the church, inasmuch as they were clear, and the king, bearing in mind that this was a period in history where conflict with one’s monarch would often prove fatal, (a fact Cranmer himself would discover just a few years later). We have noted that Cranmer often appears to have been the most radical of the bench of bishops.\(^{81}\) His own progressive tendencies were thus moderated by the majority of his colleagues, some of whom were in blunt opposition to him, and his work on the first prayer book reflects this. There is thus already, through necessity if not desire, a glimpse of the via media that would become the official Anglican way; which is not to say, of course, that the 1549 BCP was without a radical edge or two.

**Baptism in the First Prayer Book – 1549**

The Book of Common Prayer – or more accurately *The Booke of the Common Prayer and Administracion of the Sacramentes, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church after the Use of the Churche of England* – that became the official Prayer Book of the realm on Pentecost, June 9\(^{th}\), 1549 has been described as “a masterpiece of compromise, even of studied ambiguity.”\(^{82}\) As noted above, Cranmer was clearly attempting to meld a range of views and opinions, looking


\(^{82}\) Dickens, *English Reformation*, 219.
to both advance the cause of reform and hold opposing parties together. While there is evidence of conservative attitudes, sometimes in direct harmony with the King’s Book, “we may assume that the rites [Cranmer] compiled were not incompatible with his theology.” The result was most definitely a compromise, but still a giant leap forward in English liturgical reform.

The first point of difference in the 1549 BCP is that is almost all of it was in the vernacular (the ordinal remaining in Latin). Like the Sarum rite in 1542, the use of the BCP was mandated through the Act of Uniformity as from Whit Sunday that year, but it was already in fairly widespread use by that point. The protests began immediately after the Act came into force, but by then the doors of change were wide open.

For our purposes the only liturgies in the BCP we wish to peruse are those of baptism and confirmation. It is essential to go to baptism first as while the reformers may have made vast and sweeping changes to the post-baptismal rite, it remained after baptism. Throughout history the changes to confirmation theology have inevitably followed those to the theology of baptism, and the 1549 BCP was no exception.

Bryan Spinks has noted that the main theological focus of the 1549 baptismal rite is a traditional Augustinian approach, with an emphasis on original sin and regeneration, and entry into “the Ark of the Church.” Spinks also notes that there is no hint here of “Reformed Covenant theology”, with instead a focus on the idea of ‘promise’.

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83 Spinks, Reformation and Modern Rituals, 65.
84 Ibid., 67.
85 Ibid. See also Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 70-71 regarding “promise”.
Underpinning the 1549 baptism rite is Cranmer’s loosely developed doctrine of justification. Loosely put, while the traditionalists “accepted a prior justification in baptism when the soul is cleansed and made righteous by virtue of the sacramental action”, Cranmer came from the idea that “it is evident that the baptismal cleansing is very strictly related to the representative work of Jesus Christ.” In short then, as we have seen above, salvation / justification does not come through the water of baptism itself, but rather through the salvific work of Christ. There are hints of this in the baptism rite, but in fairness baptism was never Cranmer’s primary concern. “By its very constitution the baptismal teaching of Cranmer is fragmentary and disconnected.” What is clear though is that for Cranmer a key requirement for either sacrament (baptism or eucharist) was “worthy reception”:

Those that come feignedly, and those that come unfeignedly, both be washed with the sacramental water, but both be not washed with the Holy Ghost, and clothed with Christ.

Gordon Jeanes notes similarities between the structure of the 1549 baptism rite and German Lutheran rites of the 1530s and 40s, despite the actual content of the prayers looking “to the Sarum Manual almost whenever possible.” There are elements of the King’s Book in the liturgy, as well as aspects drawn from “Herman von Wied’s Consultation, the Bradenburg-Nürnberg rite of 1533,

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86 Bromiley, Thomas Cranmer Theologian, 58.
87 Ibid., 64. Most of Cranmer’s baptismal theology can be gleaned from its inclusion as a secondary concern when he is addressing other matters.
88 Ibid., 61
89 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 188-193.
90 Ibid., 194.
and a Gallican / Mozarabic blessing of the font.” It is worthy of note that Martin Bucer was a principal author of Herman’s Consultation and his influence was to continue to have an impact on English Prayer Books.

Of particular interest in relation to this study, and an area where Cranmer’s rite differs from the Lutheran offerings, is the repeated invocation of the Holy Spirit, beginning in the introduction where Cranmer has the priest say:

I beseche you [the congregation] to call upon God the father through our Lord Jesus Christ, that of his bounteous mercy he will grant to these children that thing, which by nature they cannot have, that is to saye, they may be baptised with the holy ghost, and receyved into Christes holy Church, and be made lyvely membres of the same.

A similar invocation occurs in the prayer immediately following, which is a fairly accurate English translation of Luther's Singflutgebet, or the Flood Prayer, which includes:

We beseche thee (for thy infinite mercies) that thou wilt mercifully looke upon these children, and sanctifie them with thy holy gost …

Both these invocations were to be modified in the revisions to the 1549 BCP, but in their positions here it seems clear that Cranmer sees the giving of the Holy Spirit as belonging squarely in baptism. This in itself is hardly radical of course. As we have seen above, even the medieval church recognised a gifting of the Spirit at baptism, with Aquinas and the other scholastic theologians building on the idea of a “strengthening” of that gift in confirmation. Cranmer,

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91 Spinks, Reformed and Modern Rituals, 67.


93 Ibid., 47.
however, places great significance on the Spirit in baptism, while seeing confirmation in a very different light to his medieval counterparts.

As if to emphasise the above point, the 1549 post-baptismal rituals include an anointing accompanied by a prayer Spinks describes as “being found in the Sarum confirmation rite”.

Then the prieste shall annoynt the infant upon the head, saying. Almighty God the father of our lorde Jesus Christ, who hath regenerate thee by water and the holy gost, and hath geven unto thee remission of al thy sinnes, he vouchsave to annoynte thee with the unccion of his holy spirite, and bryng thee to the inheritaunce of everlasting lyfe. Amen.

This adaptation of a traditional presbyteral post-baptismal anointing to relate it specifically to the gift of the Holy Spirit was a first in Western liturgy. As we shall discuss below, we should not rush to see this as a kind of presbyteral confirmation. Maxwell Johnson notes that there may be an Eastern Church influence present here, “where, since the time of Cyril of Jerusalem, the gift of the Holy Spirit had been associated with a single postbaptismal anointing.”

This would certainly fit with the Archbishop’s desire to include sources other than Roman, yet still recognisably ancient.

