

A MANUAL OF CONFIRMATION

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A Manual of Confirmation by Edward Meyrick Goulburn

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EDWARD MEYRICK GOULBURN

**A MANUAL OF
CONFIRMATION**

A
MANUAL OF CONFIRMATION,

COMPRISING

- I. A GENERAL ACCOUNT OF THE ORDINANCE.
- II. THE ENGLISH ORDER OF CONFIRMATION, WITH SHORT NOTES, CRITICAL AND DEVOTIONAL.
- III. MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS ON PASSAGES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE, IN CONNEXION WITH THE ORDINANCE:

WITH A

PASTORAL LETTER,

INSTRUCTING CATECHUMENS HOW TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THEIR

First Communion.

BY

EDWARD MEYRICK GOULBURN, D.D.

PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S,
AND ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS IN ORDINARY.

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I.

A GENERAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

ORDINANCE OF CONFIRMATION.

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A GENERAL ACCOUNT
OF THE
ORDINANCE OF CONFIRMATION.

§ I. *Its* (1.) WE read (Acts ii.) that the Holy
ground Ghost descended upon the Apostles on
in Holy the day of Pentecost, and that, as the
Scripture. result of this descent, they were endowed
with a miraculous power of speaking with other
tongues, v. 4. But it must be carefully observed
that this miraculous endowment was but a small, and
comparatively unimportant, effect of the Comforter's
descent. That great event transformed them in-
stantaneously from ignorant disciples, dull of appre-
hension, and timid in the hour of trial, into wise
teachers, on whom the Scheme of Salvation had
dawned in all its beauty and harmony, and into
steadfast maintainers of the Truth, at the risk of all
which the world holds most dear. For the proof of
this assertion, compare Luke xviii. 34, and many
parallel passages, where they manifest an absolute

incapacity to receive the doctrine of a Messiah glorified through suffering, with St. Peter's addresses, (Acts ii. and iii.) where he recognizes every stage of our Lord's career as a fulfilment of prophecy, and implies that His death, though brought about by the instrumentality of man, had been foreordained in the counsels of God (Acts iii. 18). Also compare the fact that upon our Lord's apprehension, "all the disciples forsook him and fled," with the resolute and determined attitude which they assume in the early part of the Acts, and specially the circumstance of St. Peter's denial with his answer to the Sanhedrim in iv. 19: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things, which we have seen and heard." Hence we conclude that in addition to the miraculous gifts then conferred upon them (and which no longer remain in the Church), a great moral and spiritual change passed upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost.

(2.) But it was not designed that the Apostles alone should partake of the outpouring of the Spirit. All believers, of whatever rank or station, ("sons and daughters, young men and old men, servants and handmaidens," Acts ii. 17, 18,) were to be sharers of the mighty boon. The regular method of its transmission was to be through the laying on of the Apos-

bles' hands, after the administration of Baptism. In one remarkable instance, indeed, that of Cornelius, the gift was conferred even previously to Baptism (Acts x. 44—47). But this was an exception to the ordinary course of proceeding, the design of which was to warrant St. Peter in administering Baptism to one of Gentile descent, which else, as being under the influence of Jewish prejudices, he might have been backward to do. (It may also teach us generally that God, though He commonly works through Ordinances, is not tied to them.) The regular method of proceeding is fully indicated in the case of the Samaritans (Acts viii. 14—17). They hear the preaching of Philip the Deacon, and are converted by it, they receive Baptism from his hands, and then the higher Authorities of the Church are sent for to lay hands on them, that they may receive the Holy Ghost. The same plan is observed with the disciples at Ephesus (ch. xix. 5, 6). They first receive Christian Baptism (from other hands, it would appear, than St. Paul's), and then, with the laying on of his hands, "the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied." The miraculous effects being in these cases similar to those which followed on the day of Pentecost, we conclude that the ordinary moral and spiritual effects were also the same.

(3.) We must not omit to notice the celebrated passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, (vi. 1, 2,) where reference is justly supposed to be made to the Ordinance of Confirmation, as it existed in the primitive Church. St. Paul is there urging Christian progress and growth in grace, a leaving of the rudiments of religion, and a going on unto perfection. He mentions rudimentary Graces, rudimentary Ordinances, and rudimentary Doctrines. The Ordinances are "Baptisms and Laying on of Hands." The passage has difficulties, which should make us cautious in explaining it; but it has been asked with great cogency, What can be this Imposition of Hands, which is spoken of as standing at the threshold of Christian Life, but that by which the Apostles were in the habit of transmitting the Holy Spirit? This is made the more probable by the immediately succeeding context, in which mention is made of "being once enlightened" (Baptism was called *φωτισμὸς*, *enlightening*), "and being made *partakers of the Holy Ghost.*"

(4.) Briefly; we find that the laying on of hands after Baptism, united with prayer for the Holy Ghost, was accompanied with an increase of spiritual light and strength, and we see reason to think that this laying on of hands was the prerogative of the highest order in the Ministry.