

Poetry.

THE DEAD.

(From an Irish Paper.)

Name them not dead—the faithful whom
Green earth closed lately o'er;
Nor search within the silent tomb
For those who "die no more."
The cold earth hides them from our love,
But not from Him who pleads above.

They passed, as all must pass, the deep
Dread portals of the grave;
But not in dull decay they sleep
Whom Jesus died to save.
To mortal eye their path is dim;
But 'tis enough—they rest in Him.

We saw the momentary cloud,
The pale eclipse of mind;
From earthly slight that came to shroud
The deathless ray behind.
A moment more, the shade is gone,
The sun, the spirit, burneth on.

To die! 'tis but to pass, all free,
From Death's dominion here—
To burst the bonds of earth, and flee
From every mortal fear—
To plunge within that gulf untir'd,
And stand beyond it glorified.

Thou weep'st—perchance they weep for thee,
If heavenly tear can flow,
To think of all the life that be
In this sad world below.
Oh! not for all its climes contain
Would they return to earth again.

Yet weep, for earth's a vale of care,
And they who mourn are blest,
If he who hears the mourner's prayer
Send comfort to the breast!
If hallowed hope break through the gloom,
Earth hath no teacher like the tomb.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

August 11, 1850.

THE GOSPEL.—(St. Luke xviii. 9—14).—When the spirit of prophecy ceased after the time of Malachi, many sects sprung up in the Jewish Church. Of these, the Pharisees were the most numerous. Originating about three hundred years before Christ, they obtained under the Asmonean princes considerable power, and were entrusted with the priesthood and other high offices of state; while the favour and affection of the people were conciliated to them, by their supposed piety, learning, and self-austerities. The Pharisees maintained a belief in a resurrection, angel, and spirit, and all the realities of an unseen world. The chief source of the errors of their creed was the assertion of a traditional law, given to Moses on the Mount, and delivered by him to Aaron, then to Ithamar and Eleazar, his sons, then to the seventy elders, and, lastly, to all the people; and the making this uncertain traditional law to be of equal authority with the written law. These opinions, which caused but little injury to the belief of the first founders of the sect, became to their followers in the third and fourth generation a fruitful source of error in doctrine, and of profligacy in practice. They began to lose sight of the spiritual interpretation of the law; and to substitute for the obedience a round of external ceremonies. Long prayers were made a pretext for oppression; hypocrisy became a cloak for crime; and, under an affectation of superior piety, was concealed a life of irreligion, immorality, and vice. Self-righteousness induced a spirit of pride, which caused them to despise others. The publicans, whose office it was to collect the revenues for the Romans (and who were themselves frequently Gentiles), were peculiarly the objects of their aversion and contempt. Our blessed Lord, therefore, purposed by this parable to administer a severe reproof to the pride and self-righteousness of the Pharisee, to recommend the virtue of humility, and to prove, that not the length, or publicity, or place of prayer, but the sincerity of heart and humble earnestness of mind manifested in the worshipper, was accepted in the sight of God. Self-righteousness is the most common, and yet the most dangerous error into which men can fall. The whole tendency of the Gospel is calculated to destroy this most fatal deception, and to bring every thought into obedience to the will of Christ, and to cause every hope of salvation to be placed in humble dependence upon the merits of Christ.

ON CONFIRMATION.

(From the Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette.)

In consequence of the persecution which followed the martyrdom of St. Stephen, recorded Acts, viii., the disciples "were scattered abroad, and went everywhere preaching the word." Among others, Philip the Deacon preached in Samaria. "Now, when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." The circumstances attending this earliest recorded instance of the administration of that ordinance which we call Confirmation are so minutely detailed, that it may be well to examine the particulars of the account, and to make some remarks naturally suggested by the narrative.

It does not appear that the Christian Church as yet existed anywhere in its due form, except at Jerusalem. There the Apostles resided together with the elders and deacons, with whom they con-

sulted concerning the propagation of the faith, the sending out different persons from their own body for the work of the ministry, as also respecting the numerous questions which arose from time to time during the course of their labours. When, therefore, they heard that Samaria had received the Word of God—that is, that the people of Samaria had repented, believed, and been baptized—the exact order, be it observed, which we read in the Scripture as having been always observed on the admission of converts into the primitive Church—no question seems to have arisen as to what ought next to be done. As a matter of course, it appears, they sent out Peter and John, two persons of the Apostolical Order. Peter and John being thus sent to discharge this duty, without any previous consultation concerning its expediency, or question as to its necessity, it may be fairly inferred that the order and discipline of the Church were already settled as to this matter; and that confirmation by the imposition of apostolical hands was appointed by Christ's inspired servants to succeed regularly to the sacrament of baptism. All this may fairly be inferred from the passage under consideration; and such a conclusion, as will presently appear, is abundantly confirmed by other parts of Holy Scripture.

The next passage to be adduced in support of the assertion, that Confirmation was a solemn ordinance instituted by the Apostles, occurs in the Epistles to the Hebrews. St. Paul, in the 5th chapter, proceeds to unfold the mysteries of the new covenant, and he dwells on the fact that they to whom he wrote were "dull of hearing." He states that they required again to be taught "which be the first principles of the oracles of God;" and that they had need of milk, and not of strong meat, as being "unskilful in the word of righteousness." He then goes on, in the 1st verse of the 6th chapter, to enumerate the principles of the doctrine of Christ, which he takes occasion to do when exhorting them to "go on unto perfection." "Therefore," he writes, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." Where St. Paul enumerates, in the order noticed above—repentance first, then faith, then baptism, and after that "the laying on of hands"—this being the exact place which confirmation has invariably occupied in the economy of the Church. Imposition of hands, in fact, is here mentioned as one of the rudiments of religion, necessary for all persons of the Christian name; but this can be said of none of those rites in which that ceremony was usually employed, with the exception of Confirmation alone. For example, it cannot signify the laying on of hands in ordination, for then it could never have been placed among the first elements of instruction proper to those who were "unskilful in the word of righteousness;" to whom alone, as we have seen, the Apostles refer these words. To which may be added the fact, that from the earliest times one of the titles peculiarly appropriated to this ordinance was *χειροθεσια*, "the laying on of hands." From this passage in the Epistles to the Hebrews, it also appears that this rite was designed to be perpetually observed in the Church, and not meant to perish with the Apostles who instituted it. Being one of the rudiments and first principles of our holy religion, it may no more cease than repentance, faith, baptism, or any of those necessary doctrines with which it is classed by St. Paul. But the Apostle's meaning is best explained by his own example, as recorded in Acts, xix.: "Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them,—Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Finding, from their reply, how imperfectly instructed they were in the first principles of the Christian faith, he proceeded to communicate to them what was necessary; and the course which he pursued, when compared with his general teaching in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is quite decisive. He said, "John verily baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him—that is, on Christ Jesus." Here we find, in order, repentance and faith; and (as might be expected) we next find the necessity of baptism and the "laying on of hands" inculcated, as being in like manner essential. "When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them." When the Apostle subsequently wrote to these same persons, he appears distinctly to allude to this event. In Eph. i. 3, he says: "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed (*σφραγισθητε*) with the Holy Spirit of promise." For it should be observed here, that the term *σφραγις*, or seal, has always been another peculiar title of confirmation. And to this same rite we may well suppose St. Paul to have referred, when he writes (2 Cor. i. 21), "Now he which confirmeth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us."

This case of the disciples at Ephesus is an instance of close connexion in point of time of the

sacrament of baptism and the rite of confirmation; which usage, in suitable cases, was long observed in the Church, and in the case of adults is peculiarly appropriate.

