

look upon Park Street as their spiritual home. And so we await the pages in the history of the church which it will be their privilege to unfold to another generation.

P. M. BURDITT.

*Yorkshire United Independent College*, by K. W. Wadsworth.  
(Independent Press, 8s. 6d.)

In preparation for the bicentenary of its foundation, which falls in 1956, the Rev. K. W. Wadsworth, one of its former students, has written this history of the Congregational College in Bradford. The author has worked hard at his sources, and pleasantly as well as competently tells the story of the early Yorkshire Dissenting Academies, and their successors, setting them in the social, political and religious background of the times. The present College was opened in 1877, and had a flying start with A. M. Fairbairn as Principal. In 1888, by which time Fairbairn had moved to Oxford, the Rotherham Congregational College united with the Bradford College, though not without much heart-searching, as we should expect. Since then the Bradford College has had its flourishing and declining periods, and Mr. Wadsworth conveys the impression that its future has recently been the subject of debate. The decision has been taken to continue its work, and the hope of Yorkshire Baptists as of Congregationalists is that the decision will be abundantly justified in coming years. The interest of the story would have been increased if Mr. Wadsworth had told us more about the theological outlook of the institutions about which he writes, and if he had told us also of the work done by men trained at Bradford. There is a slip on page 70. The B.M.S. was founded in 1792 not 1793.

*Tyndale Echoes*. (J. W. Arrowsmith, Ltd., Bristol, 5s.)

This is a beautiful little book, both in content and format. It consists of extracts from the prayers and sermons of Dr. Richard Glover, Minister of Tyndale Church, Bristol, 1869-1911. The book breathes the author's serene faith in the goodness and love of God, and is particularly suitable to put into the hands of the sick or troubled. Many who have seen photographic representations of Dr. Glover will wish that there had been one in this little book.

JOHN O. BARRETT.

## Believer's Baptism and Confirmation

AT a time when the nature and significance of Baptism have once again come to the forefront of theological discussion, modern Baptists have tended to give undue attention to Karl Barth's rediscovery of some of the New Testament truths about Baptism which in all modesty we can claim to have known for some considerable time. For that reason, we have probably underestimated the very interesting developments which have taken place in Anglican circles in regard to the meaning of Confirmation. If, with a great deal of modern Baptist apologetic, we insist that the essential point in our Baptist witness is not the retention of an external rite for antiquarian reasons but the safeguarding of a certain conception of the church as the "gathered community," we must ask ourselves whether ours is the only way of securing a "fellowship of believers." Does our insistence that Baptism and personal faith are inseparable really matter if the ultimate result is the same, namely conversion and personal committal to God in Christ? Plausible as this sounds, it cannot conceal the difference between the Baptist and the Anglican conceptions of the Church. Whatever attempts individual Anglicans may make to link Confirmation with a more personal appropriation of the Gospel, the fact remains that the vast majority of Anglicans will not admit that faith, in the sense of intelligent conviction, is an indispensable requisite of church membership.

If some Anglicans feel that this is too one-sided a statement, the answer must be that the theological confusion concerning the nature of Confirmation readily lends itself to such misinterpretation. The Roman view is that Baptism in infancy constitutes a complete act of initiation with Confirmation as a rite of strengthening when the Holy Spirit is given, not for regeneration but for the fortifying of the Christian in the struggle against sin and the living of the Christian life.<sup>1</sup> This view seems to have prevailed even in the Protestant communions until quite recently.<sup>2</sup> This attempt to give to infant Baptism the full spiritual significance it has for believer's Baptism runs into great difficulties both psychological and biblical. "The transfer of adult conditions to the child (may I repeat?) led to all kinds of theosophic speculations about the implanting of a germ of the new life to be long latent in the soul. Theories teemed, handling the darkest region of natural mysticism or psychological obscurity."<sup>3</sup>

There are recent signs, however, of an attempt to rethink the theological significance of Confirmation. The Book of Common Order, 1940, of the Church of Scotland includes the following elements in Confirmation:—

1. The ratification or confirmation of baptismal vows, including public confession of faith.
2. The confirmation of the candidate by the Holy Spirit, through the prayer and imposition of hands (or elevation in blessing) of the minister.
3. The formal act of admission to the Lord's table.<sup>4</sup>

