

The Anglican Doctrine of Confirmation in the Sixteenth Century.

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

CONFIRMATION occupies no mean place in the great controversy with Rome which fills the annals of sixteenth century church history. The name of the ordinance has survived unchanged, but the rite itself, as we now have it, is very different from the unreformed rite both in its dominant purpose and in its contents. Despite the fact that it had been given the status of a sacrament, the administration of Confirmation during the three centuries preceding the Reformation was extremely careless, frequently being left to suffragans to perform. In some areas, periods as long as seven years elapsed between the visits of a bishop for confirmation, with the result that large numbers of children, unprepared and uninstructed, assembled when the bishop did appear and the confirmation was frequently conducted in a hasty and unseemly fashion. No attempt was made to secure competent knowledge of the Christian faith on the part of the candidates and the matter of the rite was unction which, with its accompanying ceremonies, was far removed from any scriptural or apostolic model. The renewed study of the Scriptures in the early sixteenth century had revealed the great contrast that existed between the first days of Christianity and its developed form with which the students were familiar. It was inevitable that men who had already come to hold a critical view of contemporary church life, should judge it by the undeveloped standards of the New Testament and forget that the sixteenth century was not the first century.

Tyndale was the first writer to express vigorous criticism of the rite of confirmation as a human ordinance. In the *Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528) he wrote, "After that the bishops had left preaching, then feigned they this dumb ceremony of confirmation, to have somewhat at the least way whereby they might reign over their dioceses"¹; and again, "that they call confirmation, the people call bishopping. They think that if the bishop butter the child on the forehead that it is safe. They think that the work maketh safe and likewise suppose they of anointing. Now is this false doctrine verily."² These criticisms of prevailing practice were evidently becoming more widespread in succeeding years, for in 1536, the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury presented to the Upper House a document under the title, *Mala Dogmata*, containing a list of erroneous doctrines which were being printed, preached and professed in the realm. One of these erroneous doctrines is "that children ought not in any wise to be confirmed of the bishops afore they come to the age of discretion".³ During 1537, in the course of discussions for a religious formulary, which might not only give unity and peace in the realm, but also help the King in his projected alliance with Lutheran princes, certain leading questions were put to a number of bishops and other divines. In response to the question, "Whether this Sacrament be a Sacrament of

the New Testament instituted by Christ or not," in face of the implied assumption that the rite was a sacrament many felt obliged to suppose a direct dominical institution inferred from apostolic practice. The most interesting reply came from Cranmer who asserted emphatically, "There is no place in Scripture that declareth this sacrament to be instituted of Christ". He added further, the significant point, "the church useth chrisma for the exterior sign, but the Scripture maketh no mention thereof."⁴ This opinion was the result of an appeal to the facts recorded in the New Testament which led him to note the wide divergence of contemporary practice from Biblical example. Similar views had been expressed by four other bishops, Foxe, Shaxton, Goodrich and Latimer. Hilsey of Rochester defined Confirmation as a "godly ceremony" but not of such necessity, neither of such effect as it is taken for at this time, since it was "begun by Holy Fathers"':s *The Institution of a Christian Man* or "Bishops' Book" as it came to be called, issued later in the same year, declared, "there is a difference in dignity and necessity" between Matrimony, Confirmation, Holy Orders and Extreme Unction and "the other three sacraments". Confirmation was described in these words :

"The Apostles used to go unto the people after they were baptised, and by their prayer, and laying of their hands upon them, did give and confer unto them the Holy Ghost . . . the Holy Fathers of the primitive church, taking occasion and founding themselves upon the said acts and deeds of the apostles . . . thought it very expedient to ordain that all Christian people should, after their baptism, be presented to their bishops, to the intent that by their prayers and laying of their hands upon them and consigning of them with the holy chrisim, they should be confirmed."⁶

