

## **Canonical Resources and Policies for the Reception of the Heterodox**

*For use in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland, adapted from the policy document of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. This Edition: 1.1 (09/01/2024)*

### **Preface**

The truth from history is that the Church has always employed various ways of receiving the heterodox, schismatics and irregular communities back into her communion. It is a grave mistake to think that there was, and is, only one way of doing this to the exclusion of all others. Circumstances alter cases.

There are two principles that the Orthodox apply to any given situation in which there are legitimate but different options. These principles are often misquoted and misunderstood, sometimes in ways that are quite opposite to what they mean. These two principles are (in Greek) "akribeia" and "economia". The simplest definitions of these might be "economia" means "house rules" and "akribeia" means "the strictest house rule." Two common misconceptions are to think that economia means a dispensation and that akribeia is the norm. In fact, economia means ALL the possible rules of the household, akribeia being the strictest of those. In more detail, these definitions will suffice:

**ECONOMIA** is applying the rules to the household and is the norm. The rules can either be strict or accommodating according to the needs of salvation of the person or a group of persons.

**AKRIBEIA** is applying the strictest of the rules and is only one of the options available in meeting the needs of salvation of the person or group of persons.

The pastoral and dogmatic decisions that have applied throughout history to the reception of the heterodox have, in turn, been informed by the Church's self-understanding as the identifiable body of Christ, her ecclesiology. Sometimes there has been a stronger insistence on the grace of salvation within that body alone; at other times a stronger insistence on the ubiquity of divine grace operating in the hearts and lives of all men. There is truth in both positions, according to Scripture and Tradition, and one view should not be set in opposition to the other.

The ecclesiology of St Cyprian - which marked a clear boundary between the Church and that which is outside her communion - tied Baptism and Eucharist closely together. There was "no salvation outside the Church." "Salvation" in this context meant spiritual health. This approach mandated the exceptional remedy of baptism, NOT as some rigorists today suppose, for ALL heretics or schismatics, but for some of them.

At the other end of the theological and pastoral spectrum, St Augustine (a saint in the Greek calendar) made a distinction between the correct form of baptism (in the name of the Trinity and by triple immersion or pouring) and the efficacious character of the sacrament which could only be guaranteed in the Church, an identifiable Orthodox Catholic communion of local churches with their bishops. This distinction (perhaps more commonly applied in the Orthodox Christian west than the east) enabled the whole Church to discern which schismatic or heretical bodies and persons should be admitted into communion by either Baptism or Chrismation only - after being examined and instructed. Sometimes Christian bodies or persons in a greater degree of agreement in faith and practice with the Orthodox have been received by a simple renunciation of errors and profession of faith - without either baptism or chrismation.

At certain times in the history of the Church there have always been those who have pressed for baptism to be administered in all cases of those being received into the Orthodox Church from other heterodox Christian bodies and groups. Once, and for a short period of acceptance only - and even in a Synod (Constantinople, 1756) - baptism alone was prescribed for all the heterodox, and this position was supported at the time by no less than by the great St Nicodemus the Hagiorite. However, this policy was not always implemented and, in Russia, not at all (except in the previous century and for a very brief period). By 1888 the Greek world had formally reverted to the ancient practice of a mixed economy of discernment of spirits and correctness of form, which remains the overwhelmingly common practice of local Orthodox churches today.

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More recently we have seen a resurgence of pressure for a baptism only akribeia policy for all non-Orthodox from within a minority and often schismatic tendency in the Orthodox Church. Extremists in this group, often very active online, have taken up the same position as Greek Old Calendarist sects, denying the status of all Christians as Orthodox (including priests!) received by Chrismation only. This extreme position has never been endorsed by the canons of the Church in the time of the Fathers. It has frequently re-emerged when the Orthodox have felt embattled and then died down in more peaceful times.

On the other hand, there has been an equal and opposite danger, perhaps evident in the (as some might say) controversial Council of Crete (2016), which is now the official policy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to exclude baptism as an option for those being received into the Orthodox Church from certain churches. Although there is precedent for this exclusion in Tradition (for certain groups and bodies only), other local Orthodox churches have demurred at language that they suppose might imply that heterodox Christian bodies are churches<sup>1</sup> in the fullest Orthodox sense.

The controversial nature of the decisions of the Council of Crete is not new in Church history and arises from the tension between the positions of both St Augustine and St Cyprian when deciding how to receive the heterodox. Church history shows us that we would not be in the mainstream of Tradition to assume only one possible response sacramentally without a careful spiritual consideration of each case in its context. This was the method of the Fathers and the Councils and, therefore, it should be ours also.

The Canonical Resources and Policies section below shows how the Church's position on the manner of receiving the heterodox has evolved and shifted over time but always with a common grounding in the teaching and practice of the Fathers taken as a whole.

### **A: The Canons of the Ecumenical Councils:**

#### **19th Canon of the Council of Nicea (325 AD)**

Concerning the Paulianists who have flown for refuge to the Catholic Church, it has been decreed that they must by all means be rebaptised; and if any of them who in past time have been numbered among their clergy should be found blameless and without reproach, let them be rebaptised and ordained by the Bishop of the Catholic Church; but if the examination should discover them to be unfit, they ought to be deposed. Likewise in the case of their deaconesses, and generally in the case of those who have been enrolled among their clergy, let the same form be observed. And we mean by deaconesses such as have assumed the habit, but who, since they have no imposition of hands, are to be numbered only among the laity.

