

**THE DOCTRINE OF IMPOSITION
OF HANDS; OR, CONFIRMATION
THE ORDAINED AND ORDINARY
MEANS FOR CONVEYING THE
GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST**

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The Doctrine of Imposition of Hands; Or, Confirmation the Ordained and Ordinary Means for
Conveying the Gift of the Holy Ghost by John Frere

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THE HOLY GHOST.

BY
JOHN FRERE, M.A.

RECTOR OF COTTENHAM, IN THE DIOCESE OF ELY.



Non equidem ab uno hanc esse Ecclesiarum consuetudinem, ut ad eos qui longe in minoribus urbibus per presbyteros et diaconos baptizati sunt, Episcopus ad invocationem Sancti Spiritus manum imposturus excurret.

HIERONYMUS.

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PREFACE.

WHEN the following Treatise was completed, it was submitted to the judgment of a learned friend, whose name I do not feel myself at liberty to mention. The principal remark which he made after perusing it was, that the Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration seemed to be in some places almost obscured by the prominence given to the main position which I was labouring to establish, namely, that the Holy Ghost is bestowed by the rite of Confirmation, thereby claiming for it almost the place and dignity of a sacrament. He also observed, that the connexion of that rite with the Sacrament of Baptism, so strongly set forth in the Offices of the Church, did not appear to him sufficiently recognised and maintained by me.

This opinion, coming as it did from one who, in theological matters, is entitled to be heard with the greatest deference, made me at first determine upon revising my work,

with the intention of modifying those parts of it which might seem liable to the above objections; but I soon found that there would be danger of inadvertently damaging the main argument if I set about altering particular parts, and I was therefore compelled to abandon the design; however, I have thought it advisable to add a few words by way of preface, with a view of preventing, as far as possible, any misapprehension.

My object in the present Treatise being an inquiry into the true intent and meaning of the rite of Confirmation, I was obliged (if I may so speak) to take that ordinance out of the place which it occupies in the economy of the Church, and to examine it by itself. This probably has given an air of hardness to the aspect in which the subject has been viewed, because it is thus presented without those harmonies and modifications which arise from the position which it was appointed to occupy, and from a consideration of the uses to which it may be applied in any particular Church. In the course of the Treatise, and especially at the conclusion, I have touched upon the connexion of Confirmation with

Baptism; but I have not laboured this point, because it was not that which appeared especially to require elucidation.

The connexion of the ordinance with this sacrament appears to me to be clearly understood, and to be put forward, with at least sufficient prominence, in the practical and living teaching of the Church: but another, and, as I believe, a more important view of Confirmation appeared to me to be too much kept in abeyance, and my object has been to endeavour to advance that view to the place which I apprehend it ought properly to occupy.

I can understand a sense in which Confirmation, *in the case of persons baptized in infancy*, may be considered as the completion of their Baptism; because if such persons, when arrived at years of discretion, refuse to take upon themselves their vows, or neglect the means which the Church has appointed for that purpose, they must be supposed to forfeit the benefit of the covenant; though, even in that case, it would by no means follow that the sacrament would be nullified, and become of no effect. But I apprehend that this only applies to Confirma-

tion as practised in the case of persons baptized in infancy, and has nothing to do with that holy rite in its first institution, and in its proper nature.

On the other hand, Confirmation cannot be held to be the completion of Baptism, in such a sense as to justify the inference that Baptism, not followed by Confirmation, is to be deemed insufficient for its own proper effects. And on the whole, I believe that in the present Treatise, I have stated the truth of the matter as far as my ability serves to understand and to explain it. On such subjects we can but approximate to the truth. If we attempt with our limited faculties a perfect understanding and elucidation of them, we inevitably fall into error ourselves, and either mislead others, or provoke merited rebuke or contradiction. The rite of Confirmation seems to me to be, as it were, a connecting link between the sacraments, distinct from them, and yet partaking of their nature: and as in the several ranks and orders of animated nature, the same individuals of each class seem to meet and run into each other, making it difficult to distinguish where one

begins and the other ends; and as in the growth of the body it is impossible to say at what point the several stages commence, and where childhood ceases and boyhood begins; so in the ordinances of the Church, adapted as they are to the spiritual growth, and succeeding and running into one another, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to define accurately the points where they meet; so gradual is the advance, so complete the harmony of the system. On this subject, as on all others here treated of, I must bespeak favourable and candid interpretations. My sole object has been to approach as nearly as possible to the truth, in these awful and momentous subjects; and, as far as my faculties may serve, to aid others in its discovery; and I humbly implore God's blessing upon my sincere and earnest endeavour. In regard of the observation that the doctrine concerning Confirmation is sometimes stated in this Treatise in a way which seems to run counter to the truth of baptismal regeneration, I would observe, that wherever in the following pages I maintain that the Holy Ghost is given in Confirmation, and not in Holy Baptism, I mean by