

earth as it is in heaven. In this revised form the Church becomes the eschatological community in time.

A caution is always in order, however, in view of the perpetual existence of the Church in temptation—the temptation to transform a divine event into a manageable agency. While the words realization, recapitulation, and participation are, with respect to baptism, decisively important, they cannot be spoken nor their reality anticipated save in deference to the antecedent or prevenient activity of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, baptism in the derivative sense is always something that, strictly speaking, the Church *observes* or *acknowledges* as done, not something it does. Its temptation is always that of supposing that by being in possession of the “sign” it is *eo ipso* in command of the “reality.” For this there is no warrant, as I believe Wesley perceived, and accordingly he veers away from a sacerdotal ecclesiology.

A third consequent respecting baptism is this. Since the meaning of baptism is rendered explicit in the ministry of Christ, baptism replaces forever the sacrifice of “goats and bulls” as the author of Hebrews so clearly understands. The sacrifice of the Temple is superseded and henceforth becomes the wholly enpersonalized sacrifice of “a broken and a contrite heart” open now to larger, and logically if not actually, total obedience. This is justification that looks toward sanctification.

Finally, then, the question presses very hard: not *what* but *when* is baptism? The answer is when God makes it so, and while it might be in the baptism of the infant, preventing grace is, as Wesley divined, not ordinarily so far effectual as that justifying grace is not also a necessity in the process of redemption.

## 6

## Confirmation and the Lay Membership of the Church

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## A

The People of God exists by God's choice, not by man's desire. The claim of the Church of Christ to be the “elect race,” therefore, makes entry into the Church an acknowledgment of God's work rather than an expression of man's decision. The outward sign of entry into the Church is baptism, in which the new member is presented and the grace of God claimed and proclaimed for him. The analogy between Christian baptism and the initiation of the People of God in the Old Testament was perceived by Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians:

You should understand, my brothers, that our ancestors were all under the pillar of cloud, and all of them passed through the Red Sea; and so they all received baptism into the fellowship of Moses in the cloud and sea. . . . And yet, most of them were not accepted by God, for the desert was strewn with their corpses. (I Cor. 10:1-5.) [Scripture quotations in this chapter are from the New English Bible.]

The stress in this passage on the fact that baptism is no guarantee of final acceptance pinpoints the historical analogy to the very beginning of the exodus. Baptism is compared with the moment when God began to lead his people out of Egypt. His call and choice constituted the People of God. The Israelites had not yet become the People of God by conscious decision; that was to happen at Sinai. And not all of them reached Sinai. Paul does not take the analogy as far as this, and we must avoid pressing it too far. It does, however, set forth the difficulty which has been acutely felt in the Church—and more particularly with the practice of infant baptism—that while the sacrament of baptism is a means of the all-sufficient grace of God, it is also insufficient to make a man a participator in the community of grace.

Several passages in the New Testament suggest that this insufficiency was recognized from the beginning, for other rites are mentioned either in connection with or in addition to baptism. In Paul's experience at Damascus the imposition of hands by Ananias preceded his baptism. The purpose of the former action Ananias made clear, "that you may recover your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). Here a widely distributed rite for recovery from sickness was given a further purpose in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then followed baptism with water. Thus the two essential elements of Christian baptism were present at the baptism of Paul—water and the Spirit. Another occasion on which the gift of the Spirit preceded baptism is Peter's experience at Caesarea. While he was speaking to the household of Cornelius

the Holy Spirit came upon all who were listening to the message. The believers who had come with Peter, men of Jewish birth, were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out even on Gentiles. . . . Then Peter spoke: "Is anyone prepared to withhold the water for baptism from these persons, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did ourselves?" (Acts 10:44-48.)

In other cases, the gift of the Spirit follows baptism. Peter obviously expected this in Acts 2:38; Paul refers to it in 1 Cor. 12:13; and the

absence of the gift of the Spirit to the Ephesians who had been baptized by Apollos led to the further rite of the laying on of hands, after which the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 19:1-7).

