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**"Chrismation - Confirmation in the perspective of a
bilateral dialogue between the Orthodox Church and
the Catholic Church"**

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INTRODUCTION

This research paper refers to the sacrament of Chrismation in the Orthodox Church and Confirmation in the Catholic Church, as a Master thesis in the MAS¹ Programme of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey.

The term “Chrismation” comes before the term “Confirmation” chronologically. Nonetheless, I will use the combinational term “Chrismation-Confirmation” in my research paper, trying to keep an objective and respectful balance between the two traditions for the same sacrament. At the same time, when I use the term “Chrismation” it clearly refers to the Eastern tradition and when I use the term “Confirmation” it clearly refers to the Western tradition.

Chrismation-Confirmation is one of the three sacraments of Christian Initiation (Baptism, Chrismation-Confirmation, Eucharist). As it is celebrated nowadays, it has its basis in the laying on of hands by the Apostles on the neophytes. The laying on of the hands by the Apostles on the neophytes conferred the gift of the Holy Spirit and it was in connection with the sacrament of Baptism. Chrismation-Confirmation is consequently the extension of the Day of Pentecost.

¹ Master of Advanced Ecumenical Studies.

In the framework of the bilateral dialogue between the two Churches, it is very significant what is reported in the document "Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church"² of the meeting in Bari (Italy), which was held in June 1987. The agreement points out the common understanding of Chrismation-Confirmation as well as the two main differences: a) the separation between Baptism and Confirmation and b) the fact that the Eucharist frequently precedes the Confirmation abrogating the order of the sacraments of Christian Initiation. These differences have pastoral (theological and practical) consequences and implications. This is an aspect which has not yet been developed in the bilateral dialogue between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics.

The lack of the development of this aspect of Chrismation-Confirmation is the reason why I chose this topic. I would like this research paper to set some questions for a deeper understanding of Chrismation-Confirmation. Roman Catholics and Orthodox mutually recognize the Baptism of each other in practice, even if there is no official bilateral document of agreement. What about the second sacrament of Christian initiation? Is there a different theological understanding of Chrismation and Confirmation or a kind of misunderstanding that keeps the two Churches away from a mutual recognition of this sacrament?

² "Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church", *Growth in Agreement II*, WCC Publications, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge 2000, pp. 666-668.

It is really very difficult to give an answer. It is a very large and important matter to be examined in such a short paper. The two main differences between Chrismation and Confirmation are not simply and easily understandable. Theological, pastoral and historical reasons led to changes in the administration of this sacrament and consequently these changes affected its understanding.

The method which I will follow is the comparison between Chrismation and Confirmation. The first chapter presents the administration of Chrismation and Confirmation. Starting with the administration of this sacrament, its historical and theological aspects come to be more easily comprehensible. Important historical and theological aspects of Chrismation-Confirmation, from the early Christianity to the Bari document, are briefly presented in the second chapter. In the last chapter we summarize the common ground and the differences between Chrismation and Confirmation in order to go further to pastoral implications derived from the way by which Chrismation-Confirmation is administered nowadays.

A. ADMINISTRATION OF CHRISMATION IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND CONFIRMATION IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

A.1. Administration of Chrismation

Chrismation is conferred immediately after Baptism in one rite of Christian Initiation in which Baptism, Chrismation and Eucharist (or the first Holy Communion) are inseparably and unconfusedly connected. The terms “Chrismation” and “chrism” come from the Greek verb «χρίω» which means to anoint somebody with oil, scented oil or unguent.³

Chrismation, as a distinct act in the baptismal rite, is celebrated after the water-baptism when the bishop or the priest says the prayer of Chrismation: “Blessed are You, Lord God Almighty, Fountain of Blessings, Sun of Righteousness, Who made to shine forth for those in darkness a light of salvation through the manifestation of Your Only-Begotten Son and our God, granting unto us, though we are unworthy, blessed cleansing in Holy Water, and divine sanctification in the Life-effecting Anointing; Who now also has been well-pleased to regenerate this Your servant newly illuminated through Water and Spirit, giving him/her forgiveness of his (her) voluntary and involuntary sins: do You

³ LIDDELL & SCOTT, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1999, p. 2007/ LIDDELL & SCOTT, *Μεγάλο Λεξικό Ελληνικών*, <http://lexicon.omhros.eu>, as per date 20/11/2008/ Τριανταφυλλίδης, Μ., *Λεξικό της Ελληνικής Γλώσσας*, <http://www.komvos.edu.gr/dictionaries/dictionline/DictOnlineCombo.htm>, as per date 20/11/2008. Chrism is the scented and sacred oil used in the sacrament of Chrismation, which consists of pure olive oil mixed with precious balsam perfumes and essences of different kinds of flowers and other sweet smelling herbs and ingredients. It is also known by the word of Semitic origin “Myron” or “Meron”.

Yourself, Sovereign Master, Compassionate King of All, bestow upon him/her also the Seal of Your omnipotent and adorable Holy Spirit, and the Communion of the Holy Body and Most Precious Blood of Your Christ; keep him/her in Your sanctification; confirm him/her in the Orthodox Faith; deliver him/her from the Evil One and all his devices; preserve his/her soul, through Your saving fear, in purity and righteousness, that in every work and word, being acceptable before You, he/she may become a child and heir of Your heavenly Kingdom. For You are our God, the God of Mercy and Salvation, and to You do we send up Glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.”⁴ After the prayer, the neophyte is anointed on different parts of his/her body with Chrism in the sign of the cross by the bishop or the priest who administers the sacrament using each time the words “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit”.⁵ He/she is anointed on the forehead, the eyes, the nostrils, the mouth, the ears, the breast, the hands and the feet,⁶ which signifies the sanctification of the thoughts, of the desires, of all the senses and the acts on the way of God’s commandments.⁷ After receiving the Chrism, the recipient is

⁴ “Μικρὸν Εὐχολόγιον – An Orthodox Prayer Book”, (ed. Vaporis, M.N.), Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts, U.S.A. 1985², pp. 64-65.

⁵ In the Greek language: «Σφραγίς δωρεᾶς Πνεύματος Ἁγίου».

⁶ See: “Μικρὸν Εὐχολόγιον – An Orthodox Prayer Book”, (ed. Vaporis, M.N.), Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts, U.S.A. 1985², p. 65.

⁷ See: Buben, Fr. Michael J., “What is Holy Chrismation?”, in *The Word*, February 1962, p. 5.

eligible to receive the first Holy Communion and to participate in the whole sacramental life of the Church. This practice of celebration puts great emphasis to the unity of Christian Initiation through the three sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and Eucharist: "Chrismation is not only an organic part of the baptismal mystery: it is performed as the fulfillment of Baptism, just as the next act of that mystery, namely the participation in the Eucharist, is the fulfillment of Chrismation."⁸ In the celebration of Chrismation there is no distinction between newly baptized infants and adults.

Chrismation is performed by the bishop of the diocese or by a priest. The Orthodox belief, from the early Christianity, that truth is inseparable from the life of the sacramental community provides the basis for the Orthodox understanding of the apostolic succession of bishops: They are the guardians and witnesses of the tradition that uninterruptedly goes back to the Apostles. It indicates the common apostolic faith and unites the local churches, which are not a part of the body of the Church but the whole as the one body of the Church.⁹ In this case, the Apostles were those who performed the Chrismation by the laying on of their hands on the newly baptized. Later on, as Christianity

⁸ Schmemmann, Alexander, *Of Water and the Spirit*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974, p. 77.

⁹ See: Meyendorff, John, *The Orthodox Church, Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, (3rd revised edition), St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996, pp. 11-13.

began to grow, this authority was devolved to the successors of the Apostles (bishops) to administer the Chrismation by anointing the baptized with Chrism.¹⁰

Nowadays, the prevailing Orthodox practice of Chrismation is to be administered by the priest who celebrates the Baptism. Nevertheless, the Chrism is distributed to the priests by the bishop. This is the symbol of the priests' permission to administer the Chrismation on behalf of the bishop. For the Greek speaking Orthodox Churches, Chrism is prepared during the Holy Week. Its preparation begins on Holy Monday and culminates in the Liturgy of Holy Thursday. The service is performed by the Ecumenical Patriarch, members of the Holy Synod and representative bishops from other Orthodox Patriarchates and autonomous Churches. On completion, Chrism is distributed to the bishops, who, henceforth, distribute it to the parishes of their dioceses when it is needed. Chrism is not prepared on a yearly basis, but usually every ten years or when supplies run short. The practice of preparation of Chrism is similar for the other non-Greek speaking autonomous Orthodox Churches.

