

Prayer, the Ten Commandments, they should know perfectly, the other questions of the Catechism "sufficiently." You have no right to add other or higher standard of fitness. The Lord made coming to Him easy. He stooped to the very first beginnings. He wants His Church and His ministers to do the same."

We find that Trinity Parish, N. Y., surpasses two Dioceses in the number of clergy, eight Dioceses in number of Parish School teachers, and nine in number of scholars in Parish Schools. Trinity Parish reports more Sunday School teachers than are at work in any of seventeen Dioceses, and outranks twenty-seven in the important particulars of Sunday Scholars, Communicants, and contributions; while—according to more spiritual concerns—it outnumbered twenty-one Dioceses in Confirmations and thirty-two in Baptisms. St. Luke's was adopted as a Chapel of Trinity Parish after the Year Book was made up. If its statistics were to be included, as they should be, to show the actual state of things, the account would be still more striking, since the balance is nearly even between some Dioceses and Trinity Parish in several important particulars that St. Luke's would suffice to turn the scale.—*Record*.

THE Rev. C. Hylton Stewart, vicar of New Brighton, preacher at the last festival of the Dublin Choral Association in St. Patrick's Cathedral, in the course of his sermon spoke of what music had done for the Church. The hold the Church now has on the nation, he remarked, was ten times greater than it was twenty-five years ago, and this happy state of things is largely due to the judicious use of the Divine gift of music in her services to render them more attractive and to bring home the truths of their holy faith. No wonder it should do this, for music is the very speech of angels. As Charles Kingsley said, "Music is a Divine gift given unto us by the Lord Christ, to lift up our souls unto God, to make us feel somewhat of the bounty of God and of all that God has made." There are many, he said, who look askance at the place music holds in the Church service. But we go to church to worship God; and worship consists of three things—the giving of thanks, prayer, and praise.

#### CONFIRMATION—ITS AUTHORITY.

There are thousands of Christians in this country who honestly think that they are doing God service by opposing and ridiculing the rite of Confirmation. To them it is all so much formalism and superstition. They cannot understand why The Church clings to it and makes so much of it. Some of them suppose it to be a relic of Popery, and many firmly believe that the cause of true religion would be "well rid of it." Perhaps they have been prejudiced against it (as they well might be) by the conduct of some confirmed people. Perhaps the grave abuses of Confirmation in past days have blinded them to its uses. Anyhow it has never occurred to them that in resisting it they were actually "resisting the ordinance of God," and are therefore "fighting against God."

If the truth is gently and kindly put before them, perhaps they will never oppose it again, and instead of cursing it, will "bless it altogether."

To such persons, whether Churchmen or non-conformists, the following facts—facts which can not be questioned or denied—are submitted by one who once thought much as they do now, in the hope that they will weigh them and test them, calmly, honestly and prayerfully. To the writer, and to many more, they seem to

furnish an absolute demonstration of this proposition:

That the right of the "laying on of hands" is of Divine appointment; it is "from heaven," and not "of men."

But this very division of the subject makes it necessary to explain that the rite of Confirmation, as it is now administered in the Church of England, consists of two *distinct and separate* ordinances—ordinances which only within the last four hundred years have been joined together, and which any day might be put asunder—namely, (1) the "confirmation" or renewal by those who have been baptized of their baptismal promise, and (2) the "confirming" or strengthening of such persons by the grace of God, through prayer and the imposition of hands. Of the first part, the promise, we have to prove that, though not expressly commanded in Holy Scripture, it is sanctioned, and indeed suggested, by the Word of God, and is in any case a helpful and salutary ordinance.

Of the second—the laying on of hands—we have to show that it was ordained by God and is recognized as a fundamental ordinance of Christianity in Holy Writ.

I propose to treat the divine part of Confirmation.

Though the "laying on of hands" is found over and over again in Holy Scripture, and though it was practiced both by our Lord and His Apostles, nothing is too bad to say of it—at least in certain quarters. Here, then, the brunt of the battle lies, and we shall do well to encounter it at once.