Alongside such innovations, there are some clear attempts by Cranmer to accommodate the traditionalists in his 1549 baptismal rite. The water-bath itself, for example, retained the old three-fold dipping, “even to the details of dipping

94 Spinks, Reformed and Modern Rituals, 69.

95 Cummings, Book of Common Prayer, 51.

96 Johnson, Rites of Christian Initiation, 261.
the right side of the child, then the left, then face down.” Gordon Jeanes notes that such an obviously traditional ceremony would have been dismissed by most reformers as pointless and unhelpful.98

The baptismal rite concludes with a command to the godparents:

Forasmuch as these children have promised by you to forsake the devill and al his workes, to beleve in God and to serve him: you must remembre that it is your partes and duetie to see that these infantes be taught, so soone as they shalbe able to learne, what a solemnne vowe, promyse and profession they have made by you. And that they maye knowe these thynges the better, ye shall call upon them to heare sermons, and chiefly you shal provide that thei maye learne the Crede, the Lordes prayer and the ten commaundmentes in the englishe tongue, and all other things which a christian manne ought to knowe and beleve to his soules health. And that these children may be vertuously brought up to leade a godly and christian life: remembring alwayes that Baptisme doeth represent unto us our profession which is to folow the example of our Saviour Chryste, and to be made lyke unto him, as he dyed and rose againe for us: so should we (whiche are Baptised) dye from synne, and ryse agayn unto righteousnesse, continually mortifying all our evyll and corrupte affeccions, and dayly procedyng in all vertue and godlynesse of lyvyng.99

The rubric that followed made clear the expectation that “the children be brought to the Bushop to bee confirmed of hym, as soone as they can saye in theyr vulgare tounge the articles of the fayth, the Lordes prayer, and the ten commaundmentes” 100

97 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 277
98 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 52.
Confirmation in the 1549 Prayer Book

The fact that there is a confirmation rite in the 1549 BCP is in itself significant. Calvin and Zwingli were just two of the reformers who had abandoned confirmation altogether, and by the end of the 1540s it was no longer universally practiced in Lutheranism. While it is possible that its retention is a nod toward the traditionalist camp – and it is true that for the most part the actual content of the prayers is simply an English translation of the Latin from the Sarum *Manual* – it is clear that Cranmer was intent on maintaining the rite, albeit with some moves away from the medieval approach to confirmation.

*Confirmation, wherein is contained a catechism for children* is the proper title of the rite. The catechism referred to is a revised and lengthened version of that published the previous year and it is clear that it is designed to ensure the requirements of godparents spelt out at baptism could be met.

The opening rubric explains the purposes of the rite:

First because that whan children come to the yeres of discrecion and have learned what theyr Godfathers and Godmothers promised for them in Baptisme, they may then themselfes with their owne mouth, and with theyr own consent, openly before the churche ratifie and confesse the same, and also promise that by the grace of God they will evermore endevour themselves faithfully to observe and kepe such things as they by theyre owne mouth and confession have assented unto.\(^{101}\)

The demand that confirmation promises be made after catechesis “openly before the church” is a clear nod to the reformed approach to the rite, and a key

\(^{101}\) Ibid., 58.
part of the understanding of those we have looked at going right back to the Jednota.

The rubric goes on to say:

Secondly, for asmuch as confirmacion is ministred to them that be Baptised, that by imposicion of handes, and praiere they may receive strength and defence against all temptacions to sin, and the assautes of the worlde, and the devil: it is most mete to be ministred when children come to that age, that partly by the frayltie of theyr owne fleshe, partly by the assautes of the world and the devill, they begin to be in daungier to fall into sinne.\textsuperscript{102}

This follows closely (albeit much more briefly) the argument for confirmation in the \textit{King’s Book}. It also picks up on the medieval concept of confirmation as a ‘strengthening’. Here Cranmer clearly maintained a connection with the traditional understandings of the rite, although there is no mention of the Holy Spirit.

The rubric continues:

Thirdly, for that it is agreeable with the usage of the churche in tymes past, wherby it was ordeined that confirmacion should bee ministred to them that were of perfecte age, that they beynge instructed in Christes religion should openly professe theyr fayth, and promise to be obedient unto the will of God.\textsuperscript{103}

Is this a return to the Pseudo-Dionysian myth of apostolic confirmation? It certainly has that look about it!

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
The rubric concludes:

And that no manne shall thynke that anye detrimente shall come to children by differryng theyr confirmacion, he shall knowe for trueth, that it is certayn by Goddes woorde, that children beeying Baptised (if they departe out of thys lyfe in theyr infancie) are undoubtedly saved.\(^{104}\)

There shall be no “detriment” in deferring confirmation. Was Cranmer suggesting here that the rite could be skipped altogether? Certainly his key point is that baptism alone was sufficient for salvation, but there is no great emphasis here on the importance, let alone necessity, of confirmation.

The confirmation rite itself is, as noted, mostly an English rendering of the Sarum liturgy, although there is some evidence of the Consultation, a key influence on the baptismal rite, touching on confirmation also. “This influence, however, appears to have been limited to the absence of chrism and to the fact that a short catechism has been placed immediately before the rite.”\(^{105}\)

The traditional prayer for the sevenfold gift of the Spirit is present, along with a signing:

Signe them (o lorde) and marke them to be thyne for ever, by the vertue of thy holye crosse and passion. Confirme and strength them with the inward unccion of thy holy gost, mercifully unto everlasting life. Amen.\(^{106}\)

Aside from the absence of chrism this is almost a medieval prayer of confirmation. The mention of an “inward unccion” is a clear replacement for

\(^{104}\) Ibid.

\(^{105}\) Johnson, Christian Initiation, 274.

\(^{106}\) Cummings, Book of Common Prayer, 62.
the outward anointing, and in this we see a nod towards the reformers, but only 
a small one.

... with the exception of chrism and the Reformation emphasis on 
catechising, the confirmation rite of the 1549 BCP was little other 
than an English translation of the late medieval Latin Sarum Rite 
itself. As such, confirmation in England not only remained a rite 
reserved exclusively to the bishop, but its theological emphasis on 
the gift of the Holy Spirit also enabled a sacramental understanding 
of this rite to continue.\textsuperscript{107}

\textbf{Bucer’s Censura}

The 1549 BCP was in many ways a compromise guaranteed to please no one. 
While on the one hand Gardiner could describe it as “not distant from the 
Catholic faith,” and on the other Latimer could say he discerned “no great 
difference between the Communion service of 1552 and that of 1549,“\textsuperscript{108} for the 
most part the book was seen as a step too far by the traditionalists and not far 
enough by those committed to reform. Cranmer, for his part, was clear that the 
1549 BCP was “avowedly interim”\textsuperscript{109} and the ink was hardly dry before he was 
working on a revision.

We know very little about the revision process, other than that it was led by 
Cranmer himself and involved a panel of bishops. We also know that two 
critiques were received from influential Continental reformers. Martin Bucer, 
by this point Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, and the Italian Peter 
Martyr Vermigli, Bucer’s counterpart at Oxford, were asked to offer their 
thoughts on the work. Neither spoke or read English and there is some irony in

\textsuperscript{107} Johnson, \textit{Christian Initiation}, 275.

\textsuperscript{108} Wright, \textit{The First Prayer Book}, 13.

\textsuperscript{109} Colin Buchanan, \textit{What Did Cranmer Think He Was Doing? Grove Liturgical Studies 7} (Bramcote: 
the idea of the greatest work of liturgy in the English language to that point being translated into Latin so the pair could read it. While Peter Martyr’s response has not survived, Bucer’s has. Commonly known as Bucer’s Censura, it is correct title is The Judgment of Martin Bucer Upon the Book of Sacred Rites or of the Ordering of the Church and Ecclesiastical Ministration in the Kingdom of England Written at the Request of the Reverend Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and it represents the last completed work by Bucer before his death in 1551.