¹⁰ See: Gialopsos, Philip G., *The Seven Sacraments of the Greek Orthodox Church*, Light and Life Publishing Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota 1997⁵, p. 35.

A.2 Administration of Confirmation

The term “Confirmation”, which comes from the Latin “Confirmatio,” indicates that this sacrament ratifies Baptism, renews the baptismal promises, strengthens its grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, completes the individual’s spiritual life and confirms that the baptized persons are Christian soldiers.¹¹ During the Middle Ages, Confirmation was administered as soon as possible after Baptism in the first, second or third year of age, but “it was in the 16th century, by the Council of Trent, that it generally came to be reserved for candidates who had attained the age of reason (after the seventh year of age).”¹²

According to the Catholic Catechism, Confirmation is celebrated during the Mass, for the three sacraments of Christian Initiation form a unity: “the faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time, for without Confirmation and Eucharist, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete.”¹³ Even if Confirmation is separated from Baptism, it begins with the renewal of baptismal promises and the profession of faith by

¹¹ See: Turner, Paul, *Confirmation in the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, <http://www.paulturner.org/confirmation.htm>, as per date 11/12/2008.

¹² Holeyton, David R., *Confirmation, Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, WCC Publications, Geneva 2002², p. 240.

¹³ *Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, pp. 294-295, 297.

the confirmands¹⁴ in order to be denoted that Confirmation follows Baptism. The Second Vatican Council motivates: “The rite of Confirmation is to be revised and the intimate connection which this sacrament has with the whole of Christian initiation is to be more clearly set forth; for this reason it is fitting for candidates to renew their baptismal promises just before they are confirmed. Confirmation may be given within the Mass when convenient; when it is given outside the Mass, the rite that is used should be introduced by a formula to be drawn up for this purpose.”¹⁵

Nowadays, the general practice is the Confirmation of adolescents in a common rite, after a requisite period of preparation by catechism. The focus of catechism should be on spirituality, community, prayer and the Christian way of life. One should also receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Besides, candidates for Confirmation fittingly seek the spiritual help of a sponsor, as they did for Baptism. To emphasize the unity of the two sacraments, it is appropriate that this person is one of the baptismal godparents.¹⁶ This practice is used for the Baptism of infants with the only exception when

¹⁴ Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, p. 293.

¹⁵ Abbott, Walter M., S.J. (General Editor) – Gallagher, Joseph Msgr. (Translation Editor), *The Documents of Vatican II*, America Press-Association Press, New York 1966, p. 71.

¹⁶ See: Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, p. 295.

the baptized infant or child is in danger of death. In the case of adult Baptism, Confirmation immediately follows Baptism as it is supposed that catechism has already been conferred.

There is also another distinction between the Confirmation of adults and the Confirmation of infants. The history of Confirmation reveals the origins of two post-baptismal anointings in the early Roman Church.¹⁷ The first anointing, given by a presbyter immediately after the water-Baptism, signified the participation of the newly baptized person in the prophetic, priestly and royal mission of Christ. The second anointing, given only by the bishop on the forehead of the baptized, developed into Confirmation. It was the distinction of these two ministers which also led to the separation of the rite of Christian Initiation in the Western Church.¹⁸ In the case of adult Baptism, there is only one post-baptismal anointing, the anointing in Confirmation, and the participation in the Eucharist immediately follows. In the case of infant Baptism the neophyte is anointed with Chrism after the water-Baptism by the priest saying the prayer: "May the Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath regenerated thee by water and the Holy Spirit, and who hath given thee the remission of all thy sins,

¹⁷ See: page 23.

¹⁸ See: Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, p. 291/ Turner, Paul, *Confirmation in the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, <http://www.paulturner.org/confirmation.htm>, as per date 11/12/ 2008.

may He Himself and anoint thee with the Chrism of Salvation, in the same Christ Jesus our Lord, unto life eternal.”¹⁹ Later on, during the sacrament of Confirmation, he/she will receive the second anointing with Chrism by the bishop.

Confirmation takes place during the Mass. After the Liturgy of the Word, the candidates are presented to the bishop who gives a brief homily on the mystery of Confirmation. The renewal of the baptismal promises follows. After that, the laying on of hands of the bishop and the concelebrating priests over the whole group of the confirmands takes place. The bishop makes the invocation for the outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit saying the prayer: “All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their Helper and Guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord.”²⁰ The next step is the anointing with Chrism. The bishop dips his right thumb into the Chrism and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each

¹⁹ “The Rite of Baptism”, <http://www.fisheaters.com/baptism2.html>, as per date 29/4/2009.

²⁰ “Rite of Confirmation Within Mass”, <http://www.fargodiocese.org/educationformation/evangelization/Confirmation/RiteOfConfirmationWithinMass.pdf>, as per date 17/3/2009.

candidate by using the words “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”²¹ The profession of Faith and the Liturgy of the Eucharist follow and each of the confirmands receives the Holy Communion. The sign-kiss of peace, which concludes the sacrament, signifies and demonstrates ecclesiastical communion with the bishop and with all the faithful.²²

The only ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop of the diocese.²³ Bishops are the successors of the Apostles and they have received the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. So, the administration of Confirmation by the bishop demonstrates clearly that its effect is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, to her apostolic origins and to her mission of bearing witness to Christ. The bishop is also he “who, in the course of the Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday, consecrates the sacred Chrism for the whole diocese.”²⁴ If the need arises, the bishop may give the authority of administering the Confirmation to priests. If a Christian is in danger of death, any priest can give him Confirmation, for “Indeed the Church desires that none of

²¹ “Rite of Confirmation Within Mass”, <http://www.fargodiocese.org/educationformation/evangelization/Confirmation/RiteOfConfirmationWithinMass.pdf>, as per date 17/3/2009/ In Latin: “Accipe signaculum doni Spiritus Sancti”.

²² See: Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, pp. 292-293.

²³ “Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests”, B. Herder, London 1954, pp. 205-206/ Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, pp. 295-296.

²⁴ Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, p. 292.

its children, even the youngest, should depart this world without having been perfected by the Holy Spirit with the gift of Christ's fullness."²⁵

A.3 The Reception of Converts

Apart from the accustomed administration of Chrismation-Confirmation there is another kind of its administration which is related to Christian Initiation, and, moreover, has to do with the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. It is the matter of the reception of converts from the Orthodox into the Roman Catholic Church and the opposite. This issue is related to the Church's understanding of what heresy and schism are, namely the ecclesiology which was developed by both churches during the centuries. This problem was always a significant one in the history of Church from the early beginning of Christianity. It was considered by the fathers of the ancient Church and some of the Canons of Ecumenical and Local Councils of Church. The Apostolic Canons 46, 47, 49 and 50;²⁶ Canons 8 and 19 of the First Ecumenical Council;²⁷ Canon 7 of the Second

²⁵ Ibid, p. 296.

²⁶ Αγαπίου Ίερ. καὶ Νικοδήμου Μον., *Πηδάλιον*, Τυπ. Βαρβαρηγοῦ Βλαστοῦ, ἐν Αθήναις 1886, σ. 54, 58, 62.

²⁷ Ibid, σ. 115-116, 126.

Ecumenical Council;²⁸ Canon 95 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council;²⁹ Canon 66 of the Local Council in Carthage;³⁰ and Canons 1, 5 and 47 of St. Basil³¹ are particularly important for the reception of heretics into the Church.³²

After the great schism of the body of the Church in 1054 and the separation into the Eastern and Western Church this problem arose anew. Both Churches had to face a new challenge as a consequence of the separation between them; moreover as they considered each other as heretics or schismatics.