In this last case the context suggests that the baptism of the Ephesians is not to be regarded as Christian baptism, but rather the kind of baptism associated with John the Baptist. The second rite of the imposition of hands cannot therefore be maintained as necessary for Christian baptism, or as a necessary sequel to baptism, on the basis of this passage. A more notable instance, however, is found in the mission of Philip to Samaria, which resulted in many being baptized. The apostles in Jerusalem then sent Peter and John to Samaria, who prayed that the converts might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For until then the Spirit had not come upon any of them. They had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, that and nothing more. So Peter and John laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit." (See Acts 8:5-17.) The *monon de*, emphasized in the translation "that and nothing more," clearly suggests that baptism "in the name of the Lord Jesus" is not enough. We are left in doubt, however, where lies the deficiency. Was Philip one of the seven (Acts 6:5) not authorized to confer baptism by the Holy Spirit, but only baptism by water? Was the authority for baptism by the Holy Spirit reserved to the apostles only? Ananias would not be an exception to apostolic imposition of hands, since he was directly commissioned for this office and was thereby virtually an apostle. In the account of the conversion and baptism by Philip of the Ethiopian eunuch the Spirit is mentioned immediately after the baptism, but not as falling on the eunuch, only in snatching away Philip. The Western Text at this point makes an addition to insist that the Spirit did fall on the Ethiopian in connection with his baptism: "The Holy Spirit fell upon the eunuch; and an angel of the Lord snatched away Philip" (Acts 8:39). The interest of this addition is that, although the interpolation may not represent an original text and so the Lukan view, it was nevertheless reasonable for the interpolator to suppose that Philip had the power to confer baptism by the Holy Spirit, and

that this authority was not reserved to the apostles only. Dr. Rawlinson would interpret the narrative of Acts 8:5-17 "as betokening the endorsement by the two apostles of the action of Philip in baptizing Samaritans (despite their unorthodoxy from the point of view of strict Judaism), and as setting the seal of divine approval on it." (*Christian Initiation*, pp. 19-20.) G. W. H. Lampe would go further than this and suggest that, in addition to this official endorsement, there is involved something akin to ordination, in the establishment in Samaria of a new nucleus of the missionary Church. The imposition of hands by Ananias has also implications of this sort, since we are told that Saul immediately began to preach. Thus at Samaria and in the conversion of Paul important moments in the development of the Gentile mission are marked by acts of ordination. This is going beyond the evidence, however. The only secure conclusion from the narrative is that the Samaritans who were converted under Philip's preaching were incorporated into the Church by baptism with water and by the coming of the Holy Spirit which followed the imposition of the apostles' hands. In this particular instance two rites appear to have been necessary.

The only other clear link between baptism and the imposition of hands is in Heb. 6:1-2, in a list of the rudiments of Christian teaching. The inclusion of "laying-on-of-hands" suggests that an elementary acquaintance with the Church and its teaching would have introduced anyone to this established and recognized rite.

Although there is a clear connection between the imposition of hands and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it is not a simple connection. If baptism by the Spirit was always accompanied by the laying on of hands it is difficult to see why the rite should be so often not mentioned. At Caesarea Peter did not lay his hands on Cornelius and his friends; he seems to have been astounded that the Spirit fell upon them. At Pentecost Peter told the converts, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Imposition of hands is not

mentioned here, nor in Acts 16. In the many offices which the Spirit gives to the Church, in Paul's various enumerations of these, imposition of hands is not mentioned, but since baptism and the eucharist are also omitted, little weight can be placed on this silence. Where, however, in answer to a request for directions (as in Acts 2:38 and Acts 16) concerning the way of salvation no mention is made of imposition of hands with baptism, the omission is significant. We cannot accordingly conclude that the entry of the believer into the Church in New Testament times *must* be effected by the laying on of hands as well as by baptism.

The second rite mentioned in the New Testament in association with baptism is that of sealing. The epistle to the Ephesians has two references which suggest that the initiation of the Christian included an act of sealing: "And you too, when you had heard the message of the truth, . . . and had believed it, became incorporate in Christ and received the seal of the promised Holy Spirit" (1:13); "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, for that Spirit is the seal with which you were marked for the day of our final liberation" (4:30). John Wesley's sermon on the latter text, "On Grieving the Holy Spirit," points out three ways in which we are sealed by the Holy Spirit:

1. By receiving his real stamp upon our souls; by being made the partakers of the divine nature.
2. By receiving him as a mark of God's property; as a sign that we belong to Christ. And,
3. As an earnest and assurance to our own spirits, that we have a title to eternal happiness.

This exposition follows the usual lines of interpretation, linking the seal of the Spirit with the renewal of the image of God in man and giving it eschatological significance.

