

OUR CONFIRMATION CLASSES—PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

Having set forth the teaching of the Church on the mystery of the Lord's Supper, it remains to point out to the candidates the spirit in which they must always approach that sacred ordinance. The Catechism is very plain on this subject in the last question and answer. To the question, 'What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?' it is answered, 'To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life, have a lively and steadfast faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death, and be in charity with all men.' Self-examination, a holy resolution, a living faith, a thankful spirit, and a world wide charity, such are the practices and dispositions that go to make an acceptable communicant. It will be observed that this answer sums up a great deal of the teaching of the Communion Service. The opening rubrics are to this effect. Repentance and amendment of life are there set forth as essential, all wrong doing must be acknowledged, and reparation made, if necessary; those who have been at variance must be content to forgive from the bottom of the heart. The beautiful Collect at the opening of the service, in which we ask God to 'cleans the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit,' sets forth the same thought of spiritual cleanliness and the casting out of all evil from us as we approach the Holy Table of the Lord. The Ten Commandments which follow set forth the requirements of the Divine law, and afford the only perfect standard for self-examination. The communicants can be instructed how to use these Commandments for the purpose with the light thrown on them by the Sermon on the Mount. The Nicene Creed is the standard of faith adopted, and sets forth plainly the grounds on which alone we can obtain God's mercy—the life and work of the Divine Redeemer of the world, 'Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.' The three exhortations which follow the prayer for the Church Militant also set forth very clearly the evangelical disposition necessary to a proper approach to the Lord's Table, and the class ought to be instructed as to their duty of frequently reading over these exhortations as the best preparation for making a good and profitable communion. They will find themselves exhorted therein 'to consider the dignity of that holy mystery and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof, and so to search and examine their own consciences that they may come holy and clean to such a heavenly Feast, and be received as worthy partakers of that Holy Table.' The way and means of self-examination are so clearly set forth in the first exhortation, that no one need be in a difficulty, but if nevertheless any intending communicant should find it difficult to quiet his own conscience after such self examination; if he feels his faith in God's mercy to be weak, and he is despondent and anxious, the Church directs him to go to his own clergyman or to some discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his grief, that by 'the ministry of God's holy word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience and the avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.' The third exhortation, 'at the time of the celebration of the Communion,' has a paragraph which is an exact counterpart of the instruction given in the Catechism. The priest addresses the communicants thus—'Judge therefore, yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord; repent you truly for your sins past, have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour, amend your lives and be in perfect

charity with all men, so shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries.' The same note of charity and goodwill is struck again in the short address which immediately precedes the solemn confession in the Communion office—'Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours,' &c. From all this it can be plainly gathered in what spirit the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ is to be partaken of. Love, faith, humility, self distrust, these are the graces which best adorn the communicant, as they are the fittest accompaniment of every communion to the end of the Christian's life. It is these things that will make them 'meet partakers of those holy mysteries.'

Great sympathy and interest must be felt for the confirmation candidates as they prepare for their first Communion. They should be lovingly and gently spoken to, and the blessed and happy privilege so soon to be theirs should be clearly and tenderly put before them. Various little hints may be given to them to smooth the way for their first approach to the Lord's Table, how they are to receive the sacred elements 'into their hands,' how they are to receive them 'all meekly kneeling;' and how they are to retire quietly, after communicating, to their own places in the Church, there to occupy their time in prayer and meditation and thanksgiving till the Administration ceases. If it is thought desirable to suggest some little devotional book of preparation, nothing is better than that by Dr. Walsham How, the present Bishop of Bedford, or Mr. Ridley's well known treatise; but after all is said, there is no preparation like the devout use of the Communicant Service itself.

Communicants' Unions also will be found valuable as means for keeping the young communicants of the parish together for mutual strengthening and encouragement and perseverance in the divine life. The rules for these unions should be made as simple and little formal as possible. With regard to the frequency of communion, once a month may be set down as the least number of times an earnest member of the Church should receive the Sacrament. Where there is an early celebration in the month, those who are young and strong should be encouraged to receive at it.—*Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette*.