From the Orthodox perspective, the reception of Roman Catholic converts was done in three ways following either the principle of *Economia* or the principle of *Akribeia*. *Economia* is understood as the suspension of strict application (*Akribeia*) of the Church's Canons and disciplinary norms for the sake of the salvation of human beings according to God's will.³³ The three ways of the reception of Roman Catholics into the Orthodox Church were: a) by the rite of Christian

²⁸ Ibid, σ. 139.

²⁹ Ibid, σ. 249.

³⁰ Ibid, σ. 403.

³¹ Ibid, σ. 475-476, 479, 499.

³² These Canons determined the reception by libelous and anointing with Chrism of those heretics who were baptized by triple immersion in the name of the Holy Trinity such as Arians, Macedonians, Novatianists, Appolinarians etc. They also determined the reception by Baptism of those heretics who were baptized by a single immersion and completely distorted the Trinitarian dogma such as Eunomians, Montanists, Sabellians etc.

³³ See: "The Principle of Economy: a Joint Statement U.S. Theological Consultation, 1976", <http://www.scoba.us/resources/orthodox-catholic/economy.html>, as per date 4/3/2009/ "Regarding the Reception of Converts and Re-Baptism", http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/liturgics/reception_of_converters.htm, as per date 4/3/2009.

Initiation (Baptism-Chrismation-Eucharist), when the celebration of Roman Catholic baptism was considered deficient or invalid, b) by Chrismation and signing of an appropriate libelous of renunciation of the heresy that the convert previously held, and c) by simply signing an appropriate libelous or Confession of faith. All of these ways had to be used after a period of catechesis. The practice varied according to times and circumstances. The key issue in determining the manner of reception was the Orthodox perception of the validity or invalidity of the Roman Catholic baptism related to the way of its administration by immersion, sprinkling or affusion. However, it was not always clear what made the Roman Catholic Baptism partially valid or invalid. It seems that the perception about the reception of Roman Catholics into the Orthodox Church changed by various theological and historical reasons, including the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards the Orthodox Church.³⁴

³⁴ See: Μεταλληνός Γεώργιος Πρεσβ., *Ὁμολογῶ ἐν Βάπτισμα, Ἑρμηνεία καὶ Ἐφαρμογὴ τοῦ Ζ' Κανόνος τῆς Β' Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου ἀπὸ τοὺς Κολλυβάδες καὶ τὸν Κωνίνο Οἰκονόμο, ἐκδ. ΤΗΝΟΣ, Ἀθήνα 1996*²/ Dragas, George, *The Manner of Reception of Roman Catholic Converts into the Orthodox Church with Special Reference to the Decisions of the Synods of 1484 (Constantinople), 1755 (Constantinople), and 1667 (Moscow)*, http://jbburnett.com/resources/dragas_baptism.pdf, as per date 4/3/2009/ Pagodin Ambrosius, *On the Question of the Order of Reception of Persons into the Orthodox Church, Coming to Her from Other Christian Churches*, <http://www.holytrinity.org/ecclesiology/pogodinreception/reception-ch4.html>, as per date, 3/3/ 2009/ Pagodin Ambrosius, *On the reception into the Orthodox Church*, http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/reception_church_a_pagodin.htm, as per date 4/3/2009.

In contemporary times there are two distinct understandings of how to receive Roman Catholics into the Orthodox Church. The first one, the so called "Russian method",³⁵ is based on the decisions of the Constantinople Council of 1484, the Moscow Council of 1655 and especially the Moscow Council of 1667. The Roman Catholic converts are to be received by anointing with Chrism. The rite administered for converts is not the same as the post-baptismal rite, whether in its structure or in its prayers. For these occasions a special rite was set forth by the Council of Constantinople in 1484.³⁶ This rite was subsequently ratified by representatives of all the Eastern Patriarchs at the 1667 Moscow Council. The second method, the so called "Greek method",³⁷ is based on the decisions of the Council of Constantinople in 1755. According to this method the converts are to be received by Baptism and Chrismation.³⁸ Nowadays, the first method is followed by most of the

³⁵ It is called "Russian method" as it was mostly followed by the Russian Orthodox Church.

³⁶ For the English translation of the rite see: Dragas, George, *The Manner of Reception of Roman Catholic Converts into the Orthodox Church with Special Reference to the Decisions of the Synods of 1484 (Constantinople), 1755 (Constantinople), and 1667 (Moscow)*, http://jbbur nett.com/resources/dragas_baptism.pdf, as per date 4/3/2009.

³⁷ It is called "Greek method" as it was mostly followed by the Greek speaking Orthodox Churches.

³⁸ For more details about the two methods see: Erickson, John H., "Reception into the Orthodox Church, Contemporary Practice", *The Ecumenical Review*, Volume 54, Geneva 2002, pp. 66-75/ Pagodin Ambrosius, *On the Question of the Order of Reception of Persons into the Orthodox Church, Coming to Her from Other Christian Churches*, <http://www.holytrinity.org/ecclesiology/pogodinreception/reception-ch4.html>, as per date, 3/3/2009. For the theological and historical background of the ways which were formed for the reception of converts into the Orthodox Church see: Sauca, Ioan, "The Church beyond our boundaries: the ecumenical vocation of Orthodoxy", *The Ecumenical Review*, Volume 56, No 2, World Council of Churches, Geneva 2004, pp. 220-222.

local Orthodox churches as well as by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. However, there is need for a decision with a general validity in all the Orthodox Christianity as the rebaptism of Roman Catholics is still in practice in some local Orthodox churches and monasteries.

From the Roman Catholic perspective, the reception of the Orthodox converts was not complicated. The cohesion of the Roman Catholic Church under the sole authority of the Pope (papacy) led to the development of one conviction about the manner of the reception of the Orthodox, something that was not new for the Western Church: "From the fifth-century writings of St. Augustine on the Donatist Schism, the Latin tradition has been able to draw on a clearly articulated rationale for recognizing the validity, though not necessarily the fruitfulness, of Trinitarian baptism outside the bounds of the visible church... Pope Alexander VI affirmed the validity of Orthodox baptism just after the turn of the sixteenth century, and Rome has periodically confirmed this ruling since then."³⁹

Thus, the common practice is that the persons who are validly baptized outside the Roman Catholic Church, consequently the

³⁹ "Baptism and "Sacramental Economy", An agreed Statement of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, June 3, 1999, <http://www.scoba.us/resources/orthodox-catholic/baptismsacramentaleconomy.html>, as per date 24/3/2009.

Orthodox, are received by the profession of the faith of the Roman Catholic Church and by the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. In this case, a priest can administer the sacrament of Confirmation. Before the official reception of these converts a period of catechesis precedes. The kind of catechesis depends on the individual case and it is not the same as for the other catechumens who did not receive the Christian faith by valid Trinitarian Baptism.⁴⁰

This practice does not mean that the rebaptism of Orthodox converts has never occurred in the Church of Rome. It frequently happened in the middle ages and until the seventeenth century in the eastern frontiers of Roman Catholic Europe in Poland and the Balkans contrary to the official policy of the Roman Catholic Church.⁴¹ The rebaptism of Orthodox is still in practice, although rarely, in some local churches and communities in the Roman Catholic Church.

B. HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CHRISMATION-CONFIRMATION

⁴⁰ See: Akin James, "How to become a Catholic", *This Rock*, Volume 6, No 9, September 1995.

⁴¹ See: "Baptism and "Sacramental Economy", An agreed Statement of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, June 3, 1999", <http://www.scoba.us/resources/orthodox-catholic/baptismsacramentaleconomy.html>, as per date 24/3/2009.

Having presented the administration of Chrismation and Confirmation, the most important historical and theological aspects follow. The administration of this sacrament is closely related to its historical development which is continuously connected to the theological understanding of Chrismation-Confirmation in the East and the West.

B.1. Historical Aspects of Chrismation-Confirmation

Using Sergious Bulgakov's terminology of what the sacraments are, we can say that Chrismation-Confirmation is "a sacred act, when, under a visible sign"⁴² the gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred. That is why it is called the sacrament of the Holy Spirit.

