

lively." Hoping the following helps will shed some light on their pathway, and dispel the darkness that hitherto robbed them of spiritual nourishment and divine fellowship we give them a place in the RECORD.

AS TO FIRST COMMUNION.—The first communion is a date of singular importance in the religious life of every member of the Christian Church. It is the earliest public solemn profession of Christianity on personal responsibility. It goes back to the dedication and vows connected with Baptism—where the responsibility was on the part of the parents—and, as it were, adopts and renews these. Accordingly, the first communion ought not to be too long deferred: it may take place with all propriety between the ages of fifteen and twenty. It is a step eminently fitted by God's blessing to give steadiness and decision to character of youth, to be a safeguard against many temptations, and to bespeak the freshest and most vigorous efforts of mind and heart for the work of Christ on earth. According to the best expositors of Luke, ii. 41-52, Jesus Himself, at the age of twelve years, affords an example to young in joining the Church. At that age Jewish youth became "sons of law"—members of the sacred commonwealth of Israel.

There is no hint in the New Testament of any separate rite intermediate between Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Confirmation, which the Roman Church calls a sacrament, and the English Church makes an Episcopal function or rite, has only an imaginary root in the following texts—Acts, viii. 14-17, xv. 32, 41, xix. 5, 6; Heb. vi. 2. It is exceedingly desirable that when young communicants are first received the occasion should be duly and solemnly marked more than any subsequent occasion for partaking. Up to that reasonable point some ceremony like confirmation is justifiable; but, as a special function only valid when done by a bishop, it has no Scripture authority, and in its very theory is derogatory to the ordinary Christian ministry and the Christian Sacrament. Why should the two Sacraments themselves be intrusted to a certain minister, and the

same person be deemed incompetent for that rite which is only a connecting-link between them?

NO EXCUSE VALID FOR NEGLECT.—There are various unreasonable hindrances with this most blessed ordinance. Young persons are often afraid of an ordeal of questions, the answers to which test the power of memory and self-possession unduly. Some who have reached middle life before becoming communicants are ashamed to come publicly so late. Others are rendered unhappy and restrained by their keen sense of shortcoming from what a Christian should be. Others are perplexed by the difficult process of self-examination, which is occasionally performed so as to make a man's own varying feelings the object of contemplation, rather than the character and death of Jesus Christ. Again, some who have come looking too much to the ordinance as a means of good to themselves instead of a solemn festival in honour of their Lord, have felt disappointed in the partial absence of what they more immediately expected. Looking at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in its simplest and practical light as a commemoration of our Saviour's death, it ought not too greatly to be connected in the minds of communicants with rigid systems of question and answer, with intricate speculations as to the deeper doctrines involved in theories of sacrifice, or with a morbid prosecution of self-serutiny. Do I feel myself a sinful man? Do I believe that Jesus of Nazareth came from heaven to die for our sins? Do I adore Him as "my Lord and my God"? Am I striving, and do I trust in Him to help by His Spirit to live a godly, righteous, and sober life? He may well be a communicant who can to these things heartily say, Amen. And he who, having come to reasonable years, still delays becoming communicant, should think very seriously.—Have I so little to do with Jesus Christ that I cannot be one of those who celebrate that simple feast which is the monument of His own appointment, to every succeeding age, of His death?

Is it unpreparedness? But he who is unprepared for this is unprepared for death—nay, for life itself properly con-