This includes the three elements which Baptists too have always regarded as essential—public confession of faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the admission to the Lord's table, which normally follows Baptism in a Baptist church. Our chief misgiving concerns the first point, namely the ratification or confirmation of baptismal vows. These vows were not, of course, made in the first place by the person who now proclaims his faith at Confirmation. They were made by proxies or sponsors. But does this really matter? If these vows now become the expression of the personal faith of the confirmed candidate, what more can be expected? Baptists would not wish to question the reality of faith in such a candidate whose Confirmation obviously expressed his personal repentance and faith. Nevertheless, it is a confusing of the issue because this is not how Baptism is understood in the New Testament and, whatever the theological theory may be, the connection of faith and Baptism is not clearly established in the minds of many by such a practice.

Dom Gregory Dix has recently developed an emphasis found in some earlier Anglican writers by his insistence that water Baptism "incorporates a man into that Body (that is the church) from the eternal point of view, but the gift of the 'Spirit' in Confirmation is what makes him a living member of that Body within time. Thus only the confirmed may take part in the Eucharist, which is the vital act of the Body in time."<sup>5</sup> To an outsider, this looks like an attempt to have the best of both worlds—the full spiritual significance of believer's Baptism with the retention of infant Baptism. This leads to some curious conclusions. Confirmation is here made to coincide with the gift of the Spirit, presumably given for the first time at this point. Infant Baptism incorporates the child into the church from "the eternal point of view," even though he remains without the Spirit until the moment of confirmation. Baptists themselves have never been as rigorous as this. We have never said that the Spirit is absent until the moment of Baptism, though we have contended that the repentance and faith which precedes Baptism makes possible a bestowing of the Spirit not otherwise given. The conclusion to be drawn from this Anglican apologetic is that "the meaning that the Western church has tried to impose on infant Baptism, with doubtful success, should be reserved for Confirmation regarded as the second phase in the whole Christian rite of initiation."<sup>6</sup>

It might be replied by Anglicans who hold this view that the difference between our conception of the gathered church and the Anglican view is not a real antithesis. The child at Baptism is incorporated into Christ and becomes a member of the Kingdom, but only at Confirmation does he first adopt his vows as the expression of his personal faith and only then is he admitted to Communion. Is this not in fact what happens in a Baptist church? The stage of repentance and personal faith marks the entry into full membership of the Christian fellowship with the enjoyment of all the privileges and benefits thereof, including that of attending the Lord's Supper. But what is the position of the child in the Anglican church between infant Baptism and Confirmation? Would Dom Gregory Dix say he is not a member of the Church, even though in some sense incorporated into the Kingdom? Baptists would not hesitate to answer this in the affirmative, since we do not equate the Church and the Kingdom and for us to say that a child is not a member of the Church is not to declare it to be outside God's love and care: unless we are thoroughgoing Augustinians, in which case it is doubtful whether Baptist principles can be successfully grafted on to such a theological basis.

Presumably there may come a point when actual sin and wilful rebellion against God may put a person outside the Kingdom. But this is true on any view of the Church. No one maintains that infant Baptism necessitates repentance and faith when the age of Confirmation is reached. Nor do Baptists deny that children may, as they grow, fall away, although Jesus said of them: "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." The mysterious gift of freedom, which is the mark of the growing personality, make possible the denial of God and His purpose for the individual life.

Theoretically it may be admitted that Confirmation might come to signify repentance, faith and regeneration, in which case the spiritual content of the act would be the same as we believe to attach to believer's Baptism. Nevertheless, the history of the Church seems to prove that the retention of infant Baptism has made it extremely difficult to give this full and unambiguous meaning to Confirmation, apart from the manifest disadvantage of using the rite of Baptism in a sense nowhere found in the New Testament. The suggestion that infant Baptism may not be admission to full membership of the Church, since it does not include participation in the Lord's Supper, hardly seems to be borne out by Anglican comment. The Bishop of Derby points out that Confirmation is not a matter of theological necessity as far as First Communion is concerned, since the rubric provides for the admission to Holy Communion of those who are "ready and desirous to be confirmed."<sup>7</sup> Commenting on the view of Dix and others, he goes on to say: "yet if the logical reference is to be drawn, and if it were to be