Inquiring the historical background of the sacrament of the gift of the Holy Spirit we can detect some events in the Old Testament which should be considered as prefigurations of Chrismation-Confirmation and Christian anointings,⁴³ as well as the prefiguration of the promise of sending the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴ We can say that, in a theological point of view, the most important prefiguration of Chrismation-Confirmation in the Old Testament is related to the creation of the human being by God:

⁴² See: Bulgakov, Sergious, *The Orthodox Church*, Revised translation, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press Crestwood, New York 1988, p. 110.

⁴³ See: Thorton L. S., *Confirmation, its place in the Baptismal Mystery*, Darce Press, Westminster 1954, pp. 27-44.

⁴⁴ Ezekiel 36: 25-27, Revised Standard Version, 1952.

“then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being”.⁴⁵ This verse can be considered important for Chrismation-Confirmation as it reveals the first moment that the human being received the Holy Spirit; it is the Holy Spirit Himself who operates the life, according to the Trinitarian dogma.

Likewise, there are many references to the gift of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament,⁴⁶ but there is no a clear reference to baptismal anointing. For the theological comprehension of this sacrament there are especially two useful points in the Bible: a) the anointment of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit,⁴⁷ in conjunction to the descent of the Holy Spirit at the time of Jesus’ Baptism in Jordan,⁴⁸ and b) Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples after His assumption.⁴⁹ The first one is the “type of Christian baptismal anointings: Because Jesus Christ was anointed with Holy Spirit at his baptism, the Christian is anointed with Chrism at his.”⁵⁰ The second one gives the explanation of the institution of Chrismation-Confirmation by the Risen Christ on the day of Pentecost

⁴⁵ Gen. 2:7.

⁴⁶ Mat. 3:11; 3:16; 28:19; Mark 1:8; 1:10; Luke 3:16; 3:22; 4:1; John 1:31, 32; 3:5, 6; 7:39; 14:17-20; 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; 20:22; Acts 1:2-8; 2:4; 2:38, 8:15-17; 10:45; 19:1-6; Rom. 8:14-17; 22:16; I Cor. 6:19; 12:13; II Cor. 1:22-23; 5:5; Eph. 4:30; Tit. 3:5; Hebr. 6:4; I Peter 3:21; I John 2:20, 27.

⁴⁷ Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 12:16-18; Luke 1:35; 2:26; 3:16.

⁴⁸ Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32-33.

⁴⁹ John 14:1-31; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 1:4.

⁵⁰ See: Mitchell, Leonel L., *Baptismal Anointing*, S.P.C.K., London 1966, p. 17.

when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and through them upon the Church. In Romans 6:3-6, St. Paul explains that Baptism is the participation of the baptized in the death and resurrection of Christ. The baptized person is dead to sin and alive towards God in a new life in Christ. Therefore, Chrismation-Confirmation is the personal Pentecost of the neophyte, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him/her after his/her death to sin and resurrection to the true life in Christ.

This sacrament, as it is celebrated nowadays, has its basis in the laying on of hands by the Apostles on the neophytes. The Apostles laid their hands on those who were baptized;⁵¹ by doing so, they conferred not a hieratic dignity but the sacred title of Christian person. In the passages Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-6, it is clear that the imposition of hands by the Apostles on the neophytes conferred the gift of the Holy Spirit and it was related to Baptism. At the same time, in the passages Acts 2:38; 10:45 there is no clear connection between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the imposition of hands by the Apostles.

The earliest clear references to the anointing with oil and the imposition of hands, as parts of the baptismal rite, are in the writings of Tertullian from North Africa. In the treatise "De Baptismo"⁵² Tertullian says that Baptism cleans from sin but it does not bestow the Holy Spirit:

⁵¹ Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-6.

⁵² It is dated about A.D. 198.

“Not that in the waters we obtain the Holy Spirit; but in the water, under (the witness of) an angel, we are cleansed, and prepared for the Holy Spirit”.⁵³ He refers to an unction following the example of Aaron being anointed by Moses, and to the imposition of the hand inviting and invoking the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴

In the beginning of the third century, “The Apostolic Tradition”⁵⁵ of Hippolytus describes the rite of Christian Initiation including Baptism with the profession of faith and two anointings, the first one by a presbyter and the second one by the bishop.⁵⁶ The Syrian document “Didascalia Apostolorum”⁵⁷ speaks about anointing and imposition of hand.⁵⁸ In the same period, this practice is known by St. Cyprian.⁵⁹ Besides, in the third century, a very important practice comes from the East. Firmilian of Caesarea in Cappadocia sent a letter to St. Cyprian regarding the question of heretical baptism. Firmilian mentions hand imposition several times, but he does not refer to unction or anointing.⁶⁰

⁵³ Tertullian, “On Baptism”, chap. VI, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1957, pp. 669-679.

⁵⁴ Tertullian, “On Baptism”, chap. VIII, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1957, pp. 672-673.

⁵⁵ It is dated about A.D. 215.

⁵⁶ Hippolytus, “The Apostolic Tradition”, in Whitaker E. C., *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, S.P.C.K., London 1960, pp. 2-7.

⁵⁷ It is dated 3rd century.

⁵⁸ “Didascalia Apostolorum”, c. 16, in Whitaker E. C., *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, S.P.C.K., London 1960, p. 10.

⁵⁹ Cyprian, “Epistle LXIX, ii; LXXI, i”, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. V, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1957, pp. 376, 378.

⁶⁰ See: Pocknee, Cyril E., *Water and the Spirit: A Study in the Relation of Baptism and Confirmation*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1967, pp. 70-71.

The 72nd Epistle of St. Cyprian⁶¹ is the first text of early Christianity which refers to a kind of dichotomy that arose in Western and Latin Christianity in regard to the separation of the Christian Initiation into two or more parts. In this text, St. Cyprian insisted on the invalidity of heretic's baptism and he refused the practice of receiving the heretics only by the laying on of hands. Another evidence of this kind of separation is given by the Canon 8 of the Council of Arles in 314. This Canon stated that heretics should not be rebaptized but they should be only given the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands.⁶²

In the fourth century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem states that the Chrism is the seal of the covenants of Baptism and God's promises to the Christian who is anointed. Being anointed with the Chrism is the sign of a Christian and a physical representation of having the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁶³ The post-baptismal anointing with Chrism and the imposition of hand are both mentioned by St. Augustine in the fourth century,⁶⁴ but there is no mention of a post-baptismal unction by St. John Chrysostom who should be considered as the best representative of the Syrian tradition in the same era. Contrary to the latter, in the following century,

⁶¹ It is dated A.D. 256. See: Cyprian, "Epistle LXXII", in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. V, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1957, pp. 379-386.

⁶² See: Pocknee, Cyril E., *Water and the Spirit: A Study in the Relation of Baptism and Confirmation*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1967, pp. 55-59.

⁶³ See: Cyril of Jerusalem, Lecture XXI, On the Mysteries, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.ii.xxv.html>, as per date 10/12/2008..

⁶⁴ Augustine, "Sermons Pour La Pâque", 227, SC 116:286.

the Syrian work "On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy"⁶⁵ refers to the post-baptismal anointing with the "most divinely operating Chrism".⁶⁶ In the same century, the earliest reference which speaks of this sacrament as being reserved only to the bishop is the "Letter of Pope Innocent I to Decentius, Bishop of Gubbio."⁶⁷

Three factors began to emerge in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries affecting the understanding of the sacrament of Baptism and consequently the understanding of Chrismation-Confirmation: "a) the deurbanization of Christian communities, b) the growing predominance of the practice of infant Baptism, and c) the question of reordination of heretics".⁶⁸ These factors contributed to the separation between the rites of Baptism and Chrismation-Confirmation in the West. It is worth to mention that in these centuries there is not yet a compartmentation of Christian Initiation. The rite is one and the same for infants and adults. The Church in the West, notwithstanding, is inclining towards the Confirmation with Chrism and the laying on of hands as the sign of bishop's authority to confer the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized. By

⁶⁵ It is attributed to St. Dionysius the Areopagite.