Bucer begins his critique by noting that he is, overall, favourable towards the Prayer Book, but that he needs to draw attention to “a few small points which if they were not fairly interpreted might seem to be insufficiently consistent with the word of God.” He then lays out a fairly extensive list of perceived failings and shortcomings, but it is important to remember his opening comment concerning ‘interpretation’. Bucer does not condemn all use of ceremonial, even where he finds no use or scriptural warrant for it. His primary concern is his “fundamental qualification that these [traditional] elements be interpreted for the people in such a way that the teaching conveyed (if not the practice itself) is seen to be rooted in the Word of God.”

In terms of the 1549 baptism rite Bucer expresses general approval, which is not surprising given his role in the preparation of Hermann’s Consultation which is a major source for the rite. He does find some fault, however, and makes suggestions for improvement:

(1) Baptism should not take place during morning or evening prayer, but ‘when the congregation is still present in the greatest numbers,

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111 Amos, Martin Bucer, 112.
before the administration of the Holy Supper is begun.’ (2) The
service at the church door is ‘possessed of enough decency, order
and edification’ for it to take place inside the church in the hearing of
the congregation. (3) The prayer at the signing of the child, the
questions concerning the renunciation, and the Creed are all
addressed to the child who cannot understand. (4) Exorcism is
appropriate only in the case of demoniacs. (6) The giving of chrisom
and the anointing, though ancient signs, are no longer edifying but
promote superstition.\textsuperscript{112}

There is nothing in Bucer’s approach to baptism in his \textit{Censura} that he had
not already canvassed previously: “His recommendations in the \textit{Censura} are in
full agreement with what he had earlier recommended in Ulm in 1529, the
Strasboug Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1534 and the Synod of 1539, and in his
Church order for Cologne.”\textsuperscript{113} In Bucer’s mind, it seems, Cranmer was simply
playing catch-up with the rest of the reformation, and, as correspondence
between himself and others shows, making a slow job of it at that.\textsuperscript{114}

In terms of confirmation, Bucer’s major concern was for increased catechesis.

The children on whom confirmation should be conferred are defined
in the Book as those who can recite the articles of faith, the Lord’s
prayer and the ten commandments, and can sufficiently answer to
the questions of the shorter catechism. Now this at once demands
careful consideration. For either it is a question of children at their
confirmation making a serious confession of their faith, and a
confession of such a kind as the church can fairly ratify, such as, for
instance, she necessarily requires of those to whom baptism is given
in adult age. Or it is thought enough if they merely recite the words
of that confession.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112} J.D.C. Fisher, “Lutheran, Anglican and Reformed Rites” in Jones, Wainwright, Yarnold and
Bradshaw, \textit{The Study of Liturgy}, 156.

\textsuperscript{113} Amos, \textit{Martin Bucer}, 121-122.

\textsuperscript{114} See ibid., 111.

\textsuperscript{115} Fisher, \textit{The Reformation Period}, 244.
Bucer criticised the rubric requiring catechesis every six weeks, calling for a weekly session at least, noting that, “In Germany there are not a few churches in which on two days every week besides Sundays the catechism is gone through with the children.” This highlights Bucer’s life-long emphasis on commitment to both God and church. For Bucer this was a key indicator of true faith, and required an absolute profession of faith and commitment following a rigorous programme of Christian education. In particular he was emphatic that none be confirmed until they were fully ready to profess their faith, comparing those “who were confirmed without having demonstrated ‘a true faith in Christ’ to ‘some parrot saying his ‘Hallo.’”

Bucer also joined with many other reformers, Cranmer included, in connecting confirmation with communion. The 1549 BCP included a rubric restricting the reception of communion to those who had been confirmed, in line with common practice but not, as we have seen, the actions of the early church or, perhaps ironically, the Hussite reformers. In his Censura Bucer commended this restriction, but noted it would only be effective if confirmation itself was restricted only to those who not only professed their faith, but were seen to both own and live it:

This rubric will be extremely salutary, if none are solemnly confirmed except those who have confirmed the confession of their mouth with a congruous manner of life, and can be seen also from their conduct to be making confession of their own and not another’s faith.

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116 Ibid., 249.

117 For a good overview of Bucer’s emphasis on commitment see Burnett, Confirmation and Christian Fellowship, 202-217.

118 Bucer cited in Burnett, Confirmation and Christian Fellowship, 215.

As we have seen previously, the prohibition on receiving communion prior to confirmation was nothing new. While one of Cranmer’s predecessor’s, Archbishop Peckham, failed in his attempt to improve the take-up of confirmation (and in the process lowered the number of communicants)\textsuperscript{120} its inclusion in Cranmer’s prayer books would prove to be a key element in the rite’s future survival.

In the summer of 1550, having completed the Ordinal and had it published earlier that year, Cranmer went to print again with \textit{A Defence of the True and Catholick Doctrine of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Our Saviour Christ; With a Confutation of Sundry Errors}. While Bucer had found much to criticise in the 1552 Communion rite, Cranmer was aware that it still represented a radical departure from past practice and belief.

In Cranmer’s \textit{Defence} we also gain further insight into his theology of baptism:

And for this cause Christ ordained baptism in water, that as surely as we see, feel, and touch water with our bodies, and be washed with water; so assuredly ought we to believe, when we be baptised, that Christ is verily present with us, and that by him we be newly born again spiritually, and washed from our sins, and grafted in the stock of Christ’s own body … So that the washing in water of baptism, is, as it were, a shewing of Christ before our eyes, and a sensible touching, feeling, and groping of him, to the confirmation of the inward faith, which we have in him.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{120} Fisher, \textit{Baptism in the Medieval West}, 138-139.

Along with most of the reformers, Cranmer believed in a two-stage process in baptism, although not, of course, in the way of the Mason-Dix line of the twentieth century. In this Cranmer showed great consistency with his approach to the Eucharist, wherein he employed a virtually identical argument in his alternative to transubstantiation.

But what the Reformers were contending for was not the two-foldness of baptism and confirmation, but the two-foldness of baptism itself. Baptism was a human act, a washing in water: but it was also a divine act, the inward washing and regeneration of the Spirit. The two acts might not coincide in time, but both were necessary to constitute baptism in the full sense ... The concern of the Reformers was to show that it was not the external rite, which alone or primarily constituted the sacrament.122

Could Cranmer’s “two-foldness” approach to baptism have influenced his approach to confirmation? If so, there is no sign of it in his liturgies. As we shall see below however, some have been convinced otherwise.

The publication of the Defence drew a particularly ingenious response from Stephen Gardiner. Imprisoned awaiting trial, Gardiner did not get to peruse the book until after his release. In his critique, An Explication and Assertion of the Catholic Faith Touching the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, Gardiner turned Cranmer’s own words against him, offering examples of where the 1549 communion rite could be said to reflect the medieval concept of transubstantiation and thereby support the traditionalist understanding of the sacrament. Exploiting the Archbishop’s attempts to provide for both reformed and traditionalist thought in the liturgy, among other points Gardiner claimed that he could still find elements of the adoration usually attached to the now banished Elevation of the Host in Cranmer’s new Prayer of Humble Access.

