

the unity of the church; and, forasmuch as he putteth his full trust only in thy mercy, impute not to him his former sins;" and in the prayer which follows for a sick person, when there appeareth small hope of recovery, we find this petition: "Give him unfeigned repentance for all the errors of his life past, and steadfast faith in thy son Jesus, that his sins may be done away and his pardon sealed in heaven before he go hence and be no more seen." And again, in the commendatory prayer, this petition is offered for the soul of the dying man: "Wash it, we pray thee, in the blood of the immaculate lamb that was slain to take away the sins of the world, that whatever defilement it may have contracted in the midst of this miserable and naughty world, through the lusts of the flesh, and through the wiles of Satan, being purged and done away, it may be presented pure and without spot before thee." From the purport of these prayers, it would appear that the absolution which, when earnestly desired by the sick man is to be pronounced by the minister, must be regarded as something different from the forgiveness of sin, which is in these prayers ascribed to God, and asked in the name and for the sake of Christ, for the man upon whom the absolution has just been pronounced. If our church regarded this absolution as conveying a plenary pardon for sin, it would be a solemn mockery to call upon God immediately afterwards to forgive those sins which had already been pardoned by the absolution of the minister. From all this it has been maintained that the absolution in the office for the visitation of the sick, was intended to meet the ease of those who, for offences against the church, had been placed under ban and excommunication, and who, after confessing faith in Christ and entire dependence in him for their salvation, desired to be restored to the communion of the church from which they had been excluded. Viewed in this light, which indeed appears to be the only light in which it can consistently be viewed, the service is not open to the attacks made upon it by the enemies of our church.

I am free to state that, in my opinion, the use of this form of absolution, in the lax state of discipline amongst us, when excommunication is unknown, and when there are no church censures to be removed, would be calculated to mislead and to induce in the minds of ignorant members of our communion who do not understand the real meaning of the form, a belief that our church encouraged the unscriptural and soul-deceiving doctrine that a power to pardon had been committed to the ministers of Christ. It is your duty, my reverend brethren, to be careful, lest, by the injudicious use of any of our church services, you should lead the people to place their dependence for pardon and salvation on anything, save in God's mercy, through the perfect atonement and spotless righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And now, my reverend brethren, I would, in conclusion, address to you the words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles: "I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing