

fearful, to comfort the doubtful, to caution the formal, and to check the presumptuous; since all this variety of temper is found in every mixed congregation.

The confession itself is most solemn in its form, and comprehensive in its meaning; for it includes all kinds of sin, both of omission and commission—it speaks of leaving things undone which ought to have been done, and of doing things which ought not to have been done. The design, in giving this general form to the confession of sins, was, to allow each person the privilege of mentally confessing the sins he has individually committed, by thought, word, and deed, against the divine majesty, in terms which may be used by all the congregation.

If it be objected to this form of confession, that it does not specify particular sins; it may be replied, that if it did descend to a minute specification, it would cease to be a general confession, and would consequently be inappropriate to a mixed assembly; for we would charitably hope there is no one transgression, in which every member of a christian congregation continually allows himself; and we are sure there are none which may not be included in the confession we use.

We have offended against the holy laws of God in some way or other: but we have each our own way of doing it. The plague of one man's heart is his pride—of another, is his intemperate passion—of another, is his worldliness—of another, is his deadness in religion: and it is expected that every devout worshipper will accompany the general confession of his life, with a particular confession of his own personal sins, in his heart.

We take the liberty to remind our readers of the propriety of their being present at the beginning of the service, that they may prepare themselves by confession of their sins, for the devotion that follow. By delaying to enter the sanctuary till after the worship has begun, they not only disturb the devotions of others, but lose the opportunity of casting down their own burdens at the foot of the cross. 'Then I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.'

When confession of sins has been made both by people and priest, the latter stands and pronounces the declaration of absolution, or remission of sins, 'to all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe the holy gospel.' It is not, as some have idly supposed, that the minister claims the power of conveying pardon to this or to that particular person; since, if he had such a power, his want of that knowledge of hearts which would enable him to apply it aright, would hinder him from exercising it: but as one to whom 'the ministry of reconciliation has been committed,' he has received 'power and commandment, to declare and pronounce to the people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins.' And if you will take the pains to examine the rubrick, you will find that this is not called an absolution of sins, but a declaration of absolution. It expresses God's willingness to forgive the penitent, and the terms on which he is willing to receive them into favour, and cannot, with fairness be construed to mean any thing else.

We cannot but remark the propriety with which our publick devotions are introduced by confession of sins, and the declaration of absolution. We are moved, in the exhortation, 'to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness, to the end that we may obtain forgiveness of the same,' preparatory to the succeeding exercises of thanksgiving and prayer. In this, we imitate the examples of the early christians, who, according to St. Basil; 'immediately upon their entering the house of prayer, made confession of their sins to God, with much sorrow, concern, and tears, every man pronouncing his own confession with his own mouth.' And in the recorded prayers of Ezra and Daniel, we find them introducing their requests in the same way; and indeed, the practice is so consonant to reason, that its propriety is manifest at once.

To be continued.

THE CHURCHMAN'S REASONS FOR BRINGING HIS CHILDREN TO BAPTISM.

Continued.

6. That which, above all, establishes my mind in the duty of bringing my children to Christ's holy baptism, is the direction given to Abraham and his descendants, to circumcise their children when eight days old. For, as the passover was a type of the Lord's supper, so, was circumcision a type of baptism—(1 Cor. v. 6, 7; and Col. ii. 11, 12.) The covenant of grace, under both dispensations, is one and the same; and both circumcision and baptism are to be considered as seals of the Righteousness of the Faith of Christ. (Rom. iv. 11. and Acts ii. 38.) The blessings, viz. pardon, holiness, and heaven, are promised under both dispensations, the two Testaments being counterparts of the same deed of grace. The objects of the promise, and the proposals of mercy made in it, are the same in both. A change has been made in the outward ordinances whereby the blessings of the covenant are represented; occasioned by the coming of Christ, the ancient church looking forward to his arrival, and we looking backward on the accomplishment of his work; but the blessings themselves, and the parties to whom they are offered, are the same.

If then Baptism be the substitute and antitype of circumcision, it should be administered to the same persons. And surely I am to consider both circumcision and baptism as being in succession, outward and visible signs of the same inward and spiritual grace, viz. the 'circumcision of the heart,' or 'the renewing of the Holy Ghost;' and both as ordained by Christ himself to be the pledges of that inward and spiritual benefit.

7. I bring my children to be baptized, because I am not forbidden so to do. For it appears to me that if Christ, the Divine Lawgiver of his church, had intended to exclude those from the privileges of the Christian church, who had been admitted by his own command, through a long succession of ages, to the privileges of the Jewish church, he would have expressly said so. But as he has nowhere said so, I must believe that the privileges of the children of Christian parents are not fewer in number, nor less in value, than the privileges of the natural seed of Abraham. Our Lord's silence on the subject is the most satisfactory declaration of his will. I conceive that it lies with those who object to the baptism of infants, to prove the change which they suppose to have been made in the subjects to be admitted to the visible church; and not with us to prove that a long-existing practice ought to be continued. The Apostles, unless they had been forbidden, would naturally act on the same principle on which their forefathers had acted, and admit children, together with their parents, as members of the new dispensation of grace; and especially as their Lord has said, 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

8. I bring my children to be baptized, because the subjects of baptism are nowhere particularly described in the New Testament. The command to precepts and baptize all nations, Jews and Gentiles, seems to include all ages. And as no distinction is made, I conclude that all children of parents professing Christianity are comprehended in the command, especially as it is said, that, 'Of such is the kingdom of God.'