“This wilful manipulation of Cranmer’s consensus approach to liturgical writing … made the earlier Prayer Book indefensible as a standard of Reformed worship. Certainly the door to that kind of understanding would have to be closed”.123

The 1552 BCP

Just how influential Bucer’s Censura was on the revised Prayer Book is a hotly contested debate.124 While Cranmer chose to ignore around a third of Bucer’s recommendations, that still left two thirds that were included, alongside a significant number of other changes to elements not covered by Bucer in Censura. This has led Gordon Jeanes to question whether Cranmer and Bucer had entered into some private correspondence, not seen by the remainder of the review committee, where the other details were discussed.125 Whatever the case, it is clear that where 1549 had represented an attempt to straddle two worlds, 1552 was much less so.

The 1552 BCP is clearly a work of reformed liturgy. The sacramental theology it contains owes much not just to Bucer, but also to Luther and Calvin. For some, however, it still did not go far enough. A recurring dispute over the issue of kneeling for communion almost derailed the book’s publication at the eleventh hour. Cranmer steadfastly refused to change his work, noting it had already been approved by Parliament and as such there was no mandate for alteration, and finally with the first copies already printed an additional note, the so-called Black Rubric, was inserted on October 22 1552.

123 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 225.

124 For opposing views see ibid., 226-227, Cuming, History of Anglican Liturgy, 73-74, and Amos, Martin Bucer, 107-26.

125 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 229
Gordon Jeanes has shown the strong connections, both theologically and structurally, between the rites of baptism and eucharist in the 1552 book. He shows in the table below the structural similarities at the heart of the two liturgies.\textsuperscript{126}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure of the ‘core’ of the services compared</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baptism</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant prayers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invocation prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of baptism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reception and signing with cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lord’s Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Prayer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The baptismal rites now take place entirely at the font, rather than beginning at the church door. In the introduction, where in 1549 it had read “that they may be baptised with the Holy Ghost,” there was now the addition of a reference to water:

\begin{quote}
I beseech you to call upon God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, that of his bounteous mercy he will grant to these children that thing which by nature they cannot have, that they may be baptised with water and the Holy Ghost\textsuperscript{127}
\end{quote}

Thus the reformer’s focus on the two stages of baptism is more clearly defined, while also softening Cranmer’s clear belief that the inward stage, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, was the more important of the two. We see a similar

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 232.

\textsuperscript{127} Fisher, *The Reformation Period*, 106.
softening in the 1552 version of the flood prayer, criticised by Bucer for its 1549 implication that somehow Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan had sanctified “all other waters for this mystical washing away of sins.”\textsuperscript{128} Here Cranmer ignores Bucer – the reference to Jordan and “all other waters” remains – but the reference to sanctification by the Holy Spirit alone is altered.\textsuperscript{129}

\begin{table}[h]
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\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
\textbf{1549} & Almighty and everlasting God, which of thy justice didst destroy by floods of water the whole world for sin, except viii persons, whom of thy mercy (the same time) thou didst save in the ark: and when thou didst drown in the Red Sea wicked king Pharaoh with all his army, yet (at the same time) thou dist lead thy people the children of Israel safely through the midst thereof, whereby thou didst figure the washing of thy holy baptism: and by the baptism of thy well beloved son Jesus Christ thou didst sanctify the flood Jordan and all other waters to this mystical washing of sin: We beseech thee for thy infinite mercies that thou wilt mercifully look upon these children, sanctify them and wash them with thy Holy Ghost, that they, being delivered from thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ’s church, and so saved
\hline
\textbf{1552} & Almighty and everlasting God, which of thy great mercy didst save Noah and his family from perishing by water, and also didst safely lead the children of Israel, thy people, through the Red Sea, figuring thereby thy holy baptism, and by the baptism of thy well beloved Son, Jesus Christ, didst sanctify the flood Jordan and all other waters to the mystical washing away of sin: we beseech thee for thy infinite mercies that thou wilt mercifully look upon these children, sanctify them and wash them with thy Holy Ghost, that they, being delivered from thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ’s church, and being stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally they may come to the land of everlasting life, there to reign with thee, world without end: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{128} Bucer cited in ibid., 100.

\textsuperscript{129} Fisher, \textit{The Reformation Period}, 106-107. Cummings does not include the rites of the 1552 Prayer Book in his otherwise excellent \textit{The Book of Common Prayer} so we will rely on Fisher’s versions for this section.
from perishing; and being fervent in spirit, stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, rooted in charity, may ever serve thee, and finally attain to everlasting life with all thy holy and chosen people. This grant us, we beseech thee, for Jesus Christ’s sake our Lord. Amen.

Cranmer’s decision to ignore Bucer over the sanctification of the water is worth noting. It is there in Luther’s original version of the prayer – “our Lord Jesus Christ, hast sanctified, and set apart the Jordan and all water for a saving flood”[^130] – but Cranmer’s reference to “the mystical washing away of sin” is all his own. Do we here find evidence that Cranmer was not willing to completely abandon his medieval liturgical roots?

The 1552 rite also addresses the issue of faith on the part of a child being baptised. This was an important point for Cranmer. In his *Defence* he made it clear that there could be no presence of faith in the infant brought for baptism:

> Hitherto I have rehearsed the answer of St. Augustine unto Boniface, a learned bishop, who asked of him, how the parents and friends could answer for a young babe in baptism, and say in his person, that he believeth and converteth unto God, when the child can neither do nor say and such thing. Whereunto the answer of St. Augustine is this: that forasmuch as baptism is the sacrament of the profession of our faith, and of our conversion unto God, it becometh us so to answer for young children coming thereunto, as to that sacrament appertaineth, although the children indeed have no knowledge of such things.^[131^]


[^131]: Cranmer, *Defence*, 111.
Bucer, as we have seen, had been critical of the 1549 rite referring to the child directly, but given that baptism for the reformers was fundamentally about the profession of faith it would have been wrong to have ignored the faith of the candidate altogether. Thus Cranmer attended to both Bucer’s critique and his own concerns with his changes to the baptism liturgy in the 1552 BCP. Gordon Jeanes has noted that Cranmer does this by addressing three facets: the lack of faith in the child, the godparents’ profession of faith and the faith of the gathered congregation.

When an infant, lacking faith, cannot make the profession, the godparents are necessary to make it on its behalf. But in addition to the godparents’ profession, there is also the theme of the faith of the congregation which is prominent throughout the service.132

In 1549 the first signing took place immediately after the flood prayer. In 1552 this is shifted to the much more prominent position of immediately after the three-fold immersion. The accompanying prayer is also completely rewritten:133

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1549</th>
<th>1552</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| *Here shall the priest ask what shall be the name of the child, and when the godfathers and godmothers have told the name, then shall he make a cross upon the child’s forehead and breast, saying:*  
N., receive the sign of the holy cross, both in thy forehead, and in thy breast, in token that thou shalt not be ashamed to confess thy faith in Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world and the devil, and to| *Then the priest shall make a cross upon the child’s forehead, saying:*  
We receive this child into the congregation of Christ’s flock, and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world and the devil, and to |


fight under his banner against sin, the world and the devil, and to continue his faithful soldier and servant unto thy life’s end. Amen.

