

# The Church Times.

Rev. J. C. Cochran—Editor.

"Evangelical Truth—Apostolic Order."

W. Gossip—Publisher.

VOL. V.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, SATURDAY, OCT. 30, 1882.

NO. 44.

## Calendar.

### CALENDAR WITH LESSONS.

Day & date		MORNING.	EVENING.
S. Oct. 31	21 Sun. after Trin.	Hab. 2	Luke 17
M. Nov. 1	All Saints' Day.	Wis. 8	Luke 11
Tu. "	"	Ecol's 19	Luke 18
We. "	"	"	"
Th. "	"	"	"
Fr. "	"	"	"
Sat. "	"	"	"
	Papists' Consp.*	2 Sam. 22	Acts 27
	"	Ecol's 24	Luke 22

a To ver. 10. b Begin ver 33, and chap 13 to ver 7. c To ver 17.  
d To ver. 17. e To ver. 13.

## Poetry.

### THE CHURCH.

FROM what a small source springing,  
The mightiest river flows,  
Its arms on all sides flinging,  
Increasing as it goes.  
A streamlet from a fountain  
May water all the plain,  
As winding down the mountains  
It stretches to the main.

That tree its branches spreading,  
So lofty and so wide;  
Where beasts in shade are treading,  
And birds in covert hide.  
Was once, when first transplanted,  
A tiny, branchless shoot;  
Till heaven its influence granted,  
And rained upon its root.

Even so the Church, arising  
From Abram's lowly race,  
Stands, every eye surprizing,  
A wonder work of grace.  
A stream, its waters sending  
To irrigate mankind,  
A tree its boughs extending,  
Where all may shelter find.

And as the world is growing,  
That tree shall onward grow;  
And long as time is flowing,  
That stream shall ceaseless flow—  
Till in heaven's crystal river,  
And life's fair tree on high,  
It spreads itself for ever  
In vast eternity.

Clericus.

## Religious Miscellany.

### THE POWER OF ABSOLUTION

To sum up, then, these remarks upon the form of absolution, which has been retained for the special comfort of the sick in special cases, it is only in extreme cases that this strong form of absolution is to be resorted to at all, as is evident from the rubrics. The sick person is not to be moved to make a special confession of his sins, except "he feel his conscience touched with any weighty matter."\* And, even when he has so confessed, the sinner's own earnest and expressed desire for the assurance of ministerial absolution is the sole ground upon which a priest is warranted in pronouncing it—"if he humbly and heartily desire it." Not even then is the minister bound to the use of this exact form of words, but, "if he be a preacher," may exercise his own discretion in some degree as to the best mode of conveying a comforting assurance of forgiveness to the penitent but distressed sinner. Here then, there is no authority claimed for the priest of the Church of England, but such as every minister, as a minister of the gospel, must sometimes exercise, in some way or other, for the comfort of penitent sinners under a deep sense of guilt. But, if the sick person can be comforted in any other way, or should not require such strong assurance, this form need not be used, as is evident from the 67th canon. For such a reason as there was for its occasional use in the reformation age, as has been pointed out in the Bishop of St. Asaph's history of the Church of England, s. 407, p. 233, note and in Rev. C. Benson's discourse on the absolution, pp. 50-52, and 174, 175 (viz., as a "declaratory consolation" to penitent sinners in such a form of words

\* In archdeacon Cox's "Notes and Explanations" on the office for the visitation of the sick, is a good hint against "extorting" confessions, if the sick do not choose to confess of their own accord (p. 21). At pp. 25, 26 he explains the absolution to be declaratory and conditional.

as some people of that period might from their early prejudice happen earnestly to desire), does not now exist. But even if need should ever seem now to require its use, it is carefully guarded and limited in its application. For it expressly limits and restricts the power "to absolve" (that is "to pronounce remitted"—"to declare and pronounce forgiveness to") the cases of "all sinners who truly repent and believe in Christ; and all such, every protestant will admit, are pardoned, and therefore may safely be pronounced absolved; and then the act of forgiveness itself is ascribed to Christ, and set forth as a thing to be prayed for. So that it is not the minister who forgives the person's sins; he only pronounces them forgiven, upon the supposition that the sick sinner truly repents and unfeignedly believes the gospel. "I absolve thee from all thy sins;" that is, "I pronounce thee remitted from" them—"I declare and pronounce to thee, truly repenting and coming unto Him by faith the forgiveness of all thy sins." So then it is nothing more than an individual application of the general authority to "declare and pronounce" to "God's people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." For a fuller discussion of the subject the reader must be referred to the Church of England Magazine, vol. xix. No. 554, p. 323, and the Christian Observer, May, 1849, p. 322.