#### **7th Canon of the Council of Constantinople (381 AD)**

Those who from heresy turn to Orthodoxy, and to the portion of those who are being saved, we receive according to the following method and custom: Arians, and Macedonians, and Sabbatians, and Novatians, who call themselves Cathari or Aristori, and Quartodecimans or Tetradites, and Apollinarians, we receive, upon their giving a written renunciation [of their errors] and anathematise every heresy which is not in accordance with the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of God. Thereupon, they are first sealed or anointed with the holy oil upon the forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth, and ears; and when we seal them, we say: "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit".

#### **95th Canon of the Council of Trullo [Quinisect Council] (691/2 AD):**

Those who from the heretics come over to Orthodoxy, and to the number of those who should be saved, we receive according to the following order and custom: Arians, Macedonians, Novatians, those who call themselves Cathari,

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the word "church" or "churches" with reference to the heterodox in this document does not mean "Church" in the Orthodox sense but rather is adopted for ease of understanding and identification of these bodies.

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Aristeri, and Testareskaidecatitae, or Tetraditae, and Apollinarians, we receive on their presentation of certificates and on their anathematising every heresy which does not hold as does the holy Apostolic Church of God: then first of all we anoint them with the holy chrism on their foreheads, eyes, nostrils, mouth and ears; and as we seal them we say: "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit".

But concerning the Paulianists it has been determined by the Catholic Church that they shall by all means be rebaptised. The Eunomeans also, who baptise with one immersion; and the Montanists, who here are called Phrygians; and the Sabellians, who consider the Son to be the same as the Father, and are guilty in certain other grave matters, and all the other heresies, for there are many heretics here; especially those who come from the region of the Galatians, all of their number who are desirous of coming to the Orthodox faith, we receive as Gentiles. And on the first day we make them Christians, on the second Catechumens, then on the third day we exorcise them, at the same time also breathing thrice upon their faces and ears; and thus, we initiate them, and we make them spend time in church and hear the Scriptures; and then we baptise them, and also the Manichaeans and the Valentinians and Marcionites, and those of similar heresies.

It is necessary to give certificates and anathematise each his own heresy, the Nestorians and Nestorius and Eutyches and Dioscorus, and Severus, and the remaining exarchs of such heresies, and those who think with them, and all the aforesaid heresies; and so they become partakers of the Holy Communion.

### **B: Developments after the era of the first Seven Ecumenical Councils**

#### **Council of Constantinople (1484 AD)**

"This Synod was summoned at the sacred Church of Pammakaristos by Patriarch Symeon (1472-75, 1482-1485) in 1482 and again in 1484. In the first instance it issued an Horos denouncing the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438) and its doctrine of the Filioque, and in the second, it published an Acolouthy for the reception of Latin converts into the Orthodox Church. This Synod called itself Ecumenical, presumably because all four Eastern Patriarchs were present. It denounced the Council of Florence and decided that [*Text of the Council begins*]:

'The Latin converts to Orthodoxy should be received into the Church only by Chrismation and by signing an appropriate Libellus of faith which would include denunciation of Latin errors ... The Service for the Reception of Latins into the Orthodox Church published by the same holy and great Synod, for those who return from the Latin heresies to the Orthodox and Catholic Church of Constantinople, but also to the three most holy Patriarchs of the East, i.e. those of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. This Acolouthy was published in Constantinople in the year 1484 during the patriarchy of the most holy Patriarch Lord Symeon. Let it be known, also, that this Synod, being ecumenical, is the first one with God's help, to bring down and overturn that most unlawful Synod that was summoned in Florence, as one that proceeded in an evil and unconstitutional manner; and as having failed to follow the holy and ecumenical Synods which preceded it; therefore, we included the Statement (Horos) of this Orthodox and holy Synod of ours, i.e. that one of Constantinople, in the present sacred codex of Christ's holy and great Church, since it was summoned during our days.'

(*Fr. George Dragas, The Manner of Reception of Roman Catholic Converts into the Orthodox Church*).

#### **Council of Moldova (1642 AD)**

"This mystery [of baptism] once received is not again to be repeated, provided the person who provided the baptism believed in an Orthodox manner in three Persons in one God and accurately, without alteration, pronounced the aforementioned words: namely, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

(*Saint Peter Mogila's Confession and the 1642 Synod*)

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## **Council of Moscow (1667 AD)**

"At the time of Patriarch Nikon, upon the insistence of Patriarch Macarius of Antioch, who was then in Moscow, it was twice decreed at the Council that Latins would not be re-baptised in the future, the deeply rooted custom of re-baptising remained in practice. This is why Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich proposed that the Great Council should discuss and make a decision on this question. The Council fathers carefully reviewed Patriarch Philaret Nikitich's statute and came to the conclusion that the laws were incorrectly interpreted and applied to the Latins. They then referred to earlier Council statutes whereby it was forbidden to re-baptise even Arians and Macedonians in the event of their coming into Orthodoxy, and even more so, the Fathers said, Latins must not be re-baptised. They referred to the Council of the four Eastern Patriarchs held in Constantinople in 1484, which decreed not to re-baptise Latins upon their coming into Orthodoxy, but only to anoint them with Chrism, and which even composed the actual rite for their reception into the Church. They referred to the wise Mark of Ephesus who, in his epistle addressed to all Orthodox, offers the same teaching and decreed: 'Latins must not be re-baptised but only after their renunciation of their heresies and confession of sins, be anointed with Chrism and admit them to the Holy Mysteries and in this way bring them into communion with the holy, catholic Eastern Church, in accordance with the sacred canons.'"

*(Quoted in Archimandrite Ambrosius: 'On the Question of the Order of Reception of Persons into the Orthodox Church', ch. 2).*

## **Council of Jerusalem (1672 AD)**

"For heretics who renounce their heresy and join the Catholic Church are received by the Church; although they received their valid Baptism with weakness of faith. Wherefore, when they afterwards become possessed of the perfect faith, they are not again baptised."