TWO POINTS ON EVOLUTION.

Some years ago, Professor Marsh of Yale University, made a most remarkable find of fossil bones in the Bad Lands of Nebraska, including specimens of various ages of the earth's past history. Not long after, Mr. Huxley visited this country, and delivered one or more lectures on the horse, illustrated by those fossils discovered by Professor Marsh, and claiming that this series of fossils was a complete proof of the truth of the Darwinian hypothesis of evolution. I read those lectures at the time with the closest care and the deepest interest; but to me it seemed perfectly clear that the fossils and facts, instead of proving Darwinism, proved the impossibility of Darwinism.—which is a very different thing.

Huxley's theory is that the horse was originally a five-toed mammal, much smaller than at present, and that through a long series of ages he lost first one toe, then another, and so on, while gaining in general size, until now what we call the "hoof" is his original middle toe, and the two pasterns are the last of his other toes to shrink up and leave only those poor reminders of their former selves. So, with the help of Professor Marsh's fossils, he gives us actual specimens of these horses' foot-bones, in the various stages of their change. Going back from the present, we first find the horse with two toes, and two dried-up pasterns. Still

farther back, he has three toes with pasterns as before. And at last, when we reach the Eocene period, we find what he calls the Eohippus (he has previously given us the Protohippus, the Pliohippus, the Miohippus, etc.), and this Eohippus has four toes and one pastern, thus showing that the animal started with five toes, like the rest of the mammalia, but must have begun changing almost immediately, and he has been kept at it ever since.

Now be it remembered that this is set before us as a conclusive proof that all animated nature has come by gradual evolution from one primordial germ. But does it prove any such thing? Let us see.

The first appearance of mammalia on this earth of ours was in the Eocene age. There were a few rodents and marsupials towards the close of the previous period,—mere drops of the coming outpour,—but besides these, the Cretaceous, which comes just under the Eocene, has no mammalia, nor are there any in any of the other strata of the secondary or primary rocks,—none whatever. It is with the Eocene that the great gush of mammalia appears,—a vast variety of new creatures, some of them seventy feet long, and the Eohippus among them. Now, so far as proof is concerned, what they have proved is just this,—that it has taken the entire period of the mammalia upon the face of this earth of ours (a period which Dana roughly estimates at about three millions of years), it has taken this entire period to change the shape of the horse's hoof; but where did the horse himself come from, then, if he did not come in ready-made, in the Eocene period, along with all the rest of the mammalia? There is no other way left by which he could come at all.

Just look at it for a moment. Is it reasonable to contend that though it takes some three millions of years to change the shape of the horse's hoof, yet by the same gradual process his entire body can be evolved out of a monad in no time at all? or that the change of the hoof will leave traces and proofs in every stratum of rocks from Eocene to modern, while the formation of all the rest of the horse's body has left no traces at all in any stratum of rocks in any period?

No, no! We are happy to grant all that our scientific friends can prove. They prove (we take their word for it), that in the Eocene period the Eohippus appeared,—that is to say, the early horse. We accept what they say about his toes in subsequent ages, until we get to the modern horse with his hoof. But the animal is horse at the beginning, and horse all the way through. Before the Eocene period, they cannot show the slightest trace of him. There is no room left for his slow and gradual evolution. He came in with the rest of the world of mammalia—ready-made.

Now for the other argument, which is directed toward the style of reasoning by which it is attempted to support a tremendously sweeping theory on a very few disconnected and insufficient facts.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that in this country, from the Alleghenies to the Atlantic Ocean, the mortal remains of all who have died during the last five hundred years were still preserved,—not their bones only, but their hair, skin, and everything about them, so that there could be no mistake as to their identity. We should then find the following state of facts. Five hundred years ago all who lived and died here were red men. All who live and die here now are white men or black men, or some intermixture of the two. And at one point or other between the two extremes, we should find every possible shade of the missing link. We should find all possible fractional unions of red, white, and black, so as to make the chain of transition complete down to the minutest shade. And now, having our chain of evolutionist evidence complete, let us proceed to draw the Darwinian conclusion that all the