

## NOTE

### WHAT AGE FOR CONFIRMATION?

The Constitution on the Liturgy calls for a revision of the rite of confirmation. "The intimate connection which this sacrament has with the whole of Christian initiation is to be more clearly set forth; for this reason it is fitting for candidates to renew their baptismal promises just before they are confirmed."<sup>1</sup>

This brief paragraph does not provide many guidelines for the revision. Those general principles had been set forth in chapter 1 of the Constitution:

In order that the full effects of the liturgy be produced, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds be attuned to their voices, and that they cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain. . . . When the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observance of laws for valid and licit celebration . . . the faithful should take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.<sup>2</sup>

In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit. . . . Such participation . . . is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.<sup>3</sup>

That sound tradition may be retained, and yet the way opened to legitimate progress, a careful investigation is always to be made into each part of the liturgy which is to be revised; an investigation which is theological, historical, and pastoral.<sup>4</sup>

Other passages could be cited, particularly those dealing with adaptation to the age and condition, way of life, and standard of religious culture of the people.<sup>5</sup> But these should suffice.

During the last few decades theologians have already begun a thorough investigation of the nature of confirmation. There is widespread agreement that confirmation is in some way the completion of baptism, bringing the adult Christian to some kind of maturity through a special gift of the Holy Spirit. This new presence of the Spirit enables the baptized to assume the role of an adult in the Church.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 11.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 14.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 19, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

<sup>6</sup> See the excellent monograph of Ralph Bastian, S.J., *The Effects of Confirmation in Recent Catholic Thought* (Rome, 1962), and the same author's article "Confirmation the Gift of the Spirit," *Chicago Studies* 3 (1964) 171-84.

## SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE

Old Testament studies reveal that the Spirit was given to great heroes, kings, and prophets of Israel, empowering them to perform certain functions for the good of the whole people. In the prophetic books, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the Spirit also is the principle of a new covenant with Yahweh, inscribing His law on men's hearts and thus directing them to holy actions (Jer 31:31-34; 32:37-41; Ez 11:19-20; 18:31; 36:24-31; 37:14).

The New Testament describes a fuller and richer gift of the Spirit, which parallels and surpasses that of the old dispensation. The Spirit is given to all Christians, not just a few (Acts 2:39; 8:14-17; 19:1-6). He is given in a striking way, as the source of charismatic gifts for the good of the Church (Acts 2:16-17, 33, 38; 8:15-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-6). In this way all Christians are charismatics (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:4-13, 27-31; 14:12, 26-32, 39-40; Eph 4:7-16). And the love produced in the Church by the Spirit is to be so manifest that it is also a sign to nonbelievers (Jn 13:34-35; 17:20-26; cf. Rom 5:5 and 1 Cor 12-14).

How is this special gift of the Spirit distinct from that given in baptism? Baptism is associated with forgiveness of sins, the gift of sonship, a sharing in the life of the risen Christ through the Spirit (1 Cor 6:11; 12:13; Gal 4:4-7; Tit 3:4-7; Jn 3:5; Rom 8:9-15). But the gift of the Spirit in confirmation empowers the apostles and all Christians to bear witness to Christ (Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4, 38; 8:14-20; 10:44-47; 11:15-17; 19:1-7). As in the old covenant, so in the new, the Spirit is given for the good of the whole people of God. Visibility and power and a social purpose are the characteristics of this gift. Like baptism, it is closely linked to the risen Christ (Mt 28:18-19; Lk 24:48-49; Jn 7:39; 19:30-34; 20:21-23; Acts 2:33). Christ after His resurrection shares with us His power and His mission through sending His Spirit.

Besides, the Holy Spirit is sent by Christ at Pentecost not to make the apostles more docile learners but to lead them into an understanding of what our Lord had already taught them during His public life (Jn 2:22; 7:39; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Mk 7:1-19; Lk 24:45-49; Acts 2:14-36; 10:9-28). This understanding, so necessary to bear effective witness, is primarily a spiritual maturity but presupposes a biological and psychological maturity. This element of maturity is particularly striking if confirmation is seen as a parallel to the baptism of Christ, His messianic and prophetic anointing with the Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> All the sacraments incorporate the Christian more fully into Christ. What happens to the Christian is a *mimesis*, an imitation and continuation, of what has already occurred in Christ.

