

THE CIRCUMCISION.

THE festival of the Circumcision is part of Christmas, and in considering it we shall not have occasion so much to speak of any peculiar doctrine connected with it, as to point out the duty which it teaches, and this not the less plainly from our Blessed Lord's own example. That duty is *obedience*. Christ took our nature upon Him—this is the general doctrine of the season. We who call ourselves by His Name, bind ourselves to put on Christ—this is the general duty.

In putting on Christ, we bind ourselves to follow Him *implicitly*, whenever we can. It is not for us to say, *this* is a matter of importance, I see the use of it, and here I will do my best; but in *that*, as I do not see any use in it, I will please myself. To follow implicitly is to follow step by step; and want of faith is shown all the more plainly in the neglect of easy matters, because there can be no doubt of our being able to perform such things: and therefore if, in these things, we do not follow the pattern of Christ, it is because we will not.

Now apply this to those means of grace by which our individual Christian life is begun and sustained,—the Sacraments of Baptism and of the Holy Communion. These things, appointed by God, are indispensable to us in our earthly nature. We cannot follow our Saviour without His help. He has thought fit to convey this help through the Sacraments; and we are not trying our best unless we follow Him in this His first and easiest step—obedience to the ordinances of that religion to which we belong, as He, our Example, was obedient to the ordinances which then existed in His Church.

Faithful obedience does not mean obedience because we understand a

thing, and see the use of it; but it means obedience whether we see the use of the thing or not,—doing it because it is commanded, and trusting that there is a use in it, though we cannot see it. Was not this the lesson which our Lord taught us by His circumcision? What was circumcision to Him? He was obedient to the law for man, for our sakes, and to teach us the lesson of obedience to the ordinances of the religion which He was about to establish.

True it is, that the outward ordinances of our religion are not themselves grace and salvation; but they are the means of grace, and the instruments of salvation. The soul is not cleansed by the water of Baptism; but the soul, by God's grace, is then and there cleansed of its sins, as the body is cleansed by water. The soul is not strengthened and refreshed by the bread and wine in the Eucharist; but the soul is then and there strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine. All this may not be clear to the understanding of those who stand aside, and reason; but it is all known to those who humbly obey the words of our Blessed Lord, and follow in His steps. Reason hesitates and loses the help of God; while faith obediently follows in the way of salvation which Christ has appointed, and inherits the blessing. "Almighty God, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man; grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit; that, our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed will; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

A.

"WHY DO I TAKE MY CHILD TO BE BAPTIZED?"

1. Because I am commanded to do so by that branch of Christ's Church, called the Church of England, of which I am a member, and in which I was myself baptized.

2. Because that Church has, in her Twenty-seventh Article, declared her

deliberate opinion, that "the baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ."

3. Because I learn that there is not in the whole Christian world any Congregation of Christians, whose children