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# The Churchman

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## Editorial.

**T**HIS issue of "The Churchman" is devoted to the papers read at the recent Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen which was held in London. "Confirmation" was the subject chosen for consideration, with special reference to the Report—"Confirmation To-day."

The Report makes proposals in an attempt to solve the problem of the large number of infants who are baptised but fail to become regular communicant members of the Church; according to the figures given, out of every 100 children born, 67 are baptised, 26 are confirmed, but only 9 continue as Easter communicants.

Many are of the opinion that the proposals for dealing with this urgent problem are open to severe criticism, not only for certain obvious practical reasons but also, and this is our main concern, because of the theology upon which they are based. Realising the importance of a scholarly examination of the doctrinal statement in the Report, the Conference devoted the major portion of its time to this aspect of the subject.

Now that the Report has been commended to the Church for discussion, the papers given at the Conference will be of valuable help to Evangelicals when they have the opportunity of making their contribution. The whole subject demands very earnest consideration on the part of all who are concerned with the spiritual welfare of the Church.

Unfortunately, the time available at the Conference this year for discussion was so limited that it was quite impossible to issue the usual "Findings." The papers, therefore, are published as read, and do not necessarily express the opinion of all the members of the Conference. Their value, however, as important and scholarly contributions to a very vital subject is obvious.

# “The Holy Spirit and the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments”

BY THE RT. REV. LORD BISHOP OF SODOR AND MAN.

THE subject for this year's Conference was chosen soon after the publication of the pamphlet “Confirmation To-day”, which is the schedule attached to the Interim Reports of the Joint Committees on Confirmation appointed by the two Convocations. As this schedule has been commended to the consideration of the Church by the Synod of York, your Committee thought that some information and guidance might usefully be given to Evangelical Churchmen to help them in forming a judgment upon it.

And as I ventured to make some drastic criticism of the theological introduction, and to point out that the practical alternatives proposed in the Schedule could only be discussed satisfactorily in the light of the fundamental doctrines involved, I was asked to draw up the syllabus and to preside at the Conference. I am feeling the burden of this responsibility, and in particular for two reasons. First, because of the implied criticism of the work of the Joint Committees, and especially of my brother Bishops on those Committees, with whom I enjoy a great and growing fellowship. And secondly, because of the tremendous danger of handling unworthily so great a theme.

Although the Schedule had come into my hands only the day before, I felt compelled at the York Convocation last October to indicate briefly three important deficiencies in the theological introduction. Fuller study of the document has confirmed my first impression of the deep concern felt by the writers about the present situation and of the thorough investigation which they have made of various practical suggestions for reform: but it has also increased my surprise and disappointment that the signatories have apparently agreed unanimously, though perhaps in some cases unwittingly, to a doctrinal statement which implies acceptance of the full Tractarian interpretation of the Church, of Apostolic Succession, of Baptismal Regeneration and of the Eucharistic Sacrifice—an interpretation which cannot logically be reconciled with the plain meaning of the 39 Articles, and which cannot be proved by certain warrant of Holy Scripture.

The result is that, while they deplore the fact that “too much stress has been laid in the past on Baptism and Confirmation as things to be ‘done’”, they do nothing to correct, and alas! much to corroborate the wrong teaching which is so largely responsible for that popular attitude, namely, the *ex opere operato*, or automatic, theory of sacramental grace. In support of my contention, let me give a few figures. I know that statistics need careful sifting, but they have an approximate value, as the Schedule shows. When introducing the Interim Report in the Northern Convocation, the Bishop of Hull stated that Canon Quick's standard work on the Christian Sacraments made no reference to the Holy Spirit—an almost

incredible revelation ! But I wonder if the Bishop of Hull and his colleagues realise that in their doctrinal introduction while they repeat the words "Baptism" or "baptize" more than fifty times, they use "faith" and "believe" three times altogether, of which only two refer to personal faith : whereas in the New Testament "Baptism" and "baptize" are found about sixty times (excluding the thirty five references to John the Baptist), while "faith" and "believe" occur just on 500 times. Surely there is a proportion here that needs to be readjusted in the Final Report.

But I do not propose to pursue a detailed criticism of the Schedule. It will be more profitable to try to present a positive and constructive statement derived from the teaching of the New Testament, as an introduction to the different aspects of Confirmation which are to be discussed to-morrow.

So I begin with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit : for all our thinking about the Church, the Ministry and the Sacraments must start here. The Acts of the Apostles, which records the first beginnings and the early growth of the Christian Church, opens with the story of Pentecost, and that book has been aptly called "The Acts of the Holy Ghost". Similarly St. Paul, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, prefaces his description of the Christian Ministry as the gift of the ascended Christ by emphasising the unity of the Godhead—"one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." Now the theological statement in the Schedule rightly opens with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but it makes the mistake of not starting far enough back. There is indeed the one Spirit, Who indwells and inspires the one body : but our thought of His work must always be related to that of the one Lord and the one God and Father of all.

So first and foremost *the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God*, the Father, the Creator of all. From this there follow three important conclusions.

1. He is the Spirit of the living God, Who dwelleth not in temples made with hands. The Spirit of God cannot be cabined and confined within our little ecclesiastical edifices. He is sovereign and free, not tied to His own ordinances, much less to men's petty systems. He is as the strong, fresh wind of heaven. "The wind bloweth where it listeth . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit." "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

2. He is the Spirit of God the Creator, Who made and loves the world—and not only the Church. Is not the growing rift so sadly discernible to-day between the Church and the world due, at least in part, to the neglect of this fundamental truth of our creed, that God is the Maker and Ruler of the universe ? If it is the case that "no man can call Jesus Lord but in the Holy Ghost", then His Spirit still strives with man, and still convicts the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

3. God's image in man, though distorted by sin, is not obliterated. If it were, Christ would not have made the appeals, which He constantly did make, to men's conscience and reason and goodness of heart. It is God Who endowed man with these gifts, and made him a conscious moral being, capable of spontaneous response to God's love and of

fellowship with Him. God does not violate man's personality nor his will to choose. There is no regimentation with God, no mass-production. Therefore His Spirit forces no man's allegiance. His influence upon us is always personal,—quickening and strengthening our conscience, heart and will,—and never magical or mechanical.

Then in the second place, *the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ*. Which means that He is both the Spirit that was manifested in the incarnate life of our Lord and the Spirit Whom the ascended Christ bestowed on His Church. "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you"—in the power of the Spirit. The New Testament makes it clear that the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church entirely rests upon the finished work of Christ. And that was the work of man's redemption. The Son of God became Man, to make men sons of God. We can enter into this new spiritual relationship, because the Son first entered into natural relationship with us, in order to redeem us by His death and resurrection. And it was only when Jesus was thus glorified that the Spirit's work could begin (St. John vii. 39).

One of the profoundest illustrations of this truth is given by St. John, in the discourse to Nicodemus on the New Birth. There our Lord insists that it is a spiritual experience: three times He repeats the words "born of the Spirit", combining it in one instance with the words "of water", of which we shall see the special significance later. But Nicodemus is puzzled: he still asks, How can these things be? The answer to his question is given in verses 14-16. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." How can a man be born again? By faith in Christ and Him crucified. And the miracle of saving faith is the work of the Spirit. With this agrees the teaching of the Prologue in chapter i., verses 12 and 13. "As many as received Him (the Word) to them gave He the power, the authority, to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born . . . of God." And notice that in both passages the scope of Christ's redemption is universal: the door is flung wide open. "As many as received"—"Whosoever believeth" This is because Christ died for all, "for the sins of the whole world." As the summary of the creed in the Catechism puts it—"God the Son . . . redeemed me and all mankind." And it is this universal redemption that is attested by the Church in Baptism and offered in Christ's name as an unmerited and unearned gift to every little child.

The Holy Spirit is always to be worshipped with the Father and the Son. He reveals and applies the divine work both in creation and in redemption. He Who "spake by the prophets" is also the "giver of life" to the Church; in both cases He brings home the Word of God to the consciences and hearts of men. The Spirit of revelation and of truth is the same as the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry "Abba, Father".

With this necessary introduction, we come now to the special aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit, which is the subject of this paper, "The Ministry of the Word and Sacraments." The title

implies two things. First, that the Christian Ministry is essentially one of the Word and the Sacraments in that order, which is consistently the order of the Prayer Book and the Articles. And secondly, that this Ministry is intimately associated with and dependent on the Holy Spirit. I will take the second corollary first.

In the Christian creed belief in the Holy Ghost involves and includes belief in the Church, in the Sacraments and in the future life. These are not just added as supplementary articles of belief, classed together for convenience. I believe in the Church because I believe in the reality and activity of the Spirit of God. And because the nature of that activity is such as is plainly stated in the New Testament, I cannot accept the Tractarian view of the Church, of Apostolic Succession and of Baptismal Regeneration.

The Church in which I believe does not coincide with the total number of persons who have received Christian baptism. If it did I should have to unchurch all members of the Salvation Army and of the Society of Friends. The Church which I confess as one, holy Catholic and Apostolic is essentially the "blessed company of all faithful people," the fellowship of all who are united in living union with Christ by faith, His mystical body which is being created by the Spirit in all generations. But to say this is not to deny or neglect the visible Church. Our Lord founded a visible society, and His disciples, while not of the world, were to be in the world, to worship together, to witness together and to work together. One of the faults of the Schedule "Confirmation to-day" is that it confuses the visible Church with the mystical body of Christ. Its authors would do well to remember the words of Hooker. "For lack of diligent observing the difference, first between the Church of God mystical and visible, then between the visible sound and corrupted, sometimes more sometimes less, the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed." (*Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book 3, Chapter i. 9).

It is a distinction which has been widely observed in Christian theology. St. Augustine, in his treatise on Baptism, wrote that "many who seem to be outside are inside, and many who seem to be inside are outside." To take a recent instance, the Report on Doctrine in the Church of England contains this sentence on page 105, "The Church is for Christians, an object not only of sight, but of spiritual discernment or insight. It emerges in history, but it is essentially a Fellowship, constituted by a relation between God and Man, which in the last resort is discerned and apprehended by faith." And this recognition of the outward and visible on the one hand, and of the inward and spiritual on the other, both in their distinctiveness and in their mutual inter-dependence, is well expressed by J. H. Oldham in "The Church and its function in society" (page 115) where he writes, "The Church has an actual existence in history, and is real only in its actual historical embodiments. But we cannot attribute to these mixed bodies the characteristics of the true Church of Christ, or expect from them in their corporate capacity the action which can rightly be demanded from those who have committed themselves wholeheartedly to Christian discipleship. . . . Within the Church as an organised society the true Church has to be continually re-created, and to find new embodiment in the faith and obedience and devotion

of those who have responded to the voice of Christ."

I have dwelt at some length on the subject of the Church, because shallow or wrong thinking here inevitably leads to misconceptions regarding the nature of the Ministry and of the Sacraments. For if the formal rite of Baptism constitutes me a member of the mystical body of Christ regardless of my personal attitude to God or response to His Gospel of love, then I am justified in thinking that Order is more important than Faith, and that the due observance of the Sacraments takes precedence over the preaching of the Word. To put it briefly, the sacerdotal system stands or falls with the formal, external theory of the Church.

But when the New Testament shows me that the grace of God is not confined to regular visible channels, that "neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem" shall men worship the Father, but in spirit and in reality, that a man is not justified before God by works but by faith in Christ Jesus, and that the thing that matters is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision but a new spiritual creation, then I know that, while men may look on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart; and that it is not the strict religious man who relies on his regular fasting and prayer and almsgiving, but the humble soul who casts himself upon God's mercy, that finds acceptance with Him.

This New Testament emphasis on the inward and spiritual—which must nevertheless express itself in the outward and material—explains the primary importance of the ministry of the Word, and in the light of that gives its true meaning to the ministry of the Sacraments. And at this point we return to the other implication of our title, that the order Word and Sacrament, which is the regular order in our formularies, is the order of priority.

If it is the attitude of the heart that matters most in God's sight, then that which influences the heart of man towards the right attitude is supremely important. The Holy Spirit Himself is the chief Agent here.

"For every virtue we possess, and every victory won,  
And every thought of holiness are His alone."

But the question arises, How does the Holy Spirit influence the spirit of man? Directly or indirectly? The New Testament replies that it is in both ways. "The wind bloweth where it listeth" may equally well be translated, "The Spirit breathes where He will." And no man may measure or limit that influence. But, as our Lord proceeds to show in the same discourse, it is through the personal response in faith to the redeeming love of God revealed in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ that men receive the new life, which is eternal. Hence the vital necessity of proclaiming that redeeming love, of presenting the Gospel to every man's mind and conscience in a way that is so intelligible, so relevant to his condition and so inspired that he may receive it as the Word of God and live.

This is the method which Christ chose when He began His ministry by preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. This was the method that He gave to His disciples when He appointed twelve "that they might be with Him and that He might send them forth to preach." And it was the method that the apostles followed. Starting from the text which St. Peter used on the day of Pentecost, "Whosoever shall



call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," St. Paul asks, "How shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe on Him of Whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" And he sums up his argument with this conclusion, "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Romans x. 13, 14, 17).

The primary task, therefore, of the Christian Minister is to be a prophet or herald of the Gospel. And to fulfil that task he needs to be filled with the Spirit, like his Master. For it is a task that demands all his powers, and more. St. Paul leaves no room for doubt about this when he describes to the elders of Ephesus what it meant to fulfil the ministry which he had received from the Lord Jesus "to testify the gospel of the grace of God," how he had gone about among them preaching the Kingdom, and "teaching them publicly and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And he adds, "I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God."

If such is the Ministry of the Word, what of the Ministry of the Sacraments? It is clear that in the New Testament they have a vital place in the life of the Apostolic Church, complementary to that of the Word.

1. In the first place, they are essentially *sacraments of the Gospel* presenting the same message in dramatic form to all the senses, what St. Augustine calls *verba visibilia*, a message that is not only heard but seen. So Baptism proclaims that there is cleansing and new life in Christ, and that we may not enter the Kingdom of God without these. While the Holy Communion presents Christ as the Bread of Life, broken for us and giving His life that we may live through Him.

2. Secondly, they are *sacraments of the Church*, emphasising the corporate nature of Christianity, that we are not merely individual believers, but members one of another. Hence Baptism represents incorporation into the Christian society, and Holy Communion fosters our fellowship within it.