In his "Plain Account of Christian Perfection" Wesley interprets the former text. Question 26 reads: "Does St. Paul mean any more by being 'sealed with the Spirit,' than being 'renewed in love?'" The answer is:

Perhaps in one place, (2 Cor. i.22) he does not mean so much; but in another, (Eph. i.13) he seems to include both the fruit and the witness; and that in a higher degree than we experience even when we are first "renewed in love." God "sealeth us with the Spirit of promise," by giving us "the full assurance of hope;" such a confidence of receiving all the promises of God, as excludes the possibility of doubting; with that Holy Spirit, by universal holiness, stamping the whole image of God on our hearts.

The words "full assurance of hope" are brought in from Heb. 6:11, but their intrusion does not invalidate Wesley's exposition. As he pointed out in the "Notes on the New Testament" on the same text: "The sealing seems to imply, 1. a full impression of the image of God on their souls; 2. a full assurance of receiving all the promises, whether relating to time or eternity."

Wesley's interpretation of both texts, therefore, excludes the idea of sealing as a sacramental sign. Such a sign is suggested by referring to Ezekiel 9, where the man clothed in linen is commanded to mark with a cross the foreheads of the people who are to be saved from destruction. In the book of Revelation, where the same thought is taken up, the mark on the foreheads of the faithful is called the seal of God (7:1-8; 9:4). Paul also may have had Ezekiel in mind when he spoke of being "marked for the day of our final liberation" (Eph. 4:30). It was inevitable that this sign should be compared with circumcision, and in one notable passage Paul brings together baptism, circumcision, and the mark of the Christian:

God forbid that I should boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world is crucified to me and I to the world! Circumcision is nothing; uncircumcision is nothing; the only thing that counts is new creation! . . . In future let no one make trouble for me, for I bear the marks of Jesus branded on my body. (Gal. 6:14-17.)

How figurative this language may be is left to our imagination. It is certainly not to be wondered at that early liturgies of baptism included the rite of consignation, the sign made by the bishop on the forehead of the candidate.

Attempts have been made to trace to the New Testament the Syrian practice of anointing (administered before baptism), which seems to have been given more prominence in initiation than baptism. The passages cited—Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15; I Cor. 12:3—support a conclusion that the Spirit may indeed be manifest in a man before baptism, but not that any particular rite was involved.

Yet anointing is associated with baptism, although a specific rite cannot be proved. Paul links anointing with the seal of the Spirit: "And if you and we belong to Christ, guaranteed as his and anointed, it is all God's doing; it is God also who has set his seal upon us, and as a pledge of what is to come has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts." (II Cor. 1:21-22.) In I John 2:20-27 the anointing is twice mentioned as the source of the Christian's knowledge, the enlightenment imparted by the Spirit. Anointing, from its associations in the Old Testament, suggests royal, priestly, and prophetic offices, and in its application to the Christian would emphasize his being united with Christ the Anointed One. I Pet. 2:9, which especially gathers these offices together in the Church of Christ—a "royal priesthood . . . to proclaim . . ."—does not mention anointing in connection with them. The evidence for anointing as accompanying or following baptism is very slender for the New Testament period, but anointing is so unquestionably scriptural that it is not surprising that the early Church used it as a sacramental rite.

Four rites are thus associated, more or less vaguely, in the New Testament and the period immediately following: Baptism, imposition of hands, consignation, and anointing. It is impossible to maintain that they were all always used, or even that any one other always accompanied baptism. A. J. Mason assumes that the imposition of hands was in the early days of the Church universally practiced. He distinguishes between the activity of the Spirit as the agent *ab extra* of baptismal regeneration and the inward presence of the Spirit mediated by the bishop's hands in confirmation. Confirmation is thus the more important initiatory rite. Dom Gregory Dix contends for an early establishment of confirmation at the hands of a bishop on Apostolic authority. "Confirmation was in the Apostolic

Age regularly administered before Baptism in water . . . the original matter of the rite was a baptism by affusion in oil . . . confirmation originated as the Christian equivalent of the circumcision imposed on proselytes by Judaism. . . ." (Thus was established the Mason-Dix Line in support of the sacrament of confirmation.) The evidence is not clear enough to support these claims, however. There must have been some variety of practice in which the only constant element seems to have been baptism with water, to which was sometimes, or even frequently, added one or more other rites to signify baptism by the Holy Spirit. This does not necessarily mean that baptism with water could not be the full Christian baptism by water and the Spirit. Peter at Pentecost seems to assume that water baptism included the gift of the Holy Spirit, and on other occasions the beginning of the Christian way was simply termed baptism (Acts 16:33; I Cor. 12:13; Col. 2:11-12). Yet the evidence is there that in some cases it was thought necessary to ensure or mark the seal of the Spirit by adding other rites.

