

CONFIRMATION RECORDS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649533602

Confirmation Records by G. R. Moncreiff

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

G. R. MONCREIFF

**CONFIRMATION
RECORDS**

CONFIRMATION
RECORDS.

BY

THE REV. G. R. MONCREIFF, M. A.,

RECTOR OF TATTENHALL.

LONDON :

J. HATCHARD & SON, PICCADILLY;

NEWLING, LIVERPOOL;

EDMONSTONE & DOUGLAS, EDINBURGH;

G. PRICHARD, CHESTER.

MDCCLXVIL.



DEDICATION.

TO

THE MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

JOHN BIRD,

BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE,

LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

MY DEAR LORD,

It is with no common pleasure that I dedicate this little Volume to your Grace. Slight as is its intrinsic value, it may perhaps in your eyes have some little adventitious interest, as a memorial of your last official act in the rural portions of the Diocese you have so lately left. To us at least—the pastor and people who were then favoured with your parting presence—the day of our recent Confirmation will be a day much to be remembered. Especially, I trust, by those more immediately concerned, the young persons who were then privileged to receive your parting blessing. *Your*

Grace will not suspect me of overvaluing any outward ordinance, or any human instrument; but surely I may say without affectation, that as Joseph brought his Ephraim and Manasseh to receive Jacob's blessing, so do I rejoice that the Ephraims and Manassehs of my flock should have heard God's acceptance of their Confirmation vows from the lips of one to whom, on so many grounds, I can look up as indeed a father in Israel. Your last words among us will long live in many hearts; nor, to my own mind, could any occasion have left behind it a more suitable farewell, than one which seemed so solemnly to renew the great apostolic commission, "Feed my lambs."

It is not for me to congratulate your Grace, or to pretend to speak the sentiments of the clergy on your elevation to the See of Canterbury. One ground of rejoicing, I cannot pass by: we are indeed thankful to feel that our Primate is one who understands and sympathizes with the duties and the trials of a parochial ministry, and who knows by large experience how closely the true life of the Church is bound up with the discharge of what might seem to be her humbler and her less important functions.

And yet, my Lord, I am very far from admitting that a Confirmation, or a preparation for it, is in any true sense of the words, a humble or unimportant function, either of the Bishop or the paro-

chial Clergyman. I have no experience of a town population; but, speaking exclusively of an agricultural district, I feel sure that there are few, if any portions of a Minister's work more full of responsibility, or more rich in promise. If the school be the well-sheltered nursery-garden, then Confirmation is the removing of the tender plant to opener ground, where it must be prepared to encounter the keen blasts of the world's temptations. In the school, I firmly believe, our deep work as ministers must begin, if we are to be pastors of parishes, as well as preachers to congregations, and visitors to individuals or households. Here, truly we lay up for ourselves much treasure for many years: here alone our labour is distinctly prospective—the investment of the capital of our time, in the hope of future though it may be of distant returns. Here alone can these three great objects be adequately secured:—the instruction of the whole body of our future hearers and parishioners—our personal knowledge of their individual characters—and our personal influence over them as the guides and counsellors of their youth. Let these be steadily pursued for twenty years, and I will venture to say that no Clergyman will think his labour unrequited. For every part of his work, he will then have laid a foundation broad and deep. His parish will become as one large family, and he the spiritual father of it, looked up

to with a very childlike love, and bearing an almost parental authority.

I seem to be digressing. Your Grace knows that it is an attractive theme. But surely Confirmation rightly understood looks back to the child's place in school, as truly as it looks forward to the Christian's place in the world and in the Church. The Confirmation class must supply the sequel to the Bible lessons of the school: when the Confirmation is over, we have in most cases done all we shall ever have the opportunity of doing, in the way of direct education: the keystone is placed in the arch, it is time to strike away the scaffolding, and see if it stand firm in the symmetry of the heavenly model.

No doubt, there are many disappointments; the fair proportions of our buildings too often give way, when deprived of artificial support. The hopes of Confirmation-days fail, and the heart grows sick with treacherous promises and seemingly unanswered prayers. From such trials no duties of a pastor can ever be free; least of all, when he has to deal with elements so changing and uncertain, as the untried feelings and principles of the youthful heart. It is most evident, indeed, that with the increase of our school experience, the causes of mistake and errors of judgment must very greatly diminish. In proportion to our *previous knowledge* of candidates, will be our power

of judging of the sincerity of their professions. But still it may be broadly admitted, that here, as always, "we walk by faith, and not by sight:" the blossoms of preparation-days will often be far more abundant than the harvest of ripened fruit.

Yet are we not sometimes premature in our regrets? The labour is not lost, because no immediate change is produced on the conduct or the character: many and many a case would prove, if traced, that the words of that solemn season had sunk deep, even while the light heart trifled with its holiest thoughts; that the impressive service had left ineffaceable traces behind it, though buried beneath the frivolities of a beguiling world. Our part is to sow the seed: for the rest, we can but commit them to that God who "giveth the increase;" let the apparent result be great or small, it is then out of our hands; "in due time we *shall* reap if we faint not."

On the other hand, my Lord, I feel more strongly than I have generally heard it expressed, how delicate and how difficult is the task of providing suitable instruction for our catechumens. No kind of address seems free of danger; calm explanation may leave the heart untouched: fervid exhortation may only encourage the worldly mind to adopt the mask of assumed seriousness. And thus, between the two, according to Bunyan's well-known figure, Formalist and Hypocrite ~~come~~