maintained that a Christian who had been baptized, but who was as yet unconfirmed, had been incompletely baptized, I should for my part find it impossible to agree. Baptism, I should maintain, is in Western usage a sacrament complete in itself; and in the New Testament also (despite the evidence for the use in some instances, and probably in some areas, of the laying on of hands as an associated or added rite) the primary emphasis is upon Baptism, rather than upon anything corresponding to what has come to be called Confirmation."<sup>8</sup> Professor A. M. Ramsey declares: "It is emphatically the teaching of the Prayer Book that in the rite of Holy Baptism we are made members of Christ and of the Church which is His body."<sup>9</sup> As Professor Lampe himself points out, the Dix thesis would not only make "Confirmation a sacrament in the fullest sense (which the Anglican articles deny) but the great sacrament without whose reception no man could call himself a Christian."<sup>10</sup>

Baptists cannot forget too that Confirmation is the Bishop's special prerogative, and the above theory would not only make Ordination depend upon the episcopacy for its validity but also the first full entrance of the Christian believer into membership of the Church. It thus seems as if this attempt to give to Confirmation the full spiritual significance of believer's Baptism is by no means as yet a matter of common consent within the Anglican church itself. Baptists will thoroughly agree with Dr. Rawlinson, Professor Lampe and others that Baptism is itself a rite of complete initiation and that the New Testament nowhere suggests Confirmation as completing it or being itself the condition of full entrance into the Church. Yet are they themselves not in difficulty by such insistence, for they must defend infant Baptism as a complete rite of initiation on their premises and they cannot therefore give to Baptism its full significance for the believer without a doctrine of baptismal regeneration as applied to the child; a view to which they are obviously not attracted. Dix and others evidently want to find a place for repentance, faith and the gift of the Spirit as conditions of church membership, but they needlessly complicate the question and have recourse to very dubious argumentation by refusing to associate these things, as the New Testament does, with Baptism itself.

Nor is the attempt of P. T. Forsyth, writing more than a generation ago from a very different point of view, any more successful. He too thinks that in this matter we may have the best of both worlds. "Baptism unto faith has as good a right in the principle of the gospel as baptism upon faith."<sup>11</sup> His constantly reiterated criticism that the Baptists are individualistic because of their insistence on conversion reveals a serious misunderstanding of the Baptist position. Our emphasis on the necessity of repentance, faith and conversion does not exclude the priority of the divine

grace or the "objective" nature of the divine redemptive act in Christ, nor have Baptists considered conversion as separate from that incorporation into the Christian fellowship which the New Testament everywhere emphasizes. Nor have we denied the importance of Christian nurture whether in the Christian home or in the Church.

Whether the truths for which Forsyth contends can only be secured by separating Confirmation from Baptism is more than doubtful. While we are sympathetic to all attempts to make Confirmation more expressive of personal repentance and faith, most Baptists would still feel that the effort suffers from its manifest departure from the New Testament tradition. This is not because we deny the divine guidance of the Church under new circumstances, or cling to the New Testament in a mere antiquarian sense, but that the separation of Baptism from its spiritual presuppositions has led to obvious abuses in the church practice of infant Baptism and has also resulted in the theological confusion as to the real meaning of Confirmation to which the above discussion affords ample testimony.

R. F. ALDWINKLE.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Spiritus Sanctus . . . in confirmatione augmentum praestat ad gratiam . . . post baptismum confirmamur ad pugnam." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, Pt. III, Q. LXXII, A.1. Cf. Rawlinson, A. E. J., *Christian Initiation*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Turner, H. W., Confirmation, cf. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. V, No. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Forsyth, P. T., *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 199.

<sup>4</sup> *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. V, No. 2, p. 150.

<sup>5</sup> *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 155.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> Rawlinson, A. E. J., *Christian Initiation*, p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Lampe, G. W. H., *The Seal of the Spirit*, p. VII.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XIII.

<sup>11</sup> Forsyth, P. T., *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 211.

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*Private Prayer: Suggestions and Helps*, by A. Herbert Gray and George Barclay. (Independent Press, 9d.)

This excellent little booklet divides prayer into Adoration, Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition and Intercession, with a note, suggested readings and prayers on each. By way of preface it has an act of recollection which will be found an invaluable help in setting the mind in the right direction for prayer.

DENIS LANT.