3. Thirdly, the sacraments are the necessary outward expression of inward faith and love. They represent the principle stated by St. Paul in the same chapter from which I have already quoted, that "with the heart man believeth unto justification, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans x. 10). Baptism in the Apostolic Church was the great occasion for public confession of faith, and this was undoubtedly one of the chief reasons for their insistence upon it as the proper sequel of faith. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." This explains, to my mind, why it was to Nicodemus that our Lord emphasised the necessity of being "born of water." Though Nicodemus probably interpreted the words as referring to John's baptism, the principle would be the same. It was not enough to be a secret disciple: he must come out into the open and make public confession.

But perhaps I have already trespassed on the ground to be covered to-morrow morning. This much, however, was necessary in order to indicate the essential conjunction of the Word and sacraments in the Christian Ministry. There are many instances of baptism recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. In every instance, except one, baptism

follows the preaching and believing of the Word. And the one exception is the case of Saul of Tarsus, who had himself seen the risen Lord and heard His word.

Consequently, it is nothing short of a travesty of Apostolic truth to predicate of Baptism alone what the New Testament states about Baptism as the sequel to faith in response to the Gospel message. If any separation in thought is to be made between believing and being baptised, then there are plenty of passages in the New Testament which attribute both spiritual regeneration and the gift of the Spirit to the hearing and receiving of the Gospel. St. Peter, St. Paul, and probably St. James, write of the Word as the instrument of the new birth. And when St. Paul puts his great challenge to the Galatian church, he bases it on their experience, "This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. iii. 2) that is, by believing the Gospel message.

But the repeated use which St. Paul made of the rich symbolism of Christian baptism, as representing the spiritual death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness, is quite sufficient to show that he made no such separation. And neither must we. It is a false antithesis—dishonouring two great words—when a clergyman claims to be "an Evangelical in the pulpit and a Catholic at the altar." For as Canon J. K. Mozley has said, "If the sacraments are not evangelical, they are nothing."

Christ has called us to one Ministry of the Word and Sacraments. And "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

# The Sacrament of Baptism and its Relation to Confirmation

BY THE REV. J. P. HICKINBOTHAM, M.A.

## A. INTRODUCTION.

THE Report of the Joint Committees puts forward two drastic suggestions about Confirmation which it proposes should be considered and experimented with by the Church. The second—the separation of Confirmation from admission to Holy Communion—we shall no doubt consider this afternoon. The first—the separation of Confirmation from the renewal of the Baptismal vows—will be very relevant to our discussion this morning; because our opinion of such a scheme must be finally determined by our view of the Sacrament of Baptism and its relation to Confirmation, which is the subject appointed for the present session. One cannot but admire the pastoral concern which permeates the Report, and I for one feel deeply the difficulties which this proposal is designed to meet. I feel uneasy about asking young boys and girls solemnly to promise to “believe and to do” all the things which their godparents promised for them in Baptism, at an age when they cannot have realized, still less faced, the intellectual difficulties of so believing and the moral difficulties of so doing. I feel equally uneasy at withholding from them Confirmation until a later age if it means they are to be denied the Holy Communion in the difficult and yet formative years of adolescence. The idea of early Confirmation and Communion, and a late renewal of the vows is therefore pastorally attractive; and it is with real regret that I, for one, have come to the conclusion that it is based on unsound theology. But bad theology is bound in the end to work out badly in practice, and I would ask you now to consider with me whether we as Evangelicals are not bound in the interests of truth to reject this particular suggestion, not in any negative spirit but with renewed determination to find some sounder solution of the pastoral problems to which the Report draws attention. Let us turn first to the New Testament, and consider first the symbolism of Baptism in the New Testament, secondly the relation of that symbolism to the spiritual experience symbolized, thirdly then, in the light of those, the meaning of Laying on of Hands. From that we will come on to the meaning of Baptism and Confirmation to-day.

## B. BAPTISM AND LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

### 1. *Symbolism of Baptism in the New Testament.*

The interpretation of Baptism in the New Testament contains four main elements. First there is the thought of spiritual cleansing, the forgiveness of sins, from the obvious analogy of washing. *e.g.* Acts xxii. 16, “Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins”; •Eph. v. 26, “that he might cleanse it (the Church) by washing of water with the word.” Secondly there is the thought of sharing spiritually in

Christ's Death and Resurrection, the immersion representing death to, and so departure out of, the old life where sin is powerful, the coming out of the water standing for rising into newness of life where we share Christ's Resurrection life in which sin has no power to hurt and we are spiritually living with Him in Heaven. *e.g.* Rom. vi. 4, "we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." There is thirdly the thought of being united to Christ and so to His Body the Church. *e.g.* 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, "As the body is one and hath many members . . . so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body." Fourthly there is the thought of receiving the Holy Spirit. *e.g.*, the same passage continues "and have been all made to drink into one Spirit", or Acts ii. 38, "Be baptised every one of you and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." We might perhaps add a fifth interpretation, that of rebirth, *e.g.*, John iii. 3-6 and Titus iii. 5, "the washing of regeneration"; but this is not essentially different from the thought of entering the Resurrection life of Christ. If these ideas are taken together it is clear that Baptism stands for the whole of what we Evangelicals usually call conversion: it includes both the negative thought of the blotting out of the past evil life and the two positive thoughts of a present new status as children of God, having the "resurrection" life of the Kingdom, and of a new power for the future, the strength of the Holy Ghost to live according to our new status. These things are distinguishable in thought only; they are in spiritual reality one: God does not forgive the past except by justifying—putting the sinner in a positive right relationship to Himself; nor does He justify without also giving the power to live as a justified child of God, endued with the Spirit of His Son. In only one instance (the Samaritans, Acts viii.) is there an interval between baptism and the gift of the Spirit and this is plainly regarded as exceptional. We shall deal with this exception more fully later.

## 2. *The Relation of Baptism to the Conversion Experience.*

The fact that Baptism symbolises the whole conversion experience suggests that the New Testament writers have in mind adult believers baptism when they write. This is borne out by the fact that they were concerned with a Church in its first evangelistic missionary stage: the primitive preaching would be normally to adults, and they would be the great majority among the converts. Then, as to-day when Christianity faces a hostile world, there is no question of Infant Baptism on a large scale: at the most it would only be applied to the children of convinced converts who themselves first submitted to it. There is, in fact, no direct evidence in the New Testament that any children were baptised, though it is clear that children of Christians were regarded as within the New Covenant and as Church members. *e.g.* 1 Cor. vii. 14, "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy"; and St. Paul's direct address to children in the letters to the "saints" at Ephesus and Colossae. Nor can we imagine our Lord excluding from His Covenant of grace children admitted by circumcision even to the Covenant of law. The Baptism of households may suggest that infants were baptised, but it is not stated that the

households included young children. In any case, whatever the practice in this regard, the theology of Baptism is always thought out in terms of Adult Baptism—the baptism of converted people. This is clinched by two facts. First, Baptism is often associated directly with repentance and faith, *e.g.*, Matt. xxviii. 19-20, Mk. xvi. 16, Acts passim, Heb. x. 22, “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” 1 Peter iii. 21, baptism “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,” etc. Secondly, the effects attributed to Baptism are in other passages—and very strikingly sometimes in the same passages attributed not to Baptism at all but to faith, so Gal. iii. 26-7, “Ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ.” Col. ii. 12, “buried with Him in baptism wherein also ye are risen with Him through faith in the operation of God”, and *cp.* Rom. vi. 1-11 with Rom. vi. 18-23. The conclusion from this is two-fold: first, that though children were regarded as in some sense within the Covenant and the Church, to which admission was normally by Baptism, it is impossible to be sure that they were in fact baptised; secondly, that whatever the practice in this respect, the New Testament theology of Baptism has always reference to adult believers who are capable of the full conversion experience.

With this settled, we must now face the problem suggested by what I have just said: if the same effects are attributed to Baptism as to faith what is the relationship between faith and Baptism? First, the New Testament emphasises again and again that salvation (*a*) is a free gift of God, and (*b*) consists in a personal and moral relationship to God. It follows from the former that it cannot be achieved by any human moral effort; from the latter that it cannot be achieved by any human ceremony or ritual. The only possible way of receiving such a salvation is to accept it by a personal act of trust involving the appropriation of God’s proffered forgiveness and friendship and the giving of oneself to Him in gratitude. This is what the New Testament calls faith, or believing, and it is a response that is called out by the proclamation of God’s offer in the preaching of the Gospel. The efficient cause of salvation is therefore always the grace of God, offered to men by the preaching of the Word and received by faith. This is vital and cannot be sufficiently stressed; but it would be foolish and indeed impertinent to labour the point in a gathering of Evangelicals.

But loyalty to the New Testament forbids us to go to the other extreme and interpret Baptism *purely* symbolically; to say that it is only a “badge or token” of our profession as Christians, and has no vital part to play in the reception of salvation. Nor would such a view be consonant with the Articles which assert that the Sacraments are “*effectual* signs” and that through them God “doth work invisibly in us as by an instrument”. Both St. Peter (*e.g.*, Acts ii.) and St. Paul (*e.g.*, Rom. vi.) speak of Baptism as really effecting that which it symbolises. The explanation is, I think, to be found in the fact that Scripture knows nothing of that sharp dichotomy between the spiritual and the material that (perhaps through the influence of Greek thought) is common to-day. It is assumed that if a spiritual fact is a real spiritual

fact it will have its concrete expression. Is it so of morals : St. Paul bases his ethical appeals on the spiritual fact of the believers' status : " you have " he says, " been baptised into Christ's Death and Resurrection, so reckon yourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God, and don't let sin reign in your mortal body ". It is so of Church life : the Church, the fellowship of Christ and His people is the Body of Christ : then " Is Christ divided ? " No : then factions in the visible Church, the expression of Christ's Body, are a monstrous perversion of nature. So the believer who by faith is constantly united to Christ needs to express this visibly in the Lord's Supper, which is not only a symbol but a real communion of Christ's Body and Blood, failure to realise which may lead to physical results of sickness and death. So too the spiritual experience of conversion needs to be made concrete in Baptism. If it remains something purely spiritual and individual it remains " in the air " and is never fully realised : it needs to be brought into the visible context of the Christian community, and there realised and crystallised, and so deepened and completed. This is, I believe, true to Christian experience of Sacraments : first there is the individual experience through faith : then the crystallising and deepening of it through its physical expression in the context of the community ; and both are necessary for a full experience. The unconverted man who comes to Holy Communion usually fails to find in it any real blessing : the converted man finds it not only symbolises his experience, but renews and enlarges it. Unconverted Confirmands usually lapse pretty soon afterwards and find in it little or no blessing ; but converted ones find it a very real spiritual experience, and indeed, very often look back to the day of their Confirmation as the fully decisive stage of their conversion. If this explanation be adopted we may then conclude that first there is the experience of conversion involving all its various elements, received by faith ; then there is the deepening and crystallising of this in Baptism.

### 3. *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament.*

There are only three texts which need concern us here : Acts 8 (the Samaritans) Acts xix. 6 (John's disciples at Ephesus) and Hebrews vi. 2. Others such as 1 Tim. iv. 14, and 2 Tim. i. 6, are of uncertain application but probably refer to Ordination rather than to anything corresponding to Confirmation and so cannot be used in this discussion. The immediately striking thing is the paucity of these references as compared to the references to Baptism, from which it is fair to conclude that any system which sets up Confirmation as of independent equal importance to Baptism is unscriptural. The second striking thing is the close connection of the Laying on of Hands with Baptism in all these three passages. In the Hebrews passage it forms the second of three pairs of subjects, each pair apparently consisting of two things closely and habitually linked ; Laying on of Hands must go as closely with Baptism as does faith with repentance and eternal judgment with the resurrection of the dead. In Acts 19 it is implied that the Laying on of Hands followed immediately on the Baptism ; and in Acts 8 though there is an interval of time the connection of thought is clear : Baptism did not produce its normal result, the gift of the Spirit, until to it was

added the Laying on of Hands. This further demonstrates the connection of Laying on of Hands with Baptism: the gift of the Spirit, as we have seen, is normally associated with the latter; in the two cases where the purpose of Laying on of Hands is mentioned it is also the gift of the Spirit; and it is the same gift of the Spirit as is normally received at Baptism, not a different or additional gift. There is no case in the New Testament where there is one gift at Baptism and another at the Laying on of Hands (except where the imposition of hands has a quite different purpose such as ordination). There is one gift and it follows either Baptism directly, or Baptism followed by the Laying on of Hands. What are we to deduce from this? Not that the Laying on of Hands is an exceptional thing added to Baptism when this failed to produce its proper result, though the rarity of references and the tone of Acts viii. might suggest this; because the Hebrews passage makes it clear that the Imposition of Hands is a common practice, indeed probably a universal one, since it is described as one of "the first principles of Christ" and a "foundation"; and the casual way of mentioning it in Acts xix also implies that it is customary. Rather it would seem to be the normal way of completing the Baptismal rite: this is strongly attested by the liturgical practice of the early Church; it will explain its close connection with Baptism in all the references: it will also explain the scarcity of references because normally it is included under the heading of Baptism; it will explain how Hebrews can call a rite not instituted by our Lord as a "foundation" because it comes under the heading of Baptism which has Dominical sanction; and it will explain the symbolism. Laying on of Hands is an ancient and natural way of blessing, *cp. e.g.*, Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh. The obvious (and the original) interpretation of the Baptismal symbolism is that of cleansing; the negative thought of the blotting out of the past. It requires the additional sign of blessing to indicate the positive thought that such forgiveness also carries with it the pledge of power for the new life of the future, the blessing and strengthening of the Spirit. True, this can be deduced from the alternative explanation of the Baptismal symbolism in terms of death, burial, and resurrection; but this is a later and secondary interpretation (though equally true and valuable) probably added by St. Paul. Finally, it will explain why the gift of the Spirit is so often directly associated with Baptism; there is nothing in the symbolism of Baptism to suggest this directly, though it does suggest rising to a new life; but it is an obvious deduction from this ancient sign, of blessing, which may from the first have been used to round off the Baptismal service. Acts 8 is clearly an exceptional case. The exceptional thing, however, is not the addition of the Laying on of Hands to the Baptism, but the separation of the two in point of time. The reason for this may well be that Philip is unwilling to refuse Baptism to genuine believers, but feels the necessity of associating the apostles with the admission of Gentiles for the first time to the Church. He therefore administers Baptism but defers its completion until Peter and John can arrive. We may conclude, then, that the Laying on of Hands in the New Testament is part of the Baptismal rite emphasising in particular the gift of the Spirit. It has no standing apart from its connection with Baptism, and conveys no other gift than the Baptismal gift of the

conversion experience. But taken in this connection and only if taken in this connection, it has the same sacramental effect as the Baptism of which it is part : through faith a man receives not only forgiveness of sins, but the power of the Holy Spirit ; and this is crystallised and made full and complete in the sacramental act of Baptism including the Laying on of Hands.

