

Confirmation

Tyson Thomas

Confirmation is a rite of initiation in several Christian denominations, normally carried out through anointing, the laying of hands and prayer for the purpose of bestowing the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In Christianity, confirmation is seen as the sealing of the covenant created in Holy Baptism. In some denominations, confirmation also bestows full membership in a local congregation upon the recipient. In others, such as the Roman Catholic Church, confirmation “renders the bond with the Church more perfect” because, while a baptized person is already a member, reception of the sacrament of confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox Churches and many Anglicans view confirmation as a sacrament. In the East, it is conferred immediately after baptism. In the west, this practice is followed when adults are baptized, but in the case of infants not in danger of death is administered, ordinarily by a bishop only when the child reaches the age of reason or early adolescence. Among those Catholics who practice teen-aged confirmation, the practice may be perceived secondarily, as a “coming of age” rite. In Protestant churches, the rite tends to be seen rather as a mature statement of faith by an already baptized person. It is also required by most Protestant churches (Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran) but is not recognized by a coming of age ceremony in Baptist, Anabaptist and other groups that teach believer's baptism.

There is an analogous ceremony also called confirmation in the Jewish religion, which is not to be confused with Bar Mitzvah. These early Jewish Reformers instituted a ceremony where young Jews who are older than Bar Mitzvah age study both traditional and contemporary sources of Jewish Philosophy in order to learn what it means to be Jewish. The age instituted was older than that of Bar Mitzvah because some of these topics were considered too complicated for thirteen-year-old minds to grasp. Nowadays confirmation has gained widespread adherence among congregations affiliated with the Reform movement but has not gained as much **reaction (check the word)** in conservative and orthodox Jewish groups. The way confirmation differs from Bar Mitzvah is that confirmation is considered a more communal confirmation of one's being Jewish and Bar Mitzvah is more of a

personal confirmation of joining the conversant (see below section about confirmation in Judaism).

The roots of confirmation are found in the New Testaments for instance, in the Acts of the Apostles 8:14-17: Now when the apostles in Jerusalem feared that Samaria had accepted the word of god, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them, they had only been baptized in the name of the lord Jesus. They laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Also in the gospel of John, Chapter 14, Christ speaks of the coming of the holy spirit on the Apostles (John 14:15-26). Later, after his resurrection, Jesus breathed upon them and they received the Holy Spirit (John 20:22), a process completed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). After this point the New Testament records the apostles bestowing the Holy Spirit upon others through the laying of hands. German Wood cut depicting confirmation service (1679). In the teaching of Roman Catholic Church, confirmation, known also as Chrismation, is one of the several sacraments instituted by Christ of the conferral sanctifying grace and the strengthening of the union between individual souls and god. The Catechism of Catholic church in its paragraphs 1302-1303 states.

From this fact, confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace.

- It roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry “abba father” (Roman 8:15)
- It unites us more firmly to Christ
- It increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us
- It renders us bond with the church more perfect
- It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witness of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly and never to be ashamed of the cross. When Conservative Judaism began to develop as a distinct movement, it too generally rejected confirmation as either unnecessary or as a non-Jewish innovation. Today nearly all reform communities have **returned (check the word)** to individuals Bar Mitzvah at 13 and of 13 for the Bar Mitzvah ceremonies, but the communal confirmation ceremony is still popular.