From this review, then, of these passages of Scripture, it plainly follows that the laying on of hands was the ordinary practice of the Apostles, and that it was the next in order to baptism. Accordingly this solemn ordinance has been scrupulously retained from the very first in the Church of Christ. Tertullian, who wrote within 100 years after the Apostle John, speaks of it as being universal. He says:—"After baptism there followeth imposition of hands, with invocation, and invitation of the Holy Ghost."—(De Bapt.) And Cingham thus sums up the views of the ancients respecting the origin of this rite:—"The antiquity of this ceremony is, by all ancient writers, carried as high as the Apostles, and founded upon their example and practice. There are three passages in Scripture from which they generally deduce it." And he then enumerates the three passages which have been just considered.

The name given at first to this ceremony was different from its modern title: the whole rite, which consisted of prayer, unction, imposition of hands, and the sign of the cross (which in ancient times was used in every act of religious worship,) being indifferently called *χειροθεσια*, the imposition of hands; *σφραγις*, the sign or seal of the Lord (which has been referred to above); and *χρισμα*, the unction. The modern name more directly indicates the nature of the rite, and, as some suppose, has also foundation in the New Testament. Thus, when Paul and Barnabas had determined to visit their brethren in every city where they had already preached the Word of God, it is said of Paul (Acts, xv. 41), that he "went through Syria and Cilicia (*ἐπισημαίνων*) confirming the Churches." His design being to advance the instruction of those who had been already converted and baptised, and his time being limited, it is most probable that his visitation was official, that he acted in his Apostolical character, and that he confirmed his converts by imposition of hands.

Before proceeding, however, to further particulars, there are two objections to be noticed. The first asserts that the Apostles did not institute any distinct rite, and that the imposition of hands spoken of by St. Paul was a part of the sacrament of baptism itself. But this assertion may be briefly and satisfactorily set aside, by adducing the case of those believers at Samaria, whom Philip had baptised, but had left, as Scripture records, to be confirmed at some other time, and by some other minister. The second objection to be noticed is much more plausible—namely, that the Apostolical practice of laying on hands was for a totally different purpose; viz., to confer the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, empowering the early Christians to speak with new tongues, and to perform those wonders by which testimony was originally given to the Divine mission of the first preachers of the Gospel: from which it has been inferred, that since those extraordinary powers have now ceased, the ceremony by which they were conveyed has also ceased to be obligatory. In reply to this argument it may be observed, that the gift originally bestowed on the Day of Pentecost, and subsequently conveyed by the act of Apostolic confirmation, was that very gift of the Holy Ghost which our blessed Lord promised to his Church, as we read in Acts, i. 4. 5. And we may also infallibly conclude from Holy Scripture itself, that this gift was not confined to miraculous purposes (which were but a part of its outward manifestation), nay, which were, according to St. Paul, among its less important effects. He writes, Gal. v. 22, "The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Again he writes, 1 Cor. xiii., "Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, * * * and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. * * * Charity never faileth; but tongues, and prophecies, and knowledge shall fail." Now this description follows the exhortation given in the last verse of the preceding chapter, "Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet I show you a more excellent way;" that, namely, of charity or love and its blessed results, which are described in the passage from the Epistle to the Galatians quoted above, as the fruits of the Spirit, and which are the internal, permanent, and universally necessary operations of the Holy Ghost; being all by Scriptural proof directly referable to that gift which Christ bequeathed to His Church.

And, moreover, the miraculous gifts then poured forth were inferior to these moral fruits of the Spirit for other reasons; for St. Paul again tells us, "Tongues are for a sign not to them that believe, but to them that believe not;" and besides all this, extraordinary powers were not conferred on all believers: "Are all prophets? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gift of healing? Do all speak with tongues?" But, on the other hand, inasmuch as the first principles of the doctrine of Christ are necessary for all, we must conclude that all were confirmed, in our sense of the term; which inference every fact in the New Testament fully supports. It cannot therefore be con-

sidered as any argument against the identity of our confirmation with the Apostolic practice of "laying on of hands," to say that now-a-days it is no longer followed by the power of working miracles, or by the gift of tongues. Such miraculous powers are no longer required; their function in the divine economy ceased on the establishment, in her full strength, of the Church of Christ: they were, as St. Paul declared, a sign for those who believed not—not for those who believe. Nay, more, while the moral effects of the Spirit abide for ever, for "Charity never faileth," it was expressly stated from the very first, "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease." But this, like most of the other objections commonly brought against the doctrines of the Church, is of very ancient date, and has been frequently answered. It was alleged, for example, in the days of St. Augustin, (and he found it necessary to reply to it) on more than one occasion. In one place he writes as follows:—