*(Confession of Dositheus, Decree XV)*

## **C: Dissenting Voices and Modern Supporters**

### **Synod of Constantinople (1756 AD)**

In the history of the Church only one Synod, that of Constantinople in 1756 called for the baptism of Roman Catholics and Protestants, always and everywhere. The decision of this meeting, at the time, was ratified by only four Patriarchates, but gradually all four returned to a mixed economy of both strictness and adaptability as mandated by the holy Fathers and the canons of the Ecumenical Councils. Therefore, this Synod has not stood the test of time because it overturned the consistent teaching and practice of the Church as received canonically from antiquity. This patristic and conciliar economy, both in its accommodating and stricter forms, was later consistently ratified by the Synods of (AD) 1484, 1642, 1667, and 1672, and was never seriously questioned until 1756 and then, only more recently, by some vocal Orthodox minorities of schismatic tendency.

In the words of the 19th century bishop and canonist Nikodim Milaš:

"The decision that each Roman Catholic as well as each Protestant who wishes to convert to the Orthodox Church is to be baptised anew was made by the 1756 Council in Constantinople during the time of Patriarch Cyril V. This conciliar decision was motivated by the Western Christians being baptised by pouring and not by three immersions. Since the only proper form of baptism is only that which is performed by three immersions, it follows that Western Christians must be considered not to have been baptised since they were not baptised in that manner and consequently, they must be baptised when they want to convert to the Orthodox Church. This decision by the above mentioned Council in Constantinople was called for by extraordinary circumstances, which arose in the 18th century in the relations between the Greek and Latin Churches and was a reaction on the part of the Greek Church towards the aggression against that Church on the part of Latin propaganda. From a formal point of view the motivation for this decision has some basis since the Orthodox Church's canons call for the baptism to be performed by triple immersion of the one

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baptised into the water and the term baptism itself, is derived from the act of immersion, and the same canons condemn that baptism which was done by a single immersion as was done by various heretics of the first centuries of the Christian Church. But the Church has never condemned that baptism which was done by pouring. Not only that, but the Church itself permitted such a form of baptism in the event of need and considered baptism by means of pouring as not contrary to the apostolic tradition. Therefore, the above-noted decision of the Constantinople Council cannot be considered as binding for the whole Orthodox Church since it is contrary to the practice of the Eastern Church of all centuries and particularly, to the practice of the Greek Church itself from the time of the division of Churches to the time of that Council in Constantinople."

*(Quoted in Archimandrite Ambrosius: 'On the Question of the Order of Reception of Persons into the Orthodox Church', ch. 3).*

### **D: Oikonomia and the Reception of Converts:**

The first to suggest that the canons of Constantinople (AD 381) and Trullo (AD 692) should be considered as *oikonomia* rather than *kat'akribeian* (according to strictness) was St. Nikodemus of the Holy Mountain (AD 1809) in the *Pedalion* published in AD 1800. The canons themselves interpreted *kat'akribeian* receive those heretics baptised with/in water and "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" by chrismation.

Father Andrew Louth in commenting on the final canon of the Synod in Trullo (Canon 102) sees that strictness (*akribeia*) and customary usage (*synethia*) are the two ways in which canons are applied.

"This suggests a different understanding of *oikonomia* from that which has become traditional, which opposes *oikonomia* to *akribeia*, taking to mean dispensation from the strict application of the canons. Rather this canon (and those of St Basil) seems to suggest that *oikonomia* means the way in which the canons are applied in the particular case, whether strictly (using *akribeia*) or more gently: *oikonomia* is the aim of the pastor in all cases."

*(Andrew Louth, Greek East and Latin West: The Church AD 681-1071, SVS Press, 2007, p. 37)*

Father Georges Florovsky in his article: *The Limits of the Church* (*Church Quarterly Review*, October 1933, pp. 117-131) states:

"As a mystical organism, as the sacramental Body of Christ, the Church cannot be adequately described in canonical terms or categories alone. It is impossible to state or discern the true limits of the Church simply by canonical signs or marks. Very often the canonical boundary determines also the charismatic boundary; what is bound on earth is bound by an indissoluble knot in heaven. But not always. Still more often, not immediately. In her sacramental, mysterious being, the Church surpasses canonical measurements. For that reason, a canonical cleavage does not immediately signify mystical impoverishment and desolation. All that Cyprian said about the unity of the Church and the sacraments can be and must be accepted. But it is not necessary with him to draw the final boundary around the body of the Church by canonical points alone." (p. 119)

Father George Florovsky goes on to say:

"One must ask, therefore, whether it is possible to put the question concerning sectarians and heretics as a question only of "economy." Certainly, in so far as it is a question of winning lost souls for Catholic truth, of the way to bring them "to the reason of truth," every course of action must be "economical," that is, pastoral, compassionate, loving. The pastor must leave the ninety and nine and seek the lost sheep. But for that reason, the greater is the need for complete sincerity and directness. Not only is this unequivocal accuracy, strictness and clarity, in fact, *akribeia*, required in the sphere of dogma; how otherwise can unity of mind be obtained? Accuracy and clarity are before all things necessary in mystical diagnosis, and precisely for this reason, the question of the rites of sectarians and heretics must be put and decided in the form of the strictest *akribeia*. For there is here not so much a *quaestio juris* as a *quaestio*

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*facti*<sup>2</sup>; further, the question of mystical fact, of sacramental reality. It is not a matter of "recognition" so much as of diagnosis; it is necessary to identify and to discern." (p. 121)

