

This was a custom religiously observed from the very remotest antiquity of the Christian era.

A few reasons for frequenting the table of the Lord, and profiting by this ordinance:—

1. Jesus Christ has commanded his disciples to do this in remembrance of him; and, were there no other reason, this certainly must be deemed sufficient by all those who respect his authority as their Teacher and Judge.

2. As the oft-repeated sacrifices in the Jewish church, and particularly the passover, were intended to point out the Son of God till he came; so, it appears, our blessed Lord designed that the eucharist should be a principal mean of keeping in remembrance his passion and death; and thus show forth Him who has died for our offences, as the others did him who in the fulness of time should die.

3. As it is the duty of every Christian to receive the holy eucharist, so it is the duty of every Christian minister to see that the people of God neither neglect nor lose sight of this ordinance.

4. It is a standing and inextinguishable proof of the authenticity of the Christian religion.

In this place a question of very great importance should be considered: Is the ungodliness of the minister any prejudice of the ordinance itself, or to the devout communicant? I answer, 1. None who is ungodly should ever be permitted to minister in holy things, on any pretence whatever; and in this ordinance, in particular, no un-blessed hand should ever be seen. 2. As the benefit to be derived from the eucharist depends entirely on the presence and blessing of God, it cannot be reasonably expected, that he will work through the instrumentality of the profligate or the profane. Many have idled away their time in endeavouring to prove, "that the ungodliness of the minister is no prejudice to the worthy communicant;" But God has disproved this by ten thousand instances, in which he has, in a general way, withheld his Divine influence, because of the wickedness or worthlessness of him who ministered, whether bishop, priest, minister, or preacher.

Profanity and sin will certainly prevent the Divine Spirit from realizing the sign in the souls of worthless ministers and sinful communicants; but the want of episcopal ordination in the person, or consecration in the place, can never prevent Him, who is not confined to temples made by hands, and who sends by whom He will send, from pouring out his Spirit upon those who call faithfully upon his name, and who go to meet Him in his appointed ways.

I should prefer the sacrament to be administered in our form. We must yield a little in innocent matters to inveterate prejudice, but keep as near to our plan as you possibly can. Methodism in Scotland was ruined by building it by a Presbyterian model. Keep this in your eye. You should by all means give the sacrament to all united with you: Do not send them elsewhere to receive it. May the Holy Trinity have you in his continual keeping!

Scarcely any thing is more unbecoming than to see the majority of communicants, as soon as they have received, posting out of the church or chapel; so that, at the conclusion of the ordinance, very few are found to join together in a general thanksgiving to God for the benefits conferred by the passion and death of Christ by means of this blessed ordinance.—*Dr. Adam Clarke.*

SLEEPING IN JESUS.—This expression, "sleeping in Jesus," is one of the most tender that can be conceived. Death was never described as a sleep, in the sense of a natural and short repose, to be succeeded by the morn of a new and glorious day, till the Gospel so proclaimed it. The image of sleep, indeed, as of a stern, interminable state of inactivity and silence, had been long known; but that of sleep, as of a child in the arms of a mother, to be followed by the trump of a blessed resurrection dawn, was first announced in the Christian revelation. Death now is only a brief repose: the body resting from its labours, and the soul being present with the Lord in holiness and felicity.—*Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta.*

FAITH disregards apparent impossibilities, where there is a command and promise of God. The effort to believe is, often, that faith by which the soul is healed.—*Dr. A. Clarke.*

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

REFORMATION.—LUTHER.

[CONCLUDED.]

THE arguments of Rome had been signally baffled in these conferences; but she had means in reserve which had oftener achieved her victories. The putting words of the Official pronounced, that "the Emperor, the defender of the Catholic faith, was determined to do his duty;" and the full menace was realized in an Imperial decree, of the following month, declaring Luther a schismatic and heretic, and placed under the ban of the empire; a right being thus given to all men to seize his person and property, and those of his adherents. The execution of this decree was defeated by a circumstance strongly displaying the provident regard of the Elector Frederic for his illustrious subject.

The Imperial herald, who had escorted Luther as far as Friedberg, had scarcely left him, when, as he was travelling along the border of the Thuringian forest, he was seized, near the village of Schweins, by a party of horsemen in masks; thence hurried back through the forest to the castle of Wartburg, an old residence of the Thuringian Landgraves, standing among the mountains near Issenach. This singular mode of securing the person, probably saved the life, of the great Reformer. But the solitude to which he was necessarily condemned, until some change should be wrought in the Emperor, soon wearied the active spirit that had been, for many years, perpetually moving among the busiest circles of men; and Luther would have gladly run the hazard of returning to Wittemberg. The monotony of his seclusion, the change of his habits, and his natural dislike to the appearance of a constraint, which to the last had something of mystery which it was difficult to solve, might have been sufficient to justify his impatience. But he had the higher motive of dread, lest his absence at this most critical time of young Protestantism might either expose the Church to hazards, or dishonour his cause by the appearance of his having abandoned it for personal considerations. This last feeling seems to have peculiarly oppressed him. He writes to Melancthon:—

"For the glory of the Scriptures, and the consolation of mankind, I would rather submit to a violent death, than that you should think me languid in the cause. Even though I should perish, the word of God shall not perish; and you, I hope, like another Elisha, would succeed Elijah."

