

THE SEAL OF THE SPIRIT. By G. W. H. Lampe. (Longmans; 35s.)

During the last few years there has been a certain controversy in Anglican circles as to the nature and value of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Some have greatly exaggerated its importance, a few even going so far as to assert that it constitutes the real rite of admission into the Church. This book is presented as an answer to this view; the author discusses in particular the various patristic theories and statements on which his opponents base themselves. The work may be regarded as a revindication of Baptism as the great Sacrament of Christian initiation whereby we are united to Christ in the Spirit.

Does the author unduly depreciate Confirmation? The question is natural and indeed certain passages do imply a view of Confirmation that Catholics would find unacceptable. There is no fresh gift, we are told, merely a fuller realisation; or, if you like, a commissioning for service in the Church's spiritual warfare, this conceived very externally. But such remarks do not greatly matter, for the author's purpose, as he himself insists, is not to establish a theory or dogmatic of Confirmation, nor even to write its history, but to clarify the teachings of the early Church on the gift of the Spirit, illustrated especially in expressions such as that of 'seal'. His results in this field are in general quite compatible with traditional doctrine, and, if they force us to revise certain of the patristic proofs for Confirmation found in many manuals of theology, they are merely forcing us to a task long over-due.

Indeed the value of this book is that it constitutes an excellent prolegomenon to a much-needed study of the position of Confirmation in the early Church; a preservative against wearisome journeys up blind alleys at the same time as an indication of many profitable *points de depart*. Catholic theologians have tended to neglect Confirmation, save for occasional wanderings. There was a famous controversy between Père Galtier and Dom de Puniet as to the rite of Confirmation in the early Western Church, the former holding for imposition of hands, the latter for unction. Unfortunately they both started from the principle that that rite was to be identified with Confirmation which was linked with the 'gift of the Spirit'. Texts and quotations were piled up on both sides and much learning displayed, but little or no progress achieved. The truth is—as the book under review shows well—that the sacramental reception of the Spirit is linked indiscriminately with Baptism, Chrismation and Imposition of Hands. Clearly a different method of discrimination was called for.

This book may be warmly recommended to all who are interested in the sacramental action of the Holy Ghost, and especially in that Sacrament so particularly attributed to him.

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