The implications of this statement, despite its generalisations, are clear and important. There is, first, the implied citing of scriptural precedent in the apostolic laying on of hands upon the baptized for the gift of the Holy Ghost. The divine institution of Confirmation is expressly denied since the rite, in origin and persistence, is said to have arisen from the example of apostles and the holy fathers, who thought it *expedient* that Christian people should be confirmed after their baptism. Such an assertion was only possible if the compilers had come to the conclusion that Confirmation was a church ordinance and not a sacrament of divine obligation. Further, the explicit mention of laying on of hands in association with the use of chrisim, marked the influence of scriptural study and the beginning of a tendency which culminated in the substitution of the laying on of hands for anointing with chrisim in the Anglican rite. A further revision of the Bishops' Book was issued in 1543, under the title of *A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man* and commonly called the "King's Book". The article on Confirmation speaks of the rite in the same terms as the Bishops' Book, implying that it is merely an ecclesiastical institution.

Bishop Jewel, who may be regarded as the representative Anglican divine of the early Elizabethan period, has an interesting discussion of Confirmation in his "Treatise of the Sacraments" published in 1583, several years after his death. Before he expounds the meaning of Confirmation in the Church of England and defends it against its Puritan opponents, he gives a careful criticism of the prevailing un-

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reformed practice, suggesting the necessary reasons for the changes made in the English rite. There is nothing so good and holy that it may not come to be abused in the course of time as has happened with Confirmation. "Time rusteth and consumeth all things and maketh many a thing to prove naught in the end which was first devised for good." The indictment consisted of five counts: first, the rite was administered in a strange tongue that no man might understand what was meant. Next "they received to confirmation such children and so young as were not able to make profession of their faith; so that the infant promised he knew not what". Thirdly, the bishop in effect despised the rite which he professed to honour, because he "ratified and confirmed where there was nothing to be confirmed; he set to his seal where there was nothing to be sealed". Fourthly, there was great abuse in the manner of administration and in particular with the form of the rite. "' *Consigno te . . . signo crucis, et confirmo te chrismate salutis*' It agreeth not with a Christian faith to give the power of salvation into oil. He that seeketh salvation in oil, loseth his salvation in Christ and hath no part in the Kingdom of God. Oil for the belly and for necessary uses of life. It is no fit instrument, without commandment or promise by the Word, to work salvation." Fifthly, "They say confirmation is more honourable than baptism; because any priest may baptize; but confirmation is given only by a bishop or a suffragan. So do they give a greater pre-eminence to confirmation which is devised by man, than to the holy sacrament of baptism which Christ Himself ordained. I need not speak more hereof; the error is so gross, so thick, so sensible and palpable."⁷

These words of Jewel present a restrained, scholarly, but searching criticism of unreformed practice. There were others whose criticisms were expressed with more violence. Thomas Becon who had been chaplain to Cranmer and spent some years in exile during the reign of Queen Mary, employed a sharper pen in making the same points.

"The papists say to such as are witnesses of the child's baptism, 'Ye are bound by the order of our mother, the holy church, to see that this child be confirmed so soon as is possible or as soon as ye hear that the bishop cometh within seven miles of the town, without any further delay'. . . . and what is the confirmation of the children that is used at this present but plain sorcery, legerdemain and all that naught is? The bishop mumbleth a few Latin words over the child, charmeth him, crosseth him, smeareth him with stinking popish oil, and tieth a linen band about the child's neck, and sendeth him home. O Lord God, what a Confirmation of a child's faith is this! Yea, rather what a delusion and mocking is this of the godly, ancient custom in confirming children."⁸