"... If in fact the Church were fully convinced that in the sects and heresies baptism is not accomplished, to what end would she reunite schismatics without baptism? Sure, not in order simply to save them by this step from false shame in the open confession that they have not been baptised. Can such a motive be considered honourable, convincing and of good repute? Can it benefit the newcomers to reunited them through ambiguity and suppression?" (p. 122)

"The 'economical' explanation raises even greater difficulties from the side of its general theological premises. One can scarcely ascribe to the Church the power and the right, as it were, to convert the has-not-been into the has-been, to change the meaningless into the valid ...." (p. 123)

"If the rites of schismatics are not sacraments, they are a blasphemous caricature. In that case, neither 'economical' suppression of facts nor 'economical' glossing of sin is possible. The sacramental rite cannot be only a rite, empty but innocent. The sacrament is accomplished in reality. But it is impossible to say also that in the sects the sacraments *are of avail*. The sacraments are not 'magic' acts; indeed, the Eucharist may also be taken 'unto judgement and condemnation.' But this does not refute the reality of 'validity' of the Eucharist itself. The same may be said of baptism; baptismal grace must be renewed in unceasing effort and service, otherwise it becomes 'inefficacious.'" (pp. 126-127)

Father Georges concludes by saying:

"This is a beginning only, a general characteristic; not everything in it is clearly and fully said. But the question is truly put. There are many bonds still not broken, whereby the schisms are held together in a certain unity. Our whole attention and our whole will must be gathered together and directed to removing the stubbornness of dissension. 'We seek not conquest,' says St. Gregory Nazianzen, 'but the return of brethren, the separation from whom is tearing us.'" (pp. 130-131)

### **E: Who Decides the Manner of Reception:**

All matters of reception of converts to the Orthodox Faith are decided by the bishop and not the priest, and especially not the person entering the Church. Occasionally, someone will approach our clergy and state how they want to be received into the Orthodox Church (by baptism or by chrismation). Clergy are expected to follow the directives given by the Metropolitan of the Archdiocese as presented in this document. The priest investigates what the person has received consulting lists below. Any variance or ambiguity must be referred to the local bishop who retains the authority to direct proper reception into the Orthodox Church. Priests (and lay people) do not have the authority to deviate from these directives.

### **F: "Corrective Baptism"**

Some recently have been endorsing "corrective baptism," a baptism after reception in the Orthodox Church by Chrismation. This is encouraged in some monasteries (including Mt. Athos) and perhaps in some jurisdictions. The practice of corrective baptism is forbidden in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland. Any lay person who receives a corrective baptism will be excommunicated and a clergyman will be deposed. This is a serious offence breaking the unity of the Church and as such, is dealt with in an uncompromising manner. Any person who receives a corrective baptism is not eligible for ordination in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland.

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<sup>2</sup> *Trans (Latin): "... not so much a question of law as a question of fact."*

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## G: Ways of Receiving Converts

Reception of Converts into the Orthodox Church: Canon 95 of the Council in Trullo of AD 692, which was ratified by the Second Council of Nicea, the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and is a restatement of Canon 7 of the First Council of Constantinople, provides three ways to receive converts into the Orthodox Church:

1. Through Profession of Faith
2. Through Profession of Faith and Chrismation
3. Through Profession of Faith, Baptism, and Chrismation

In order to understand this and apply these canons in our contemporary setting, it is important to look at each to see the underlying criteria established by the Holy Fathers of these Ecumenical Councils.

### G1. Through Renunciation of Heresy and Profession of Faith

There are a small number of circumstances, not covered by the canons, in which the bishop has both the discretion and authority to receive a person into the Church by a renunciation of heresy and profession of faith alone, assuming that the person concerned was originally baptised in the Orthodox Church. However, in cases of formal apostasy, that is, the renunciation of Christ in adhering to a religion other than Christianity, then the baptised but apostate person is to be received back by a public renunciation of their errors, a public confession of the Orthodox faith and chrismation.

### G2: Through Profession of Faith and Myron (Chrismation):

Traditionally, Orthodox theology receives those convert who have been baptised with water in the Name of the Holy Trinity by Chrismation. The reception of a convert by Chrismation is not the recognition of the validity of non-Orthodox baptism. Instead, it is an act in which Chrismation perfects whatever was lacking in their non-Orthodox baptism. Thus, those baptised "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," with water by a church that professes a trinitarian faith ("Father, Son, and Holy Spirit") are to be received by Profession of Faith and Chrismation.

Nonetheless, pastorally not dogmatically, when the catechumen has persistent personal and spiritual concerns with their baptism in the former heterodox tradition, this Archdiocese does allow them to choose an Orthodox baptism instead of chrismation. The priest who baptises in such circumstances must, however, make it very clear that both options, baptism and chrismation have equal standing in the economy of the Church and both, equally, confer membership and grace in the body of Christ.

**Historically, the Canons specifically directed the followers of these heretical groups to be received by Chrismation alone:**

**Arians:** They profess that Christ is a creature, not *homoousios* with the Father. Arians do not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity.

**Macedonians** (Pneumatomachi): Semi-Arians who denied the deity of the Holy Spirit. They were Pneumatomachi, "combaters against the Holy Spirit." Founded by Macedonius I of Constantinople. Considered the substance of the Son to be homoiousios, but not homoousios.

**Sabbatians:** Sabbatius was a Novatian presbyter who held that Pascha and Passover should be kept at the same time by Christians and Jews.

**Novatians:** Refused readmission to communion of the lapsed. The followers of Novatian called themselves the Cathari, or pure ones (purists). Other than refusing the lapsed (and later all those with mortal sins)

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back into communion, they held to the same practices and beliefs as the rest of the Church. Also known as Aristori.