### B

From this variety of practice uniformity did not emerge, but at least a clear pattern of initiation at length became evident in the early Church.

1. The Catechumenate: the candidate was prepared by instruction, and confessed his faith.
2. Baptism with water.
3. One or more other rites: (a) Chrismation; (b) imposition of hands; (c) consignation, which emphasized or ensured the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the new Christian's ingrafting into Christ, and the branding of him as Christ's property; all of which could have been assumed as imparted by baptism itself, but by some must have been thought to be attendant on these further rites.

4. The first Holy Communion.

The theological difficulties which might have arisen with any attempt to give clear definition to the significance of the further rites were postponed as long as the whole initiation was one occasion.

Theological significance could still be attached to the whole, in which the parts had dramatic differentiation rather than theological. But the growing practice of infant baptism in the Church demanded a clear assessment of each particular in the rites of initiation.

If a person was to be baptized as soon as possible after birth it was obvious that the Catechumenate and the Holy Communion were inappropriate, so that the unity of the initiation would be broken. The Eastern Orthodox Church preserved the unity of the rite by enlisting the participation of parents where the infant could not respond. Thus baptism followed confession of faith; then the child was anointed (perhaps with consignation included in the rite); and lastly came Holy Communion. The "Apostolic Constitutions" suggest that, while baptism could take place in the bishop's absence, the anointing must await his coming. Where this regulation was observed the initiation must have been divided into two parts, with an interval of time, dependent on the bishop's visit, between them. The unity of the rite was, however, preserved by letting the priest anoint the child with oil blessed by the bishop. While this unity was maintained theological difficulties were not pressing.

In the Western Church infant baptism became limited to the act of baptism with water. On the authority of Acts 8:17-19; 19:6; and Heb. 6:2 the further rites of initiation with the first Holy Communion were postponed to an age of spiritual maturity. It became immediately important to define the significance of this second part of initiation. Did it confer anything which baptism did not? Was it simply a reinforcement of baptism? Did it mark the gift of the Holy Spirit, as in Acts 8? We need not for our purpose attempt an account of the variety of opinion which arose in efforts to deal with these questions. From the confusion of thought of this period the clearest statement appears in Pseudo-Eusebius' Homily on Pentecost:

The Holy Spirit therefore, who comes down in his health-giving descent upon the waters of baptism, imparts his fulness to give sinlessness;

in confirmation he affords a further accession to give grace. . . . In Baptism we are reborn to life, after Baptism we are strengthened (confirmed) for the fight; in Baptism we are nourished, after Baptism we are fortified.

The word "confirmation" is frequent from the fifth century onward as the name for the second part of initiation, its meaning being explained along the lines suggested in Pseudo-Eusebius. Confusion still persisted, however. The Holy Spirit may be present at baptism in his *fullness* (*plenitudinem*), but it appears that the Christian needs a *further accession* (*augmentum*) of the Spirit. Is this further gift of the Spirit necessary to salvation? The general decision and final pronouncement of the Church was that it was not. But Thomas Aquinas' definition of confirmation tended to leave the question still open: *hoc enim sacramentum est perfectio baptismi*, with the ambiguity of the word "*perfectio*."

### C

The reformers in general accepted the practice of confirmation, while rejecting it as a sacrament. The stricter definition of sacrament led to the rejection of the Roman rite, but the obvious need for reinforcement of baptism made some form of confirmation necessary—even if it consisted only of instruction preceding first communion. The practice of anointing was rejected as not being evidenced in the New Testament, whereas imposition of hands was maintained by many, because there was warrant for it in Scripture as well as in the practice handed down through the Church Fathers. There was a general strong insistence on the catechumenate. The instruction and examination of candidates, in which they confessed their faith, were the necessary precursors of whatever other rite was observed in confirmation. The whole rite of initiation was accordingly:

- A. Baptism—usually in infancy.
- B. Confirmation—years later—consisting of:
  1. Instruction and examination;
  2. Confession of faith with promises;

3. A ceremony, often with imposition of hands, of confirmation by the Holy Spirit;
4. First communion.

The word "confirmation" was understood by the reformers to have a double sense, the candidate being subject or object of the confirming. He is subject when he confesses his faith and goes on to confirm the baptismal vows. He is object when the Holy Spirit strengthens or confirms him in the faith. The Anglican Order of Confirmation in the Book of Common Prayer reveals this twofold sense. A very brief service calls upon the candidates to renew the vows made in their name at baptism. Then follows a prayer containing the petition for the Holy Spirit: "Strengthen them, we beseech thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace . . ." with careful avoidance of the suggestion that anything is added now which was not already present in baptism. The imposition of hands too is accompanied by a carefully worded prayer that the candidate may "increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more."