⁶⁶ Dionysius the Areopagite, "On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy", in Whitaker E. C., *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, S.P.C.K., London 1960, p. 50.

⁶⁷ Innocent was Pope from 402 to 417 and his letter with the original Latin title "Epistola Innocentii Papae I ad Decentium Episcopum Eugubinum" is dated 416. See: "The Minister of Confirmation", <http://www.tomrichstatter.org/i%20initiation/i37confi.htm>, as per date 11/12/2008.

⁶⁸ Osborne, Kenan B., *The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist*, Paulist Press, New York-Mahwah 1987, p. 122.

this way, the Church in the West stresses the authority and the apostolic succession of bishop. The Church in the East is inclining towards the Chrismation with the anointing with Chrism which is blessed by the bishop. Cyril Pocknee explains: "The disappearance of the ceremony of hand imposition in the Eastern Orthodox rite may be connected with the custom of permitting presbyteral Chrismation. We find the same custom in some of the non-Roman rites of the West, such as the Mozarabic and Gallican liturgies, where presbyteral Confirmation was permitted. Hand imposition usually seems to have been confined to bishops... We note that some of the lesser eastern rites as the Coptic have retained hand imposition as well as the use of Chrism in their post-baptismal ceremonies".⁶⁹

The early Church and tradition, especially in the East, used the Greek noun «χρῖσμα» (chrism) to indicate the baptismal anointings, as Jesus Christ was the only Anointed One. This term came to be the prevailing theological term for the second sacrament of the rite of Christian Initiation. It is only in the beginning of the fifth century that "the noun 'confirmatio' is first found as a liturgical term in a well-known sermon preached on Whitsunday about the year 460, generally attributed to Faustus of Riez. The cognate verb is found earlier still: the

⁶⁹ Pocknee, Cyril E., *Water and the Spirit: A Study in the Relation of Baptism and Confirmation*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1967, pp. 70-71.

canons of the Council of Riez (439) spoke of confirming neophytes, an expression whose meaning was already well understood in southern Gaul.”⁷⁰ The use of the term ‘confirmatio’ was to indicate “the intervention of the episcopos in the baptismal service, especially if he had not been at the actual water-bath service...”⁷¹ This Latin term is unknown in the writings of the New Testament or in the Fathers of the Church until that time.⁷² “The first time that we find the term ‘Confirmatio’ in an actual ritual occurs in the tenth century.”⁷³ The Church in the East continues celebrating the Chrismation by the anointing with Chrism immediately after Baptism and related to the Eucharist.⁷⁴

The difference between the Eastern and the Western tradition becomes clearer later on. By the thirteenth century Baptism and Confirmation come to be regarded as two distinct sacramental acts in the Church of Rome. The bishop of Mend (13th century) was the one who

⁷⁰ Fisher J. D. C. and Yarnold E. J., “The West from about AD 500 to the Reformation”, *The Study of Liturgy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, p. 149.

⁷¹ Osborne, Kenan B., *The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist*, Paulist Press, New York-Mahwah 1987, p. 137.

⁷² Pocknee, Cyril E., *Water and the Spirit: A Study in the Relation of Baptism and Confirmation*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1967, p. 30.

⁷³ Osborne, Kenan B., *The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist*, Paulist Press, New York-Mahwah 1987, pp. 137-138/ see also: Pocknee, Cyril E., *Water and the Spirit: A Study in the Relation of Baptism and Confirmation*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1967, p. 30.

⁷⁴ See: Osborne, Kenan B., *The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist*, Paulist Press, New York-Mahwah 1987, pp. 113-128/ Thornton L. S., *Confirmation, its place in the Baptismal Mystery*, Darce Press, Westminster 1954, pp. 152-159.

introduced a few changes in the rite of Confirmation. The most important was the replacement of the laying on of the bishop's hand on each confirmand with a collective laying on of both hands.⁷⁵ Later on, the Council of Trent,⁷⁶ under the influence of the Reformation, separated the infant Confirmation and the first Holy Communion from the rite of Baptism.⁷⁷ In the mid-eighteenth century, an innovation related to the sacraments of Christian Initiation was introduced by the "Instructions du Rituel de Toulon" in 1748. Confirmation was conferred to children after having received their first Holy Communion. This practice became widespread throughout France after the Revolution but, by the time, was actually declined by many dioceses. In the eighteenth century, Pope Benedict XIV reinstated the ancient gesture at the moment of anointing with Chrism, namely the laying on of the bishop's hand flat on the head of the person being anointed.⁷⁸ Later on, Pope St. Pius X was the one who raised again the custom of Confirmation of children after having received the first Holy Communion. In 1905, he encouraged frequent Holy Communion, even before Confirmation, and five years later he

⁷⁵ See: Martimort, A.G., *The Church at Prayer, Volume III: The Sacraments*, The Liturgical press, Collegeville, Minnesota 1988, pp. 73-74.

⁷⁶ The Council of Trent was held from December 13th 1545 to December 4th 1563.

⁷⁷ See: Pocknee, Cyril E., *Water and the Spirit: A Study in the Relation of Baptism and Confirmation*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1967, pp. 94-99.

⁷⁸ See: Martimort, A.G., *The Church at Prayer, Volume III: The Sacraments*, The Liturgical press, Collegeville, Minnesota 1988, p. 76.

lowered the age for the first Communion.⁷⁹ His exhortation is still in practice. Through these centuries until nowadays, Chrismation was and is celebrated in the same way following Baptism and before the first Holy Communion and it was never reserved only to the bishop.

B.2. Theological Aspects of Chrismation-Confirmation

Regarding the theological understanding of this sacrament, the fact which should be stressed is that from the early Christianity Chrismation-Confirmation is the second stage of Christian Initiation which consisted of the three sacraments Baptism, Chrismation-Confirmation and Eucharist administered in one rite. From this fact it can be presumed that the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople, which is accepted by all Christianity, in its reference to one Baptism did not have the limited meaning of the water-baptism, but indicated the rite of Christian Initiation including water-baptism, Chrismation-Confirmation and Eucharist.

From the early beginning of Christianity, both in the West and in the East, the second sacrament of Christian Initiation is the “gift of the Holy Spirit.” This conviction is clear and obvious in the theological

⁷⁹ See: “Second Vatican Council and Confirmation”, <http://www.tomrichstatter.org/i%20initiation/i37confi.htm>, as per date 4/3/2009.

understanding of Chrismation-Confirmation in both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches until nowadays. This sacrament is administered by using the phrase “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit”⁸⁰ in the Orthodox rite and “The seal of the gift that is the Holy Spirit”⁸¹ in the Catholic rite. Both phrases express the same meaning: “it is the sacrament which corresponds to an individual Pentecost in the life of each Christian”.⁸² Each Christian receives the gift of the Holy Spirit for his/her salvation. He/she receives afresh the glory which was inherent in the soul and the body of the first Adam and was lost after the fall.⁸³ The word “gift” in singular has a deep meaning. The newly baptized receives not just some gifts of the Holy Spirit. What is bestowed upon him/her is the Holy Spirit Himself as Gift. Chrismation-Confirmation, in both Churches, has also the meaning of participation in the royal, prophetic and priestly dignity of Christ, in His messianic mission, as well as the power and the ability for witness to the Truth with consciousness.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ “Μικρόν Εὐχολόγιον – An Orthodox Prayer Book”, (ed. Vaporis, M.N.), Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts, U.S.A. 1985², p. 65.

⁸¹ Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, p. 293.

⁸² See: Thorton L. S., *Confirmation, its place in the Baptismal Mystery*, Darce Press, Westminster 1954, p. 181.

⁸³ Gen. 6:3; Rom. 3:23.