**Quartodecimans or Tetradites:** Early Christian heresy whose followers observed Pascha on the Jewish Passover (14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan) and not necessarily on Sunday.

**Apollinarians:** Claimed that Jesus had a normal human body but a divine mind instead of a human soul.

### **Criteria:**

The criteria for reception by renunciation of heresy followed by Chrismation was made for those churches that held a traditional form of baptism in/with water and "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." They might have a defective theology but continued with a recognizable form of Christian baptism and Christian belief and practice. In these cases, the Church did not baptise (i.e., re-baptise) those who had already been baptised; to do so was seen to be sacrilege by the holy Fathers. Nonetheless, concern for salvation in such circumstances by the catechumen does justify some leniency and therefore, the choice of baptism if their conscience cannot be quietened by chrismation alone.

### **Reception by Chrismation, in the modern era, has been interpreted to include:**

#### **G2a. Roman Catholics:**

... that is, those belonging to the Roman Catholic Church (including Eastern Catholics such as Maronites and Melkites)

#### **G2b. The family of non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches, including:**

- The Assyrian Church of the East
- The Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite)
- The Indian Orthodox Churches (Malankara)
- The Armenian Apostolic Church
- The Coptic Orthodox Church
- The Ethiopian Orthodox Church
- The Eritrean Orthodox Church

#### **G2c. Traditionally Trinitarian Protestants**

This list is being compiled from the confessional and liturgical practices of these denominations in the British Isles and Ireland and will be published in the next edition of this document. For current information please contact the Metropolitan Archbishop.

#### **G2d. Independent Churches**

More difficult groups to verify are the large and growing numbers of independent (often evangelical or Bible) churches. Many of these churches depend theologically on the particular pastor at any given moment and have few, if any, governing documents through which baptisms can be verified. Positive verification must be obtained for reception by Chrismation; otherwise, such baptisms should not be accepted. In cases of doubt the Metropolitan must be consulted for guidance on how to receive a prospective convert from these churches.

These churches include:



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- Independent Non-denominational churches of various backgrounds
- Smaller denominational groups

### **G2e. More Questionable Groups requiring more attention:**

#### **i. Other Independent Churches**

Some independent (and some charismatic churches) while professing belief in the Holy Trinity are baptizing "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in Jesus' Name" or some variation on this. Baptisms done in this manner are not acceptable. Care must be taken to verify that the proper formula was used and that the church confesses a basic trinitarian doctrine. Churches who have followed this practice include:

- Calvary Chapel
- Independent churches
- Charismatic or Pentecostal churches

#### **ii. Those not baptised in/by a church - Independent baptisms**

Typically, for a baptism to be accepted by the Orthodox Church, it has to be administered by one authorized to baptise in a church/ denomination whose baptisms can be accepted. Because the intent of the church / denomination is important in ascertaining the theology and practice of baptism, baptisms should be administered by an ordained/licensed minister of a church or denomination since it is important that theological context can be verified. Most denominations have a verifiable understanding of the Holy Trinity which allows a baptism to be accepted. Those who have been baptised by a friend or acquaintance who is not affiliated with or under the governance of any particular church should be carefully scrutinized and in all cases of question, the local Bishop must be consulted.

### **G2f. Progressive Protestants**

Because of the strong influence of progressive theology in some Protestant denominations, some of their clergy have abandoned the proper Trinitarian language and groups baptised with "inclusive" language such as "Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier," or some variation thereof, including language like "Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Mother of us all." Under these circumstances the convert must be received by Baptism. Because Protestant denominations are constantly subject to change and have a strong congregationalist influence, it is necessary to verify that the proper Trinitarian language was used before receiving a convert by Chrismation even if they provide a certificate with the correct language since a minister may decide on his own to reject the traditional language used by their denomination. This was rare before the 1990's but has become more prevalent since. Thus, baptisms after 2000 should receive more scrutiny. If it cannot be verified with certainty that the convert was baptised with water "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," he or she must be received through the full service of the Mystery of Baptism (if verified, they must be received by Chrismation alone). In cases of doubt or confusion, the Metropolitan Archbishop must be consulted for guidance on how to receive a prospective convert from these churches.

*Note: With over 45,000 denominations throughout the world, it is impossible to keep up with each particular sect of Christianity. It is easier to discern what is done in large denominations which have official policies than many of these smaller denominations or affiliations of churches that have little oversight or discernible governing documentation.*

### **G3: Through Profession of Faith, Baptism, and Chrismation:**

All other heretical groups, "Greeks," pagans, etc., were received by renunciation of heresy, profession of faith, a period of catechumenate, followed by Baptism and Chrismation. This included the following groups:

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- Paulianists:** Monarchian, non-trinitarian, Adoptionist. Emphasises the oneness of God. Paul of Samosata. Christ was born a mere man but was infused with the Divine Logos. Jesus is not God-become-man, but man-become-God.
- Eunomeans:** Ultra-Arians. Eunomians said the Son was not "like the Father."
- Montanists:** Relied on the spontaneity of the Holy Spirit and prophesying. Montanus was a recent convert when he began his prophesying. This New Prophecy was divisive. Montanists recognised women as bishops and presbyters. Some suggest that Montanism was non-trinitarian.
- Sabellians:** Theological Modalism. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three different modes or aspects of God, not three persons. Denies a plurality of persons (hypostases) in the Godhead.
- Manichaeans:** Taught an elaborate dualistic cosmology with Gnostic tendencies. Founded in east Persia. Was a main rival to Christianity in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. It spread throughout the east even into China. Mani was held to be the final prophet after Zoroaster, Buddha and Jesus. Manichaeans practiced severe asceticism and vegetarianism.
- Valentinians:** One of the major Gnostic "Christian" movements.
- Marcionites:** Founded by Marcion (d. 160). Early Christian dualistic belief. Rejected the Old Testament saying that the teachings of Christ are incompatible with the actions of the God of the Old Testament. He promoted a severe morality. Some suggest he was an early Gnostic.