Attempts at revision have revealed the differences which exist within the Anglican Church concerning the exact meaning of the rite of confirmation. "The Final Reports of the Joint Committees on Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion of the Convocations of Canterbury and York" submitted an order of initiation for an adult who had not yet been baptized. This order has the virtue of restoring the unity of the whole initiation, including baptism and confirmation. The part of the service for confirmation follows closely the Prayer Book order. But three members of the Canterbury Joint Committee submitted a minority report in which confirmation included consignation and the prayer for strengthening by the Holy Spirit was replaced by "Send down from heaven we beseech thee, O Lord, upon them thy Holy Ghost the Comforter. . . ." This report was submitted in 1954. In 1958 a report submitted by the Church of England Liturgical Commission suggested to the archbishops a form of service for the ministration of baptism and confirmation to those who are of age to answer for

themselves. After baptism in this order follow consignation and then confirmation, with the prayer "Send down from heaven upon them thy Holy Ghost . . ." in a form which makes a clear distinction between water baptism and the coming of the Spirit. In the order suggested for confirmation it is stated that the candidate comes to *receive* the Spirit, and a clear difference is established between baptism with water for regeneration and confirmation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The minority opinion of 1954 seems to have prevailed in the Liturgical Commission by 1958.

The Standing Liturgical Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, which published in 1950 its suggestions for discussion and consideration, follows a similar line in making confirmation the occasion when the Holy Spirit is *given* to the candidate. The distinction between baptism and the gift of the Spirit is emphasized by the reading of Acts 8:14-17. The tendency in both the Protestant Episcopal and Anglican churches is plainly toward making baptism an incomplete rite, since the gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred through confirmation.

The Presbyterian churches have always emphasized confirmation as simply a confirmation of baptism, in which the candidate makes vows and confesses his faith. There is no imposition of hands, and the only suggestion of confirmation in the objective sense is in the prayer asking for strength to be given by the Holy Spirit, with increase of grace.

#### D

John Wesley's works make little reference to confirmation. He refutes the Roman claim that it is a sacrament in his treatise "A Roman Catechism, faithfully drawn out of the allowed writings of the Church of Rome, with a Reply Thereto," but adds nothing constructive to the refutation. His other reference is in the long letter of November 26, 1762, to Dr. Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester. Speaking of the claim that the people of England are Christians, he wrote: "It must be allowed that the people of England generally have been christened or baptized; but neither can we infer,

"These were once baptized, therefore they are Christians now." He closed this point thus: "If men are not Christians until they are renewed after the image of Christ, and if the people of England in general are not thus renewed, why do we term them so?" He then proceeded to show that this renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit, by whom we are born again and assured of our adoption as sons. He went on to use the offices of the Church of England to illustrate his point, among them drawing three quotations, one from the office for baptism of infants, one from baptism "for those of Riper Years," and one from the Order of Confirmation:

Give thy Holy Spirit to this infant, that he may be born again.

Give thy Holy Spirit to these persons [already baptized] that they may continue as thy servants.

Almighty God, who dost vouchsafe to regenerate these persons by water and the Holy Ghost, strengthen them with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them the manifold gifts of thy grace.

"From these passages," he wrote, "it may sufficiently appear for what purposes every Christian . . . does now receive the Holy Ghost."

Wesley was not primarily discussing baptism and confirmation here, so that the references to the latter cannot be taken to be his opinion on the subject. As far as it goes, this letter appears to maintain the Holy Spirit is *given* in baptism for the purpose of regeneration, but the *continued* work of the Spirit leads a man to the new birth, assurance, and sanctification. In confirmation prayer is offered that the Spirit may produce this continued work.