At the Incarnation Christ received the Spirit as His inner principle of holiness, consecrating Him for His work, establishing Him as king and priest, if you will, but not yet impelling Him to His prophetic task. Only at His baptism is Christ given His definitive mission to preach. His baptism establishes Him as Suffering Servant and Messiah. It is a new descent of the Spirit on one who was already filled with the Spirit. The reason for the new "anointing" is a new mission, or at least the bringing to maturity of certain elements of His original mission. For this social task of bearing witness to the good news, a biological and psychological maturity was required even in Christ. It occurred only after He had grown. It should not be surprising if a similar period of growth was needed in the apostles, and indeed in every Christian.

New Testament evidence therefore indicates that confirmation is the sacrament of Christian maturity in a double sense: (a) The new presence of the Spirit is given not for individual growth in holiness but for the social task of bearing witness to Christ. (b) A certain biological and psychological maturity is a prerequisite for an understanding of this social function.

#### LITURGICAL HISTORY

Liturgical history confirms and illustrates this scriptural evidence. The early Church did not set up a special catechesis for children. It treated them as adults and demanded of them a lengthy catechumenate. Before baptism all had to give some evidence of a good moral character and be instructed about the basic truths of Christianity. As more and more converts were made, the Church left it to Christian parents to prepare their children for baptism.

This led to a rather widespread practice of postponing baptism until the catechumen was an adult. Much of the motivation for this was the prevalent strict penitential discipline. At least some postbaptismal sins could be remitted only through public penance. To insure the possibility of this post-baptismal forgiveness, baptism itself began to be put off until after adolescence and even until the deathbed. This was so clearly an abuse that the Church reacted vigorously. "Baptism is necessary for salvation; therefore even infants should be baptized."<sup>8</sup>

By the fifth century, baptisms of infants had become customary in Rome. Little by little the baptismal ceremony was modified for them, since infants could have no moral and doctrinal preparation. Religious formation was placed after baptism, and gradually the Church in the West separated from baptism the sacraments of confirmation and the Eucharist, placing them at

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Denzinger-Schönmetzer (32nd ed.) 184, 219, 223, 224, 247.

a later date. However, up until the twelfth century, if a bishop was available, he would confer all three sacraments of initiation on the child soon after birth.

During this period the parents still had full responsibility for the Christian formation of the child. No catechisms or anything like them were available. The culture itself supplied a general Christian background and education, however informal. Conformity to their group culture sufficed to shape the religious attitudes of the children.<sup>9</sup>

Beginning in the thirteenth century, a growing realization of the need for psychological awareness, if the recipient was to receive the full benefit of the sacraments, led to postponement of the Eucharist and also confirmation to the "age of reason," i.e., between seven and fifteen years of age. By the seventeenth century a very strong emphasis on the personal commitment of man to religion had arisen. Group conformity no longer sufficed to make a man a good Christian. In many countries social pressure to conform to religious values and patterns was slackening. Only personally convinced Christians actually led Christian lives. To meet this need, catechisms for children were produced, with First Communion coming at the end of a long doctrinal preparation.

Jansenism may have been partly responsible for postponing confirmation and the Eucharist, presenting the sacraments as a reward for being good. There was also a tendency to regard these sacraments as a reward for attending catechism classes. But these abuses were not as important or basic as was the desire to lead the child to a genuine interior profession of faith, so that the reception of the sacraments would be a truly human act for him. Spain, Portugal, and Latin America resisted this trend to defer the latter two sacraments of initiation. But by the end of the nineteenth century the rest of the European continent and the United States had extended the preparation time for confirmation even beyond that for Holy Communion, and Communion had been set at about twelve years of age.

The 1910 decree of St. Pius X, *Quam singulari*, moved the time for First Communion up to the "age of reason," specifying it as around seven years of age. But it left untouched the postponement of confirmation. As a result, the Eucharist stood out more clearly as a source of nourishment and strength in the process of leading the child to spiritual maturity. The experience of the last fifty years has shown that frequent reception of the Eucharist can be very meaningful to little children and can deepen their faith.