### **Criteria:**

The criteria for reception by Renunciation of Heresy followed by Baptism and Chrismation was made for those churches and groups whose theology was no longer recognisable by the Orthodox Catholic Church. This included the Gnostics, Modalists, non-Trinitarians, and extremists among some Arian groups. Even if the proper forms (water and formula) were used, the theology of these groups was such that the Church could not recognize anything within it that it could embrace.

### **Modern Applications:**

#### **G3a. Non-Trinitarians / Modalists:**

The following denominations do not accept the doctrine of the Trinity, favouring instead a form of Sabellianism. Therefore, they do not baptise "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Converts from these denominations must be received through Baptism

1. The "Oneness" or "Jesus Only" Pentecostals
2. The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World
3. The United Pentecostal Church
4. The Unitarian Churches and some Congregationalists

#### **G3b. Churches that have played with the language of baptism**

Some groups have changed the traditional language of baptism to be gender neutral or non-sex specific. Therefore, those entering the Orthodox Church from these confessions must be baptised:

#### **G3c. Churches that do not practice baptism**

The Salvation Army does not practice baptism. Therefore, those entering the Orthodox Church from this organisation must be baptised.

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## **G3d. Other groups**

The following groups do not have a recognisable Christian theology. Therefore, those entering the Orthodox Church from these confessions must be baptised:

- 1 Christian Science
- 2 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)
- 3 The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (or any other branch of the Mormon Movement)
- 4 Society of Friends (Quakers)
- 5 Jehovah's Witnesses
- 6 Christadelphians

## **G3e. Non-Christians**

All non-Christians must be received through Baptism, such as:

- 1 Buddhists
- 2 Hindus
- 3 Jews
- 4 Muslims
- 5 Adherents of Scientology
- 6 Unitarian Universalists Followers of all other non-Christian religions.

## **H: Verification of Baptism:**

The normative verification of baptism is a baptismal certificate issued by the parish, church, or denomination. The form should list the date of baptism, the name and denomination of the church, and the name of the minister performing the baptism.

In cases of some Evangelical churches (Baptist, Assembly of God, various other Anabaptists or Evangelicals, etc.), baptismal certificates are typically not given nor are good records kept. In these situations, a signed letter from a witness to the baptism (parents, family friends, etc.) or from the minister performing the baptism may be used for proof of baptism. In some cases of adult baptism, a person can attest to his or her own baptism in a certain church.

Given the fact that some of the more liberal denominations and some independent Charismatic / Pentecostal churches (see above) may use alternative or additional wording for baptism, there should be verification that the proper Trinitarian formula ("In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.") was indeed used.

In cases where there is no proof of baptism, due diligence should be done to ascertain if a baptism has taken place or not. Receiving someone by baptism because of the lack of a certificate should be a last resort, not a first. We have heard of some clergy instructing those entering the church that if they don't provide a certificate, then they can be baptised. The sacramental theology of the Church should never be circumvented simply by the lack of a certificate.

## **Renunciations**

There are four categories of renunciations found in the history and practice of the Church.

- 1 Formal Libellus: A formal written renunciation. Rarely used today.
- 2 Detailed renunciation as found in the Book of Needs.
- 3 Brief renunciation as found in some liturgical texts such as the Services of Initiation published by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
- 4 Informal Confession of Faith (reciting the Nicene Creed) usually applies to Apostolic and Non-Chalcedonian Churches, not Protestants.

## **Appendix: Patristic Sources on Reception of Converts<sup>3</sup>**

### **St Stephen, Pope of Rome (AD 255) : Letter to St. Cyprian**

"If, therefore, someone comes to you from any heresy whatsoever, let nothing be renewed except that which has been handed down, namely, that the hand be imposed on him in penance, for the heretics themselves quite properly, **do not baptise those who come to them from each other, but simply admit them to communion.**"

"But the name of Christ accomplishes much toward the faith and sanctification of Baptism, so that whoever has been baptised anywhere in the name of Christ, immediately receives the grace of Christ."

### **St Cyprian of Carthage (AD 258)**

*His Comments at the Council of Carthage in response to St. Stephen ...*

It remains, that upon this same matter each of us should bring forward what we think, judging no man, nor rejecting any one from the right of communion, if he should think differently from us. For neither does any of us set himself up as a bishop of bishops, nor by tyrannical terror does any compel his colleague to the necessity of obedience; since every bishop, according to the allowance of his liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another. But let us all wait for the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only one that has the power both of preferring us in the government of His Church, and of judging us in our conduct there.

### **St. Basil the Great (AD 379) Letter 188**

As to your enquiry about the Cathari, a statement has already been made, and you have properly reminded me that **it is right to follow the custom obtaining in each region, because those, who at the time gave decision on these points, held different opinions concerning their baptism.** But the baptism of the Pepuzeni seems to me to have no authority; and I am astonished how this can have escaped Dionysius, acquainted as he was with the canons. The old authorities decided to accept that baptism which in nowise errs from the faith. Thus, they used the names of heresies, of schisms, and of unlawful congregations. By heresies they meant men who were altogether broken off and alienated in matters relating to the actual faith; by schisms men who had separated for some ecclesiastical reasons and questions capable of mutual solution; by unlawful congregations - gatherings held by disorderly presbyters or bishops or by uninstructed laymen. As, for instance, if a man be convicted of crime, and prohibited from discharging ministerial functions, and then refuses to submit to the canons, but arrogates to himself episcopal and ministerial rights, and persons leave the Catholic Church and join him, this is unlawful assembly.