#### C. BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION TO-DAY.

In judging present day practice I take it that we shall be agreed that we are bound by New Testament principles ; but that we are not necessarily bound by the details of New Testament practice. Indeed, a slavish observance of New Testament practice may often obscure New Testament principles because we have to reckon with changed circumstances, and the application of a principle cannot but vary according to the circumstances to what it is applied. Our task is to apply New Testament principles to the circumstances of the present day. In certain cases, there has been no essential change of circumstances, and therefore there is no justification for a change of practice ; the principle still applies in the same way. This is so in the case of Adult Baptism. There it still represents the whole conversion experience of a believer, symbolising and deepening it. And the Laying on of Hands only has meaning as completing the Baptism, emphasising the positive side of the Baptismal gift. This suggests two possible modifications of present day Anglican practice. Though it ill beseems one who is not faced with the enormous problems of the mission field to question anything done overseas, it does seem difficult to justify the practice, common I believe in some parts of the mission field, of making a long gap between the Baptism and Confirmation of adult converts. If they are not fit for Confirmation, ought not, on New Testament principles, Baptism to be deferred until they are ? At home, might we not press for a new form of service in which, according to primitive custom, Baptism and Confirmation are united in one service ? It is a real weakness in the present system that the Baptism of an adult is normally a quiet—I almost might say hole-in-the-corner—business, which is often looked upon merely as a formality necessary to qualify for the great act of Confirmation. That reverses the New Testament emphasis ; and no attempt to attribute equal and independent importance to both services would be either pastorally possible or theologically sound. We need one service as in New Testament times to cover an experience essentially one. And I am sure we ought to think very seriously before baptising an adult who is not willing also to be confirmed. It is not possible to make a rule against such a practice, because Scripture does not lay down directly that Laying on of Hands must accompany Baptism ; and because the fault is largely that of the Church which has not sufficiently emphasised the unity of the two rites ; but I am sure we ought not to be satisfied with such cases.

But in the great majority of cases we are faced with a very real change of circumstances : we now have the Baptism of infants, followed by the Laying on of Hands in later years. Unless we are prepared to accept that fact wholeheartedly, and I would add to accept the fact that the Prayer Book services attribute a definitely sacramental character to both rites, we cannot be true members of the Church of England. On what New Testament principles then can these practices be justified ?



First, it is clear that the Baptism of infants is not the same thing as the Baptism of adults. Adult converts have a real conversion experience based on conscious faith. Babies cannot have it. Therefore we cannot apply to Infant Baptism the whole New Testament theology of Baptism which is based on the assumption that this conscious faith exists. The only New Testament justification for Infant Baptism, and it is a sound one, is that (a) the New Testament regards children as admissible to the Covenant and the Church; (b) the only way of entrance to the Church specified in the New Testament is Baptism. Infant Baptism is, therefore, a fair deduction to make, whether or not that deduction was drawn in Apostolic times, just as the Doctrine of the Trinity is a fair deduction to draw from the New Testament statements about the Father, our Lord, and the Spirit, though that deduction was certainly not drawn till several centuries later. But we cannot draw this deduction if by it we are going totally to alter the character of Baptism; we cannot take an Apostolic, even a Dominical institution, and give it an entirely new meaning. That is a clear desertion of New Testament principle. What is permissible is to alter the time and mode of its use so as to include in it a witness to the additional New Testament principle of the admission of children to the Covenant in such a way that the meaning of Baptism and Laying on of Hands is itself preserved in all essentials unchanged. In other words, Infant Baptism *by itself* cannot be justified on New Testament grounds because it cannot have the full meaning of New Testament Baptism and Laying on of Hands; our Church contends that Infant Baptism followed by Laying on of Hands at years of discretion enables these two ceremonies, taken together as part of a single whole even though their administration may be separated by some years, to be justified because *together* they can have the same meaning as Adult Baptism and Laying on of Hands had in the New Testament. Anything which tends to separate the two and make them independent rites tends to destroy the authority of both; they become two human ordinances, impertinently assuming the outward forms but not the inward meaning of the single New Testament rite, and so they lose their Dominical and Apostolic authority and the guarantee of their sacramental efficacy.

How then can the Church justify its contention that though Infant Baptism does not mean precisely the same as New Testament Baptism and Laying on of Hands, yet Infant Baptism plus Laying on of Hands later does bear that meaning? I think the question may be answered in the following way. The essence of the New Covenant is a personal relationship with God which is habitually described in the New Testament in terms of Father and children; and the Church which is the community of covenant members, is the household or family of God. When speaking of adults, St. Paul makes it clear that they are expected to be grown up children of God: enjoying the liberty which is impossible for small children. They are in fact to enjoy with God a relationship like that of good parents and their grown up or growing up children: *i.e.*, love and care by the parents meeting with a response of trust and love by the children. But the New Testament also regards young children as admissible to the Covenant: for them this mutual relationship is impossible: they are as incapable of conscious response to God as they are of conscious response to their own

parents. This can only be explained if we assume that God is as satisfied to have babies in his spiritual family as parents are to have them in their physical families, and that He has with them a relationship similar to that of human parents with their babies, *i.e.*, a relationship in which all the conscious activity comes from Him ; He loves them and cares for them and is with them ; and is quite satisfied that they make no conscious response. That this is so is indicated both by the Epistles, and by Our Lord's emphatic rebuke to those who attempted to keep the children from Him, and His assertion that " of such is the Kingdom of God ". Its basis is to be found in the New Testament doctrine of sin and the Atonement. " Sin " says St. Paul, " is not imputed where there is no law " *i.e.*, God does not hold people morally responsible who in fact are not morally responsible. Babies certainly are not and are, therefore, not subject to condemnation. But nevertheless they have an inherited sinful nature, original sin, which apart from Christ, will certainly lead them later into actual sin. Does this then separate them from the love and care of the Heavenly Father? No : because the Cross of Christ avails for all sin, and His forgiveness is a free gift. An adult receives it by faith, which is not a meritorious work, but as Dr. Dodd puts it " an act which is the negation of all activity, a moment of passivity out of which the strength for action comes, because in it God acts ; the recognition that I do nothing and God does all. Because an adult thinks consciously this must be conscious. A baby does not think consciously, but neither does a baby set any obstacle of his own will against God and His gift ; and it is only self-will that can prevent the reception of God's gift. Infant Baptism is then the assurance that because of the sufficiency of the Cross of Christ the child is accepted with God in a family relationship perfect of its kind ; one of love and care by the Father, pure unconscious receptivity by the child. This is a true sacrament ; the spiritual experience is true for all children ; by baptism it is crystallised and made concrete by the admission of the child to the visible Church, the visible community which represents and expresses God's spiritual family of which the child is already a member. This act in turn deepens the experience because it brings the child into contact with the Christian fellowship, so that by the prayer of the faithful, and the use as childhood develops of corporate worship and teaching, its membership of God's spiritual family may become the more real and effective. That is why Christian parents and godparents are so important : without them membership of the visible family of God may be only formal, and much of the spiritual grace available from it rendered ineffective. But absence of such sponsors is no reason against baptising an infant : he is a member of God's spiritual family and it is better that that should be expressed formally than not at all.

But this relationship is bound to change. The child grows and becomes capable of moral response. In the Divine as in the human family the relationship will either become different and better in kind or different and worse. If the response is not made the family unity will be for the first time broken : the child who goes off into the far country ceases to be in a real sense a member of the family, though the father will still love it. But if the response is made there will be a two way relationship of love and care by the parent, love and trust

by the child, something obviously deeper and more satisfying than the parent-infant relationship, though that was perfect of its kind. This conscious mutual relationship grows out of the old one way relationship ; it may be realised suddenly or slowly, but one day it will reach self consciousness. This stage is what we call conversion, and the child has now developed from being an infant member of the family of God into being a grown up child of God. At this stage he has the full experience which is represented in the New Testament by Baptism and Laying on of Hands. One part of that he has already received : the actual Baptism ; two parts he has not received because they symbolise especially the conscious part of the relationship : namely the confession of personal repentance and faith and the Laying on of Hands in token of blessing and strengthening for the new life to which that confession has committed him. These therefore he receives, and his Baptism is thus completed and corresponds in all points to the Baptism and Laying on of Hands in the New Testament. The form of the confession as a direct renewal of the Baptismal vows, emphasises this fact ; no new gift supplementary to the New Testament Baptismal gift is being received ; rather his Infant Baptism, administered when he could not make the moral response necessary for the full New Testament Baptismal gift, now reaches its fruition and is transformed for him from Infant Baptism into the full Baptism with Laying on of Hands signifying the full conversion experience of the New Testament. This act of Confirmation, being the completion of Baptism, is itself fully Sacramental ; that is, provided there is the spiritual experience already there through the response of conscious faith, it is crystallised and so deepened by the outward act which brings the child into the full assurance that he has received or is receiving and will receive all that the New Testament means by conversion and its consequences, symbolised by the Baptism and Imposition of Hands on those who have faith.

The conclusions I would draw from all this are three. First, that no specific age can be laid down for Confirmation ; the essential condition is a conscious right relationship to God in Christ, whether arrived at gradually or suddenly, and this will vary immensely with the individual. Secondly, that the Sacramental nature of Confirmation depends upon its being the completion of Baptism ; and likewise the justification of Infant Baptism depends upon it being regarded as valid and effective in itself but incomplete until rounded off by Confirmation. Thirdly, that therefore, though the renewal of the Baptismal vows may be as Dr. Chase suggests " an accident of the rite " and a purely Anglican feature, yet the proper place for such a renewal is at Confirmation ; and that some such renewal is most valuable as bearing witness to the essential character alike of Infant Baptism and of Confirmation ; we ought to be thankful that the Church of England has recovered here something which makes plain as nothing else could, the essential relationship between Infant Baptism and Confirmation, a relationship which is essential because, apart from it, neither can be justified, whereas with it they both fall fully into line with New Testament principles ; and therefore we ought to guard for the World Church as well as for ourselves a treasure which has been missed alike by the Free Churches and the Eastern Church, who leave infant baptism incomplete because no integral part of the rite takes place when

conscious faith is reached, by the Roman Catholic Church which virtually treats Infant Baptism and Confirmation as separate Sacraments and therefore has no New Testament warrant for either of them, and by the bodies which practise only Adult Baptism, who have failed to secure expression for the New Testament teaching on the position of children as members of the family of God, a membership which the New Testament declares to be symbolised and made real in the visible sphere by admission to the Church by Baptism.

# The History of Confirmation in the Christian Church

BY THE REV. F. J. TAYLOR, M.A.

CONFIRMATION is the distinctively Western name for the rite of laying on of hands or of unction, but it does not occur until the middle of the fifth century when it is used in the verbal form by Leo the Great in a letter to Nicetas of Aquileia with a primary reference to the imposition of hands. Faustus of Riez whose work can be dated in the second half of the fifth century, is the first writer to use the noun 'confirmatio'.<sup>2</sup> Probably the origin of this usage is to be found in the Latin version of 2 Corinthians i. 21, 'Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ and hath anointed us is God' which reads '*qui autem confirmat nos vobiscum in Christum*'. The corresponding Greek word is βεβαίωσις which first occurs with this technical meaning in the Apostolic Constitutions, a Syrian work of the latter part of the fourth century. Before 'confirmatio' came into general use as a descriptive term for this rite, the Latins employed the terms, 'signaculum,' 'chrisma,' 'perfectio,' while in the East the usual terms were 'seal' or 'perfection'. Confirmation is thus a term which in Christian history covers a diversity of practice, for neither in the manner of administration nor in the conceptions associated with it, does it stand for a fixed and uniform rite. There is no consistent tradition either in the form or in the matter of the rite while the minister may sometimes be a presbyter and on other occasions a bishop. This variety of custom with differing theological understandings of the meaning of the rite can be traced back to the New Testament. Indeed in the paucity of references which makes it impossible to enunciate certain definite conclusions, the New Testament is a mirror of subsequent church history.

## I.

The laying on of hands was a familiar religious action to the Jew of the first century. In the Old Testament it signified the bestowal of a spiritual gift, a blessing, healing or appointment to a particular function. Our Lord is recorded to have laid his hands in blessing on the children brought to Him.<sup>3</sup> The Christian community took over this rite and gave it deeper and richer significance but without express command of the Lord. Baptism was the sacrament of admission into the Christian fellowship and the laying on of hands was associated with special gifts of the Holy Spirit. Twice in the history of the Apostolic Church it is recorded that the gift of the Holy Spirit was bestowed (through the imposition of hands) upon a number of persons already baptised.<sup>4</sup> It is evident that on these occasions the laying on of hands was a distinct rite administered separately from the washing of baptism, but it cannot be affirmed that the laying on of hands was a regular sequel to baptism in the Apostolic age. On each of the recorded occasions

the gift of the Spirit resulted in the manifestation of ecstatic qualities and the stories may have been told primarily in the interest of these prophetic gifts. Again it is impossible to know whether these incidents are to be regarded as typical illustrations of early church order or as evidences for the abiding presence in the community of the Spirit bestowed at Pentecost and now dividing to every man, severally, as He will, the gifts of His power. It must be remembered that other passages such as the story of Cornelius tell of the same gift of the Spirit bestowed without either baptism or the imposition of hands, which suggests that Luke's real interest lay in the gift of the Spirit and the evident tokens of His presence and not in the media of His coming. The evidence does not allow of any certain conclusion about the minister of such a rite, whether or not he must be of apostolic rank, nor is there any indication that in post-apostolic generations its administration was to be confined to any particular grade of ministers. The reference in the Epistle to the Hebrews to the laying on of hands as one of the six foundation principles of the doctrine of Christ would suggest a frequent use of the ordinance before the end of the first century. The close association of 'baptisms' and 'laying on of hands' in this passage seems to indicate confirmation, though the laying on of hands was also used for other purposes. It is likely that in the undeveloped form of ministry prevalent at that time, all accredited ministers would be capable of administering such a rite.