This passage was written during exile when Becon could only witness from afar the restoration in England of the unreformed rite. In 1565, James Calphill, Archdeacon of Colchester and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, published an *Answer to John Martiall* in which he sought to defend the manner of confirming now used in the English church, by pointing to the differences from Roman custom as well as to apostolic precedent. "What promise have they of grace annexed unto their sacrament, unless they have shut the Holy Ghost in their grease-pot."⁹ Such criticisms were not, however, merely the expression of private

views held by individual theologians. They were opinions commonly shared by English Churchmen including the hierarchy. In episcopal injunctions during the reign of Elizabeth, the necessity of fulfilling the duty of catechizing was frequently emphasised¹⁰ and for that purpose, no other catechisms were to be used by clergymen or schoolmasters except one or other of those composed by Nowell, Dean of St. Paul's. This authoritative standing accorded to his catechism, gave to his statements almost an official importance. It can, indeed, be claimed that in this Catechism issued in 1570, we can find the best evidence for the mind of the English church after the settlement of 1559. Under the heading 'Of Sacraments', he passes severe judgment on "another (*i.e.*, Roman) confirmation used of late :

They conveyed a device of their own, that is, that the bishop should not examine children, whether they were skilled in the precepts of religion or no, but that they should anoint young infants unable yet to speak, much less to give any account of their faith ; adjoining also other ceremonies unknown unto the Holy Scripture and the primitive Church. This invention of their's they would needs have to be a Sacrament, and accounted it in manner equal in dignity with baptism ; yea, some of them preferred it also before baptism."¹¹

In 1587, Thomas Rogers published an Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles which was re-published in quarto in 1607, and reprinted six times during the seventeenth century. An abridgment was issued towards the end of the eighteenth century, and the book was valued by many of the early Evangelicals. These facts seem to indicate that a high authority was, for a long period, ascribed to the Exposition. Moreover, since Rogers was a chaplain to Bishop Bancroft, we may assume that he was regarded as a very good churchman. Among the errors which he stigmatises as "dangerous and very damnable doctrine" are the doctrines that "the Holy Ghost is given in full" ; "to say that men cannot be perfect Christians without Popish Confirmation" and "that the grace of Baptism is made perfect".¹² All these criticisms of unreformed practice fall within the general framework of Reformed thinking with its emphasis on repentance and faith as the foundation principles of Christian life and form the background against which must be seen the teaching of the reformed rite itself.

II.

When the first English Prayer Book was authorised in 1549, it bore the marks of years of discussion and criticism of the existing liturgy and its theology. The changes made in the rite of Confirmation, together with the omissions, indicate the doctrine implied.

In the Prayer Books of 1549, 1552 and 1559,¹³ the title of the service is "Confirmation wherein is contained a Catechism for Children", and the catechism is printed as a section of the Order for Confirmation. The first rubric gives the reasons for this change : "To the end that Confirmation may be ministered to the more edifying of such as shall receive it . . . it is thought good that none hereafter shall be confirmed, but such as can say in their mother tongue the Articles of the Faith, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments . . . and this

order is most convenient to be observed for divers considerations". The word, *hereafter*, in this passage gives the key to the way in which the whole Order is to be interpreted. It is plain that the compilers deliberately intended a change in the usage to which English churchmen had hitherto been accustomed and they justified this change on the scriptural ground of the necessary edification of those who should participate in it. If the criticisms of Tyndale, Cranmer, Jewel, Nowell and Rogers of the unreformed administration of confirmation were justified there was evident need of improvement in the manner of its use, even if the structure of the rite had remained untouched.

In the first place, infant confirmation was abandoned by the insertion in the service itself of the catechism, "that is to say an Instruction to be learned of every child before he be brought to be confirmed of the Bishop". This change was emphasised by another rubric which spoke of the time "when children come to the years of discretion and have learned what their godfathers and godmothers promised for them in baptism, they may then themselves, with their own mouth and with their own consent, openly before the Church, ratify and confess the same". The open profession of faith and obedience at Confirmation formed no part of the medieval service, but it is a characteristic of the Lutheran Church Orders which had appeared some years previously at Cassel in 1539, and in Brandenburg in 1540. It is when the English rite of 1549, 1552 and 1559, is compared with the rite in the Sarum Pontifical that it becomes clear how salient a feature instruction, leading to profession of faith, has been made in the English service. It is true that the question addressed by the bishop to the candidates did not appear until 1662. But the intention of the service is declared in the prefatory rubrics wherein it is stated that the children "being instructed in Christ's religion, should openly profess their own faith and promise to be obedient to the will of God". The intention appears to have been that "the Bishop or such as he shall appoint", should at the time of the Confirmation "appose" the candidates at his discretion in certain questions of the catechism, thereby enabling them to profess personal faith and obedience. The separation of the catechism from the Order of Confirmation in 1662, and the insertion of the question addressed by the Bishop to the candidates made no essential change in the intention of the rite, but merely simplified and improved the procedure, leaving the task of catechising to the regular teaching ministry of the clergy.