While Methodism remained a society within the church the question of confirmation did not arise, but the separation of the Methodists into a church meant that the entry into the society of people who hitherto had not been members of the church became entry into an active membership of the church, and some service appropriate to mark this fact was necessary. The title of the forms of service which have been developed on both sides of the Atlantic plainly states its intention: "For The Public Recognition of New

Members" or "The Order for Receiving Persons into the Church"—and the stress has been placed on the confirmation of baptismal vows and on the fellowship of the church. The emphasis on welcome and fellowship has been in the past shown in the rite of the "right hand of fellowship," in place of imposition of hands. The present Book of Offices authorized by the British Conference includes in the order for The Public Reception of New Members:

1. A constitution of the Church; with thanksgiving and intercession for the Church;
2. Confession of faith;
3. Promises, including confirmation of the candidates' "response to His gracious call," engaging him "to be His faithful soldier and servant to your life's end"—an obvious reference to baptism;
4. Welcome, including blessing of confirmation—to "stablish, strengthen, settle" the candidate (but without express mention of the Holy Spirit);
5. Dedication of the whole congregation present;
6. Holy Communion.

The subjective and objective elements in confirmation are thus included; but there is no mention of any specific rite of imposition of hands or right hand of fellowship.

When considered with baptism as the whole rite of initiation into the church, this service appears to find its main deficiency in the catechumenate. This deficiency is lessened, however, when we consider what must be taken into account in confirmation, the conditions of membership in the Church. These are the desire to be saved from one's sins, the plain evidence of this in life and conduct, and the desire for fellowship with Christ and his Church. The second and third conditions argue for a trial period when these points can be tested, a period which should also be used for instruction. Thus provision is made for an adequate catechumenate. In *The Book of Worship for Church and Home*, published under the direction of the General Conference of The Methodist Church in America, the catechumenate is stressed by providing an order of service "For Receiving Persons as Preparatory Members."

Methodism therefore has in its usages, or at least within its grasp, all the elements of Christian initiation. The two main divisions are there—baptism, usually of infants; and confirmation, under the name of "Reception into Membership." The latter term is descriptive, but it has against it the fact that at baptism the child is received into the "congregation of Christ's flock" and so becomes a member of the Church. The statement on membership authorized by the British Conference in 1961 differentiates clearly between this and full membership, but this distinction affirms that membership begins at baptism and merely points to two types of membership. It seems better to think of the whole initiation, beginning with baptism and ending with the first communion, as reception into the membership of the Church, and to find another term for the rite which we now call "The Public Reception of New Members." The term "confirmation" lies at hand and has centuries of Protestant use to commend it.

It now remains for us to consider what we are trying to do in the whole process of receiving members into the Church and how far our orders of service achieve these aims.

### E

Recent emphasis on the laity, with discussions of the function of members of the Church under the heading of the "Theology of the Laity," and references to confirmation as the "Ordination of the Laity," is in general a revival of interest in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The way to the ordained ministry of the Church, if this doctrine is taken seriously, lies in first becoming a member of the whole Christian priesthood and then being ordained to the special ministry. Ordination does not make a man a priest; he becomes a priest when he joins the believing community of the Church. Ordination directs the way in which his priesthood is to be exercised. The priesthood of all believers is a corollary to Paul's conception of baptism as union with Christ in his death and resurrection, his constant references to the believer's being "in Christ," and to the view of the Church as the Body of Christ. The



constitution of the Church and the place of the believer in the *koinonia* of the Church are to be determined in the light of the ministry and work of Christ.

The term which Jesus chose to describe his own ministry was *diakonia* (Matt. 20:25-28; Luke 22:27; cf. John 13). "Ministry," therefore, expresses the nature of the Body of Christ and the function of those who are united with him. Just as through Christ's *diakonia* the redemptive rule of God is established in the world, so through the *diakonia* of those who are Christ's the kingdom is being brought within the reach of every man. Membership in the Church therefore means partaking in this ministry. A member is incorporated into Christ and into his royal, prophetic, and priestly offices. Wesley was keenly aware of this and, driven by necessity as well as theology, placed great responsibility for the Christian mission on the shoulders of the lay members of the Church. This realization and practice has been the strength of Methodism.

This ministry in union with Christ has its creative source in the Holy Spirit. The reality of the indwelling Christ is made more and more apparent through the continuous revealing work of the Spirit. By the fortifying power of the Spirit the member of Christ is transformed "into the same image from glory to glory," as Paul put it (II Cor. 3:18 K.J.V.). So to be "in Christ" is also to be "in the Spirit." The Spirit in us also means Christ in us. Not that they are confused—the creative cause, the instructing intelligence, the persistent power, are the Spirit who is the energy and the endowments of the new life; the object and the content of the new life is Christ.