Gone is the address directly to the child, and added is a direct statement of reception into the church. Gone also is the post-baptismal anointing present in 1549. Bucer had been critical of both the use of chrism and the vesting in a white robe, both part of the Sarum rite, and in 1552 both are abolished.

Cranmer may also have been paying attention to Bucer again when he omitted the exorcism found in the 1549 liturgy from that of 1552, although Jeanes notes that the other revisions to the rite make it “hard to see in any case how the exorcism would have been included.”

Following the reading of the gospel and the exhortation in 1549 there had been the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed prior to the procession from the church door to the font. As the whole liturgy takes place at the font in 1552, the procession is gone, the Lord’s Prayer is moved to following the signing, and the Creed, in 1549 repeated within the profession of faith by godparents, is left in that place alone in the later book.

In keeping with the removal of most ceremonial from the 1552 BCP the elaborate three-fold dipping from the Sarum rite, repeated in 1549, is replaced with a rubric instructing the priest to “take the child in his hands, and ask the name, and naming the child shall dip it in the water, so it be discreetly and warily done”.

134 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 256.

Confirmation in 1552

It is impossible to deny that the confirmation rite in the 1552 BCP was a work of reformed liturgy. Where 1549 had been an only slightly modified version of the medieval rite, the revised liturgy was almost completely rewritten. The catechism at the beginning of the 1552 rite was only slightly lengthened, but the liturgy itself underwent major changes, although the opening prayer reveals little of what is to come. There is in this prayer though the reference to “strengthen them,” with its inevitable similarity to the late mediaeval rites.136

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1549</th>
<th>1552</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almighty and everliving God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants of water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins, send down from heaven, we beseech thee, O Lord, upon them thy Holy Ghost, the Comforter, with the manifold gifts of grace, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and fulfil them, O Lord, with the spirit of thy holy fear.</td>
<td>Almighty and everliving God, who has vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins, strengthen them, we beseech thee, O Lord, upon them thy Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness: and fulfil them, O Lord, with the spirit of thy holy fear.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The signing that followed in the 1549 rite has gone completely and is replaced by a prayer that accompanies the hand-laying, which is now the only manual action in the liturgy.

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136 Ibid., 241 and 251.
Defend, O Lord, this child with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue thine for ever, and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto thy everlasting kingdom. Amen.\footnote{137}

Cranmer walks a fine line here. Gone is the signing and the peace that followed it, but the reference to “daily increase in thy Holy Spirit” still harks back to the medieval approach to confirmation. This, coupled with the reference to “strengthening” in the already traditional prayer for the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit, provides just enough of the old to offset the new, despite the fact that the “Defend, O Lord” prayer said by the bishop during the hand-laying appears to have its origins in the work that the thoroughly reformed Bucer did for Hermann’s Consultation and led to at least one person questioning whether it was really appropriate for an episcopal confirmation.\footnote{138}

Thus, whereas the hand-laying with prayer in the rite of 1549 could be interpreted, and no doubt was so interpreted, if not by Cranmer himself at least by a number of his fellow divines, as a means of grace wherein the Holy Spirit was sacramentally imparted, the changes made in 1552 have the combined effect of making such an interpretation, if not impossible, at any rate more difficult.\footnote{139}

The concluding rubrics to the 1552 rite spell out the now increased obligations of the clergy and the wider community for catechesis:

\begin{quote}
The curate of every parish, or some other at his appointment, shall diligently upon Sundays and holy days half an hour before Evensong, openly in the church instruct and examine so many children of his parish sent unto him as the time will serve, and as he shall think convenient, in some part of this catechism.
\end{quote}

\footnote{137} Ibid., 251. \footnote{138} Ibid., 253. \footnote{139} Ibid.
And all fathers, mothers, masters and dames shall cause their children, servants and prentices, which have not learned their catechism to come to the church at the time appointed ... And whenever the bishop shall give knowledge for children to be brought afore him to any convenient place for their confirmation, then shall the curate of every parish either bring, or send in writing, the names of all those children of his parish which can say the articles of their faith, the Lord’s prayer and the ten commandments: and also how many of them can answer to the other questions contained in this catechism.

And there shall none be admitted to the holy communion, until such time as he can say the catechism and be confirmed.140

Twice in this rubric the emphasis is moved away from confirmation and on to catechesis: “which have not learned their catechism” replaces “which are not yet confirmed”, and “until such time as he can say the catechism and be confirmed” replaces simply “until such time as he be confirmed.” The shift in emphasis is clear and significant. The Lutheran and Reformed influences Jeanes sees in the 1552 baptism rite are even clearer in confirmation. By the end of 1552 there could be no doubting that the initiation sequence and emphases in the English Prayer Book had moved heavily away from their medieval predecessors and firmly into the realms of reformation sacramental theology. Yet there was still just enough of the old left to make it noticeable.

While the reformed credentials of the 1552 BCP are reasonably clear, it is notable that Cranmer refused to implement all Bucer’s recommendations and, as Fisher has commented, the door remains open for those so inclined to find a nod towards the traditionalist position within it. In the confirmation rite the removal of chrism and anointing visibly shifts the liturgy away from its medieval background. The retention of references to “strengthening” however, along with traditional elements like the prayer for the seven-fold gifts of the

140 Ibid., 252.
Spirit and, of course, its maintenance of the rite as an episcopal service, ensure that it is recognisably confirmation in the line of its medieval predecessors. There is little doubt that for those who strongly desired it, confirmation in the 1552 BCP could be construed to be compatible with the rites of the late medieval church. It was also, of course, thoroughly reformed, with a focus on catechesis and profession of faith, and thus those wishing to see something in the line of the rite of the Jednota could also find what they were looking for in its pages. The scales may have tipped more clearly towards reform, but Cranmer had maintained at least some of the traditional, and that accommodation had significant implications.

It would be unfair, however, to suggest that Cranmer in 1552 simply continued his attempts to find consensus between the competing religious parties of his time. This had certainly been the case in 1549, where the Archbishop’s desire for compromise and consensus was obvious. By 1552 that intention was at least mostly gone, although Gordon Jeanes notes that it is likely any chances of such a position had evaporated even before the 1549 book was published.141

Thus the 1552 BCP, in ways somewhat different to its predecessor, was still destined to ensure controversy. Cranmer’s eucharistic and baptism theologies in particular ensured that not even the reformed side would be completely happy.142 Perhaps this, more than anything else, might seek to offer assurance that Cranmer indeed knew his own mind and was prepared to stand by it. Earlier signs of a desire to please everyone might be tempered by his ultimate inability, and apparent lack of desire, to do just that.

141 Jeanes, Signs of God’s Promise, 290.
142 Ibid.
1553-1559

The end of what must have seemed a dream run for reform-minded Englishmen came on July 6 1553 when the young King Edward VI died. What followed was a period of political turmoil which placed Cranmer at the heart of attempts to preserve the fledgling English Reformation. Henry’s will had been clear and in the event of the death of Edward his illegitimate daughter, Mary, would take the throne, with all her papist tendencies. In a matter of weeks, despite a bold plan to change the order of succession, Mary was monarch and by December all of England was restored to the religious observances in force at the time of Henry’s death.