Even before Pius X, Leo XIII had written to Bishop Louis Robert of

<sup>9</sup> Throughout this section the article of Antoine Chavasse, "Histoire de l'initiation chrétienne des enfants de l'antiquité à nos jours," *Maison-Dieu*, no. 28 (4th trimester, 1951) 26-44, has been very helpful.

Marseilles on June 22, 1897, praising him for confirming the children before First Communion. He considered the sacrament of confirmation to be a means of strengthening the children against temptation and rendering them "more docile in accepting the commandments."

In 1917, canon 788 of the Code of Canon Law declared that confirmation is "suitably put off until about the age of seven." Several later documents from the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments clarified this statement.<sup>10</sup> The Congregation prefers that children receive confirmation before their First Holy Communion, and that they be confirmed at about seven years of age. On July 1, 1952, the commission for interpreting the Code went even further, denying to local bishops the power to defer confirmation until children are ten years old.<sup>11</sup> This attempted reversal of a trend towards later confirmation has not met with widespread enthusiasm among bishops or laity. Although several articles have been published in the last twenty years by liturgists, canonists, and catechists who agree that confirmation should be received around seven or even before, these statements have largely fallen on deaf ears. Why? Probably because they have run counter to recent emphases in sacramental theology and to the findings of sociology and psychology. Furthermore, it seems quite probable that this particular canon law was made for a Catholic, not pluralist, society, especially not for a modern, industrial, urbanized, highly mobile society, in which a set of values must be interiorized in each person.

It is proper, therefore, especially in the light of the principles of liturgical and canonical reform laid down in Vatican II, to ask whether the Code of Canon Law should be revised to put confirmation at a later date, or at least to permit individual bishops or episcopal conferences to defer confirmation if they judge this more suitable for their culture and region.

#### MAJOR ARGUMENTS FOR EARLY CONFIRMATION

What are the major arguments for confirming young children?

1) "The early Church gave confirmation and baptism together; the postponement of confirmation was a later abuse." This is the strongest argument. It is not based on Scripture (Acts 8 clearly separates the two sacraments). But it is based on the liturgical life of the Church at a time when the liturgy was most flourishing. The separation of confirmation from baptism does indeed seem to have been an abuse originally.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> June 30, 1932 (*AAS* 24, 271-72); May 20, 1934 (*AAS* 27, 16-18); Sept. 14, 1946 (*AAS* 38, 349-54).

<sup>11</sup> *AAS* 44, 496.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. B. Luykx, O.Praem., "Confirmation in Relation to the Eucharist," in *Readings in Sacramental Theology*, ed. C. Stephen Sullivan, F.S.C. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964) pp. 187-209.

Certainly the early centuries of the Church have much to teach us about the liturgy. But further progress is still possible. The Holy Spirit is still with the Church, leading us into ever-new insights into the meaning of Christian life. To deny this is to opt for a liturgical archaism. In fact, the early liturgy of initiation was worked out for adults. No real adaptation to children was made. Infants were baptized because the Church was convinced that baptism was necessary for salvation; and a high rate of infant mortality would have made their early baptism all the more urgent. The same necessity for confirmation was not felt, at least not for infants. Therefore, when confirmation began to be separated from baptism (for wrong reasons, granted), the scattered protests were not effective. The reasons for delaying confirmation now, however, are not the same reasons as those which led to the original separation. They are based on sound theological grounds; in fact, they are the very principles most stressed by the Constitution on the Liturgy—the fully conscious and active participation of the faithful in the liturgy. The ultimate question must be this: At what age can the recipient of confirmation most fully and actively take part and thus be most enriched by this encounter with Christ and the Spirit?

Before one can conclude that the present postponement of confirmation until after First Communion is an abuse, something more is required than a historical study of the postponement. Vatican II insists on theological and pastoral considerations as well. Perhaps once again God has written "straight with crooked lines." Perhaps He has let us stumble onto a more fruitful reception of the sacrament.