"If the Pope proceed to attack all who are of my sentiments, Germany must be involved in tumult; and the sooner the attempt is made, the sooner will he and his abettors be defeated."

But his solitude was not unproductive. He occupied his time in study, and from the mountain-fortress of Wartburg issued a succession of powerful performances, which he would probably have never found leisure to produce in the whirl of active life. His "Tract on Auricular Confession," showing its corruption of the useful and innocent custom of the primitive church into an instrument of the cupidity and avarice of Rome; his "Notes on the Gospels," his "Letters to the Students of Erfurt," an disrespect to the clergy, and his memorable work on the guilt and folly of monastic vows, attest his diligence; while, from the utter obscurity of his retreat, and the popular sympathy felt for the imagined sufferings of the man and the minister, they fell with a vast increase of weight among the nation.

At length news came from Wittemberg that made him brave the chances of Imperial violence. A professor of canon law had been appointed in the University. Against this law, as the ancient ally of the Popedom, he had waged the most determined hostility; and this appointment was too like a triumph of the evil influence, to let him lie tranquilly upon his pillow. He suddenly appeared at Wittemberg, ready to meet the chain or the stake for the honour of truth. But there he found that his opinions had taken too firm root to be easily overpowered; and that they were even producing results of the most practical good. His Anabaptist brethren had already abolished private masses, one of the most lucrative and scandalous resources of the Romish ritual; and begging for the order, the necessity of wearing the monk-

ish dress, and the perpetuity of the monkish vows, were given up at the same time.

A singular antagonist was now to increase Luther's celebrity. Henry VIII., jealous of fame in every form, undertook the hazardous task of overwhelming him, against whom no adversary had hitherto been able to stand. Henry's answer to the book on "The Babylonish Captivity of the Church," now remains only as one of the idle monuments of the age of scholastic folly. But Rome, little suspecting the temperament of the man on whom she lavished her praise, received his "Defence of the Seven Sacraments" with grateful pomp. The volume was accepted in full conclave, and the title of "Defender of the Faith" was conferred, to swell for ever the honours of the British diadem. But the title was scarcely given, when Henry's defiance turned into burlesque the short-sightedness of the great Infallible.

Luther, strong in the strength of his cause, feared no man. He answered the monarch even with less ceremony than the monk. His reply is learned and argumentative; but, from what peculiar circumstance we cannot now discover, his style is singularly contemptuous. The controversial habits of the age were harsh; and Henry, unhesitating as he was in his epithets, must have been astonished at finding himself so closely rivaled.

In this year Leo died, as was presumed, by poison.

Luther's absence from Wittemberg was but temporary. On his return, he commenced the great work that alone could give stability to his cause—the translation of the Scriptures. The first efforts of printing had been employed in the promulgation of the Scriptures; and Germany possessed translations of parts of the Bible so far back as the year 1476. But they were few, repulsive to the eye, and, from their rudeness, scarcely less repulsive to the understanding. Luther applied himself for a year to the study of the original languages; and in 1522, commenced his colossal work. His own account of his purposes, to Spalatin, is brief but clear:—

"I translated not only John's Gospel, but the whole of the New Testament, in my Patmos. But Melancthon and I have begun to revise the whole of it: and it will, by the blessing of God, do us credit. We sometimes need your assistance to direct us to suitable modes of expression; prepare yourself, therefore; but supply us only with such words as are simple, and avoid all that are confined in their use to the camp, or the court. We wish the work to be distinguished by the simplicity of its style."

Matthew's Gospel was published first; then Mark's; then the Epistle to the Romans. The entire New Testament appeared as early as September, 1522. To promote the circulation, the volume was made as cheap as possible; and the parts were also published separately. Luther's still more arduous labour, the translation of the Old Testament was instantly commenced. And he thus writes on the 2d of November:—

"In my translation of the Old Testament, I am only in Leviticus. It is inconceivable how much writing letters, business, conversation, and many other things, have interrupted my progress. I am now determined to shut myself up and use despatch, so that the five books of Moses may be sent to press by January."

"We shall print them separately. After that we shall proceed to the historical parts of Scripture, and, lastly, to the Prophets. The size and price render it necessary to make those divisions in the publication."

The Romish advocates were up in arms on the appearance of a work which has been always fatal to the delusions of Rome; but it was received with joy by the people, and Luther exultingly saw it spread to the borders of the land. This translation still stands at the head of all the German versions. Its simplicity, force, and dignity have had no rivals; and, like our own authorized version, it is appealed to as the finest example of the old national tongue.

The Reformation had rapidly assumed a form, and its success brought with it the usual concomitants of worldly fortune. Ambitious minds began to discover in it a means of public distinction; and the first serious anxieties which Luther felt were awakened by the spirit of partisanship. Carolostadius had the weakness of ambition; and intelligence reached Wartburg, that he was urging himself into a name by rash attacks on the public