The tale of Cranmer’s fate under Mary is well documented elsewhere. Following a period of failed negotiation, imprisonment and humiliation, Cranmer met his death at the stake in Oxford on December 21st, 1556. But the English reformers found new hope when Mary died just two years later and Elizabeth took the throne. The new queen, however, faced problems on several fronts. Elizabeth had to balance her personal preferences with the realities of her situation, a situation that gave birth to the Elizabethan Settlement. Liturgically, Diarmaid MacCulloch summarises Elizabeth’s response to her predicament as typically ingenious:

Elizabeth’s solution to her dilemmas was remarkable: quite deliberately, she established a version of the Edwardian Church which proved to be a snapshot, frozen in time, of the Church as it had been in September 1552, ignoring the progress made in further changing the Church of England after that date.\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{143} MacCulloch, Thomas Cranmer, 620.
Thus the Prayer Book of 1559 was the original Prayer Book 1552, as approved by Parliament, without the “Black Rubric.” The widespread revisions to Canon Law that Cranmer had worked on prior to Edward’s death were forgotten. The revised catechism and primer prepared in 1553 were discarded and the 1559 baptism and confirmation rites were identical to the previous versions. The only significant alterations to the Prayer Book were to the eucharistic liturgy and the addition of what would become a hotly contested rubric regarding ornamentation at the beginning of matins.\(^{144}\)

**Just How Far Did Cranmer Want to Go?**

Thus at the conclusion of the sixteenth century, despite all Cranmer’s questionnaires and revisions, the state of Christian initiation in England looked much as it had half a century earlier.\(^{145}\) The question must be asked however, what might have happened had Cranmer lived and continued his reforms? Some believe he had already tipped his hand in his first two Prayer Books.

Marion Hatchett, writing in the 1960s, argued that Cranmer incorporated the anointing from the traditional confirmation rite into his 1549 baptism rite deliberately to restore the two into one single rite of (presbyteral) initiation. Even with the dropping of the anointing in the 1552 revision, Hatchett claimed that the shifting of the signing to the point immediately after the immersion accomplished the same thing.\(^{146}\) Hatchett’s work was highly influential on the

\(^{144}\) Ibid.

\(^{145}\) Bryan Spinks notes that despite the lack of change and the adoption of the Articles of Faith there was still variation in the interpretation of baptism. It is likely that this also extended to confirmation, with those of a more traditionalist leaning and the emerging Puritan movement both wanting further change. See Spinks, *Reformed and Modern Rituals*, 72.

authors of the initiation rites in the 1979 American Book of Common Prayer and was later picked up by participants in the Fourth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation held in Toronto in 1991. David Holeton, building on the work of Hatchett, has stated,

I would suggest (as others in the past) that Cranmer intended to take the entire theological content of medieval baptism and confirmation and place it in his reformed baptismal rite. Prayer Book baptism is complete initiation.147

William Crockett goes further in his belief that:

There is a growing consensus among liturgical scholars that Cranmer had a twofold aim in revising the initiation rites. In the first place, it now seems clear that Cranmer’s aim in revising the baptismal rite was to restore the unity of Christian initiation. Secondly, while he retained a rite of confirmation in the Prayer Book, he followed the Reformation rather than the medieval model and interpreted confirmation as the renewal of baptismal vows rather than as the completion of baptism.148

Despite Crockett’s assertion of “a growing consensus” there are strong arguments against these claims. Bryan Spinks systematically addressed them in an address to the Eighteenth Congress of Societas Liturgica in 2001.149 Spinks argues that Cranmer’s belief in predestination and theology of justification means he would never have considered baptism alone suitable evidence of election.

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148 William Crockett in Holeton, Growing in Newness of Life, 47.

At an experiential level, Cranmer expected certain visible signs to indicate election, namely, articulation of the faith and ability to remember and be repentant for admission to communion. In Tudor England children were not capable of showing a lively faith and understanding and were not admitted to the table, any more than were notorious sinners, without catechesis and repentance. Thus it is no accident that Cranmer re-imaged confirmation, and placed it after catechesis, which allowed the articulation of a lively faith, and at least some outward certification of the ability to approach the sacrament of the supper worthily.\textsuperscript{150}

So did Cranmer, like Luther and others, see little of value in confirmation apart from the opportunity for the “certain visible signs” he was looking for to be seen? There is no question that Cranmer believed confirmation unnecessary for salvation, and it appears he both accepted and agreed with Bucer’s emphasis on catechesis prior to a public confession of faith. Here he stands in line with the other reformers and the Jednota before them. Yet there are still signs of the traditional among the reformed.

Of course Cranmer was an Archbishop. While the 1552 BCP followed a reformation line, it was still not, as we have seen, at the level expected by the likes of Bucer and the Italian reformer, Peter Martyr. Cranmer appears to have deliberately pulled back from moving to a specifically Lutheran or Reformed position on baptism and confirmation. There is no suggestion he was moving towards presbyteral confirmation, and while Hatchett, Holeton, Crockett and others would say otherwise, there is really little to suggest that Cranmer was intentionally attempting to combine the two rites at all. Cranmer’s Prayer Books, like the man himself, are a complex mix of traditional and reformed, with the stubborn determination to avoid being completely accepted by either camp still obvious in much of Anglicanism today. While there are undeniably in the 1559 BCP and its descendants aspects of the reformed approach to

\textsuperscript{150} Spinks, \textit{Toronto Revisited}, 105.
confirmation in the model pioneered by the Jednota, there are also hints of the sacramental understandings of Aquinas and Lombard, and the reliance on discredited sources common to them all. This then is the legacy of Cranmer and the foundations upon which Anglican confirmation has been built: an often murky pool fed by two streams that although discernable have often run mostly underground.
Conclusion

“Perhaps the biggest problem in the theological debate is the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between two positions on the meaning of confirmation.”

We have seen above that Thomas Cranmer was the recipient of two distinct models of confirmation when he set about his liturgical reforms in the sixteenth century.

The first – and oldest – was the sacrament of the medieval church, honed by the scholastic theologians into a source of strengthening by the Holy Spirit for the rigours of Christian life. It had travelled via a varied route from its origins as an integral part of the integrated rite of Christian initiation by immersion and post-baptismal hand-laying and / or anointing. At a relatively early point it had become separated in some regions but not others, but by the early middle ages it was identifiably two sacramental rites: the first a (usually) presbyteral act of baptism, followed days, months, or years later by an episcopal act of confirmation. Both were understood as true sacraments by virtue of both their antiquity and the actions of God perceived in them.

The second model has its origins in the Hussite movement of fifteenth century Bohemia. Imagined in part by the Táborites, honed by Petr Chelčický and finally modified and implemented by the Jednota Bratrská, this was confirmation in name, but bore almost no resemblance to the sacrament of the late middle ages. Intended at least in part to address the issues of infant baptism, this confirmation provided an opportunity for one baptised in infancy to profess their faith and make a personal commitment of belonging to the sect.

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It followed an intentional period of catechesis and preparation, and was administered by the local presbyter rather than a bishop. Passed through Erasmus, Bucer and Luther, the influence of this Jednota confirmation is clear, firstly in the educational emphases of both Erasmus and Bucer, and latterly in the rites of profession and commitment (sometimes called confirmation) of a number of the churches of the sixteenth century reformations.