2) "Children should receive the fulness of the Holy Spirit as soon as possible." Child psychology indicates that the second or third year of life is most important for the formation of religious attitudes. Confirmation will render the child more docile in submitting to the commandments, more persevering in the face of temptations, better able to pray, and more attentive at Mass.<sup>18</sup>

These reasons deserve serious consideration. They have been often repeated. But how conclusive are they? All of them are based on the presupposition that the Holy Spirit is given in confirmation primarily for the spiritual growth of the recipient. Theologically, this is not so. Growth is not the same as maturity. The Holy Spirit is given at baptism to make us children of God. He does not remain inert and passive within us, but stimulates us to growth, strengthens us against sin, and teaches us to pray. The sacrament of the Eucharist promotes this growth. The coming of the Spirit at confirmation is

<sup>18</sup> These arguments are taken from G. Delcuve, S.J., "A Necessity for the Normal Efficacy of Religious Education: Confirmation at the Age of Reason," *Lumen vitae* 5 (1950) 305-32.

not so much for the sake of the recipient as for others. The gift of the Spirit is *charismatic* in confirmation.

Consider the scriptural evidence. The Spirit was not specially sent to Christ at the age of two or three or six to render Him more docile to His parents; nor was He sent at age thirteen to render Christ more docile to the teachers of the law. But He was sent to Christ after He had reached biological and psychological maturity; and the purpose of this mission was other-directed. Should we criticize God the Father for unduly postponing this mission of the Holy Spirit to Christ?

How many times Christ upbraided the apostles for slowness to understand! Should we criticize Christ or the Father for not sending the Spirit to them at once, as youngsters, or at their very first contact with Christ? Or should we maintain that the Spirit was indeed given them from the first, but that He works only slowly in the human heart; and that the Spirit was given on Pentecost not for their own personal growth so much as to build up the Church? Perhaps God is teaching us something here about the nature of confirmation, which the Fathers constantly link to Christ's baptism and to Pentecost.

It is significant that the New Testament references to confirmation in the apostolic age refer to charisms, to gifts given for the good of the Church, to gifts which are a sign to nonbelievers. As was mentioned earlier, the special characteristics of this gift of the Spirit (as distinct from prebaptismal, baptismal, and other postbaptismal gifts) are visibility, power, a social purpose, and an understanding of the Christ-event needed to bear effective witness to others. These are other-directed and build on a psychological maturity.

It is true that all sacraments involve a new presence of the Spirit within man, and that this presence produces a holiness and consecration. In this sense confirmation does bring about a spiritual growth. But that which is characteristic of confirmation is that it produces a climax and termination of this growth-process. Maturity closes one stage of growth and opens a new phase of personal development. It marks the transition to conscious openness to the world and responsibility for others. The spiritual maturity effected by confirmation is much more closely related to bearing testimony to the kingdom of God than it is to docility in keeping the commandments, perseverance in temptation, and concentration in prayer. These latter qualities are the foundations of maturity; as such, they belong properly to the baptismal gift of the Spirit.

Furthermore, the Church has been for centuries administering confirmation to very young children—in the East, in Spain, in Latin America. Is there any evidence that these children are more docile in learning the command-

ments, more persevering in the face of temptation, better able to pray, more attentive at Mass? If in replying one invokes different social, cultural, political, and economic factors, well and good. The Holy Spirit is not given as a substitute for deficient human preparations. The sacraments are not magic. Nor is confirmation to be confused with baptism or the Eucharist. Baptism is the beginning of the spiritual life, the Eucharist is its nourishment. Confirmation has another purpose, the social good of the whole Church. Our major concern with confirmation should not be whether we are depriving some individual of a sacramental grace by deferring the sacrament, but whether we are depriving the Church of truly effective and responsible witnesses by conferring it too early.

How reluctant we are to say that a child of seven has the capacity to destroy his whole future by a seriously sinful act! Anyone who has dealt with children or young adolescents recognizes that a full, adult commitment is still far in the future for them. To reject this experiential evidence on the basis of an *a priori* philosophical presupposition which "comes to the assistance of shortsighted common sense" is not only absurd; it is the illogical refusal to apply to confirmation the same insights one has already applied to penance. To put off a sacrament until the recipient is fully aware of the permanent and sacred character of the action is not to diminish "the intensity and quality of the participation" but to increase it.