⁸⁴ See: Ware, Timothy (Kallistos), *The Orthodox Church*, New York, Penguin 1997, p. 279/ Thorton L. S., *Confirmation, its place in the Baptismal Mystery*, Darce Press, Westminster 1954, pp. 22-26/ Schmemmann, Alexander, *Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, Herder and Herder, New York 1965, pp. 77-93/ Osborne, Kenan B., *The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist*, Paulist Press, New York-Mahwah 1987, pp. 128-137/

The theological understanding of Chrismation-Confirmation in the early Christianity is based on the Bible and the experience of the Holy Spirit in the sacramental life of the Church, and it is the same in the Orthodox Theology from that period until these days. The human being was created “in the image and the likeness of God,”⁸⁵ and “The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”⁸⁶ It is the Holy Spirit, according to the Trinitarian dogma, who operates the life and the sanctification of every human being. The human being in the state of the original sin was not overshadowed by the Holy Spirit “for he is flesh.”⁸⁷ It was centuries after the original sin when the humanity of Jesus Christ received the Holy Spirit from the very moment of conception.⁸⁸ “The Holy Spirit was operative only in the human nature of Christ, and appeared to the world in Christ throughout Christ’s entire earthly life from the annunciation to the Theotokos to Christ’s ascension.”⁸⁹ The sending of the Holy Spirit from Christ⁹⁰ on the day of Pentecost was the main purpose of the divine economy for the salvation of the human race.

Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, p. 294.

⁸⁵ Gen. 1:26.

⁸⁶ Gen. 2:7.

⁸⁷ Gen. 6:3.

⁸⁸ Matthew 1:18-20; Luke 1:35; 2:11; 2:26.

⁸⁹ Phidas, Vlassios, Baptism and ecclesiology, *The Ecumenical Review*, Volume 54, World Council of Churches, Geneva 2002, p. 43.

⁹⁰ John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:13-15; Acts 1:4-5.

St. Athanasius, St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Nikolaos Cabasilas explain that the aim of the incarnation of the Word of God was the coming of the Holy Spirit to the human beings.⁹¹ Therefore, Baptism is the participation into the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Christological typology); Chrismation is the personal Pentecost, namely, the reception of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatological typology); and the participation in the Eucharist is the becoming one body and one blood with Christ.⁹²

Confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church, except for being believed as the gift of the Holy Spirit, after its separation from Baptism came to be more stressed as the renewal of the baptismal promises and as the completion of the individual's spiritual life in which the baptized persons are given an additional grace which arms them as Christian soldiers.⁹³ By stressing this meaning of Confirmation, the Roman

⁹¹ See: Ἀθανάσιος Ἀλεξανδρείας, *Περὶ τῆς ἐνσάρκου ἐπιφανείας τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου*, P.G. 26, 996 C/ Συμεών τοῦ Νέου Θεολόγου τὰ Ἄπαντα, Ἐκδ. Ζαγοραίου - Ρηγοπούλου, Ἀθήνα 1969, σ. 179/ Νικόλαος Καβάσιλας, *Ἑρμηνεία τῆς Θείας Λειτουργίας*, κεφ. 37, 3, SC 4, σ. 228. Also See: Acts 8/10/19/ 10:47/19:2/ Gal. 3:1-5/ II Cor. 1:21-22/ Rom. 8:9.

This element is also pointed out in the Gospel according to John, more than in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus' baptism is not mentioned by John in a clear and straight way as the other Evangelists do. In the Prologue of the fourth Gospel, John exclusively focuses on the descent of the Holy Spirit (John 1:32-33).

⁴⁸ See: Phidas, Vlassios, Baptism and ecclesiology, *The Ecumenical Review*, Volume 54, World Council of Churches, Geneva 2002, pp. 43-47.

⁹³ See: Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, p. 297/ Abbott, Walter M., S.J. (General Editor) – Gallagher, Joseph Msgr. (Translation Editor), *The Documents of Vatican II*, America Press-Association Press, New York 1966, p. 71/ "Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests", B. Herder, London 1954, p. 210.

Catholic Church tried to give rational reasons for the separation among the sacraments of Christian Initiation and at the same time to assert the relation between Baptism and Confirmation. However, it is clear that the core of the separation between Baptism and Confirmation was the “desire to reserve the completion of Baptism to the bishop...”⁹⁴ The main problem which came as a consequence of the compartmentation of Christian Initiation is that the first Holy Communion usually precedes the sacrament of Confirmation abrogating for the second time the order of Christian Initiation and consequently the theological and pastoral understanding of it.

Another variation, which we can mention on the understanding of Confirmation, is the fact that it is considered being the “completion of Baptism”⁹⁵ or suggesting “the ratification of Baptism,”⁹⁶ as if there was a deficiency in the sacrament of Baptism. This ratification-completion takes place at the age of “reason” or “Christian maturity,” usually in the period of adolescence, after having received the sacrament of Penance “in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit”.⁹⁷ Therefore, Confirmation seems like being a human action. Far from this new

⁹⁴ Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, p. 291.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 291.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 291.

⁹⁷ Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church, Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, p. 295.

meaning, for the early understanding of the rite of Christian Initiation, Baptism and Chrismation-Confirmation are two completed sacraments which are celebrated in the same rite, as the first and the second stage of Christian Initiation.

B.3. Chrismation and Confirmation in the Framework of the Ecumenical Movement.

Coming back to the historical context of Chrismation-Confirmation, it is very important to focus on what its place is in the framework of the recent Ecumenical Movement. As a first step, both Churches in their responses to the BEM document⁹⁸ agreed to the need for more development of what the deeper meaning of Chrismation-Confirmation is as the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁹ Afterwards, it is very significant what is reported in "Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the

⁹⁸ The BEM (Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry) document is one of the most known ecumenical documents of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC). It is the fruit of a 50-year process of study and was published in 1982. The process has its origin in the first Conference of Faith and Order in Lausanne (Switzerland) in 1927. The BEM investigates and presents the growing agreement as well as the differences in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, that is to say, the fundamental areas of the churches' faith and life. It is also known as Lima document because of its adoption by Faith and Order in the plenary commission meeting in Lima (Peru) in 1982. The BEM was (and respectively is) the basis for many official agreements and mutual recognition among churches.

⁹⁹ Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990, Report on the Process and Responses, WCC Publications, Geneva 1990, pp. 48-49.

Church”¹⁰⁰ document of the meeting in Bari,¹⁰¹ in the context of the bilateral dialogue between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics. In the second part of this report, titled “The sacraments of Christian initiation: their relation to the unity of the Church,” Chrismation-Confirmation is recognized as one of the three sacraments of Christian Initiation which should be celebrated in conjunction with each other following the early pattern of its administration. It is worth to mention that this document points out the two main differences between Chrismation and Confirmation: a) the separation between Baptism and Confirmation, and b) the fact that the Eucharist frequently precedes the Confirmation abrogating the order of the sacraments of initiation. According to this agreement, these changes “did not concern the theological understanding of the fundamental unity, in the Holy Spirit, of the whole process of Christian initiation.”¹⁰² The report evokes pastoral reasons for the way in which Confirmation is administered nowadays without, however, adequate explanations about the abrogation of the order of Christian Initiation.

¹⁰⁰ See: “Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church”, *Growth in Agreement II*, WCC Publications, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge 2000, pp. 666-668.

¹⁰¹ This meeting was held in Bari of Italy in June 1987.

¹⁰² “Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church”, *Growth in Agreement II*, WCC Publications, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge 2000, p. 667.

C. CONCLUSION

C.1 Common Ground and Differences between Chrismation and Confirmation.

After the exposition of the administration of the sacrament of Chrismation in the Orthodox Church and the sacrament of Confirmation in the Catholic Church as well as the most important historical and theological aspects, we briefly present the common ground and the differences between Chrismation and Confirmation:

Common Ground

1. Chrismation-Confirmation is one of the three sacraments of Christian Initiation (Baptism, Chrismation-Confirmation, Eucharist) into the body of Jesus Christ, that is to say, the body of the Church.
2. Chrismation-Confirmation, as it is celebrated in both Churches, has its basis in the laying on of hands by the Apostles on the neophytes after Baptism in order to confer the gift of the Holy Spirit as it is described in Acts. This sacrament is the personal Pentecost of each Christian with the reception of the Holy Spirit. It has also the meaning of participation in the royal, prophetic and priestly dignity of Christ, in His messianic mission and it confers the power and the ability for witness to the Truth with consciousness.