Secondly, the sacramental character of Confirmation was denied by the omission of the anointing with chrism, hitherto the matter of the rite. It can hardly be maintained that the omission is not prohibitive and leaves the use of chrism to the discretion of the bishop, since in the Pontifical its use is expressly directed and, until 1549, this was the only service book which contained the words and rubrics of the rite. The absence of any form of service for the blessing of chrism from the Prayer Book confirms the intention of the compilers that chrism should not be used. Moreover, the practice of the Church of England since 1559, serves as an authoritative commentary on the meaning of this particular rubrical omission. In the "*Consultatio*" of Hermann of Cologne, the use of chrism was declared to be superfluous, a sign that has been superstitiously abused and without the authority of

primitive antiquity. In its place, the symbol of the imposition of hands was to be used since "it sufficed for the Apostles and the more ancient Fathers".¹⁴ No such explanatory rubric was inserted in the English rite but the same change was made and the Bishop was directed to lay his hand upon the head of the candidates: "And thus shall he do to every child, one after another". In the second prayer book, this portion of the Service of 1549, in which the laying on of hands was accompanied by the signing of the forehead of the candidates with the cross, was omitted and a new prayer inserted; "Defend O Lord, this child with thy heavenly grace", prefaced by the rubric, "Then the Bishop shall lay his hand upon every child severally". Hereafter the matter of the rite was to be the imposition of hands only, a custom which could be called Apostolic, and which was allowed by ample Biblical precedent. Doubtless there were many who deplored the omission of the anointing of infants, having come to suppose some special efficacy in the chrism. Consequently, another prefatory rubric was added to assure anyone who might think "any detriment shall come to children by deferring of their confirmation, he shall know for truth that it is certain by God's Word that children being baptized (if they depart out of this life in their infancy) are undoubtedly saved".

Thirdly, the spiritual purpose of the rite was declared to be the strengthening and confirming of the candidates "with the inward unction of thy Holy Ghost unto everlasting life", that is with such gifts as they need for the exercise of adult Christian discipleship. It is ministered to them that be baptized, having received the forgiveness of all their sins "that, by imposition of hands and prayer, they may receive strength and defence against all temptations to sin and the assaults of the world and the devil". Since this was the purpose of the rite, the rubric went on to assert that the best age for Confirmation was adolescence, that time when, "partly by the frailty of their own flesh, partly by the assaults of the world and the devil, they begin to be in danger to fall into sin". The emphasis of the whole Order, particularly in 1552, was on prayer in the commending of the candidates to the guiding and empowering hand of God. It was assumed that they had come forward with due understanding of the faith and in honest profession of obedience, and the laying on of hands (after the example of the holy apostles) was "to certify them of the favour and gracious goodness of God toward them". The post confirmation prayer, which was a new feature in 1549, was adapted from a longer collect in Hermann's rite and emphasises the fact that the service is primarily, in Bishop Burnet's phrase "a gesture in prayer".¹⁵