To disagree with members of the Church about repentance, is schism. Instances of heresy are those of the Manichaeans, of the Valentinians, of the Marcionites, and of these Pepuzenes; for with them there comes in at once their disagreement concerning the actual faith in God. So, it seemed good to the ancient authorities to reject the baptism of heretics altogether, **but to admit that of schismatics**, on the ground that they still belonged to the Church.

As to those who assembled in **unlawful congregations**, their decision was to join them again to the Church, after they had been brought to a better state **by proper repentance and rebuke**, and so, in many cases, when men in orders had rebelled with the disorderly, **to receive them on their repentance**, into the same rank. Now the Pepuzeni are plainly heretical, for, by unlawfully and shamefully applying to Montanus and Priscilla the title of the Paraclete, they have

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<sup>3</sup> *References in bold are to those cases of reception where baptism was **not** mandated.*

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blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. They are, therefore, to be condemned for ascribing divinity to men; and for outraging the Holy Spirit by comparing Him to men. They are thus also liable to eternal damnation, inasmuch as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit admits of no forgiveness. What ground is there, then, for the acceptance of the baptism of men who baptise into the Father and the Son and Montanus or Priscilla? For those who have not been baptised into the names delivered to us have not been baptised at all. So, although this escaped the vigilance of the great Dionysius, we must by no means imitate his error. The absurdity of the position is obvious in a moment, and evident to all who are gifted with even a small share of reasoning capacity.

The Cathari are schismatics; but it seemed good to the ancient authorities, I mean Cyprian and our own Firmilianus, to reject all these, Cathari, Encratites, and Hydroparastatae, by one common condemnation, because the origin of separation arose through schism, and those who had apostatised from the Church had no longer on them the grace of the Holy Spirit, for it ceased to be imparted when the continuity was broken. The first separatists had received their ordination from the Fathers and possessed the spiritual gift by the laying on of their hands. But they who were broken off had become laymen, and, because they are no longer able to confer on others that grace of the Holy Spirit from which they themselves are fallen away, they had no authority either to baptise or to ordain. And therefore, those who were from time to time baptised by them, were ordered, as though baptised by laymen, to come to the church to be purified by the Church's true baptism. **Nevertheless, since it has seemed to some of those of Asia that, for the sake of management of the majority, their baptism should be accepted, let it be accepted.** We must, however, perceive the iniquitous action of the Encratites, who, in order to shut themselves out from being received back by the Church have endeavoured for the future to anticipate readmission by a peculiar baptism of their own, violating, in this manner even their own special practice.

My opinion, therefore, is that nothing being distinctly laid down concerning them, it is our duty to reject their baptism, and that in the case of anyone who has received baptism from them, we should, on his coming to the church, baptise him. If, however, there is any likelihood of this being detrimental to general discipline, we must fall back upon custom, and follow the fathers who have ordered what course we are to pursue. For I am under some apprehension lest, in our wish to discourage them from baptising, we may, through the severity of our decision, be a hindrance to those who are being saved. If they accept our baptism, do not allow this to distress us. We are by no means bound to return them the same favour, but only strictly to obey canons. **On every ground let it be enjoined that those who come to us from their baptism be anointed in the presence of the faithful, and only on these terms approach the mysteries.** I am aware that I have received into episcopal rank Izois and Saturninus from the Encratite following. **I am precluded, therefore, from separating from the Church those who have been united to their company, inasmuch as, through my acceptance of the bishops, I have promulgated a kind of canon of communion with them.**

### **Cyril of Jerusalem (AD 386)**

We may not receive Baptism twice or thrice; else it might be said: "though I have failed once, I shall set it right a second time, whereas, if thou fail once, the thing cannot be set right"; for there is one Lord, and one faith, and one baptism: for only the heretics are re-baptised, because the former was no baptism.

As they viewed the Holy Spirit as sharing the Divine Nature in an even remoter degree, as being only the noblest production of the Only-begotten Son, Eunomius was the first person heretically to discontinue the practice of threefold immersion in Holy Baptism. He also corrupted the form of that Sacrament, by setting aside the use of the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and baptising people "in the name of the Creator, and into the death of Christ." Therefore, the Council of Constantinople ordered that converts from Eunomianism should be baptised, **although those from other forms of Arianism were admitted into the Catholic Church by simple imposition of hands.**

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### **St. Leo the Great (461 AD): Letter 159, VIII. About baptism by heretics**

**For they who have received baptism from heretics, not having been previously baptised, are to be confirmed by imposition of hands with only the invocation of the Holy Spirit, because they have received the bare form of baptism without the power of sanctification.** And this regulation, as you know; we require to be kept in all the churches, that the font once entered may not be defiled by repetition, as the Lord says, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." And that washing may not be polluted by repetition, but, as we have said, only the sanctification of the Holy Spirit invoked, that what no one can receive from heretics may be obtained from catholic priests. This letter of ours, which we have sent in reply to the inquiries of the brotherhood you shall bring to the knowledge of all your brethren and fellow bishops of the province, that our authority, now that it is given, may avail for the general observance.

*Dated 21st March, in the consulship of Majorian Augustus (458). Letter 166, II.*

**Baptism by heretics must not be invalidated by second baptism. But if it is established that a man has been baptised by heretics, on him the mystery of regeneration must in no wise be repeated, but only that conferred which was wanting before, so that he may obtain the power of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the Bishop's hands.** This decision, beloved brother, we wish to be brought to the knowledge of you all generally, to the end that God's mercy may not be refused to those who desire to be saved through undue timidity.