"In the first age the Holy Ghost fell on them that believe; and they spake with tongues which they had never learned, as the Spirit gave them utterance. These were signs proper for that time: for then it was necessary that the Holy Ghost should be thus signified in all kinds of tongues, because the Gospel was to run throughout the whole world, in all sorts of languages. But this demonstration once made, it ceased. For does any man now expect to hear them speak with new tongues, who receive imposition of hands as a means to obtain the Holy Ghost? Or, when we laid hands on these infants, did any of you wait to see whether they could speak with tongues? And when they did not speak with tongues, was any one so perverse in heart as to say they have not received the Holy Ghost? For if they had received it, they would have spoken with tongues as was done heretofore. If, therefore, there be no such miracles now to testify the presence of the Spirit, how knows any man that he has received the Holy Ghost? Let him ask his own heart. If he loves his brother, the Spirit of God abideth in him."—(Aug. Tract. VI., in 1 Johan.)

The ancient Church, therefore, as our Church in the present day, derives imposition of hands, for conveying the gift of the Spirit, from the practice of the Apostles, though the effects in after days were very different from what they were at the first. Though men have not the gift of tongues conferred upon them now, as in the days of old, yet they may have other graces sufficient to testify the presence of the Spirit; and if the absence of miraculous gifts is no argument against the existence of such spiritual graces, as it confessedly is none,—so neither is it any argument against the retaining the Apostolical practice of the laying on of hands.

FORMS OF PRAYER OPPOSED TO FORMALISTS.

(From Anderson, on the Lord's Prayer.)

If any of us have been accustomed to undervalue or dislike prescribed forms of prayer, as being apt, in our opinion, to degenerate into coldness or formality, we should remember that we have a form in the said prayer actually prescribed by our Lord Himself; and we should consider, therefore, whether the coldness and formality, of which we complain, may not be owing entirely to our own want of affection in spiritual things. For if we are always desiring variety in prayer, what is it but the want of a spiritual mind that makes this needful? In order that our affections may be lively in that holy exercise, we find it necessary that they should be continually stirred up by new expressions; whereas the soul that is really in earnest in the thing itself, for itself, panting ardently after the grace of God, and the pardon of sin, regards not in what terms utterance shall be given to its petitions, whether new or old. Nay, though these petitions may be in the words which have been heard and uttered a thousand times, yet still they will be new to a spiritual mind. And, surely, the devotion that continues in lively exercise, while pursuing this regular and constant path, has more evidence of sincerity and true vigour in it, than that which depends upon new notions and new words to move it, and which cannot, as it were, stir a step without them.

To borrow the language of the good Archbishop Leighton; "We may well doubt whether that can be any other than a false flesh of temporary devotion, which comes only by the power of some moving strain of prayer that is altogether new. But when confession of sin and requests for pardon, though uttered in accustomed terms, are found to carry the heart along with them heavenward, it is then far more certain that the Spirit of God dwelling in us, and the sense of the things themselves, such as the esteem of the blood of Christ, and the favour of God, really move the heart, since there is no novelty of words to help it." Let us not err, then, in a point of such importance as this; but let us rest assured, that when the Holy Spirit teaches God's people to pray, He exercises His blessed influences not so much on the understanding as on the affections. Let us not suppose, therefore, that when He pours upon us the spirit of grace and supplication, His work consists, wholly or chiefly, in furnishing new supplies of thoughts and words;