The two centuries following the Apostolic age were marked by great but almost silent development in the rites of the Christian Church. From the rudimentary elements visible in the apostolic period, the rites were gradually developed into the forms which were later embodied in the liturgical books. Justin Martyr, in his first Apology, gives an account of baptism as it was administered in the Roman Church soon after the middle of the second century.<sup>6</sup> A period of preparation and instruction preceded baptism which was administered after a profession of faith and a promise to live according to the teaching that had been received. After the baptism all returned to the place of religious assembly, "to make common prayers for ourselves and for the enlightened person and for all others everywhere" and to share in the Eucharist. The rite is called 'regeneration' and the 'washing' or 'enlightenment' and there is no allusion to confirmation. It is difficult to assess the value of the evidence afforded by the Didache, 'that spoilt child of criticism' but if, as seems likely, it dates from the later part of the second century, the absence of any reference to confirmation in its detailed instructions for baptism is significant.

The most important feature in the life of the second century church was the struggle with Gnosticism and in the absence of orthodox evidence, information coming from Gnostic sources bears witness to interesting developments in the rite of initiation into the Christian fellowship. The Acts of Thomas which is probably a third century work of Syrian origin describes the rite of baptism preceded by unction<sup>8</sup>: 'Holy oil, given us for sanctification . . . Let thy power come and rest on thy servant Mygdonia; and heal her through this unction . . . When she had been baptized and had dressed herself, he (the apostle) broke bread and took a cup and made her communicate in the body of Christ and the cup of the Son of God and said, 'Thou hast received

the seal, and won for thyself eternal life.' ” The practice of unction before baptism appears to have been in general use among Syriac-speaking Christians, nor was it confined to them since they were pioneers in liturgical work and their influence spread to other areas. The difficulty posed by the early Gnostic and Syrian evidence is to know whether these rites reflect general Christian practice at the time or whether the origins of many of the features of later confirmation are to be found here.

## II.

The evidence for orthodox practice comes to light in the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian in the third century. The word catechumen, though of Greek origin, first appears in their writings and shows that careful preparation and discipline preceded the reception of baptism. After prayers, fastings and vigils the candidates were assembled before the bishop at some time in the solemn season between Easter and Pentecost and renounced “ the devil, his pomp and his angels ”. Baptism was then performed with three immersions, at each of which a question on belief in the Trinity was put to the candidate. This was followed by unction, signing and imposition of the hand. The newly baptised and confirmed then participated in communion, and partook of a draught of milk and honey as a symbol of the blessings of the Promised Land into which they had entered. Tertullian furnishes a commentary on the significance of these ceremonies in an eloquent passage in the treatise ‘*De Resurrectione Carnis*’: “ The flesh is washed, that the soul may be rid of its stain ; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated ; the flesh is signed with the cross, that the soul also may be protected ; the flesh is overshadowed by the imposition of the hand, that the soul also may be illuminated by the Spirit ; the flesh is fed with the Body and Blood of Christ, that the soul also may be made fat from God.”<sup>9</sup> Several comments may be added on this evidence. First, what now appear amongst us as three separate though related acts, baptism, confirmation and first communion, in the third century formed one liturgical act of admission into the Christian church and participation in its privileges. Secondly, these ceremonies, like all ancient baptismal rites, were designed for the use of adults. The practice of infant baptism was spreading rapidly in the third century, although Tertullian did not like it and urged its postponement : “ If any understand the weighty import of baptism, they will fear its reception more than its delay.”<sup>10</sup> Thirdly, the gift of the Spirit is explicitly attributed to the imposition of the hand : “ Not that in the waters we obtain the Holy Spirit ; but in the water under the influence of the angel, we are cleansed and thus prepared for the Holy Spirit ”.<sup>11</sup> Unction is the token of consecration “ from the old discipline wherein on entering the priesthood men were wont to be anointed with oil from a horn ”.<sup>12</sup> “ The hand is laid on us invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through the words of benediction . . . over our cleansed and blessed bodies, willingly descends from the Father that Holiest Spirit : over the waters of baptism, recognising as it were His primeval seat, He reposes ”.<sup>13</sup> Fourthly, the minister of such rites is the bishop. Admission into the Christian fellowship is so solemn an act and so great a matter of importance for the Christian community itself, that it is

desirable that one of the chief officers of the community should be the agent of divine grace on the occasion.

### III.

Three factors in the developing life of the church were destined to exercise profound and far-reaching influences both on the theology and on the liturgical practice outlined above. In the first place, as Christianity moved out of the missionary period of its early life into the stage when many could look back on several generations of Christian forbears, infant baptism became the normal practice justified by the analogy of the rite of circumcision in the Jewish church. Secondly, the Christian community itself had multiplied so rapidly in numbers and influence that it was hardly possible to restrict baptism to the former period of Easter to Pentecost. If infants were to be baptised within eight days of birth then the rite would have to be administered at all seasons of the year. Thirdly, the geographical expansion of the Church went hand in hand with a growing tendency for bishops, as among the few well-educated and experienced men available, to become preoccupied with civil affairs, so that it was a physical impossibility for them to be present at every baptism-confirmation. There were various ways in which this changing situation could have been confronted. One method which was rejected particularly in the West, would have been a great increase in the episcopate. A second method which was in fact followed in the East was the delegation to the presbyter of the right to administer baptism-confirmation as one rite of admission to full membership in the Church of Christ. The question whether the presbyter could confirm does not appear to have been raised in the East but merely assumed, since the administration of the rite in its completeness came to be in the hands of the presbyters. Thus the unity of the rite of initiation consisting of baptism, confirmation and first communion was preserved. But, apart from certain compressions, a rite originally designed for adult catechumens was used without significant change for infants. The practice of the Orthodox church has remained unchanged to this day. A modern Eastern theologian, commenting on the Sacrament of Chrism, declares it to be "absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of the purpose of baptism" as is shown by the practice of the Apostolic and post-Apostolic church.<sup>14</sup> The matter of the rite is not the laying on of hands but anointing with chrism, the minister is the priest and normally the recipients are infants a few days of age. The preparatory parts of the rite represented by the catechumenate have largely disappeared as a logical result of this development. Eastern theologians contend that there are no adequate grounds for depriving infants of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of the rights of full membership in the Church, implied in the practice of the Western church which separates the two Sacraments. The special relationship of the episcopate to the rite of initiation, characteristic of the early centuries, has not been entirely obscured since the chrism can only be consecrated by the bishop, and the priest anoints with this consecrated oil. In this way the bishop is still designated the minister of the sacrament which is distributed through priests for the convenience of the faithful, "thus not depriving, even temporarily, the faithful from the grace conferred through this sacrament".<sup>15</sup>



The third way of dealing with a changing situation was the method actually followed in the West. Infant baptism rapidly became universal after the fourth century, and current sacramental theology, based on an *ex opere operato* doctrine provided the necessary justification. The large dioceses in the West made it impossible for a bishop to attend the baptism of more than a small portion of his flock and priests, through the pressure of circumstances, became the normal ministers of this sacrament. (Indeed in earlier times, priests and deacons had assisted the bishop in the baptism but not in the anointing.) Neither the Pope nor the bishops were willing to surrender entirely the prerogatives of the episcopate in the initiatory rites of the Church. Hence the separation of the rite into the two distinct rites of baptism and confirmation followed as a practical necessity. But this separation was neither a simple nor a speedy process and priests in some parts of the Western church maintained for centuries their claim to confirm as well as to baptize.<sup>16</sup> Jerome writing in 379, assigned confirmation to the bishop as a matter of orderliness and dignity but not as a fundamental necessity, since he was well aware that a strict limitation of the power to confirm, to the bishops might prove very inconvenient for people living in remote places. The practice of episcopal confirmation was rather "for the honouring of the bishop's office than from law of necessity".<sup>17</sup> It was inevitable that he should regard the practice in this light as he believed confirmation to be that part of baptism which conferred the gift of the Holy Spirit and he could not contemplate large numbers of the faithful deprived of this gift for many years through lack of adequate episcopal visitation. In a letter written early in the fifth century to Decentius of Gubbio,<sup>18</sup> Pope Innocent I revealed the determination of the Roman bishops to restrict the power of confirming to the episcopate. Presbyters might anoint the head with chrisam previously blessed by the bishop but the signing of the cross on the forehead (the vertical unction) was to be reserved to bishops when they gave the Holy Spirit. Presbyters did not accept this ruling without a struggle for a Council of Orange later in the same century forbade two chrismations, indicating that they had continued to exercise what they believed to be their right. It is noteworthy that the imposition of hands is not mentioned by Innocent in his letter. As in the East, so in the West anointing had come to take the place of the laying on of hands as the matter of the rite, though it is probable that the signing of the forehead of the candidate with the Cross was regarded as including the imposition of the hand. The pontifical of Egbert, Archbishop of York (tenth century) contains interesting evidence for the administration of Confirmation in that period.<sup>19</sup> After prayer for the sevenfold gift of the Spirit, the bishop put the chrisam on the forehead of the candidate in the form of a cross, saying, 'Receive the sign of the Holy Cross, by the chrisam of salvation, in Jesus Christ, unto eternal life'. Other prayers followed but there was no laying on of hands as a distinct action. In some forms of the rite the bishop was directed to extend his hands towards or over the candidates but in others this was omitted entirely.

#### IV.

The practice of the Western church was thus, in the course of time,

sharply divided from the custom of the East and it can be said that with rare exceptions, by the time of Charlemagne in the West, baptism and confirmation were administered as two distinct rites often separated by a considerable period of time. Many practical problems followed upon this separation for bishops were increasingly preoccupied with affairs of state and most of them presided over huge dioceses with inadequate episcopal help. For this reason it became quite common for communion to be given to those who were baptized but had not been confirmed through no fault of their own. Clearly they could not be deprived indefinitely of the benefits of the eucharist, that is of a sacrament counted necessary to salvation, through the pastoral inefficiency of the hierarchy. It is still a common practice in the Roman church to give first Communion to children before they are confirmed; in some cases immediately before Confirmation, in others with a considerable interval between the two rites, in order to allow of further instruction.

Medieval English Synods favoured early Confirmations. A synod held at Exeter in 1287 ordered that children were to be confirmed before they were three years old and parents who neglected this rule were to fast every Friday on bread and water until their children were confirmed. Apparently children were to be brought to the bishop at the first opportunity given by his presence in the neighbourhood. This is the probable explanation of the rule that children were to be confirmed within three years since the bishop was expected to make a visitation of his diocese once in every three years. On the continent about the same time, a Synod of Cologne (1280) directed priests to admonish parents to bring any children yet unconfirmed to the bishop at the age of seven years and upwards. The manner of administration was often perfunctory and even scandalous, crowds surrounding the bishop who would sometimes confirm from horseback. The great emphasis on the Eucharist and the obstacles in the way of the regular administration of confirmation led to the obvious result of widespread neglect of the rite. Despite the fact that it had been officially ranked as one of the seven sacraments in the Sentences of Peter Lombard in the middle of the twelfth century, ecclesiastical authority was obliged in practice to admit that it was not a necessary preliminary to communion. Consequently the laity did not value it very highly and in 1281 Archbishop Peckham in his Lambeth Constitutions sought to remedy the abuse. "Many neglect the Sacrament of Confirmation for want of watchful advisers; so that there are many, innumerable many, who want the grace of Confirmation, though grown old in evil days. To cure this damnable neglect, we ordain that none be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood that is not confirmed, except at the point of death, unless he have a reasonable impediment".<sup>20</sup> This regulation passed into the Sarum Manual and thence into our Prayer Book as the rubric printed at the end of the Confirmation service; 'and there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed'.

A study of medieval theologians illustrates a corresponding theological uncertainty about the institution, the matter, the form and the minister of Confirmation. Four views have been current in the West on the essential matter of this rite, formally declared a Sacrament,

Ante-Nicene testimony generally holds that the essential matter consists in the imposition of hands alone. Eastern theologians regard Chrism as the matter of confirmation, although they are prepared to concede the imposition of hands as sufficient Confirmation. This view has found slight support in the West. Some regard the essential matter as consisting in either the imposition of hands or the chrism and Aquinas describes chrism as *conueniens materia huius sacramenti* viewed in the light of the established usage of the church.<sup>21</sup> The most generally accepted view is that the matter is imposition of hands and chrism conjointly, that is, the action which takes place in the anointing, accompanying the words 'et confirmo te chrismate salutis'. There is a similar uncertainty about the form, partly on account of the lack of exact knowledge of early precedent. Aquinas regards the formula 'consigno te sequo crucis' as the *conueniens forma* of Confirmation, but in the Ordo Romanus of the eighth century the sufficient formula is given as 'confirmo te in nomine.' Normally the Bishop alone is the minister of the rite but priests have been extraordinary ministers of the sacrament by special delegation from the Pope in cases of missionary exigency. The precedent created by Gregory the Great could not be entirely ignored, for in 594 he had written to Januarius of Cagliari in the following terms: 'It has reached us that some have been offended because we forbade presbyters to touch the *baptizandi* with the chrism. For our part, indeed, we did according to the long standing usage of our church; but if it be true that some are distressed about the matter, we allow that where bishops cannot be had, presbyters also are to touch the *baptizandi* on their foreheads with the chrism.'<sup>22</sup> Where bishops were not available, the Sardinian presbyters were clearly authorised to confirm. The general disallowance of priestly confirmation in the West is clearly a matter of discipline which can be dispensed with by authority. It is worth noting that in the two Italian dioceses administered by the abbots of Monte Cassino and La Cava, these prelates, though only presbyters, administer Confirmation with chrism previously consecrated by a bishop.

As a consequence of these theological difficulties, the Council of Trent did not formulate many canons on the subject and the aim of the deliberations was defensive rather than definitive. It was content to affirm Confirmation to be a Sacrament, to decide that the ordinary minister is a bishop and to condemn those who maintain that to ascribe virtue to the sacred chrism is to offer outrage to the Holy Ghost. Elsewhere, the Council defined 'in Confirmation, a character is imprinted in the soul, a certain spiritual and indelible sign, on account of which the sacrament cannot be repeated'.<sup>23</sup> It was this theological uncertainty together with the elaborate ceremonies of the Sarum rite already declared by Wycliffe to be "a piece of pompous mummery" which confronted the Reformers in their task of theological and liturgical reconstruction.