3. The bishop is the only ordinary minister of Confirmation. The bishop of the diocese or a priest on behalf of the bishop is the ordinary minister of Chrismation. The meaning is the same in both churches. The administration of this sacrament by the bishop, or by a priest on behalf of the bishop, demonstrates that its effect is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church and to its apostolic origins.

Differences

1. In the Roman Catholic Church the gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred by the imposition of bishop's hands on the neophytes and the anointing with Chrism on their forehead. In the Orthodox Church the gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred by the anointing with Chrism on the forehead, the eyes, the nostrils, the mouth, the ears, the breast, the hands and the feet.
2. Chrismation is conferred immediately after the water-baptism in the one rite of Christian Initiation. Confirmation is conferred separately from Baptism

usually in the period of adolescence, often many years after Baptism.

3. According to the scholastic theological understanding developed after the eleventh century, Confirmation is considered being the completion of Baptism and the completion of the individual's spiritual life at the age of maturity in parallel to the conviction of being the gift of the Holy Spirit. Chrismation is not the completion of Baptism but its fulfillment, as the aim of Jesus' incarnation was the descent of the Holy Spirit and consequently the participation of the human being in the kingdom of God.
4. As a consequence of the separation between Baptism and Confirmation and the disruption of the unity of the sacraments of Christian Initiation, baptized children receive their first Holy Communion before they have received the sacrament of Confirmation.
5. The preparation of candidates for Confirmation includes the sacrament of Repentance for the forgiveness of sins, a tradition unknown in the first

period of Christianity and unknown in the Orthodox Church until nowadays.

The above mentioned differences are related more to the liturgical practice of Chrismation-Confirmation and less to its main theological understanding as the gift of the Holy Spirit which has never been abandoned by both Churches. Every difference between Chrismation and Confirmation is not indispensably dividing as some of them are fruit of the local tradition of each Church to accomplish pastoral needs (such as the difference 1) or a different terminology to express more or less the same meaning (such as the difference 3). Nevertheless, there are theological and pastoral implications which should be pointed out.

C.2. Remarks and Suggestions

In the context of the bilateral dialogue between churches, the realization of the common ground and the differences should be the first step and the node of the process, always, within the respect for what every participant represents. Between Orthodox and Roman Catholics a mighty bond exists. It is the common tradition of the early Christianity through the combination of historical and theological elements. This reveals the existing common substance and offers solutions for many

problems. What was shaped as local tradition in the East and the West, such as customs and pastoral liturgical practices, should be carefully and substantially approached.

I would like to put the following paradigm. Some Orthodox may consider as a deviation that the Roman Catholic Church has finally developed two post-baptismal anointings, the first by a priest in Baptism and the second by the bishop in Confirmation. Similarly, some Roman Catholics may consider as a deviation the administration of Chrismation in the Orthodox Church only by Chrism and not by the laying on of hands as the Apostles did. However, the two traditions are attested in the first period of Christianity having both a common basis and effect that is the conferment of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This difference existed before the great schism between the East and the West, but it had never been a matter of theological disagreement.

Both Churches should respect local liturgical practices which do not distort the one and common tradition of the undivided Church as it is attested in the first millennium. Investigating the reasons and the incentives of the different liturgical practices and their pastoral and theological background, we can realize that most of these differences are not dividing. They are desirable as they express and preserve the variety of God's gift in the Church. Thus, the validity of Chrismation and

Confirmation and their mutual recognition do not depend on their administration by the laying on of bishop's hands or by the anointing with Chrism, but on their deep theological understanding. Moreover, we cannot consider as a real difference the conviction of Confirmation being the completion of Baptism and the completion of the individual's spiritual life at the age of maturity. Even if the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church describes Confirmation as "the ratification of Baptism",¹⁰³ it gives the following explanation: "Although Confirmation is sometimes called the 'sacrament of Christian Maturity', we must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth, nor forget that the baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need 'ratification' to become effective."¹⁰⁴

The first real difference between Chrismation and Confirmation is the administration of Confirmation separated from Baptism abrogating the unity of Christian Initiation. The Bari document characterizes the separation between Baptism and Confirmation as a change "in liturgical practice in consideration of the pastoral needs of the faithful"¹⁰⁵ which did not concern the theological understanding of the fundamental unity

¹⁰³ "Complete and Unabridged Catechism of the Catholic Church", Geoffrey Chapman (ed.), a Cassell imprint, April 1995, p. 291.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 295.

¹⁰⁵ "Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church", *Growth in Agreement II*, WCC Publications, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge 2000, p. 667.

of Christian Initiation. Of course, both Churches have made changes in the liturgical practice of the rite of Christian Initiation. This is not the real problem provided that these changes serve the purpose of the sacraments without distortion of their theological meaning. The real problem occurs when these changes affect the understanding of the sacraments.

Nowadays, Chrismation is rarely celebrated during the Liturgy. This is indeed a change which came from practical pastoral reasons. Baptism is celebrated individually either for adults or infants. There is rarely collective Baptism on certain baptismal days (Easter Eve, Epiphany and Pentecost) during the Liturgy as the custom was in the first centuries of Christianity. Nevertheless, even if Baptism is not celebrated during the Liturgy, the first Holy Communion immediately follows preserving the unity of Christian Initiation. This is considered being an acceptable change as it does not affect the theological understanding of the sacraments.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church appeals pastoral reasons for the separation of the rite of Christian Initiation. The main pastoral reason is the “contact of the baptized person with the bishop.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ “Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church”, *Growth in Agreement II*, WCC Publications, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge 2000, p. 667.

Indeed, the separation between Baptism and Confirmation occurred in order to have Confirmation administered only by the bishop stressing the episcopal authority and the apostolic succession. Of course, bishops are the successors of the Apostles, but the apostolic succession and tradition is not limited to the episcopal office and therefore there is not really a problem. The apostolic succession and tradition are related to the whole life of the Church including every aspect of Christian faith and practice and their harmony with the teaching of the Apostles and the tradition of the early Church. Consequently, the separation between the sacraments of Christian Initiation raises theological and pastoral questions.

Another reason which led to the separation of the rite of Christian Initiation is the preparation of candidates with the appropriate catechism in order to be ready to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and to be conscientious “soldiers of Christ.”¹⁰⁷ That is why Confirmation is conferred at the age of reason.¹⁰⁸ This meaning of Confirmation is related to the conviction of the completion of individual’s spiritual life at the age of maturity or reason. If we accept that the delay of Confirmation is based on the lack of the ability of discernment and reason of children, we could say that this is a reasonable opinion and the separation is not

¹⁰⁷ See: Turner, Paul, *Confirmation in the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, <http://www.paulturner.org/confirmation.htm>, as per date 11/12/ 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Seven or twelve years of age or later.

indefensible. Indeed, how can a Christian really and effectively attain the goal of his/her salvation, when his/her brain and conscience are still immature? However, the reasonable and legitimate things should not always be the measure of the sacramental and hyperphysical dimension of faith, as the limited human reason is not able to interpret in an absolute way the unlimited love and energy of God. If the lack of reason of children is the determinant for the administration of Confirmation in mature age, then why is Baptism administered in infantile age? Have the baptized infants developed the ability of discernment and reason? Are both the only presuppositions for salvation? If yes, what about the mentally defective people? Should not they be baptized and confirmed?

Besides, catechism was an ancient practice of the Church and is still a very important and helpful element for the participation in the Christian life. We can say that catechism characterizes and conditions, in some way, how the human being should receive and treat the gift of the Holy Spirit. Catechism is a human action under the guidance of the Holy Spirit but, in any case, it does not identify or limit the divine uncreated energies of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation is not only a human action. It is a kind of human response¹⁰⁹ to God's grace and the offer of salvation by

¹⁰⁹ It is a kind of human response to God's grace by the following meaning. Of course, through Chrismation-Confirmation we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, but this gift is not given inconsiderately. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given under certain precondition which has to do with the free will and volition of the human being. This precondition is

Him. The renewal of the human being into the new life in Christ cannot be considered as a human achievement. Similar questions are raised by the sacrament of Repentance for the forgiveness of sins which precedes Confirmation as preparation of candidates in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This practice stresses the human dimension of Confirmation more than the conferment of the Holy Spirit as the gift.