In receiving both these models of confirmation Cranmer was, to some extent, torn between past and present. We have noted that in his youth the future Archbishop showed little or no inclination towards reform, but as the continental influence became stronger in England, and Cranmer had first hand experiences of reformed theologians and liturgies, he found himself drawn into the reform movement sweeping much of the western church.

It has been clear that Cranmer was not an autocratic archbishop. His preferred method of consultation via questionnaire reveals a desire to listen to and where possible accommodate all sides of an issue. His earlier years as a diplomat and royal representative had clearly honed his skills as a walker of fine lines, and we have seen occasional glimpses of the politician within.

In his first prayer book Cranmer sought consensus, or at least compromise. A skilful if not subtle blending of old and new, the 1549 Book of Common Prayer featured a baptismal rite with clear links to Cranmer’s increasingly reformist theology, and a confirmation liturgy with a strong connection to tradition. The book was slated by reformers and damned with faint praise by traditionalists, an assurance that it could not remain in place for long.

In 1552 Cranmer produced a book worthy of the term ‘reformed’, but despite clear shifts away from the inherited past, there remained in its liturgies a
traditionalist vein. In the 1552 confirmation rite Anglicanism moved mostly into the Lutheran / Reformed model of catechesis and profession, inherited and adapted from the Jednota, but there remained just enough of the medieval sacrament of the Holy Spirit to provide grist for the traditionalist mill and ensure future Anglicans would never have a single, clear view of what confirmation meant and did.

Adding to the potential confusion of two distinct and in many ways exclusive confirmation streams was the fact that both were built at least in part on dubious foundations. We have seen above the influence of a single sermon – probably episcopal, probably by Faustus of Riez – which thanks largely to its inclusion among the False Decretals attributed to the non-existent Pope Melchiades helped shape the approach of Lombard, Bonaventure and Aquinas. This set in place the core of confirmation as received in the Roman Catholic tradition ever since. The Jednota, meanwhile, relied on the myth of an apostolic rite of hand-laying following catechesis, perpetuated by Pseudo-Dionysius, discredited in the early sixteenth century, but still cited on the continent and in England decades later. Added to these issues evident in the sixteenth century is the fact that in recent decades challenges have been made to the validity of the key evidence for the early church approach to Christian initiation, with both the date and authorship of the Apostolic Tradition being reassessed. No matter which way we look, then, confirmation sits on a perilous perch in terms of appeal to the past.

Whatever the debates and intentions of its architect, his supporters and opposition, as far as the “average Anglican” was concerned the “real” meaning and purpose of confirmation was clear for some four hundred and fifty years: it provided an entry point to receiving communion, and a gate to ensure children were kept out.
And there shall none be admitted to the holy communion: until suche tyme as he can saye the Catechisme and be confirmed.²

Cranmer’s inclusion of “the confirmation rubric” in his rites provided a future for the rite. While there is evidence confirmation was still only fitfully practiced in some places,³ as the importance of the eucharist became more prominent so its entry point grew more important. While in places this remains the case, in Aotearoa-New Zealand the gate was removed in the 1970s and the resulting loss of purpose for confirmation has led to a variety of reports, resources and recommendations.

The usual response to this scenario has been to look for a specific model within the Anglican tradition. In much of the Anglican Communion, including Aotearoa New Zealand, the scales have tipped firmly towards the reformed end of the spectrum, with confirmation seen usually as a rite of commitment incorporating a personal profession of faith and ownership of promises made at baptism.⁴ In other words, more towards the Jednota form of the rite.

The problem is, the sacramental elements are still there, albeit faintly. It was significant that the proposed 1928 revision of the 1662 BCP – left un-ratified in England but used extensively elsewhere – included an addition to the preface of the confirmation liturgy, citing Acts 8, and stating that “a special gift of the

² From 1559 BCP cited in Cummings, The Book of Common Prayer, 156.
⁴ It is not until the 1662 revision of the Book of Common Prayer that any explicit ratification – or confirmation – of baptismal promises appears in the confirmation service, despite a common understanding that this public ratification was the “principal function of the occasion.” In the 1662 rite the bishop begins by asking the candidates to “renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism”. See Austin, The Rite of Confirmation, 69-71.
Holy Spirit is bestowed through the laying on of hands with prayer.”\(^5\) This effectively restored a medieval concept that had remained officially absent for nearly four centuries. The work of Mason and Dix restored interest in the sacramental possibilities in Anglican confirmation, and the growing trend for bishops to anoint with chrism those coming for confirmation, which has been criticised heavily by some as an attempt to “suggest an additional sealing with the Spirit in confirmation and thereby undermine the sufficiency of baptism as full Christian initiation,”\(^6\) has provided more impetus for seeing the rite in sacramental terms.

To solely embrace the sacramental element of Anglican confirmation, however, is to fail to recognise what its architect intended. As we have seen above, Cranmer was clearly not trying to portray confirmation primarily in terms of its medieval sacramental heritage. Indeed, his revisions in 1552 significantly weakened suggestions that some form of reception of the Holy Spirit was involved, while leaving the concept of “strengthening” – so familiar to a traditional view of the rite – in place. Embracing confirmation as firstly a sacrament of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is inconsistent with Cranmer’s theology.

Similarly though, a purely reformed approach to confirmation misses the Cranmerian mark. Cranmer had every opportunity to introduce all the alterations Bucer suggested in \textit{Censura}. To do so would have cast his prayer book as an unapologetically reformed publication whilst rejecting all traditionalist tendencies. While catechesis features strongly in the 1552 confirmation rite – and there is certainly a strong element of the type of


examination envisaged in the Jednota’s model – it is tempered by the hints of sacramentalism noted above and there is no reason to believe that was accidental.

Cranmer then deliberately, and in a most Anglican fashion, opted for the middle way, albeit with a distinct lean in the reformers’ direction. Thus any approach to Anglican confirmation that fails to take into account both its sacramental and reformed origins cannot be considered to be in sync with sixteenth century Anglican thought. Equally, however, any approach to confirmation that includes a hint of its sacramental background must then contend cautiously with the questions raised about baptism.

Throughout this work we have had to constantly consider both confirmation and baptism. The latter, all accept, is the primary rite. At no point in either Reformed or Catholic history has baptism ever been considered of secondary importance to confirmation. Some, of course, possibly Cranmer included, would argue whether baptism (externally anyway) was necessary for salvation, and many of the reformers took the same two-stage view that Cranmer did in which baptism by water and the spirit were seen as two elements of the same rite – the external and the internal – with the internal holding the most significance. The Jednota and possibly others would have doubtless seen both baptism and their version of confirmation as essential, but by the third decade of the sixteenth century they afforded sacramental status only to the former. The question remains however, how an Anglican model of confirmation that incorporates a sacramental approach contends with contemporary baptismal theology.

Again, it is beyond the scope of this work to explain and explore fully the baptismal theology of the twenty-first century Anglican church. The Toronto
Statement from the IALC sums up the situation well: “Baptism is complete sacramental initiation and leads to participation in the Eucharist.” In this Province as others that “completeness” includes children and infants, meaning the four centuries that confirmation served as a gateway to communion are done.