## V.

On one point all the Reformers were agreed, in treating Confirmation as an ecclesiastical ordinance and not a sacrament. They could find no warrant in Scripture for supposing that it possessed the same importance as Baptism or the Lord's Supper. There was no record of its institution by the Lord or of its regular practice by the Apostles

and there was no Word of Promise attached to make it a sacrament of the Gospel. Consequently in the disturbed conditions of ecclesiastical order in the sixteenth century it did not seem to be a matter of concern if the primary responsibility for its administration was placed on the parish parson. Secondly the Reformers were also in substantial agreement in their emphasis on the instruction to precede confirmation so that it should become the occasion of a deliberate and public confession of faith on the part of those who had come to years of discretion. It should be remembered that children reached maturity much earlier in the sixteenth century than they do today. Abundant evidence for this fact is to be found in marriage records and in the very early age of the majority of undergraduates. Thus Confirmation has no mean place in the grand controversy with Rome which fills the record of the Reformation.

In the Lutheran churches, confirmation is treated with high seriousness as a great moment in the Christian life of the candidate and in the family life of the Church. The minister of confirmation is the parish pastor and not the bishop, even although as in the Church of Sweden an unbroken episcopal succession has been maintained since the Reformation. In Sweden it is not uncommon for the minister to extend his hands towards the candidates as in the Roman rite but in the Danish and Norwegian churches the imposition of the right hand on the candidate's head is prescribed in the Services. Prominence is given both to instruction and to a public examination of the candidates beforehand and there is no emphasis upon any particular gift of the Holy Spirit associated with the rite.

Calvin was not without a sound appreciation of the proper value of Confirmation, if purged of the unscriptural accretions of the centuries. It was, he says, in ancient times customary for the children of Christians after they had grown up to appear before the bishop to fulfil that duty required of such adults as presented themselves for baptism. "In order that this act . . . might have more reverence and dignity, the ceremony of laying on of hands was also used. . . . This laying on of hands which was done by way of benediction, I commend and would like to see restored to its pure use in the present day." But the absence of instruction and catechising prior to Confirmation and the prominence given to anointing in place of the laying on of hands drew forth his severe condemnation. "Who taught them to seek salvation in oil? Who taught them to attribute to it the power of strengthening?" Baptism and confirmation without instruction or catechising was tantamount to dis severing "the proper promises of baptism from baptism."<sup>24</sup>

Despite this lead given by Calvin himself, the Reformed churches have mostly contented themselves with courses of preparation for first Communion, although within late years the tendency has been towards the observance of a rite. The French Reformed Church has a service for the admission of catechumens to the Lord's Supper in which after public examination in the faith the minister lays his hand on the head of each person kneeling before him with the words "*je te confirme dans l'alliance du baptême au nom du Père, du Fils et du Saint-Esprit.*"<sup>25</sup> In the Church of Scotland after classes for instruction, the minister recommends to the Kirk Session the persons to be admitted to full

church membership and a date for Confirmation is appointed. At that service the presiding presbyter invokes the Holy Spirit on the candidates for the confirmation of their baptismal grace and of the vows they have made.

The Church of England presents the example of a reformed church which deliberately retained Confirmation and made the bishop the sole minister of the rite, while reconstructing the service on the basis of apostolic practice as recorded in the New Testament. In common with other evangelical churches, the title of sacrament is restricted to Baptism and the Lord's Supper and the rite is so constructed that the salient feature is the solemn profession of the candidates in the renewal of the baptismal vows. The episcopal action is limited to prayer and the imposition of the hand on the head of each candidate. The use of chrism and the sign of the cross are discontinued. The absence of any assertion of a specific gift through the laying on of hands is a definite characteristic of the teaching of the Fathers of the Church of England. Laying great stress on catechising they regarded Confirmation as the decent public recognition as full members of the Church of those who had demonstrated their knowledge of the faith and publicly testified their personal belief. The blessing of Confirmation resulted from the prayers of the bishop and the congregation, and the laying on of hands was, in Hooker's phrase, "a ceremony betokening our restrained desires to the party, whom we present unto God by prayer".<sup>26</sup> Thomas Rogers who, as chaplain to Bishop Bancroft, may be regarded as a good churchman, published in 1587 an exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles. He set forth the teaching of the Church of England in these terms: "Touching Confirmation . . . rightly used as it was in the primitive church it is no sacrament, but a part of Christian discipline, profitable for the whole church of God". Among the errors which he stigmatises as 'damnable and dangerous doctrine' are the doctrines that the minister "must be a bishop and none inferior minister" and that "the Holy Ghost is given in full".<sup>27</sup>

The practice of Confirmation in the Church of England did not for a long while conform to the serious standard of reformed doctrine set out in the rite itself. Robert Cawdry, who was deprived of his benefice of Luffenham in 1587 for defying the rubrics of the Prayer Book, appealed against his sentence to Lord Burleigh, in the course of which he said that the Bishops themselves "for the most part these twenty-nine years had not observed it . . . in not confirming of children as the book appointed".<sup>28</sup> Four years later, Whitgift found it necessary to issue to the bishops of his province an urgent letter "for the better observance of catechizing and confirming of youth".<sup>29</sup> The testimony of Baxter shows that more than a generation later, about 1630, conditions were no better. He describes how the bishop came into the neighbourhood and he and other boys ran to see him. "The bishop examined us not at all in one article of the faith; but in a churchyard in haste we were set in a rank and he passed hastily over us, laying his hand on our heads and saying a few words which neither I nor any that I spoke with understood; so hastily were they uttered and a very short prayer recited and there was an end. But whether we were Christians or infidels, or knew so much as that there was a God, the bishop little knew or inquired. And yet he was esteemed one of the best bishops

in England. . . This was the old careless practice of this excellent duty of confirmation."<sup>30</sup> The new standards of ministerial duty which came to prevail as a result of the Evangelical revival and the Oxford movement have made this carelessness in administration, a thing of the past in our church. It is evident that although the ordinance may rightly be called apostolic, it is none the less a church ordinance and its manner of administration may lawfully be varied by the church if there seems to be good reason for so doing. Since the Reformation we have had the opportunity of using a rite based upon reformed theology and one which seeks seriously to grapple with the disappearance of the catechuminate through universal infant baptism.

- <sup>1</sup> Ep. clix. 7., clxvi. 2.
- <sup>2</sup> De Gratia i. 14. cf. Liturgy and Worship p. 443.
- <sup>3</sup> Gen. xlvi. 14-18, Deut. xxxiv. 9. Mark x. 16.
- <sup>4</sup> Acts viii. 14-17., xix. 1-6.
- <sup>5</sup> Hebrews vi. 2.
- <sup>6</sup> First Apology 61, 65.
- <sup>7</sup> Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles : C. Bigg p. 21.
- <sup>8</sup> The Offices of Baptism and Confirmation ; T. Thompson pp. 11-12.
- <sup>9</sup> De Resurrectione Carnis 8 (Ante-Nicene Lib. Translation).
- <sup>10</sup> De Bapt. 18.
- <sup>11</sup> De Bapt. 6.
- <sup>12</sup> De Bapt. 7.
- <sup>13</sup> De Bapt. 8.
- <sup>14</sup> The Ministry and the Sacraments ; ed. R. Dunkerley, p. 72.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 72.
- <sup>16</sup> The Mozarabic rite (5th to 9th cent.) shows that in Spain the Eastern practice long continued.
- <sup>17</sup> Dialogus contra Luciferianos ; 9 (Migne P.L. 23, 173).
- <sup>18</sup> Ep. xxv. 11. (Migne P.L. 20. 514).
- <sup>19</sup> Annotated Book of Common Prayer : J. H. Blunt p. 252.
- <sup>20</sup> English Canons : Johnson ii. pp. 277-8.
- <sup>21</sup> Summa iii. Qlxxii. a. 2.
- <sup>22</sup> Ep. iv. 26.
- <sup>23</sup> Session vii. Can. i, ii, iii, ix.
- <sup>24</sup> Inst. iv. xix. 4-13.
- <sup>25</sup> Confirmation (S.P.C.K. Various Writers) Vol. 1. p. 262.
- <sup>26</sup> Eccl. Pol. Bk. v. ch. lxvi.
- <sup>27</sup> 'Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles' T. Rogers (Parker Soc.) p.252ff).
- <sup>28</sup> The National Church : H. H. Henson p. 55.
- <sup>29</sup> Works (Parker Soc.) Vol. III. p.610.
- <sup>30</sup> Quoted in Henson *op cit* p. 57.

# Confirmation in Relation to Holy Communion

BY THE REV. A. M. STIBBS, M.A.

THIS title indicates a very proper sub-division of the main subject under consideration. But it may be misleading if it makes us try to get to grips too quickly with secondary issues. As it stands it gives too much prominence to the sacramental. If we are to appreciate these things aright we need to stand back and see them against a larger background; we need to relate them on the one hand to the Gospel of Christ, and on the other to the moral response of the believer.

The recurring need in every generation is to confront our young people not primarily with Confirmation and Holy Communion and so with the Bishop and the priest, whom some make so indispensable to these rites, but rather with the Christ of the Gospel and the urgent challenge to personal faith in Him.

Here we can learn from the mission field overseas. (I speak as one who has worked for six years in China.) As Christian witnesses we do not confront the heathen with an ecclesiastical and a sacramental system and say, 'You must acknowledge our Bishop, and receive our sacraments'. We confront them with the Gospel,—the preached word—and with the Christ of the Gospel, and we call upon them to acknowledge and to receive Him. We invite to faith, in response to the word preached, and only when we are sure of its active presence do we invite to participation in the Sacraments.

This primary importance of faith in active response to present preaching of the Word is also stressed in Article xix. It is only in a company, where faith is thus actively responding, that there is any place for the Sacraments to be administered. Sacraments are, therefore, subordinate and subservient. They are introduced, on the one hand, to endorse the word preached, and visibly to express the Divine donation of grace. They are introduced, on the other hand, to provide responding faith with an outward means of expressing present appropriation. If this personal response of faith towards Christ is not present, participation in the Sacraments is out of place, and may become a deception or a substitute for the real thing rather than a help to spiritual enrichment. Whereas, if only faith is present, as the rubric after "The Communion of the Sick" makes so plain, it is possible to feed on Christ without partaking of the Sacrament with the mouth. The question, therefore, of primary importance, before individuals should be welcomed to the Holy Communion, is the question whether they have responsive faith actively functioning in their hearts.

It is significant that in all our Prayer Book services the would-be participant is made answerable; and it is only to those who have professed the present response of repentance and faith that the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are administered. Further, the

plain teaching of the New Testament is that salvation, new birth, and the gift of the Spirit are primarily gifts of God to be enjoyed by direct faith in Christ. The sacrament and the human minister simply serve to confirm one in the possession of gifts which God gives to faith.

With regard to Confirmation, therefore, my contention is that the thing of primary importance in the Order of Confirmation, as we have it in our Prayer Book, is the personal confession of faith made by the candidate. Even in Infant Baptism this response has to be made in the candidate's name, so that by proxy the infant says, in effect, 'I repent', 'I believe', 'I will obey'. It is only of a candidate thus professing repentance and faith that the minister says after baptism, 'This child is regenerate'. For we can, according to New-Testament teaching, only be sure that a person is regenerate, when he has himself believed. Nor is it good enough that profession of faith should be merely formal and by proxy. The protest of the Baptists is understandable, and has often been necessary. But the Prayer Book gives the proper answer. The Catechism recognises that repentance and faith are necessary, and that if those baptized in infancy would enjoy the promises pledged to them in baptism they are, when they come of age, bound to perform the conditions of benefit.

The primary stress of confirmation is, therefore, on the response of the candidate. In this matter public opinion in the country is more right than much ecclesiastical emphasis. For "to obey is better than sacrifice". The moral response of the candidate to Christ, his personal profession of faith in Christ, is more important than the due performance of the ritual act by the Bishop. Further, this interpretation is confirmed by the rubric which says, "And there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed". The addition of this last clause—ready and desirous to be confirmed—makes plain that the minimum indispensable qualification for admission to Holy Communion is not the laying on of hands but the individual's readiness publicly to confess his own faith in Christ.

In contrast to this, it is very disappointing and indeed alarming to find that the Confirmation Report or Schedule makes no satisfying mention of the activity of personal faith. It says that ratification of the baptismal vows is purely voluntary and not essential. It desires to dissipate the so-called widespread misunderstanding that the "confirming" of the Baptismal vows is the all-important thing in Confirmation. It descends to suggesting that what should be the confession of the essential qualification for membership in Christ should be made a legal qualification for membership in the councils of the Church. It even suggests that failure to ratify the vows does not call into question any confirmed person's right to communicant status. In other words, communicant status can be sacramentally conferred without any question being asked about the moral condition of the individual. If we tread such a road we may next expect to write 'Ichabod' over the so-called Church. We shall be in the condition of those who have a name to live and are dead. For the primary secrets of spiritual vitality are not sacraments but faith, not Bishops but Christ. The just shall live by faith. Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.



Next, let us consider another possible criterion of communicant status. Those who come to the Communion ought to be those who have received the Spirit; they ought to be born again from above. This, in the days of the Acts of the Apostles, was the recognised mark of the true Christian. But how are we to be sure whether an individual has received the Spirit? Some would answer, By getting a Bishop to lay on his hands and pray. This is not the primary New Testament answer. We ought rather to say, by leading the individual to turn in penitence to Christ, and to put his trust in Him. As John the Baptist foretold, the Spirit is the distinctive gift of the Christ. It is He alone, the glorified Lord, who baptizes with the Holy Ghost. It is, therefore, His exclusive prerogative to add new members by spiritual birth to the family of the Church.

In the days of the early Church, if the Apostles wanted to make sure whether people were genuine members of the fellowship, they looked for the grace of Christ and the gifts of the Spirit in their lives. When they saw these manifested, as Barnabas did at Antioch, they acknowledged their oneness in Christ, gave them the right hand of fellowship, and said in effect, God bless you. The incident at Samaria, recorded in Acts viii, was abnormal. Here there was concern because the Spirit had not been received. Clearly it was expected that if individuals believed and were baptized they would receive the Spirit; unless, as some probably thought at this stage, because they were Samaritans, they were not meant to share the blessings of the Messiah. What happened in their case was therefore (as I understand it) a special providence, meant as much for the enlightenment of Peter and John as for the blessing of the Samaritan believers, and making plain in a marked way that Samaritans were meant to share in the gift of the Spirit just as much as Jews.