The second main difference between Chrismation and Confirmation, as it is also pointed out in the Bari document, is the practice of “admitting to first communion baptized persons who have not yet received confirmation.”¹¹⁰ The Bari agreement makes the point: “This inversion, which provokes objections or understandable reservations both by Orthodox and Roman Catholics, calls for deep theological and pastoral reflection because pastoral practice should never lose sight of the meaning of the early tradition and its doctrinal importance.”¹¹¹

exactly the candidate’s will to be incorporated into the one body of Church through the rite of Christian Initiation (even if he/she is an infant and his/her parents make a decision for him/her). In other words, the candidate is the one who comes to the body of Church and he/she asks for the sacraments of Christian Initiation.

¹¹⁰ “Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church”, *Growth in Agreement II*, WCC Publications, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge 2000, p. 667.

¹¹¹ “Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church”, *Growth in Agreement II*, WCC Publications, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge 2000, pp. 667-668.

This practice abrogates for the second time the rite of Christian Initiation and, in our opinion, it is more serious than the separation between Baptism and Confirmation. In comparison to the tradition of the early Christianity, the administration of Confirmation some years after Baptism and before the first Holy Communion is more acceptable than the practice of receiving children to the Holy Communion before they have received Confirmation. At least, the first practice does not turn over the order of Christian Initiation even if it raises many theological and pastoral questions. The second practice changes the theological understanding of the three sacraments of Christian Initiation. According to the theological understanding of the early Church, after Baptism the neophyte is born into a new ontological life in Christ; he/she receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power to be strengthened in the new life; and through the Eucharist, he/she is embodied into the one body of Jesus Christ, the body of the Church, in order to experience the sanctifying community of Church and its eschatological dimension as the kingdom of God. Therefore, the new ontological life is expressed, signified and fulfilled by the incorporation into the body of the Church.¹¹² So, what is the meaning of the inversion of the order of Christian Initiation? Is this

¹¹² See: Ζηζιούλα Ἰωάννη, Μητρο. Περγάμου, *Ἡ Βαπτισματικὴ καὶ Εὐχαριστιακὴ βίωση τοῦ Μυστηρίου τῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, http://www.oodegr.com/oode/orthod/mystiria/bapt_efx1.htm#3, as per date 3/4/2009/ Ζηζιούλα Ἰωάννη, Μητρο. Περγάμου, *Ἡ Ταύτιση Θείας Εὐχαριστίας καὶ Ἐκκλησίας*, <http://www.oodegr.com/oode/dogma/ekklisiologia/efxaristia1.htm>, as per date 3/4/2009.

liturgical change able to express and fulfill the deeper theological meaning of the new ontological life through Christian Initiation? Is finally Confirmation the personal Pentecost with the reception of the Holy Spirit before the incorporation into the one body of the Church?

After these remarks, we think that the phrase in the Bari document that the changes in the liturgical practice of Chrismation and Confirmation “did not concern the theological understanding of the fundamental unity, in the Holy Spirit, of the whole process of Christian initiation”¹¹³ is not clear enough. Of course, both Churches have never abandoned the fundamental meaning of Chrismation-Confirmation as the gift of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the practice of Confirmation nowadays reveals that its theological meaning has been affected by the separation between Baptism and Confirmation which started from a pastoral reason, namely the administration of Confirmation only by the bishop. Consequently, the first separation led to the separation of the rite of Christian Initiation in three parts when the first Holy Communion precedes Confirmation. In our opinion, a comparison between Eastern and Western theologies will show that the core of the problem lies in the Christomonism of the scholastic theology which developed in the West.

¹¹³ “Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church”, *Growth in Agreement II*, WCC Publications, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge 2000, p. 667.

The West insisted more on the role of Jesus Christ for the salvation of human beings demoting the role of the Holy Spirit for the same purpose.

In the process of the bilateral dialogue it is very encouraging that both Churches concentrated on the common understanding of Chrismation-Confirmation. Beyond this, they should discuss more about the differences between Chrismation and Confirmation not only about the unquestionably main difference that is to say the administration of Confirmation after the first Holy Communion.¹¹⁴ The differences, not necessarily negative and dividing, include important aspects that both Churches could receive from each other in mutual respect especially in the process of the Ecumenical Movement.

For instance, the Orthodox Church should consider more about the value of catechism in Christian life as a continuous process for a deeper experience of God's grace. The Orthodox could learn many things by the importance which the Roman Catholic Church puts on the catechism. After the prevalence of infant baptism, the catechism on Baptism is kept almost only for adult baptism in the Orthodox Church. Apart from the preparation of adults for Baptism, there is rarely catechism on the meaning of Christian Initiation in other occasions.

¹¹⁴ See: "Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church", *Growth in Agreement II*, WCC Publications, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge 2000, p. 668.

Thus, the indiscriminate baptism just for social reasons is very common. There is also another important element which is kept by the Roman Catholic Church. This is the laying on of hands in the rite of Confirmation. It is a gesture connected to the gift of the Holy Spirit as it was conferred by the Apostles and it is attested from the early Christianity. The Orthodox Church could reinstate the laying on of hands as a visible sign of the gift of the Holy Spirit, especially when Chrismation is celebrated by the bishop.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church could receive the unity of the administration of Christian Initiation in the Orthodox Church following the early tradition of the one and undivided Church. The Roman Catholic Church has recognized many implications of the separation of Christian Initiation,¹¹⁵ but the separation paradoxically remains. So, she should find ways to reinstate the unity of the sacraments of Christian Initiation in their theological and administrative order as it is attested in the ancient Christianity which never knew a partition of the sacramental process for the admission of candidates into her body.

¹¹⁵ See: "Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church", Growth in Agreement II, WCC Publications, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge 2000, pp. 666-668/ "Second Vatican Council and Confirmation", <http://www.Omrichstatter.org/i%20initiation/i37confi.htm>, as per date 4/3/2009.

In our opinion, the following questions should be also discussed and clarified. Both Churches mutually recognize the Baptism of each other in practice.¹¹⁶ At the same time, both administer a kind of Chrismation and Confirmation for the reception of converts from the Roman Catholic into the Orthodox Church and the opposite. What is the real meaning of this sacramental act? Is this just a sacramental act which defines the Church's boundaries? Are both Churches in danger to consider the Holy Spirit being active in baptism (even if it is accepted by Economy) but inactive in Chrismation-Confirmation when they meet each other? We say that this sacramental act is not the same rite of Chrismation-Confirmation but a special one for the reception of converts. Nevertheless, in its celebration the words "the gift of the Holy Spirit" are repeated. Especially in the Orthodox Church, it is significant that this rite developed in 1484, that is to say more than four centuries after the great schism in 1054. What was actually the need of preparing such a special rite for the converts from the Roman Catholic Church? Were there only theological reasons or historical ones as well?¹¹⁷ What is

¹¹⁶ Until now, there is not an official bilateral document on the mutual recognition of Baptism between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics. Thus, when we say "both Churches mutually recognize the Baptism of each other in practice" we denote the way of the reception of converts from the Roman Catholic Church to the Orthodox Church and the opposite. In our opinion, it is an important issue which must be seriously examined and discussed by both Churches.

¹¹⁷ See the English translation of the rite in: Dragas, George, *The Manner of Reception of Roman Catholic Converts into the Orthodox Church with Special Reference to the Decisions of*

the theological difference between this rite and Chrismation-Confirmation? Is the gift of the Holy Spirit conferred or not? If yes, are both Churches in danger to repeat the unrepeatable conferment of the gift of the Holy Spirit?

the Synods of 1484 (Constantinople), 1755 (Constantinople), and 1667 (Moscow), http://jbburnett.com/resources/dragas_baptism.pdf, as per date 4/3/ 2009.

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