The sacraments should be as fully acts of faith as possible. Furthermore, Scripture invariably associates confirmation with an adult conversion experience. This is not so clearly true of baptism, and that is one of the reasons why the Church urges infant baptism so strongly despite its being an irrevocable commitment of the person to Christ.

3) "The child should receive confirmation as early as possible in order to share in the fulness of the priesthood. All sacraments are acts of worship and directed to the Eucharist. The confirmed person shares in the Eucharistic celebration more fully. To postpone confirmation, therefore, diminishes the fruitfulness of the Eucharist."

Certainly confirmation is directed to the Eucharist, but under what aspect? Baptism has already conferred the Holy Spirit, has already given a share in Christ's priestly anointing. But how is this baptismal priesthood to be exercised? The Constitution on the Church<sup>14</sup> indicates that the baptized exercise their priesthood in offering the Eucharist, but also in receiving the sacraments in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity. The very act of worship itself is a profession of their faith before their fellow Christians. The Eucharist, considered solely

<sup>14</sup> Cf. nn. 10 and 11.

from the aspect of baptism, is for the building up of the Church, the nourishment and mutual support of the Body of Christ.

Yet the adult Christian professes his faith not just before the Church but before the whole world. He offers the Mass not just for himself, nor even for the Church alone, but for the salvation of all men. He spreads and defends the faith not only by word but also by deed, and the offering of the Eucharist for the spread and defense of the faith is a most sacred participation in the redemptive work of Christ.

But this offering is a sacramental act. It does not happen automatically or magically. The offerer should be consciously aware of the whole world and aware of his obligation to all mankind. What child of seven takes the whole world seriously? He is normally ego-oriented. He is open to the development of an intimate personal relationship to each of the Three Divine Persons; but he does not yet see the consequences of this relationship on a universal plane. His Eucharistic participation is directed to the growth of his own immature religious life. This is nothing scandalous or surprising. It parallels his human psychological development. It also parallels Christ's growth in the priesthood.

Christ's reception of the Holy Spirit is His priestly anointing. Since He received the Spirit at the Incarnation, His every act was priestly, with a sanctifying and redeeming value. But Christ did not exercise this priesthood in a full and public way before His baptism; and His baptism (the going down into water; the public recognition by the Father as Christ rises from the water; the descent of the Spirit) is a remarkable foreshadowing of the paschal mystery (the going down into death; the public recognition by the Father as He rises; the descent of the Spirit). In a very real sense, His baptism initiates the paschal mystery itself, the great act of universal redemption. It inaugurates the full exercise of His priesthood.

Our own baptism incorporates us into Christ by giving us Christ's Spirit. Thus we also share Christ's priesthood from our baptism on, much as Christ possessed and exercised His priesthood from the moment of His Incarnation. But confirmation gives us a new and fuller share in that priesthood: the social responsibility of offering worship for all men. This universal social responsibility was given dramatic impetus in Christ's baptism at the beginning of His public life and found its fullest response in His death and resurrection. It is a mature, adult response—not that of a child. It is echoed in the life of mature, adult Christians, not in children.

4) "If confirmation is postponed, some people will never receive the sacrament." Such an argument presupposes that the reception of the sacrament, like baptism, is necessary for salvation. But it is not. A statistical rise

in confirmations is hollow indeed if the statistics do not represent a stable decision to dedicate oneself wholeheartedly to the spread of God's truth and love. We do not encourage teen-age marriages, or ordinations, precisely because these sacraments have enduring effects, while the teen-ager is notoriously unstable. Few at that age are capable of making a lasting self-dedication. Fewer still can do so before reaching adolescence. Is the effect of confirmation less lasting or less important than the effects of marriage or ordination? True, the consequences may not be so serious for the individual in terms of invalidating a subsequent marriage, but what are the consequences for the Church when the majority of those confirmed go through a routine action because it is expected of them at a certain age or in a certain grade of school? Perhaps much of the apathy of the laity in even the post-conciliar Church is traceable to a latent resentment of a "conveyor-belt Christianity," in which personal choice and commitment has been neglected. More and more this underlying hostility is rising to the surface and finding expression as college students and other young adults feel cheated of an opportunity to declare themselves firmly for Christ by an act which shapes their future indelibly and permanently.