Again, if we consider the incident in Ephesus recorded in Acts xix, we find that when Paul doubted whether certain professed disciples had received the Spirit he did not say to them, 'Can it be that no Apostle has laid his hands on you?' He asked rather, 'Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed?' And when they said, 'No', Paul said in effect, not 'You ought to be confirmed', but 'Your faith cannot then be Christian faith'. For he asked them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' What mattered was not who administered the sacrament, but the confession of faith into which they were initiated. The remedy was to preach to them the Gospel, and to lead them to believe in Christ, and to receive baptism in His Name. The laying on of hands was but the crowning act of faith and prayer,—as though Paul said, Now, if you have believed in Christ, we may be sure that God will give you the Spirit; and He did. This is the consistent attitude of St. Paul,—that when men believe in Christ they are immediately sealed as His by His gift of the Spirit. The Galatian Christians, he implies, received the Spirit by the hearing of faith not by the works of the law nor by the observance of ritual.

This means, therefore, that we may be sure that young people, who were baptized in infancy, have entered into the vital experience of new life in the Spirit only when they make the personal response of faith to Christ. Therefore, when, in the Confirmation service, as we now have it, they confess that they have made this response of faith their

own, it becomes the company of the faithful, acting through their minister, to recognise that, because of their personal faith now publicly confessed, these individuals can rightly be regarded as those who really have the Spirit. So the Bishop lays his hands on them to assure them that in turning to Christ in penitent faith they have done all that God asks. He, therefore, certifies them by this sign of God's favour and gracious goodness towards them. And, believing that they therefore already have the consequent gift of the Spirit, because they have believed, the Bishop prays not that the gift may be given in an initial way here and now, but that they may daily increase in the Spirit more and more, and be given those gifts of wisdom and understanding, which are the characteristics of Christian maturity. There is, therefore, surely a wrong emphasis in praying, as we so often hear done, for those 'who are seeking the gift of the Spirit by the laying on of hands.' We ought rather, when we pray for confirmation candidates, to pray for those who are going publicly to confess their faith in Christ, that their response towards Christ may be genuine and enduring, that they may be established of God in His service, and that God Himself by His Spirit would complete unto the end that work of grace which He has already begun in their hearts.

The new character conferred on sinful men by the Gospel of Christ is a new life of true personal moral responsibility. The sinner, otherwise bound by sin, is offered a new freedom to make a decision and a response towards God. To stress this is not Pelagian. It is rather to marvel at the Divine grace that alone makes this new response possible. But, since by grace response is possible, those who would share in the fellowship must make it. Those only truly belong to the 'Ecclesia', who have personally responded to the Divine 'klesis'. We cannot be reinstated as true sons in our Father's house until we make our active answer; until, like the returning prodigal, by our own conviction and choice, we come to ourselves and return to our Father to confess sin, to trust Him to make us something new, and to desire to spend our days in His company and in His service.

The great need of our churches is this true conversion towards God of those who have grown up within them. Christ Himself said such conversion is indispensable. Without it there is no entry into the kingdom. It is as necessary for those baptized in infancy as for the heathen. In the mission field overseas or in home evangelism among complete outsiders, Christian workers seek rightly for evidences of true conversion before desiring participation in Baptism and Holy Communion. It is serious indeed if we have a higher and truer standard for those thus brought in from outside as adults than for our own children brought up as they should be within the continual influence of the Church's teaching. Surely Confirmation and preparation for it, if rightly used, can provide, as many Evangelical clergy could testify, a unique opportunity to bring this issue to a head in young lives?

Also, since such response Godward involves moral decision, those who have made it can, when they become communicants, rightly be regarded as morally responsible people. This, at least, is the New Testament conception of Church membership. Such members can each and all be expected to have powers of moral judgment; so that affairs can be referred to the whole membership of the local congrega-

tion for moral decision. Such communicants can rightly be expected to be able to examine themselves, to discern the Lord's body, to be aware of the inconsistency of drinking the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. They are, or ought to be, those who, if such need arise, can rightly be excommunicated for moral delinquency. This kind of responsibility can obviously only be carried by those who know and are ready openly to confess where they stand in relation to Christ and His Gospel. Surely, therefore, young people ought not to be admitted to the Communion until they have come to an awareness of the importance of personal moral decision and, what is more, made their own. Also, if changes are to be made, it seems desirable that in the Order of Confirmation more should be made of the confession of faith and opportunity given, as to the bride in the marriage service, for each individual to answer singly and for himself alone.

Because such standards of communicant membership have not been inculcated and upheld the majority of the laity have a very weak sense of personal moral responsibility as Christians. It is impossible to stir their conscience to shoulder burdens, which they ought to carry. They leave such things far too much to the clergy or to the zealous few. Also, in the wider spheres of the community and the nation, there are directions in which the sense of moral responsibility and the determination to refuse the evil and to choose the good is all too weak. May not the fault lie in part with the Christian Church, because we have been tending to make participation in the fellowship too easy?

Perhaps one may suggest the analogy of marriage. There is a proper order of progress into married union. First, it is of primary importance that the two individuals concerned should be fully aware of the solemn and far-reaching character of the step which they are taking. They ought properly to count the cost and to make a free responsible personal decision, recognising that once committed to it, it shuts out all other alternative partners, and involves them in the obligations of a life-long loyalty to the one partner of their choice. Second, it is right that this decision should be publicly confessed before God and a congregation, and consequent recognition given of their married state with prayer for God's increasing blessing on their union. Third, it is now permissible and indeed proper for them to live together and to enjoy all the intimacies of intercourse and fellowship.

The parallel with the subject which we have under consideration is obvious. Christ is the Bridegroom who in utter grace and absolute faithfulness offers to make us His. One baptized in infancy is like one betrothed by his parents, but one without whose full personal consent the intended relationship cannot be publicly confirmed in marriage. Personal decision to respond to the invitation of the Gospel ought therefore to precede Confirmation. Confirmation is like the marriage service in which the candidate, having personally confessed his faith in Christ and pledged his loyalty to Christ, is openly recognised as one of His with prayer for the increasing blessing of His Spirit. Then entrance into the full privileges of Church fellowship follows.

To return to the marriage analogy, it is surely wrong to allow sexual intercourse before marriage, and still worse to suggest that because such intercourse is sacramental its use might help the couple concerned to get to love one another better before they take the marriage vows.

It would surely be equally wrong to allow a couple to be "married" with the blessing of the Church in order to enjoy the intimacies of sexual union on the understanding that they take the marriage vows, if they feel they can, five years later, when they have discovered for themselves what married life involves, and will know better what they are undertaking. The application is obvious. The man in the street may think that we might at least give such methods a trial during an experimental period. Surely a Christian with any conscience would not tolerate them.

In contrast to the undesirable and unnecessary suggested alternatives of the Schedule the present Prayer Book order, if properly used, can make Confirmation an occasion of great significance in a young life. It can literally be like a marriage ceremony bringing to the candidate God-given witness that justifies him in saying of himself, like the newly wed bride can say of herself, I am His, and He is mine. This is the conviction that makes men live differently,—as so many writers on the Old Testament testify of the Israelites,—the solemn God-given conviction that the Lord is my God, and that I am one of His people. If I may give my own testimony, this is how my own confirmation stands out in my own memory,—because, on the day on which I was confirmed, the chapter I was reading from the Bible was 2 Samuel vii., of which the 24th verse reads, Thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee forever; and thou, Lord, art become their God.

As things are, if candidates are to be allowed to be confirmed or to become communicants, without any adequate sense of the accompanying moral responsibility, the danger is lest those who ought to consider themselves spiritually married to Christ should spend most of their time, as the prophets of Israel or our Lord would say, living adulterously. We need a new awareness in the Church that one cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of idols without provoking the Lord to jealousy. There is something spiritually unhealthy about enjoying intercourse with the world, or living to self, all the year or all the week, and then expecting, without any sense of inconsistency, to join in the communion of the Lord's Table on Easter Day or on some Lord's day. We cannot "keep only unto Him" without in some real sense "forsaking all other". Nor shall we get a full renewal of spiritual vitality within the body corporate of the Church until we recognise more clearly that some who are nominally married to Christ and yet living in separation from Him and disloyalty to Him ought to be excommunicated.

Communicants will only examine themselves by these higher standards, if they are taught to do so from the start. Therefore, before young people are admitted to the Holy Communion, with all that it implies, they ought to be faced with the challenge to make their choice and to give their answer. I hold strongly, therefore, that it would be wrong to alter the present order so as to allow young people to attend communion before they are sure enough of their personal faith in Christ to be able properly to confess it,—and to confess it not primarily before the Bishop, but rather before God and the congregation of His people. Also, I disagree fundamentally with the statements in the Schedule that in Confirmation the response of the candidate is

secondary and optional. For, if from adult converts to Christianity we rightly expect personal confession of faith before baptism, we ought surely to demand similar confession from our own children before they, too, are properly recognised as members of the Church and consequently admitted to the Holy Communion.

There is one other point worthy of mention. Its underlying truth is forcibly expressed in the vigorous metaphorical words of our Lord Himself—Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you. Our Lord clearly meant that if things of value or sacred significance are given to creatures who cannot appreciate their worth and use them rightly, they may not only get no benefit, but also they may in resentful disappointment despise the gift and turn against the givers. A reaction almost of this kind sometimes seems to occur with some who are confirmed and begin to attend Holy Communion. The reason seems to be that false hopes are raised. They are led to expect that participation in these services will, *ipso facto*, do something wonderful; and nothing happens. They are genuinely disappointed. And so they react unfavourably against Church going. We can only hope to prevent such tragic anti-climaxes, and worthily to discharge our stewardship in the Gospel, if young people are adequately taught the true value and right use of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper before they are allowed and encouraged to become communicants. In other words, young people must come to some personal spiritual discernment and to active and confessed repentance and faith before they can be expected with spiritual profit to enter into the meaning and the blessing and the responsibility of participation in the Sacrament of our redemption by Christ's Death.

So I repeat; the primary secrets of spiritual vitality in the Church are not sacraments but faith, not Bishops and priests but Christ. There is continual need in the Christian life afresh to face the insistent challenge to put first things first. If we wish to see an increase in vital enduring communicant membership of the Church what we need to do is not to facilitate the reception of the Holy Communion at an earlier age and with less sense of responsibility, but to concentrate our faith and prayer and effort on leading our young people into true conversion to God and into personal, responsible, penitent and obedient faith in Christ.

*An Appendix, not read at the Conference, concerning the admission to the Holy Communion of unconfirmed members of the Free Churches.*

This subject, if it is to be treated with true Christian comprehension, must include the question of the admission to the Holy Communion of members of the Free and non-Episcopal Churches, who do not use the Order of Confirmation.

What is to be the criterion here? If some such congregations, like those believers in Samaria mentioned in Acts viii, clearly have not received the Spirit, then we might offer to send to them our Bishops to pray and to lay hands on them, and to see if spiritual transformation followed in their communities. Even this procedure I should oppose as on our part a presumptuous suggestion. The right thing to do, as I

understand it, would be to send to them preachers of the Gospel. But if such congregations are obviously sharing in the same grace of Christ as we are, then we ought to welcome them as they would welcome us to the Table of the one Lord without any insistence on the necessity of episcopal laying on of hands. In other words, "confirmation" in this sense ought not to be made an essential of intercommunion or reunion. The necessary qualification in addition to baptism is the personal confession of faith in Christ as the redeeming Lord on the part of all who partake of the Communion. If some have made this confession as adults in adult baptism, that is enough. Or if others, who were baptized in infancy, have in some other way, to the satisfaction of the congregation to which they belong, approved themselves as true believers in Christ, there is no need to insist on a further confirmation before admission to the Holy Communion.

The nearest parallel to this within our own Episcopal Church is found in the mission field overseas, where adult converts are baptized. Then, if there is to be laying on of hands, it ought ideally to be done at the same time as baptism. Otherwise, to keep such true believers waiting until a Bishop can visit them, and to suggest to them that something more is necessary before they can be welcomed as communicant members of the Church, is, as I understand it, unscriptural and theologically unjustified. Also, it tends in the mission field to cause a wrong emphasis to be put on confirmation to the detriment of baptism. Candidates, concerning whose fitness there is still some uncertainty, are sometimes allowed to be baptized because the minister says to himself, Anyway they cannot become communicants until they have been confirmed. This surely is an improper use of confirmation with those who as adults have already confessed their faith in baptism.

Therefore, in the last analysis, as I see it, the decisive qualification for admission to Holy Communion is not Confirmation in the sense of the laying on of hands by the Bishop but Baptism together with the presence in the life of the individual concerned of an active responsive faith in Christ, and a faith sufficiently taught and developed to understand properly and use profitably the Sacraments as a means of grace. Such faith may of course be professed without being possessed. Beyond a certain point the Church cannot decisively check the things of the heart. But, if such faith is confessed, and if those concerned have satisfied themselves as far as is possible that the elements of the faith are understood, and that there is no moral inconsistency in the life, such ought to be welcomed to the fellowship of the Lord's Table. Indeed, the Order of Confirmation itself might be more welcome to those who join our Church from other Christian Churches, if it was made plain to them that it is not the conferring upon them of a primary essential, which hitherto as Christians they have not possessed, but rather a public acknowledgment of their membership in the family of God, and a prayer for the increasing blessing of the Spirit in their life, granted on the simple condition of their willingness to renew in public profession of response to Christ and His Gospel in repentance, faith and obedience.

The existing rubric in the Prayer Book is, therefore, in essential principle fundamentally right,—that none ought to be admitted to Holy Communion unless, in addition to being baptized, they have

confessed, or are willing to confess, their personal faith in Christ and their active response to His claims in both renunciation of evil and obedience to God's revealed will. In other words, those who become communicants ought to be those who are consciously and continually reckoning themselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

# Practical Proposals for the Better Administration and Observance of Confirmation

BY THE RT. REV. THE BISHOP OF CROYDON.

**M**Y subject is of the first importance. I believe we have in our Church practice of administering Confirmation something we cannot value too highly, and yet one that has received far less attention than it deserves with the consequences of loss in Communicants and grave lapses after Confirmation. I am not in the least degree happy about the proposals to admit to Communion before Confirmation, nor of suggestions to experiment on such lines.

It seems clear to me that there is Divine Providence in the delay that must perforce exist in most cases between Baptism and Confirmation owing to the fact that the latter must be administered by a Bishop, who is, of course, not always available. In Acts viii. we have the account of the first recorded Confirmation. St. Philip preaches and baptizes, then come the apostles to lay their hands on the baptized.

It is right and proper that we bring our babies to be baptized as early as possible, dedicating them to the Service of the Master, bringing them under His influence, His Spirit, pledging them to be brought up to lead *godly and Christian lives*; then when they come to years of discretion prepare them for Confirmation. I suppose we have been slow to realise the changed conditions. In earlier days, and the hey-day of Sunday Schools, it was fairly safe to assume that children had been taught the Catechism and its meaning, and that therefore a dozen or so classes would suffice to prepare them for Confirmation. Whether this was really so or not, the facts of today hold no warranty for this assumption. People, especially children, come for Confirmation with very little background.