The doctrine of Confirmation expressly taught or implied by the English Prayer Book was, therefore, very different from that of the unreformed rite. Previously, Confirmation was administered in Latin, with chrism, to infants, as a sacrament, with no preparation or intelligent acceptance of obligation on the part of the candidate and no distinct and separate laying on of hands by the minister of the rite. "Hereafter," that is, after 1549, none were to be confirmed except they had been prepared, the service was in English and confirmation was by the imposition of hands and not by anointing. The principal concern of the reformers appears to have been the pastoral requirements of the situation consequent upon universal infant baptism. They found good

reason to retain that ancient practice, but it could only be used with becoming seriousness, if sponsorship were made a reality and the children taught the meaning of the baptismal obligations and led to ratify and confirm the same for themselves. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."¹⁶ In all these changes the English Reformers were at one with the Reformers on the Continent,¹⁷ who denied the sacramental character of Confirmation, emphasised the need of previous instruction and restored the laying on of hands in place of the chrism. The principal difference was the retention of the bishop as the minister of the rite in England whereas on the Continent, the parish parson was the normal minister. But there were no reformed theologians in the sixteenth century who supposed that this difference of minister witnessed to any essential difference in doctrine or in practice.

III.

In the light of this discussion of the rite, we turn to consider the doctrine of Confirmation as it was understood by the Church of England in the sixteenth century, both in its official formularies, and in the writings of its leading divines, which present a sufficient commentary on the sense in which those formularies were understood by the men who bore the responsibility for their promulgation. The XXVth Article expressly denies that Confirmation is a Sacrament and leaves us to decide whether it has "grown of the corrupt following of the Apostles", or whether it is a "state of life allowed in the Scriptures". The suggestion has been made that Confirmation in the official language of the time, meant distinctly the rite of anointing and not the laying on of hands¹⁸ so that it is anointing and not laying on of hands which is included in the Article among those things which have grown from "the corrupt following of the Apostles". If this suggestion be true, it only serves to underline the point that deliberate changes were made in the matter and the meaning of the rite. Certainly it is true, both that the Reformers conceived themselves to be returning to a more primitive practice and also that they regarded Confirmation as a valuable ordinance. For this reason it is more likely that the rite is included in the states of life allowed in the Scriptures, since its salient feature was the use of a Scriptural symbolism and its purpose the decent public recognition as full members of the Church of those who had demonstrated their competent knowledge of the faith, and had publicly testified their personal belief.

The repudiation of the sacramental character of Confirmation which was a feature common to all the Reformers was not the occasion for a despal of Confirmation, but arose from the high regard in which Sacraments were held. Only Baptism and the Lord's Supper were accorded this status because they were rites commanded by the Lord with a promise annexed to their due performance. Bishop Jewel sets out this view very clearly :

"When I say a sacrament, I mean a ceremony commanded by God in express words. For God only hath the authority to institute a sacrament. Sacraments are confirmations and seals of the promises of God and are not of the earth, but from heaven . . . Augustine said : '*accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*'. Join the word to the creature and it is made a sacrament. This

creature or element is visible as are water, bread and wine. The word which must be joined is the commandment and institution of Christ ; without the word and the commandment and institution it is no sacrament. I protest that the use and order of confirmation rightly used, is profitable and necessary in the Church and in no way to be broken. But it . . . is not a sacrament. Christ did not command it : He spake no word of it . . . You shall never find that he commanded confirmation or that he ever made any special promise to it. Therefore, you may conclude that it is no sacrament. Otherwise, being rightly used, it is a good ceremony and well ordained of our ancient fathers."¹⁹

To exalt Confirmation to the rank of a sacrament was to ignore this twofold test of the dominical command and the word of promise, and to set the action of the Church, however necessary or laudable, on a level with the action of Christ. In practice, in the sixteenth century, to judge from the complaints made by the Reformers, Confirmation was more highly esteemed than Baptism, largely because it could only be administered by a bishop with solemn and elaborate ceremony. "So they give greater pre-eminence to Confirmation which is devised by man, than to the holy sacrament of baptism which Christ ordained."²⁰ The appeal to Scripture showed not only the absence of any dominical word about Confirmation, but also remarkably little emphasis upon its use in apostolic times. The only conclusion to be drawn from these facts showed that it was an ecclesiastical ordinance and, therefore, an ordinance whose form and matter could be changed by the church if need should arise. Baptism was thus to be rescued from its position of inferiority and given its proper status as a gospel sacrament, the sacrament of regeneration. Jewel himself speaks of Baptism "as our regeneration or new birth".²¹

