

It was to the hands of the Apostles that our Lord committed the power of conveying the presence of God the Holy Ghost; and as their successors, the Bishops, cannot be present at every baptism, Confirmation—that is, sealing—or laying on of hands, is made to wait till a suitable time afterward; but many persons have been confirmed immediately after their baptism, even in their infancy. For Confirmation is, like baptism, a thing that is done to us by God once for all, not one that we do for ourselves. A babe has no unbelief, therefore it can be baptized; and for the same reason it can be sealed or confirmed. If an older person were wicked enough to come to holy baptism without repentance or faith, he would not be fulfilling the condition; and so, too, we must bring faith when we come to be confirmed, really knowing what we are about.

Thus it is a very holy and solemn occasion to us, and our Church has thought that it is a fit time for us to pronounce our own ratification of our baptismal vow. Some people make mistakes about it, and fancy the making the vow for ourselves is the chief point of Confirmation. But this is not the fact. Nothing we do can be so important as what we receive from God, and we have in reality accepted the vow every time we have answered our catechist's question: "Dost thou not think thou art bound to do and believe as they (our sponsors) promised for thee? Yes, verily; and by God's help, so I will."

Of course, the making the vow is a deep and anxious matter; and if we do not take it with our whole heart, we can be in no frame of mind to meet the blessing of being sealed by God the Holy Ghost. But we must not fall into the mistake of thinking that the making the vow for ourselves is the great matter. Confirmation is not our confirming our own vow, but God's confirming us in the strength of the Holy Spirit. We are just as much bound by our vow before Confirmation as after it. The difference is that Confirmation gives us more power to keep it, by strengthening us with the sevenfold seal of God the Holy Ghost.

Therefore, let no young person fancy that he or she goes to Confirmation to release God-parents from their vows. The sponsors were merely the children's voices; and if the child would receive the benefits, it must keep the promises that they depend on. Neither let any elder person, who remembers making the vow childishly and thoughtlessly, think that Confirmation can again be resorted to. The vow can again be renewed—we may do so secretly at any time, best of all at the Holy Communion—but as to the sealing, the conferring of that anointing of the Holy Spirit in virtue of which we are called Christians, from the name of Christ, the anointed, that is given once and may not be sought again.

Young people, then, "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Come in faith and earnestness to make your promise and receive your seal, and guard it faithfully to the end.

Elders, who are conscious of thoughtlessness and evil, pray and seek in the Holy Communion that the seal once given, and now tarnished and defaced, may shine forth once more in the holiness of life that bears witness to the presence of the Holy Ghost, that so the angels of destruction may see God's mark on your brow, and the day of terror may be to you the day of full adoption.—*Church Critic.*

When the future life begins, every man will see Christ as He is. And the sight of Him may of itself bring a finality to his character and destiny as it discovers each man fully to himself.—*President Porter.*

The soul once brought into inner and immediate contact with a Divine power and life is never left to itself.—*Rev. J. L. Diman.*

THE OLD CATHOLIC CHURCHES.

The following is a translation of the joint declaration lately issued by the Old Catholic Bishops of Holland, Germany, and Switzerland. It has already received the adhesion of Pfarrer Cech as Diocesan Administrator of the Austrian Old Catholic:—

"IN NOMINE SS. TRINITATIS.

"Johannes Heykamp, Archbishop of Utrecht; Caspares Johannes Rinkel, Bishop of Haarlem; Cornelius Diependaal, Bishop of Deventer; Joseph Hubert Reinkens, Bishop of the Old Catholic Church of Germany; Eduard Herzog, Bishop of the Christian Catholic Church of Switzerland, assembled in the Archi episcopal residence at Utrecht on the four and twentieth day of September, 1889, after invocation of the Holy Spirit, address the following declaration to the Catholic Church:—

"Being met together for conference in response to an invitation from the Archbishop of Utrecht, we have resolved for the future to hold consultations together from time to time on subjects of common interest, in conjunction with our assistants, counsellors, and theologians. We regard it as fitting that at this our first meeting we should join in a brief declaration of the ecclesiastical principles on which we have hitherto exercised our Episcopal office and shall continue to exercise it in future, as in separate declarations we have repeatedly taken occasion to state.

"1. We hold firmly to the ancient ecclesiastical rule formulated by Vincentius of Lerinum:—

"Id tenemus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.

"We, therefore, hold firmly to the faith of the ancient Church as expressed in the œumenical creeds and in the universally acknowledged dogmatic decisions of the œumenical councils of the undivided Church of the first 1,000 years.

"2. We reject, as contradictory to the faith of the ancient Church and destructive of its ancient constitution, the Vatican decrees of the 18th July, 1870, respecting the infallibility and universal Episcopate or ecclesiastical omnipotence of the Roman Pope. But that does not hinder us from recognizing the historical primacy attributed by various œumenical councils and the fathers of the early Church to the Bishop of Rome as *primus inter pares*, which received the consent of the whole Church for the first 1,000 years.

"3. We reject also, as not grounded on Holy Scripture or the tradition of the first centuries, the declaration of Pius IX. in 1854 regarding the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

"4. Touching the other dogmatic decrees issued by the Romish Bishop in later times, the Bulls *Unigenitus*, *Auctorum Fidei*, the *Syllabus* of 1860, and so on, we reject them so far as they stand in opposition to the teaching of the ancient Church, and do not regard them as authoritative. Further, we renew all former protests which the ancient Catholic Church of Holland has already made against Rome.

"5. We do not accept the Council of Trent in its decisions regarding discipline, and its dogmatic decisions we accept so far only as they agree with the teaching of the ancient Church.

"6. Considering that the Holy Eucharist has ever formed the central point of Divine service in the Catholic Church, we hold it to be our duty to declare that we adhere in all fidelity to the ancient Catholic faith regarding the Holy Sacrament of the altar, believing that we receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself under the forms of bread and wine. The celebration of the Eucharist in the Church is not a constant repetition or re-

newal of the atoning sacrifice, which Christ once for all offered on the Cross; but its sacrificial character consists in its being the perpetual memorial of that sacrifice and a real representation on earth of that one offering of Christ for the salvation of redeemed humanity which, according to Heb. ix. 11, 12, is constantly presented by Christ in heaven, since He now appears in the presence of God for us (Heb. ix. 24.) Whilst this is the nature of the Eucharist in its relation to the sacrifice of Christ, it is at the same time a holy sacrificial feast, in which the faithful who receive the body and blood of the Lord have fellowship one with another (1 Cor. x. 17.)

"We hope that, through the efforts of theologians, a way may be found, while adhering to the faith of the undivided Church, to reconcile the differences which have arisen since the division. We exhort the clergy under our jurisdiction both in their sermons and their religious instruction to emphasize as of chief importance the essential truths of the Christian faith, which are accepted by the ecclesiastically separated confessions; in dealing with existing differences carefully to avoid any offences against truth and love; and as well by example as by precept to lead the members of our congregations to treat those who differ from them in a manner befitting the spirit of Jesus Christ, the common Redeemer of us all.

"8. We believe that it is by holding firmly to the teaching of Jesus Christ, while rejecting all the errors that through human frailty have been mixed with it, as well as all ecclesiastical abuses and hierarchical ambitions, that we shall best counteract unbelief and that religious indifference which is the greatest evil of our time.—*The Family Churchman.*

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