I plead that the Confirmation Classes should aim at covering the ground of Christian doctrine, belief and practice as far as may be, and that these should be attended by children from the ages of thirteen for three successive years; that these should include a Rule of Life about prayer, worship, communion and alms-giving and not until the child is ready to keep this rule should it be confirmed.

At Confirmation the Baptismal vows and promises are ratified and confirmed in the child's own person. It is, therefore, an act of solemn self-dedication. I am sure the meaning of "worship" should be prominent from the start, this is "Worth-ship". Expressing to God what He means—is worth—to us. Expressing to our fellows what God means to us. So few realise the true purpose of "going to Church", of prayer as learning to talk with God, of communion as really communing with our Lord.

It is strange to imagine that anyone, especially a child, can be brought to so tremendous a decision in a dozen classes, or to believe that a promise and rule of life made at the end of them is likely to be kept.



The period of preparation spread over two or three years is a preparation for a determined and sincere dedication, and this should be by keeping the Rule. So first I plead for a thorough revising of our whole method of preparation. There are several being tried, such as the "Confirmation School" and "Catechism Classes". Personally I use the three year plan, and find parents prepared to co-operate, and I do not find the children lose interest, but rather it increases. They must, of course, be shown clearly that the course lasts three years. This is important to avoid disappointment and the sense of being "turned down". Only this year, my third in my present parish, I have confirmed children who have been through the three year course, and have brought their parents to help them to keep the Rule.

Everything must depend upon the preparation. We need not be so much afraid of losing candidates by insisting on sincerity. There are those who do not feel they can keep the promises, but there remains always the Holy Spirit, and the one who misses Confirmation does feel it, and in later years will seek it.

Then, I submit, there should be a further period of preparation after the Confirmation before the first Communion. Our intelligences are limited, and we can only digest one thing at a time. We must not give the impression that when a person is confirmed it is "all over and done with". I submit there be a series of classes in preparation for Holy Communion. Methods as to the number of classes will vary. I have never yet found candidates anything but sorry when the classes end. The candidates form friendships and are willing enough to continue. Then, after the first communion, at least three more classes to gather up the threads. All this sounds as though a great deal of time and energy is involved, and so it is, but I submit there is nothing more worth doing. If we really are aiming at conversion and true dedication we cannot give too much to it.

*With regard to the Administration*, I urge that there be a preparation Service, preferably the night before the Confirmation, and parents and friends be urged to attend. The first part is taken up with seating arrangements and rehearsing the Candidates so that they will know exactly what to do. At the Service they should have been instructed how to occupy the time of waiting, and whilst the others are being confirmed. Hymns to read are of great value.

The actual service differs slightly in different places. In some the actual name of the Candidate accompanies the laying on of hands. In some each of the promises is put separately to the Candidate. Whichever method is used all depends on the preparation and the Spirit of the thing. If the standard is pitched high and candidates are urged to postpone their confirmation until they have prayed and thought about it more it does help to induce the sense of solemnity and obligation.

Time hardly allows me to say more, but I plead also for Annual Refresher Courses for those who have already been confirmed. There are many who say they wish they could be confirmed again because they did not understand it at the time. These welcome such classes and it helps the children.

# Our Present Need

BY THE RT. REV. THE BISHOP OF WARRINGTON.

WE are much indebted to the Joint Committee for the time and thought they have given to the production of their Schedule on "Confirmation To-day", and more particularly for the candour with which they have drawn attention to the situation created in the Church by the decline in attendance at the Holy Communion. The position is one which should cause us grave anxiety; for whereas a certain number of parishes, by virtue of long tradition and good leadership, have sustained their attendance, the falling away in many cases, it is to be feared, has been very disquieting. The defect of the Report is that it offers a way of recovery by the too facile remedy of fresh administration, rather than by going to the heart of the trouble.

"Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?" Why is it that down the centuries the Christian Church has held to this particular ordinance with such tenacity? Why must we always keep it central in our corporate life? The Holy Communion is rich in influences of many and varied kinds; but it is with a sure touch that our Church comes to the essential answer. It was ordained "for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ and of the benefits which we receive thereby." It was ordained that we may ever and again present to our own consciences and to God Himself that wonderful Atonement which He in His infinite mercy has made for our redemption. Yet such has been the unaccountable attitude of the modern mind to this central glory of our faith that during the last thirty years, if the average person has even heard the Atonement preached in Church, it has only been to hear it explained away!

Here is the first cause, as I see it, of the present trouble. The "acids of modernity" have so eaten into the religious thought of our generation that the whole conception of the destructiveness and of the guilt of sin has been impaired. The pressing need of a divine atonement has appeared to fade from present consciousness; and as an inevitable consequence that Sacrament, designed by our blessed Lord to enshrine his supreme provision for man, has lost its place of priority in Christian worship.

The second ground for the present situation is to be found, I fear, in a defective post-Confirmation shepherding. A generation ago the most vital organisation in a "live" parish was that of the Communicants' Guild. At Confirmation all boys and girls found themselves incorporated, *ipso facto*, into a new and warm association; bound together, it is true, by varied interests and recreations, but centring all the time upon a regular attendance at the Lord's Table. It involved an immensity of work: it meant book-keeping: it meant organisation: it meant visiting: it meant personal friendship: but every bit of it was rewarded by the results achieved. What I wonder is, whether amid all the embarrassing pressure of recent years, an adequate

pastoral supervision has been offered to our young Communicant life, or whether the Youth Group which has now, I gather, largely supplanted the old Communicants' Guild has made the Holy Communion sufficiently central in its aims.

The Joint Committee in their Schedule, in Chapter 5, offer three possible ways of dealing with the present situation. 1. The maintenance of the *status quo*. 2. The separation of Confirmation from the Ratification of Vows. 3. The separation of Confirmation from admission to Holy Communion. It is this third proposal which I trust the Oxford Conference may view with grave apprehension. Let us be quick to perceive that if this suggestion is accepted it means an end of Confirmation as we have come to know and value it in the Church of England. To admit children to Communion at a tender age will, I fear, fail to produce that permanent attendance which we all desire, for the simple reason that child-habit seems so rarely to survive the menace of the school-leaving upheaval. To-day the "years of discretion" in young life are really those years of freedom that follow upon school-leaving; and this is why the decision to be confirmed, and to come to Communion at the age of fourteen to seventeen is found in experience under wise shepherding to produce the most enduring results. Moreover, the more a child might make good in Communion attendance prior to Confirmation, the less would Confirmation seem intelligible at, say, the age of nineteen either to the child or to its parents. And, except in a very few cases, Confirmation would become a rare event.

To separate Confirmation from the Vows seems wholly unreasonable, because it is only as we pledge ourselves to repentance and faith and obedience that the Gift of the Spirit can come.

I trust therefore that the Oxford Conference will look long and carefully at this Schedule before giving it their approbation. Our way of hope, as I have said above, lies not so much along the line of fresh administration but rather of renewed pastoral zeal. Far more, I believe recovery is ours now, as in all ages, through a wise and fearless upholding of the Cross of Christ as the supreme need of man. The soil on many sides I believe is ready. The pathetic thing is that what is really lacking is the good seed itself. Human society to-day calls for nothing so much as for a revival of Evangelical faith.

## Book Reviews

### THE STORY OF ENGLAND'S CHURCH.

By L. E. Elliott-Binns, D.D. *National Society and S.P.C.K.* 3/6 net.

It is no mean achievement to condense the "Story of England's Church" into 127 pages of easily readable print, but this is what Dr. Elliott-Binns has attempted and well succeeded in doing, since he has given us a clear and connected outline of its history which is neither "scrappy" nor noticeably "sketchy." The ordinary churchman who has neither the time nor often the money to buy and read large and costly Church histories can in this little book, at the modest price of 3/6 get a most valuable and also, with a few exceptions, a reliable account of the life and development of his Church from the conversion of England to the present day.

Canon Elliott-Binns notices the important distinctions between the Celtic and Roman types of Church life, and the characteristics and defects of each are very forcibly sketched and all the really salient features are mentioned and emphasised. The decision of Whitby (664) to accept the Roman usages and jurisdiction is thus shown to have been truly beneficial to the future English Church.

In dealing with the Norman period Dr. Elliott-Binns is scarcely correct in asserting that Anselm's quarrel with Rufus turned on the question of Investiture (p.32) as this thorny matter did not arise till the subsequent serious struggle with Henry I.

Our Author concisely and accurately describes the corruption of the Medieval Church when he says (p.65) that "Christianity by the time of the Reformation had departed from its primitive purity, and by the more ignorant was regarded as a species of "magic" in which the priest was everything, the people mere spectators. All this was swept away by the English Reformers. In treating of the English Reformation Canon Elliott-Binns' warm appreciation of Cranmer's great work for it is a welcome sign and a useful corrective of much partisan "Anglo-Catholic" misrepresentation of this outstanding Anglican Father and martyr. We have abundant records of the persuasive and forceful preaching of the English Reformers and of the great power of the Gospel message proclaimed by such men as John Bradford, Hugh Latimer and Dr. Rowland Taylor, which changed the lives of the humblest people into bold and intelligent defenders of the Christian Faith even unto death. Canon Elliott-Binns is therefore scarcely justified in asserting that there was an "absence of fervent religious motives for the (Reformation) changes" in England, because "Englishmen had not the same consciousness of a fresh discovery of the Gospel message and of its liberating power" (p.63) as the Continental Reformers, nor is he right in declaring that the English Reformation "was accompanied by no spiritual awakening" (p.84).

The faithful witness of the Marian martyrs is surely a sufficient refutation of this surprising statement, and it is also a proof that the converting power of the Gospel was as great in England as on the Continent.

Canon Elliott-Binns wisely emphasises the fundamental difference between the Marian and the Elizabethan persecutions, the former being for purely religious opinions while the latter were due to treasonable plots against the Queen's life or to attempts to overthrow the existing governments of the Country. Concise generalisations are apt sometimes to be misleading. I cannot believe that Dr. Elliott-Binns wishes to assert that there was a "Central Party" of Elizabethan Churchmen holding religious views akin to those of Henry VIII, *i.e.* "Popery without the Pope". Yet when he conjectures that "Elizabeth's religious position was very like that of her father" (p.60) and that this "Central party shared the Queen's views" (p.67) this is what this generalisation actually implies. There was, of course, no such "Central religious party amongst Elizabethan Churchmen".

He also gives a short but discerning diagnosis of the Puritan struggle and its real implications for the Reformed Church Settlement of religion. It would however have been more accurate if Dr. Elliott-Binns had said that the ejected Ministers in 1662 "abandoned ministry in a Church with whose 'worship' rather than with whose 'teaching' they could not agree" (78) because these

Nonconformists had no quarrel with the *doctrines* of the Church as expressed in the 39 Articles. We are glad that Canon Elliott-Binns corrects the ignorant confusion of Evangelicals with "Low Churchmen" who were originally men of Latitudinarian views. Mr. Payne in his "Free Church Tradition in the Life of England" declares that Wesley was "moulded and shaped by his association with the Free Churches" (p.17), but Dr. Elliott-Binns is far truer to facts when he says that "Wesley always had a strong distaste for Dissenters of every kind and regarded them as a hindrance to his work and little likely to respond to his appeals" (83).

His description of the Tractarian Movement is however both inadequate and misleading since he omits all reference to its revival of medieval and Roman doctrines, and instead seems to regard the Movement as praiseworthy "for bringing again to notice certain doctrines which were in danger of being neglected" (101).

Again Dr. Elliott-Binns' reference to the Revised Prayer Book amounts to a serious misrepresentation of that heated controversy, when he contents himself with stating the half-truth that its rejection was due to nonconformist intervention" (119). He is altogether silent about the doctrinal changes involved in the proposed alternative Communion office and the authorisation of Reservation which caused not merely this "nonconformist intervention" but the determined opposition of the majority of Church-goers. The wide circulation of Sir William Joynson-Hicks' "Prayer Book Crisis" probably did as much as anything to stimulate this sustained opposition. Canon Elliott-Binns' condonation of the Bishops' later "defiance" of Parliament by authorising this rejected Prayer Book for liturgical use, with his verdict that it had "worked well" in practice, is certainly open to question. He also apparently endorses a statement, which he quotes, of Archbishop Ussher that clergy are merely required "not to contradict the teaching of the 39 Articles". It is a little difficult to square this negative attitude with the positive assertion of their "Declaration of Assent" that "the doctrine therein *set forth* in them is agreeable to the Word of God". The value and service of this most interesting historical *multum in parvo* would have been increased by the addition of an Index.

#### A SHORT LIFE OF KIERKEGAARDE.

By *Walter Lowrie*. London—Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. 12/6.

Mr. Lowrie has rendered a valuable service in giving us in English this well printed and very readable "Short Life" of Kierkegaard, which is only a quarter the size of one published by the Oxford University Press in 1938. It is surely a conspicuous mark of the outstanding genius of this celebrated Danish writer that 90 years after his death not only are his works still being widely read, but that during the last eight years, twenty-three of his books have been translated for the benefit of English readers. There is little doubt that the serious mental and spiritual experiences which Soren Kierkegaard underwent during his short life (1813-1855) were largely due to his most unfortunate and unwise upbringing. His father's boyhood had been ruined by desperate hardships and want so that in a fit of youthful despair he cursed God. Later when, through the unexpected adoption of a rich uncle he became a prosperous business merchant, the father took a melancholy and morbid view of this childish act—as a "sin against the Holy Ghost". In a spirit of careless desperation he indulged for a time in a sensual life. This experience, even after his spiritual reformation, led him to bring up his children with unnatural sternness and repression. Young Soren therefore had no childhood, no games and his only "recreations" were serious learned discussions and instructions from his father, who had also led him to think "he was doomed to be a sacrifice", since five of his seven children had died in early youth, and Soren himself was a frail, weakly child with curvature of the spine. Soren was convinced that he would never reach the age of 34. He declares that as a child "he was already as old as an old man" Although he possessed at first "childlike faith", and his stern father often indulged him, yet Soren confessed later that his early austere Christian training was "crazy", so that Christianity often appeared to him as "the most inhuman cruelty". The odd way which his father dressed the boy invited the ridicule of his school-mates, and this provoked Soren's natural polemical temper so that he was regarded as a "regular little wild cat".