Some years later the Puritan criticism of Confirmation, expressed by Cartwright in his controversy with Whitgift, alleged that restricting its administration to the bishop was the means "whereby the popish opinion which esteemeth it above baptism is confirmed . . . and therein great cause of suspicion is given to think that baptism is not so precious a thing as confirmation". To this Whitgift replied :

"You know that Confirmation now used in this Church is not to make baptism perfect, but partly to try how the godfathers and godmothers have performed that which was enjoined them when the children were baptized ; partly that the children themselves (now being at the years of discretion and having learned what their godfathers and godmothers promised for them in baptism) may, with their own mouth and with their own consent, openly before the church, ratify and confirm the same, and also promise that, by the grace of God they will evermore endeavour themselves, faithfully to observe and keep such things as they, by their own mouth and confession have assented unto. . . ."²²

He pointed out further, how impossible it was to suppose that Confirmation was in any way exalted over baptism when the last rubric before the Confirmation service was considered, which asserted that no harm would come to children if their confirmation were deferred beyond what had previously been the customary period.

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There are other witnesses to be summoned who will show that a deep concern for the right understanding of Baptism and the Lord's Supper was bound up with the denial of sacramental status to Confirmation. The Homilies approved in 1563, for use by "all parsons, vicars and curates", have an official authority beyond the authority of any single theologian. The "Homily on Common Prayer and Sacraments" teaches the doctrine of two only Gospel sacraments, and includes a statement clearly based upon the XXVth Article: "No man ought to take these (Orders, Matrimony, Confirmation) for sacraments in such signification and meaning as the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are, but either for godly states of life . . . or else judged to be such ordinances as may make for the . . . edification of Christ's Church."²³ The Catechism of Dean Nowell was also endorsed by the considered judgment of his contemporaries, and it is instructive to note that the ground of his complaint against Roman practice is that it has accounted Confirmation to be equal in dignity with baptism.

"By all means they would that this, their confirmation, should be taken for a certain supplying of baptism, that it should thereby be finished and brought to perfection, as though baptism else were imperfect, and as though children who, in baptism, had put upon them Christ with His benefits, without their confirmation were but half Christians; than which injury, no greater could be done against the divine sacrament, and against God Himself, and Christ our Saviour, the author and founder of the holy sacrament of baptism."²⁴

In expounding Article XXV, Thomas Rogers is equally emphatic in concluding "it is an error that confirmation is a sacrament, because it hath no institution from God which is necessary to all and every sacrament."²⁵ He stigmatises as dangerous and damnable doctrine the notion that "the grace of baptism is made perfect" in Confirmation and adds the pertinent remark, "it savoureth of Donatism to measure the dignity of the sacraments by the worthiness of the ministers".²⁶

When these writers turn to consider the positive value of Confirmation in the Christian life, it is notable that they all suppose it to be an ancient rite, sadly corrupted in the course of the centuries, and which has now been restored by the action of the Prayer Book compilers to its primitive purity and simplicity. Indeed, so convinced were the Anglican Reformers that they were but restoring the godly system of the Primitive Church that they often read back into the early records, the original features of their own policy. Their knowledge of antiquity was inadequate and their historical sense ill-developed. The view of Confirmation in the primitive Church entertained by Bishop Jewel is thus described:

