

sulting their own feeling as to the interpretation of the words in the statute, but by enquiring into the judgment of those who have acted upon the statute ever since it became law. They look into what are called *precedents*, and they decide accordingly.

Now here is a principle of the Gospel embodied in the practice and set forth in the writings of the holy Apostles 1800 years ago. But after 1500 or 1600 hundred years men begin to differ about its application, some restrict it to the age of miracles, others regard it as a duty and ordinance incumbent on all Christians in all ages. Why not enquire how it was understood by those immediately following the Apostles? Most remarkable and unanimous is the testimony of these EARLY FATHERS as to the general practice and opinions of the primitive church.

About 80 years after St. John flourished TERTULLIAN, an eminent Christian writer. He says plainly enough, that "*after Baptism succeeds Laying-on-of-hands, by solemn prayer calling for and invoking the Holy Spirit, upon which that most blessed Spirit willingly descends upon the bodies thus sanctified and blessed.*" S. CYPRIAN, Bishop of Carthage, who lived only 40 or 50 years after him, commenting on the Acts viii. writes: "*The same thing is practised among us; they who are baptised in the church are presented to its governors, (the bishops,) that by their prayers and Laying-on-of-hands they may obtain the Holy Ghost, and be perfected with the seal of Christ.*" In the same century and to the same effect it is mentioned by S. Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 200, by Origen, A. D., 210, by Firmilian, A. D. 250, by Cornelius, A. D. 260. Similar testimony is borne by the great S. Augustine and other illustrious historians of the fourth and fifth centuries. S. JEROME, who translated the Scriptures into the then vulgar (the latin) tongue, and died