A sacramental approach to confirmation is hard-pushed to avoid suggesting that baptism alone completes Christian initiation. If that approach follows the medieval understanding, as Fisher has suggested some might see in the 1552 rite, it will need to make allowances for a “special” giving of the Holy Spirit without suggesting that such is at all necessary to complete or enhance baptism. Cranmer’s approach does little to help this cause. His rubric at the end of the baptism liturgy makes it clear that he still sees confirmation if not sacramentally, then at least as necessary.

The Minister shal cammaunde that the children be brought to the Byshop to be confyrmed of him, so sone as they can saye in theyr vulgare tongue the articles of the faythe, the Lordes praier, and the x. Commaundementes, and be further instructed in the Catechisme set furth for that purpose, accordingly as it is there expressed.

While Cranmer, following Bucer’s recommendations, is primarily focused on catechesis here, it is hard to get away from the idea that baptism is somehow if not incomplete, then at least in need of something more.

The difficulty arises, of course, when baptism is understood as the sole point of initiation via a single non-repeatable event. Whilst true to a point, this ignores the essentially formational nature of catechesis itself. “Recalling

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8 1552 BCP cited in Cummings, Book of Common Prayer, 146.
Tertullian’s observation that Christians are ‘made, not born,’ catechesis for Christian education should intentionally be concerned with ‘building Christians,’ and any theology of confirmation should reflect that understanding.” The concept of a single event of Christian initiation that prevails in our contemporary age bears little resemblance to the models envisaged either by the reformers or the early church. In the reformed tradition, as we have seen, baptism, while seen as complete in terms of salvation, was simply the beginning of a process of initiation. It is true, of course, that the reformers for the most part would not have seen those baptised as infants as full members of the church. For an example of that we might look to the early church, where we believe what emerged was a focus on initiation as a whole within its various constituent parts, with various liturgical rites along the way: election to the catechumenate, baptism, confirmation and communion, with the three happening or not happening at a single event in time. Seen in this manner we might recognise a focus on a process rather than event approach to initiation.

Bryan Spinks has shown that Stephen Sykes suggested Cranmer had a similar process (or journey in his language) focus when preparing the 1552 baptismal rite:

The Christian ‘profession’ entails a journey ‘in Christ,’ which begins with a dying to sin. This in itself presupposes that humanity apart from Christ is in a state of sin, the information appropriately conveyed by the words with which the liturgy begins … Delivery of sin through the atoning death of Christ brings the Christian into the company of those undertaking the journey of sanctification, a

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10 For more on this see Brian R. Dawson, “In Search of Meaning: Christian Initiation and the Rite of Confirmation in the Methodist Church of New Zealand / Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa” (Extended Research Essay, Melbourne College of Divinity, 1993), 38-42.
constant further dying to sin and growth in obedience and godliness. The final state is that of enjoyment of the kingdom and eternal life. Thus, deliverance from sin, sanctification and entry into the kingdom constitutes a comprehensive summary of life ‘in Christ.’ Because the self-same promises of the Gospel accompany the Christian throughout his or her entire life, Baptism is a reminder of the Christian profession, a structure and framework for the whole of Christian living.

It is not, therefore, accidental that in the pivotal address to the godparents before they make their promises, what is entailed in Christ’s reception of and blessing of children is spelt out as follows: ‘To release them of theyre synnes … to geue them the kingdom of heaven, and euerverlasting lyfe.’ This pattern is constantly reiterated …

Sykes concludes:

... this liturgy is characterised by a structure and a pattern of repetitions expressive of the way in which a Christian becomes involved in the divine plan, and the consequences of having done so. The structure focuses the drama upon the child, deploying the powerful thought of divine tenderness towards small children, but at the same time addresses adult participants through the metaphor of growth to maturity. It deliberately sets out to remind all present of the fundamental character of their own baptism, and to reinforce and encourage Christians in the profession of their faith.\textsuperscript{11}

Regardless of how confirmation is approached, all must accept the shaky foundations noted above. If we accept that these key historic documents can no longer be taken as necessarily accurate, we are left with the realisation that there is nothing we can know for certain about initiation in the early church.

But does that matter? The evidence covered above shows liturgists for centuries have looked to the early church as the gold standard in liturgy, but is older necessarily better? Regardless that many of the reformers clearly thought

so, we can not return to the fourth or fifth centuries, and as Anglicans we inherit a sixteenth century model of dubious historical accuracy. To dismiss the rites on those grounds would be to dismiss all liturgical reform in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not to mention the work of the medieval sacramentalists – our options are decreasing!

Certainly the catechetical emphasis of the sixteenth century reformers has proven valuable for many, including those they originally railed against. Maxwell Johnson has noted that the post-baptism rites arising among the churches of the reformation had the unlikely effect of restoring and revitalising confirmation to some extent in a new era.

Whether such rites were called “confirmation” or not ... by the development of such rites of profession based on extended catechesis, and by making such catechesis and profession a prerequisite for the reception of first communion, the Protestant Reformation did restore something akin to the rites associated with the reddito symboli in the ancient catechumenate ... Nevertheless, whatever the profession rite is called, since it was the baptised who, by these “confirmation replacement rites,” were generally admitted to first communion sometime near the traditional “age of reason,” it cannot be ignored that the traditional Western initiatory sequence of baptism, “confirmation,” and first communion, in that order, was actually maintained by the Protestant Reformation with a greater tenacity than it had been among the late medieval Roman Church itself.¹²

The significance of this potential invigoration of what had so often been a neglected sacrament was not lost on the Roman church as it set about framing its response to the sixteenth century reformers. Key among these responses was a hardening of the line barring infant communion and a renewed emphasis on

¹² Johnson, Christian Initiation, 277. For more on the possible restoration of the reddito symboli see Old, Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite, 201-226.
Christian education. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests* appeared in 1566. In referring to confirmation this *Catechism* described the confirmation of those below the “age of reason” as “inexpedient” and suggests somewhere between seven and twelve as an appropriate age.\(^{13}\) Thus it could be said that the Jednota’s influence had spread even as far as Rome, or at least Trent.

**Last Word**

The initial goal of this work was to show that Anglican confirmation is the product of Thomas Cranmer melding a medieval sacramental understanding of the rite, evolved from the Roman approach in the fifth and sixth centuries, with reformed confirmation, its origins quite separate to the Roman rite within the Jednota Bratská of fifteenth century Bohemia. The effect of this, according to my hypothesis, was a guaranteed confusion as to the rite’s meaning and purpose, albeit masked for some centuries by its role as the gateway to holy communion.

At its conclusion this work has shown the above to be true, but at the same time raised questions about the validity of the sources both medieval and reformed confirmation are based on. This last section too has raised the possibility that perhaps the way forward for confirmation among Anglicans is to reclaim precisely the mongrel pedigree it assumes. Could that future be found in an approach based on an understanding of Christian initiation as a *process* rather than an *event*, beginning with baptism, followed by careful preparation and rigorous catechesis, celebrated in an episcopal rite that brings together a commitment to the church, a personal profession of faith, and a hand-laying and anointing with prayer for a renewed and increased experience of the Holy Spirit, with all of these aspects both acknowledged and expressed,

\(^{13}\) Johnson, *Christian Initiation*, 285
embracing the middle way that Cranmer plotted so long ago? Only time will tell.
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