"When the children of the Christians were thus brought up and had learned the religion of Christ, and to walk in the ways of godliness, they were brought to the Church, and by their parents presented unto the bishop, and yielded a reason of their faith openly, before the whole congregation; they professed they would so believe, that they would live and die in that faith. Then the bishop and all the people fell down on their knees and prayed unto God that He would continue the good thing He had begun; and the bishop, laying his hand upon them, commended

them unto God. This was the ratifying of the profession which they made by others at their baptism, and for that cause called Confirmation."²⁷

Dean Nowell has a similar account in which he speaks of parents and schoolmasters in ancient times diligently instructing their children, for which purpose "little books which we name Catechisms were written. After that the children seemed to be sufficiently trained in the principles of our religion, they brought and offered them unto the bishop . . . that they might after baptism, do the same which such as were older, who were also called *Catechumeni* . . . did in old time before or rather at, baptism itself. For the bishop did require and the children did render, reason and account of their religion and faith : and such children as the bishop judged to have sufficiently profited in the understanding of religion he allowed, and laying his hands upon them and blessing them, let them depart. This allowance and blessing of the bishop our men do call Confirmation."²⁸

Rogers describes in the same general way, the origin of Confirmation as "an examination of such as in their infancy had received the sacrament of baptism and were then, being of good discretion, able to yield an account of their belief and to testify with their own mouths . . . which confession being made and a promise of perseverance in the faith by them given, the bishop by sound doctrine, grave advice and godly exhortations, confirmed them in that good profession ; and laying his hands upon them, prayed for the increase of God, His gifts and graces in their minds."²⁹

It may be that these writers all relied on Calvin for their statements about primitive Confirmation, since in his discussion of the subject in the Institutes, he gives a similar imaginary picture of the early use of laying on of hands "done simply by way of benediction . . . which I would like to see restored to its pure use in the present day."³⁰ This view of the essentials of Confirmation, however inaccurate it might be historically, is none the less valuable, for the evidence it yields of the sixteenth century estimate of the ordinance. The supreme importance of instructing the young in the fundamentals of the faith and preparing them for a public confession of faith was everywhere recognised, and led to high regard being paid to its pastoral value by the Elizabethan divines. Only in this way could Infant Baptism be given its evangelical meaning and the personal category of repentance and faith secured in the sacrament. But the method of such instruction was for men to devise and the public confirmation in the faith of those who professed an adequate knowledge of it was also for man to order. The existing order had been a mockery and drastic changes had become necessary. The Apostolic custom of the laying on of hands was restored as a symbolic act of prayer for those who had testified to their faith. The new rite was designed for those who would be brought up in a Christian environment but who would yet need some outward seal upon their personal discipleship. In defending episcopal confirmation against the attacks of Cartwright, Whitgift, after quoting Bucer's admission that the imposition of hands was most fittingly done by those "to whom the chief care of the church is committed", went on to say :

"It cannot be denied that by hearty and earnest prayers, God doth

work these effects in those children that be his ; and hereof imposition of hands is a sign. The ground of this is that promise whereupon all our prayers do depend, that is ' that we shall obtain whatsoever we ask the Father in Christ's name ; neither can you more justly cavil in this respect at the imposition of hands at the confirmation of children than you can do at the same in ordaining of ministers".³¹

When we come to the end of the century and consider the teaching of Hooker in the fifth book, " Of the Laws of the Ecclesiastical Polity ", published in 1597, we find a different manner of treating the subject with the Puritan critics primarily in mind. The conception of the rite set out in the Prayer Book was now commonly accepted as a reformed and scriptural order and the task of Hooker was to defend its retention on Scriptural, historical and reasonable grounds. But it is easy to exaggerate the differences between Hooker and the earlier writers. With them, he refuses to call the rite a sacrament, speaking of it as " the ancient custom of the Church."³² The content of the service he defines by prayer in much the same way as Jewel, Nowell and Rogers ; " With prayers of spiritual and personal benediction the manner hath been in all ages to use imposition of hands as a ceremony betokening our restrained desires to the party whom we present unto God by prayer." For the rest, his discussion is taken up with the question of the separation of Confirmation from Baptism, the Bishop as the only minister and the spiritual gifts associated with the rite.³³ He makes little mention of the examination of candidates, and there is no word about ratification of vows. But these things were not in dispute with his opponents, who valued highly such godly discipline and, since the provision was made for them in the Prayer Book, there was no need to discuss them at any length.