*Dated the 24th of Oct., in the consulship of Ms Majorian Augustus (458). Letter 166, QUESTION 18.*

Concerning those who have come from Africa or Mauretania and know not in what sect they were baptised, what ought to be done in their case?

**REPLY.** These persons are not doubtful of their baptism but profess ignorance as to the faith of those who baptised them: and hence, since they have received the form of baptism in some way or other, they are not to be baptised but are to be united to the Catholics by imposition of hands, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit's power, which they could not receive from heretics.

### **St. Gregory the Dialogist (+604 AD)**

#### **Book I, Letter 43**

But with respect to trine immersion in baptism, no truer answer can be given than what you have yourself felt to be right; namely, that where there is one faith, **a diversity of usage does no harm to holy Church.** Now we, in immersing thrice, signify the sacraments of the three days' sepulchre; so that, when the infant is a third time lifted out of the water, the resurrection after a space of three days may be expressed. Or, if anyone should perhaps think that this is done out of veneration for the supreme Trinity, neither so is there any objection to immersing the person to be baptised in the water once, since there being one substance in three subsistence, it cannot be in any way reprehensible to immerse the infant in baptism either thrice or once, seeing that by three immersions the Trinity of persons, and in one the singleness of the Divinity may be denoted. But, inasmuch as up to this time it has been the custom of heretics to immerse infants in baptism thrice, I am of opinion that this ought not to be done among you; lest, while they number the immersions, they should divide the Divinity, and while they continue to do as they have been used to do, they should boast of having got the better of our custom.

#### **Book XI, Letter 67**

And indeed, we have learned from the ancient institution of the Fathers **that whosoever among heretics are baptised in the name of the Trinity, when they return to holy Church, may be recalled to the bosom of Mother Church either by unction of chrism, or by imposition of hands, or by profession of the faith only.** Hence the west reconciles Arians to the holy Catholic Church by imposition of hands, but the East by the unction of holy chrism. But Monophysites and others are received by a true confession only, because holy baptism, which they have received among heretics, then

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acquires in them the power of cleansing, when either the former receive the Holy Spirit by imposition of hands, or the latter are united to the bowels of the holy and universal Church by reason of their confession of the true faith. Those heretics, however, who are not baptised in the name of the Trinity, such as the Bonosiaci and the Cataphrygee, because the former do not believe in Christ the Lord, and the latter with a perverse understanding believe a certain bad man, Montanus, to be the Holy Spirit, like whom are many others these, when they come to holy Church, are baptised, because what they received while in their error, not being in the name of the Holy Trinity, was not baptism. Nor can this be called an iteration of baptism, which, as has been said, had not been given in the name of the Trinity. But the Nestorians, since they are baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity- though darkened by the error of their heresy in that, after the manner of Jewish unbelief, they believe not the Incarnation of the Only-begotten, when they come to the Holy Catholic Church, are to be taught, by firm holding and profession of the true faith, to believe in one and the same Son of God and man, our Lord God Jesus Christ, the same existing in Divinity before the ages, and the same made man in the end of the ages, because The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

### **St Isidore of Seville (636 AD) : Book 2 De Ecclesiasticis XXV**

**Heretics also, if nevertheless they were taught to have received baptism in attestation of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are not to be baptised again but are to be cleansed only by chrism and, therefore, it is of no concern whether a heretic or a faithful one baptises.** The sacrament is so sacred that it is not defiled by a murderer ministering it. Certainly, a heretic has the baptism of Christ but, because he is outside the unity of the faith, it produces nothing for him. But when he shall have come back in, immediately the baptism that he had outside toward destruction, begins now to work in him toward salvation. For the fact that he received it, I approve, that he received it outside the unity of faith, I disapprove.

### **St Cyprian of Carthage on Modalism:**

...how, when God the Father is not known, nay, is even blasphemed, can they who among the heretics are said to be baptised in the name of Christ, be judged to have obtained the remission of sins?"

### **Tertullian on Modalism:**

He commands them to baptise into the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, not into a unipersonal God. And indeed, it is not once only, but three times, that we are immersed into three persons, at each several mention of their names.

### **St John of Damascus (749 AD) : On the Orthodox Faith, S82, On Faith and Baptism**

We confess one baptism for the remission of sins and for eternal life, for baptism indicates the Lord's death. "We are therefore buried together with the Lord through baptism," as the divine Apostle says. Thus, just as the Lord's death was accomplished only once, so too we should be baptised only once and baptised according to the Lord's command in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, having been taught to confess the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Those, then, who after having been baptised in the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and after having been taught about the one nature of the Godhead in three hypostases, are baptised again crucify Christ again, as the divine apostle says: "For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened," and so forth, "since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt." Only those who have not been baptised in the Holy Trinity should be baptised again."

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### **St. Mark of Ephesus (1449 AD)**

We cut [the Latins] off as heretics. Why do we anoint them who come to us? - is not this clear - as heretics? The 7th canon of the Second Ecumenical Council speaks thus: "Those heretics who come over to Orthodoxy and to the society of those who are saved we receive according to the prescribed rite and custom: Arians, Macedonians, Novatianists, who call themselves 'pure and better,' Quatrodecimans or Tetradites as well as Apollinarians. We receive them on condition that they present a written document and that they anathematise every heresy, which is not in accord with the thinking of the holy, catholic and apostolic Church of God, and then they should be marked with the seal, that is, anointed with chrism on the forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth and ears. And as they are marked with the seal, we say seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit'..." **If it is necessary to catechise [the Latins] then it is clear that they must be chrismated."**

*(Quoted in Archimandrite Ambrosius, On the Question of the Order of Reception of Persons into the Orthodox Church, ch. 1).*