This participation in the Spirit is also a fellowship in the Spirit. Union with Christ through the Spirit means also union with one another through the same Spirit. The beginning of Methodism in societies made fellowship one of the main features of our church. Some have been sarcastic at our expense, suggesting that the only contribution that Methodism has to make to a world Church is the warm handshake. But if the handshake is truly symbolic of Christian fellowship, it may prove to be the greatest of all contributions. Christian fellowship is one experience of the Church which can be

shared by *all* its members, even by those whose contribution to its ministry and mission is of necessity little or nothing.

In fact, that is the point at which we begin; when we can contribute nothing Christian love is extended to us. Infant baptism for most of us marks our entry into the Church. This should be the beginning of our catechumenate through the years when we grow in the fellowship of the Church and are instructed in its ways. At some point in the course of it there is the decisive moment when the continuance of the work and of the whole experience is our decision. And at last we reach the moment when we can take up the ministry of the Church, completing our unity with Christ begun when we were baptized into his death and resurrection, by receiving the bread and wine and, remembering his death and passion, becoming partakers of his body and blood. This whole experience, extending over many years, is our entry into the membership of the Church. We need to increase our sense of the unity of this experience.

When we receive "new members" we recall the baptism formula and ask for some renewal of the vows then made, so that some link is established between the beginning and the end of the period of becoming a member of the Church. Similarly in the baptism order the questions addressed to the parents and to the Church point forward to the period of training. These necessarily form a tenuous link, if only by reason of the passage of time between them. An excellent further link is provided in the "Order for Receiving Persons as Preparatory Members" in the American offices, and the similar order accepted by the British Conference in 1961. The Church in general, however, needs to see the process from infant baptism to the first communion as a whole, so that the responsibilities of the Church during this one process may be more clearly envisaged. This whole view could be encouraged by our preaching on the subject of initiation, for instance, at a baptismal service; it could be advanced to give a closer bond with the Church to Sunday school and youth work; it could be the subject of conferences of

all church workers. It is also possible that future revisions of the Book of Offices may pay more regard to this unity.

More emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit should find a place in our office. It is surprising that Wesley's emphasis on the continuing work of the Spirit in assurance and sanctification has no significant place in the service.

The other point which seems to lack significant emphasis in our present orders of service for receiving people into the full membership of the Church is that the candidate is entering a *diakonia*. He is essentially taking his place in a priesthood, with a ministry to accept and fulfill according to his ability. While this is lacking in our orders of service, it would be well to emphasize it in supplementary homilies, until a revision of the office can make more adequate provision than at present.

There is no suggestion here that baptism is in itself incomplete. It is the beginning of the way and brings the candidate into the Church, claiming all the work of Christ for him. We can never claim that an additional rite is necessary to salvation. What we can claim is that the Church knows its *full* members among those who after baptism have been instructed, have made their promises and under the guidance and strengthening of the Holy Spirit have accepted responsibility for the ministry of the Church, by their own confession and communion joining themselves to Christ in the fellowship of his people.

We can conclude with the analogy with which we began. The initiative lies with God, who chooses his people. They were "baptized into the fellowship of Moses in the cloud and sea." In the beginning of their way they knew little or nothing; the *fact* of redemption and the *promises* for the future were enough to start with. They had a long way to go and much to learn. Even then, only some of them came into a definite realization of what it meant to be the People of God. It is that realization for increasing numbers of those who have been baptized that is our subject when we think of confirmation and the "lay membership" of the Church.

## 7

## Ordination and the Ministry in the Church

PHILIP S. WATSON

The Christian community, the Church, is described in scripture as the offspring of Abraham (Gal. 3:29), the spiritual kindred of Isaac (Gal. 4:28 ff.), and the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16). (Scripture quotations in this chapter are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.) Ancient Israel was the People of God under the old covenant established through Moses, and the Church is the same people under the new covenant established by Christ. It is true that most of the Jewish descendants of Israel have rejected Christ, but this only shows that "not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants" (Rom. 9:6-7). Instead, the true Israel are those who share the faith of Abraham. The People of God is like an olive tree, long ago planted by God (Rom. 11:17 ff.). From it many of the natural branches (the Jews) have been broken off, and wild olive branches (Gentiles) have been grafted in. Thus the Gentiles who have accepted Christ have become members of the common-