5) "Confirmation should be given in the first grade as a ratification of baptism." Quite the contrary. The child will go through crisis situations at the beginning of grammar school, high school, college, and business life. The aid of the Holy Spirit will be forthcoming as needed; for He has been given in baptism for the defense and growth of the individual. The purpose of the sacraments is not to give actual graces so much as sanctifying grace, a special relationship to Christ.

The Church is free to establish sacramentals for those crisis periods. For example, the renewal of the baptismal vows at the Easter or Pentecost vigils can be expanded and adapted to include the equivalent of puberty rites. Solemn First Communions also can be explained to the child as a ratification of baptism.

But the first three crisis periods are transitional phases connected with temporary life-situations. As the child awakens to peer-group influences in the primary grades, or as his emotional life dramatically changes, or even as his intellectual life enters into a rational and critical level in college, a new sense of selfhood emerges. Each of these crises is a deepening identity-crisis. Little by little man comes to a fuller self-awareness. Only after he realizes who he is can he engage himself in a total commitment. And only after he makes a total commitment is he a really effective witness to others.

Confirmation, therefore, as the sacrament of Christian maturity, as the

sacrament which confers the Spirit to empower the Christian to bear witness to Christ before the world, should not be administered before a man has this mature self-awareness, before he is capable of this total commitment. Again, the parallel to matrimony and holy orders clarifies the nature of confirmation. All three are social sacraments, given for the group. All three demand that the recipient be other-directed and fully responsible.

6) "It is wrong to delay confirmation just to motivate attendance at catechism classes." Agreed. This would make the sacrament a means of manipulating the child. The sacrament should not be presented as a reward for fidelity to catechism instructions but as a symbolic consecration of man's life to God, the establishment of the confirmed person in a new relationship to the Church and to all mankind. It should be clear enough by now that the postponement of confirmation is not justified by such extrinsic reasons but by the inner nature of the sacrament itself.

One last point. The Constitution on the Liturgy<sup>15</sup> calls for a renewed emphasis on the bishop and the cathedral. The bishop is to be seen as the high priest and father of the whole diocese. Two changes in the rite of confirmation might well teach this truth in a dramatic way. Let the young people be confirmed, not in their parish churches, but in the cathedral. Their first loyalty and allegiance should be to the bishop, not to the pastor. The bishop's church is the cathedral church. That is the center of the liturgical life of the diocese. In times past, it was easier for the bishop to travel to the parishes. But now in many countries transportation is no problem for the laity. This change of place will impress them with the seriousness of the sacrament of adulthood and with the importance of the central role of the bishop.

Adult converts should come together for confirmation from all the parishes of the diocese to the cathedral. They will have been baptized at the Easter vigil in their own parishes, where they were welcomed into the larger family of the parish. On the vigil of Pentecost they will gather in the center of the diocese to be fully incorporated into the Church. The presence of so many other adults will encourage them; and they will also see their parish in proper perspective.

When should these adults receive their First Holy Communion? In a sense, twice. Their baptism should be connected immediately to the Eucharist, but to the Eucharist as strengthening food to nourish their still immature spiritual life. When they are confirmed, they will have another Solemn Communion, now as a sign of their full union with other Christian

<sup>15</sup> Cf. n. 41.

adults, as strength for their task of proclaiming Christ to the world, and as the completion of a sacrifice which they offer now not just for themselves but for the salvation of all mankind.

Finally, at what age should confirmation be given to those who are baptized in infancy? It should be given when they have sufficient psychological and spiritual maturity. For most Catholics this will occur around the time they leave school and enter the world of business and labor. Some few may mature earlier, just as some Baptists ask for baptism at the age of ten to twelve. Our fellow Christians have much to tell us on this point, if only we will listen. Let the reception of confirmation not come at some fixed age but when the recipient feels ready and freely asks for it. It will then be always a moment on which he can look back in later life and say: "That was the time when I freely chose of my own accord to be an adult Christian with all that this implies. That was when I first reached Christian maturity."

*University of San Francisco*

FRANCIS J. BUCKLEY, S.J.