I begin by remarking that this rite exists at the present day; that it exists—whether rightly or wrongly I do not say, but it exists—among all sorts of Christians, Romans, Nestorians, Anglicans, Lutherans, Zwinglians, etc., all of whom, widely as they may differ in other respects, are agreed here; that it is administered in almost all lands, and not in England or Europe alone; and, lastly, that it is practiced in the "Reformed," no less than the "Unreformed" communions; among the Protestants of Sweden, Denmark and Germany, and amongst the Calvinists of France and Switzerland, no less than amongst Catholics. The rite then exists, and all over Christendom. Now comes the question: "How do we account for this? Who began it? When was it first started in the Church? Was it last year or last century? Was it at the Reformation, or was it in the "dark ages," 500 or 1500 years ago? Was it invented by some designing Pope or crafty Patriarch? No, the Reformers, the Patriarchs, the Popes, whatever their deeds, good or bad, did not begin Confirmation. Each of these simply continued a custom existing before his time. They merely handed on to us what had been handed down to them. As we have inherited it, so had they. All you can blame the Reformers or the Fathers for is this—that they did not discontinue it; that they did not dare to drop a rite which had descended to them. They purged it of sundry accretions—that was all. This is bare fact—fact that can not be denied.

When then was it started? The first recorded instance was in the year of our Lord 37. The Apostles began it; St. Peter and St. John started it. In Acts viii. 15-17, we find them doing precisely what our Bishops do now.

They prayed for those who had been baptized; "prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost." Then they "laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." A little later, in Acts xix. 5-6, we find St. Paul doing the same thing, and with the same result. This was the beginning of Confirmation. And from that day to this it has continued so far as we can trace, without intermission, century after century, without a break down to the present time. If, therefore, the great Church

of Christ, if the millions of Christians of past ages and of the present day are altogether mistaken in maintaining and ministering this rite, they may at least plead that they are following the example of Christ's Apostles; that they have only continued what the Apostles themselves commenced. It may be contended that it is wrong for us to do what the Apostles did, but that they did this can not be denied. You have Bibles. Search and look. Is this a fact or not?

Yes, and it is a fact that in this "laying on of hands," the Apostles only followed in the steps of others who had gone before them; they followed the example of Jacob, of Moses—Moses, who did this by Divine command—and, above all, the example of our Lord and Master.

For not only did He, the Incarnate Son of God, lay His hands over and over again upon the sick to heal them, but He also laid His hands on the children to bless them.

What wonder that the Apostles should use a rite which they had received of the Lord Jesus. They thought perhaps they could not do wrong in following their Divine master; we think we can not do wrong in following them.

We see, then, that the Apostles in laying hands on the baptized at Samaria and elsewhere only followed an ancient usage; they adapted it, *i. e.*, to a Christian purpose; but can we discover what made them do this, what led them to employ the laying on of hands for this new and different purpose? Did they act on their own responsibility, and was it their own idea? That is altogether inconceivable. It is inconceivable that the Spirit of Truth, which was promised to the Apostles as their sure guide, was withheld from them when, without a moment's hesitation they began confirming. No, either their Lord must Himself have given directions respecting this ordinance during the "great forty days" which He devoted to "speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God," which is extremely probable—He certainly did speak of laying hands on the sick, and we know there are "many other things which Jesus did" which are not recorded—or the Holy Ghost must have moved them to act as they did—one or the other. But in either case the thing was of Divine appointment, "from heaven" and not "of men." In either case the Apostles only did what they were taught of God to do. This, too, is undeniable, and that this rite is of Divine appointment may also be undeniably inferred from the language in which Holy Writ refers to it. True, it is nowhere commanded, in so many words, in the New Testament, but then it hardly could be, seeing that it had been in use in The Church for years before a page of the New Testament was penned.

It would be rather late in the day for St. Paul, who wrote from A. D. 54 to A. D. 64, to ordain or enjoin Confirmation, seeing that it was already practiced in the year A. D. 37.

It had been ordained already by the Apostles; all we can expect to find, consequently, is a casual, or shall we say providential recognition of it in their writings, or in the history of the early Church.

And this is just what we do find. Acts viii. 17, and xix. 6, have already been quoted, but it remains for us to notice, Heb. vi. 1-2.

Here the sacred writer gives us, quite incidentally, a list of the "first principles" or "foundation" of Christian teaching. He mentions "repentance," "faith," "baptism," etc.—things which we are all agreed to call fundamentals—and he also mentions the "laying on of hands."

The laying on of hands, that is to say, was then taught and practiced amongst Christians, and so generally, so universally, as to be accounted a principle, a fundamental. But is it in the power of man, yes, even of Apostles, to appoint fundamentals? Is it conceivable that God has delegated to any human brain to decide what shall, and what shall not constitute the