

'CONFIRMATION'

The Editor,

The Life of the Spirit.

REVEREND FATHER,

I am much puzzled by the suggestions being made in several reviews lately, and in the Editorial of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* for April 1956, that Confirmation should be deferred to the age of adolescence for psychological and educational reasons.

Is not the tradition, custom and law of the Church correctly enshrined in the Instruction of the Congregation of the Sacraments (20.5.34, cf. also 30.6.32) where it is said that it is 'truly opportune and even more conformable to the nature and effects of the sacrament of confirmation, that children should not approach the sacred table for the first time unless after the reception of the sacrament of confirmation, which is, as it were, the complement of baptism and in which is given the fullness of the Holy Spirit (St Thomas III, q.72, art. 2)'? It is added that communion must not be postponed because confirmation is not available. From this and from the practice of confirming infants and the wording of the laws of the Church (c. 788) there seems to be no doubt as to the mind of the Church on the matter.

The child of seven years is, for many purposes, an adult spiritually. This is perhaps more evident in a poor and primitive society, but is surely universally true. He must undertake responsibility towards the spiritual care of younger brothers, sisters and cousins, towards the defence of his faith and of Christian morality among companions, and towards his own conscience. No longer an infant spiritually, he requires the fullness of grace; and when communicating requires to be spiritually fed with the graces of a responsible member of the Church, one spiritually grown-up by the sacrament of confirmation.

In the background of the realities of sacrament and grace, it seems to me that theories of educational and psychological expediency are beside the point, the more so when this is confirmed by the mind of the Church.

Yours sincerely,

OSWIN MAGRATH, O.P.