In a brilliant University career Soren soon displayed his natural ability, and it is not surprising that as a reaction from his strict home life he lost his melancholy by indulging in extravagant ways and in outdoor diversions, as well as by acquiring a love of music, literature and drama and the aesthetic side of life. But Soren pretended to be more frivolous than he was since he was still a devout communicant and was studying theology under Professor Martensen to fulfil his father's great desire for his ordination. By the age of twenty-three he reached, what he describes as the "second stage" of his life, that of "Revolt against God", and he was rapidly drifting away from Christianity, although he declares that "he never gave it up".

The year 1836 was for Kierkegaard the period of rebellion, dissolute living and despair. Probably as a violent reaction to his overstrict upbringing, he was for a time obsessed with the Carprocratian aim of experiencing personally the unrestricted passions of uncontrolled natural desires. He wanted to feel "all the sluices of sin open in his own bosom". His father's stern repression of "the sexual instinct in his son" had led Soren to declare that "Christianity had brought sensuality into the world". Consequently through the influence of two evil companions and while intoxicated, his sexual fall occurred in May, 1836. But remorse immediately followed and he longed to "rise again", but it took him two melancholy years to find his way back. He tried the study of philosophy as a substitute for the Christianity he had rejected, but in the end he felt that Christianity was far closer to reality than Hegelism. He had quarrelled seriously with his father in 1837 and left the home roof, but his father still allowed him an annuity of £220 and also discharged his debts. His father's later full avowal to him of his youthful sins was the means of a reconciliation in May, 1838, when Soren learnt that his stern religious instruction was dictated by love to save him from the sensuality his father had succumbed to. It was then that he learned "from his father what father love is and thereby I got a conception of the divine father love, the one unshakable thing in life". This was for him a definite spiritual turning point, and he registered a humble prayer of thanksgiving for his "earthly father", who died a few months later.

A year previously Soren had fallen desperately in love with a young girl of fourteen, who was devotedly attached to him. Very soon, however, in a morbidly and selfishly instrospective fit of remorse for his previous moral lapse, he refused to marry "Regina", and in spite of her tears and entreaties, Soren insisted on separating, although he retained a strong, lasting affection for her till his death, and this "disappointed love" was the theme of many of his writings.

As an author he was most popular and his writings made a deep impression. His "Either/Or" in 1843, the mysterious work of a genius, created a great sensation and was translated into several languages. Soren was a prodigious worker and he impaired his health by overstudy and want of physical exercise. He was an old man at thirty five. In a little more than two years he published fourteen books, besides writing continuously a most extensive "Journal" from the age of twenty. "His considerable gifts of mind" were his only consolation of joy, but he was not insensible of his increasing reputation. In 1847 he wrote: "After my death not only my works but my life will be studied and studied." He made a good profit from his books, but his mode of life was extravagant and luxurious so that at last he was living on his capital on the verge of want.

His "Concept of Dread" in 1844 dealt with the dogmatic problem of "Original Sin" and was a deep psychological analysis of his own spiritual experience. He regarded fear or "dread" as the chief determinant of original sin, "All sin begins with fear", and he adds, "It was dread which caused me to go astray." "Dread is an attraction to what one fears" was his questionable assertion. "It is" he declares, "an alien power which lays hold of an individual and yet he cannot tear himself loose from it. What one fears also attracts one."

As a literary writer he could employ biting art and satire, and by his attack on an objectionable comic paper Kierkegaard incurred a long period of popular scorn and derision which he described as the "martyrdom of ridicule". Again in the last three years of his life he launched a bitter, satirical and extravagant attack on Christianity and the Danish Established Church, which did much harm to some of his oldest friends. His "Fatherland" in 1854 created consternation as Kierkegaard had always loyally supported Church and State, and several times was on the verge of ordination to a parish. In a series of widely circulated tracts he declared "official Christianity" to be "intellectually

ludicrous and indecent, a scandal in the Christian sense". The Church or "Christian garrison", was, he declared, "a peril because it falsely represented Christianity". "The Christianity of the New Testament is something infinitely high." "It is for all who will put up with everything and suffer everything."

Although a genius and a profound thinker and teacher Kierkegaard was certainly a compound of human imperfections and contradictions, which were in a large measure due to his abnormal upbringing and his delicate health. Mr. Lowrie declares that the Kierkegaard he loves is not "the dissolute and despairing youth, nor the returning prodigal, nor the unhappy lover, not the genius, but the frail man utterly unfitted to cope with the world, who nevertheless was able to confront the real danger of penury as well as the vain terrors his imagination conjured up. He said distinctly the definite thing he was bidden to say and died with a hallelujah on his lips" (p.209).

An Appendix gives us a list of over thirty of Kierkegaard's works translated into English, and this illuminating, analytical and instructive "Short life" of Walter Lowrie's should fulfil its main purpose to stimulate many thoughtful Christians to become acquainted not only with the philosophical and aesthetic, but especially with the profound and original religious writings of this remarkable Christian apologist.

#### THERE IS A TIDE.

*By Mervyn Stockwood. George Allen and Unwin. 6/-.*

This book is written by a young clergyman in the Diocese of Bristol. He dedicates his work to his Diocesan "with respect and affection". It would not have been written had it not been for Miss Peggy Cripps, daughter of Sir Stafford Cripps, M.P., with whom the author has co-operated in religious and political work. Miss Cripps wished for a reasoned presentation of the Christian faith. Mr. Stockwood decided to write a series of essays on the Creed. He writes as a Left Winger saying: "I detest capitalism and all its manifold ramifications, but I do not believe that a Labour Party, which has ignored Truth for fictitious platitudes, is capable of building a new England." He is a convinced Socialist. He has some hard words to say about the jubilant sermons which greeted Mr. Chamberlain's activities in Munich. "We applauded them not because we were concerned with the fate of Czecho-Slovakia, but because we presumed that the unscrupulous expediency of the Prime Minister and his accomplices had saved our skins." That may be Labour propaganda, but it is not truth. Nobody knew better than Mr. Chamberlain that we were not ready for war. He came back saying that the document he had signed meant "Peace in our time". He died a broken hearted man. But it was he and not Hitler who flew to Munich in order to try to save the world from the horrors of war. To compare him to Pilate is really ludicrous.

He is a high churchman but rejects transubstantiation. But what proof can he offer of his own theory of the Holy Communion: "When He was on this earth, His ego was associated with a body of flesh and blood; in the Sacrament it is associated with a body of bread and wine. What happens at the altar is that our egos come into communion with his ego, and the points of contact are, on our side, flesh and blood and, on his side, bread and wine." How does this explanation square with the original institution? He was then before them in His flesh and blood. But enough. We do not think that Evangelical Churchmen will find this book helpful.

A. W. PARSONS.

#### "LORD SHAFTESBURY."

*By Florence Higham. S.C.M. Press. 6/-.*

Those who read Mrs. Higham's earlier book, "Faith of our Fathers", will open this volume with an anticipation which will be matched by its realisation. Although this study is not a full-length biography, it is fuller than a short sketch. It is what it claims to be—"A Portrait." A portrait, however, must depict its subject with insight, truthfulness, sympathy, and that subtle quality which can reveal a character in its strength or its weakness. The portrait must also have a background which is related to the life and character of the sitter.

All these qualities are brought together in this portrait of one of the noblest Christian gentlemen of the nineteenth century. He is portrayed as a man of firm principles and earnest religious convictions, which were grounded upon the revelation of God in Christ and in Holy Scripture. Shaftesbury's burning passion was the betterment of his fellowmen who were suffering agonies under a

system dominated by the cruel principles of unbridled *Laissez-faire*. The background of the picture has been painted equally faithfully, and reveals a period, regarding certain aspects of which no Englishman can be proud. To us, it seems impossible that Shaftesbury should have had to fight so long and so doggedly to secure a decent standard of life for the workers of the land. The portrait of this devout, Christian humanitarian has been drawn with vivid strokes, striking colours, and dark shades, and readers will want to know more of the man's religious convictions which inspired his efforts for men. The background of his labours, sketched as vividly as is the personal portrait, will invite fuller investigation after the manner of Arthur Bryant's study of the industrial aspects of those years in his "Years of Victory" and "English Saga".

Satisfying as is the portrait, it must be said that a few criticisms of his religious background are not just. Shaftesbury was an evangelical of the evangelicals, and the company in which he found his inspiration is described as composed of "sound, if uncritical, members of the Church of England." (p.33); yet these are the very men who from a spiritual point of view turned the Church of England "upside down". It is said that "the Evangelical framework of his faith saddled Shaftesbury with a creed, less enlightened than that which his own life proclaimed" (p.96); and again, that "it would be idle to deny . . . that in many ways his Evangelical approach gave Shaftesbury a narrow vision" (p.94). If, however, the dictum of the New Testament is true, that a tree is known by its fruits, these observations need drastic revision, for the inspiration Shaftesbury gained for his humanitarian works was fostered in that movement which Overton declares was "the strongest force" in the Church of England throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century. If the book reaches a second edition, it is to be hoped that Mrs. Higham will endeavour to correct what we feel to be an unjust judgment. The "portrait," however, presents us with a pleasing picture of a great and good man.

E.H.

#### THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST: A DEVOTIONAL STUDY.

*By the Rev. Canon Charles Smyth. Longmans, 1945. 2/6.*

This is an admirable book, not, apparently, intended for those who have no experience of Christ, but rather for the Christian who is anxious to enlarge his vision and to deepen his devotion to our Lord as a living Person.

The author has previously given us many historical studies of real value, and, in the book before us, he has made a wide exploration of the literature of many centuries dealing with the subject of friendship. References to and quotations from this literature are frequent in every chapter. Anyone who desires to follow the subject further, and who has access to a good library, will find the book an excellent guide. We do not think that the author exaggerates in the least degree when he claims "to be blazing a new trail." On the other hand we certainly do not agree with him when he describes his work as "crude, pedestrian, amateurish."

The first two chapters are taken up with an analysis of the quality of human friendship: that is, of friendship between man and man. The central portion of the book is most valuable, for it traces fully the Gospel teaching as to what is implied in the friendship of Christ with man and of man with Christ. The Friendships of Jesus with individuals are passed in careful review, and the treatment is always thorough and reverent. We note a fine passage in the concluding chapter—"In Christ is ultimate wisdom, final truth; in Him alone is the complete and perfect fulfilment of the intellectual quest: He holds, because He is, the answer to all my intellectual problems, and some day I shall fully know that answer when I behold Him face to face."

We thoroughly recommend this book as likely to enrich both mind and heart of the thoughtful reader.

D. TAYLOR WILSON.

#### IN OUR TONGUES.

*Edited by J. P. Stevenson. S.P.C.K. 5/-.*

Mr. Stevenson in his introduction to this book mentions two criticisms which are commonly made against the Church. One is that the language in which we present the Gospel is stilted and unreal, and unrelated to the world to-day. The other is the lack of a sense of wonder in our proclamation of the glorious news of the Gospel. Miss Dorothy Sayers has said in one of her books that it has been left to Christians to lay upon Jesus Christ "the reproach of insipidity".



The contributors to this volume can certainly not be accused of insipidity in their treatment of the great matters of religion. They are all men well versed in speaking to the man in the ranks, and they speak in a language that he can understand. The contributors include C. S. Lewis, Dr. G. F. McCleod, Dr. Welch, and Canon Cockin. Some of the addresses were delivered to men in the desert, some in Padre's Hours, some in broadcast talks. O.R.C.

### THE BIRTH OF JUDAISM.

*By Dorothy Batho, B.D., S.Th. National Society and S.P.C.K. 5/-.*

Now that Scripture is to become a subject for instruction in all schools and for teachers' examinations, it is well that the Church should give time and thought to the writing of suitable text books.

The late Miss Dorothy Batho has produced a book which should be widely used for Old Testament instruction. Her work is not an Old Testament History, but it takes the relevant facts from it and weaves them into an excellent study of the origin of Judaism.

The Hebrews are placed in their right perspective amongst the nations of antiquity. Materially, they were a comparatively unimportant people. Spiritually, their influence on subsequent civilisation can scarcely be over-emphasised. The writer points out the difference between the way the Old Testament historians wrote their history and the modern method. In the former case, the writers interpreted events to show that God was over-ruling men and nations for His own purpose for man. Modern historians treat their subject objectively and connect events more externally.

The ability to see God's hand in the world of time differentiates the Old Testament prophets from secular historians. Thus the Old Testament gives a unique point of view which we can accept or reject, but the authoress shows that this point of view is eminently reasonable, and that the prophets were men, who being in close contact with God, received Divine illumination.

The book is well written, contains a good index and many maps. There is also a series of photogravures which add value to the work, e.g., the Tel-el-Amarna Tablet. Both teachers and students will find the book very valuable for examination purposes. It is neither too critical nor too factual.

G. G. DAWSON

### "WILSON CARLILE, THE LAUGHING CAVALIER OF CHRIST."

*By Sidney Dark. James Clarke and Co. 10/6.*

Any book by Sidney Dark is bound to be interesting: this latest volume from his pen is not an exception. In this case, too, he had a subject which, itself, could hardly avoid being attractive. Yet, it is questionable whether Sidney Dark was quite the right person to be responsible for a life of the Founder and Chief of the Church Army. As Dean Matthews points out in the Foreword, the heart of Carlile's work, before and after he founded the Church Army, was his Evangelicalism; his biographer's sympathies do not run especially in that direction. Mr. Dark is himself conscious of another point in which their sympathies diverged: although Carlile did such excellent work in the realm of social reform—prisons, housing, etc.—he was insistent that nothing less than the conversion of the individual was the primary aim. A third and more general criticism of this volume is justified: too much of it is concerned with Sidney Dark's own opinions on various subjects.

Throughout the book are passages and statements to which the Evangelical will take exception or which he will query, and he will wonder why the author is so concerned to drag in Roman Catholics, saints, etc. Why, for example, does he, quite unnecessarily quote, on housing, Archbishop Griffin? Our own bishops have made equally decisive pronouncements. Why does he constantly drag in Roman Catholic saints for comparison with Carlile, whose sympathies were wide certainly, but not particularly in that direction? We think too that Carlile's "sacramentalism" is somewhat exaggerated. Oddly enough the passage quoted from Archbishop Laud's last will and testament could have been used by a definite Evangelical. But Laud is obviously one of Sidney Dark's heroes, though this hardly excuses the use of the well-worn plea that Laud died for the English Church. Competent historians would not endorse that. J.B.