It appears from this examination of the formularies of the Church of England, and the teaching of the earliest Anglican fathers that English Churchmen in the sixteenth century were careful to separate themselves decisively from the current doctrines of the place and value of Confirmation in the Christian life. By their writings as well as by liturgical reform, they sought to deliver the Church from the superstitions and errors they had learned to fear and despise. They made the rite into an occasion of great pastoral significance, laying emphasis upon the teaching and pastoral care necessary for those who should present themselves as candidates for Confirmation. In addition, the personal responsibility of the candidate was strongly emphasized. In this way, a change of historic importance was made in the meaning of Confirmation. There is no trace in antiquity of the ratification by the baptized child, when he has attained an age capable of deliberate choice, of the promises made for him by his sponsors. No change had been made in the meaning or practice of Confirmation when Infant Baptism became the general custom, with the disastrous consequences depicted in the Reformers' criticism of contemporary practice. The Reformation marked the first and on the whole, successful attempt, to bring Confirmation into line with the changed pastoral situation consequent upon universal Infant Baptism. Nor were the Reformers alone³⁴ in desiring the postponement of the age of Confirmation and the revival of the catechumenate in a modified form, to bring Infant Bap-

tism into harmony with the New Testament categories of repentance and faith.

1. Tyndale; Works (Parker Soc.) Vol. 1, p. 274.
2. *Op. cit.* p. 277.
3. Quoted by S. L. Ollard in *Confirmation* (S.P.C.K.) Vol. I., p. 63.
4. Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer (P.S.) p. 80.
5. The Reformation, the Mass and the Priesthood: E. C. Messenger, Vol. I, p. 253.
6. *Ibid.* p. 260.
7. Works, Vol. II. (P.S.) pp. 1124-5.
8. Works (P.S.) "Prayers, etc.," p. 234.
9. Answer to Martiall (P.S.) p. 216.
10. See Ollard in *op. cit.* pp. 98-101.
11. Nowell's Catechism (P.S.) p. 211.
12. The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England: An Exposition of the XXXIX. Articles. Thomas Rogers (P.S.) pp. 254-5.
13. These texts can be found in the Parker Society volumes on the Liturgies of Edward VI. and of Elizabeth.
14. Further Studies in the Prayer Book: J. Dowden, pp. 266-7.
15. Exposition Thirty Nine Articles (1831 Ed.), p. 357.
16. Romans x. 9.
17. See the quotations from continental divines approved by Rogers in his discussion *op. cit.* pp. 251-55.
18. The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism: A. J. Mason, pp. 426-7.
19. Works (P.S.) Vol. II. p. 1125.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 1124.
21. Works (P.S.) Vol. II. p. 1104.
22. Works (P.S.) Vol. III. p. 494.
23. Homilies (1822 edition) p. 317.
24. *Op. cit.*, p. 211. Compare Cranmer's criticism of Roman eucharistic teaching.
25. *Op. cit.*, p. 252.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
27. Works (P.S.) Vol. II. p. 1125.
28. *Op. cit.*, pp. 210-11.
29. *Op. cit.* pp. 252-3.
30. Inst. iv. xix. 4.
31. Works, Vol. III., p. 493.
32. Eccl. Pol. V., lxvi. 1.
33. *Op. cit.*, lxvi. 2, 4, 5-7.
34. See the evidence on Roman regulations for the instruction of children at various councils in the sixteenth century, quoted by Dowden, "Further Studies", pp. 276-8. The development of catechetical instruction for which the Roman Church has become justly famous, is primarily due to the urgent need of meeting the Reformed challenge in the sixteenth century.