9. I bring my children to holy baptism, because tradition and the universal practice of the church of Christ sanction my practice in so doing. I cannot find that, till after the Reformation, any doubt existed on the subject. All the notices we have in the writings of the primitive Fathers of the church are in its favour, though, as might be expected, those of the two first centuries are few in number, because the subject was uncontroverted, and their remains are scanty.—

* The change made by our Lord, in the ordinance of admission into the church, was by no means arbitrary, nor is its reasonableness difficult to be discovered. Before 'the offering of the body of Jesus once for all,' every rite of the church proclaimed that 'without shedding of blood there is no remission.' This was the language of the ordinances both of Circumcision and the Passover. But since the great atoning Victim has been offered, bloodless ceremonies proclaim that peace has been made by the blood of the cross, and lead the mind to the effects of atonement in the enlightening and sanctifying influence of God the Holy Ghost. The righteousness of faith under both dispensations is the same; but 'the seal of that righteousness' differs with the different aspects which faith bears to it.

The universal church, without the exception of a single branch, or (so far as I have heard) of a single individual, * from a period long before the introduction of Popish superstition into it, and through the whole period of that superstition, admitted children to baptism, as we learn from the writings of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, in the year 253, from whose time the evidence is full and clear. The case is the same with the whole Greek church. The newly discovered Syrian church, on the coast of Malabar, in the East, which was planted by the Apostle St. Thomas, and has subsisted from his time to the present without any subjection to the church of Rome, and indeed without any intercourse, till within a short period, with the churches of Europe, is found to concur in this point with the general church of Christ. And there surely we may suppose tradition to be pure. If therefore the baptism of infants be not true baptism, it will follow that the Christian church was destitute of this ordinance, (except in the case of adults converted from Judaism or Heathenism,) from the third century to the fifteenth, that is, for twelve hundred years, even on the confession of those who oppose the practice. It will follow that the Fathers of the early ages, the holy martyrs of the valleys of Piedmont, the Syrian Christians, &c. were never admitted into the Christian church by its admission, rite, and they were not (to use our Lord's words) 'born of water.' In short it will follow that the visible church, as such became extinct soon after the days of the Apostles, and was not revived till after the Reformation, when some person began to baptise others who had never been baptized himself. Though tradition is of itself a fallible guide, yet when it is clear, universal, and uninterrupted, its weight is very considerable; and in the case before us this is its character. For no one will deny that the evidence from the time of Cyprian, that is, from the middle of the third century downwards, is indisputable; and no one will assert that there is any contrary evidence to be produced before this time. No one can tell us when this corruption, as some suppose it to be, was introduced; no one can find, during the period I have mentioned, a dissenting voice. Now immemorial custom is admitted in courts of human judicature: and surely, when the Scripture is silent, it cannot be without weight in matters relative to the church of Christ.

To be continued.

* With the exception of two persons in the third century, who were for delaying baptism in certain specified cases, contrary to the avowed practice of the church; and of a few persons, about the year 1000, who denied baptism to infants, because, among other monstrous tenets which they maintained, they denied that any infants could be saved.

† The custom of giving the communion to infants, which is sometimes brought forward for the purpose of weakening the evidence of tradition in support of Infant Baptism, will not answer the purposes for which it is produced.—For the former practice has no foundation in the word of God: the child of an Israelite being expressly forbidden to be admitted to the passover till he could ask his parents the meaning of the mystery. Exod. xxiii. 26. Buxtorf. Synagog. Jud. cap. 3. An infant, moreover, cannot partake of the communion 'in remembrance' of Christ, which is required in the words of the Institution of the Lord's Supper. The custom is not to be traced so far back, nor was it so generally received, as that of Infant Baptism. Justin Martyr, who lived but forty years from the time of the Apostles, while he speaks of baptism as introduced in the place of circumcision, mentions not a word of infant communion. He speaks also of those who were made disciples of Christ in their childhood. (See reason 1.) And how could they be so made but by the rite of baptism?

Singular Fatality by Lightning.—Two men were killed by lightning in Woolwich, Conn. on the 27th June. They had retired to bed in the garret, containing two beds, the head of each standing against the chimney together with two others, the lightning struck the chimney, and killed one man in each bed; the other two escaped unhurt. The lightning passed into the chamber below where an old lady was reading her Bible with her hands on the leaves, and her fingers spread open, it passed through her fingers burning two of them, and the corners of half a dozen leaves of the Bible; thence it descended to the lower room, where a man was sleeping on an iron bound chest, it stove the chest to pieces, the man receiving no material injury. There were 28 people in the house.—Am paper.