The Exhortation to the Communion. It has been supposed by some that the Romish practice of "auricular confession" is sanctioned by these words: "Therefore, if there be any of you, who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy word he may receive the benefit of absolution together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding all scruple and doubtfulness."

But here the party is invited to come only if, he cannot quiet his own conscience; and even then for "further comfort or counsel" only. Nor is it to the "priest" but to some "discreet and learned minister of God's word" that he is (not commanded or even urged, but) invited to come, in order that (not by any "authoritative absolution or sentence of the priest or by any liturgical form of absolution, but) "by the ministry of God's holy word"—by a close and individual application of gospel truth contained in the Bible, such as 1. John ii 12—to the heart and conscience, by some discreet and learned minister, he may "receive the benefit of absolution" in the comfortable sense and assurance of remission of sins. That this is the true meaning by the words, and that which was intended by the compilers, has been proved by Wheatly (c. xi. s. v., § 6, pp. 437-8), and by Jenner, pp. 15, 16, and pp. 24, 25.\* See also an able article in the Christian Observer, January, 1851, p. 11, &c., and pp. 35-6. Indeed the homily on repentance, pt. ii., pp. 478-481, expressly condemns the practice of "auricular confession."

### DEACONS.

The Omission of the Absolution in the Daily Services by Clergymen in Deacons' orders. It has been inferred from this that our absolution is a popish form. But it is a remarkable fact that this absolution was not

\* In the liturgy of 1549 the exhortation was worded thus, "Let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned priest, taught in the law of God, and confess and open his sin and grief secretly, that he may receive such ghostly counsel, advice, and comfort, that his conscience may be relieved, and that of us (as of the ministers of God and of the Church) he may receive comfort and absolution." &c., and there was an admonition not to be offended with them that used "the auricular and secret confession to the priest" (Keeling, p. 179). At the same time the rubric, prefixed to the absolution in the visitation of the sick, contained this clause: "and the same form of absolution shall be used in all private confessions" (Keeling, p. 319). The omission of this clause, and the alteration of the communion to nearly its present form at the revision in 1552, are striking facts, from which both Wheatly and Jenner (in the passages referred to above) rightly argue that the meaning here assigned to the particular clause which is under consideration, is the true and proper meaning. The 13th canon also uses this language; "If any man confess his secret and hidden sins to the minister, for unburdening of his conscience and to receive spiritual consolation and ease of mind from him"—not absolution.

derived from any Roman form, but was composed by the reformers in 1552, "with the advice of foreign, and even Presbyterian Protestants" (Mant's prayer-Book, p. 14). It appears to have been taken from Calvin, Pollanus, and "the liturgy used by John a Lasco, one of the most influential of the foreign reformers in the German church" (Jenner, pp. 7, 8). And it is nothing more than a particular and official form of preaching the gospel. But as the deacon does not preach *ex officio*, like the presbyter, but only by virtue of the bishop's license—"if thereto licensed by the bishop"—the license is withheld from preaching this particular form as a test of submission, as significant mark and intimation of his subordinate and probationer, who has not yet purchased to himself the "good degree" (1 Tim. iii. 16) of a fully accredited ambassador of Christ, and therefore has not yet received full preaching powers "in the congregation." While his pronouncing this form on his admission to the higher order of priesthood,\* at once proves him to have been duly invested with full authority as a minister of Christ. Such appears to be a simple and satisfactory reason for the omission of the absolution by the deacons of our Church.† For, while a presbyter receives authority "to preach the word of God, and to minister the holy sacraments," a deacon being a probationer, is allowed to preach only "if thereto licensed by the bishop;"‡ in the absence of the priest to baptize infants—not adults, and to "assist" at the holy communion "in the distribution" of the same, viz., by delivering the cup (see the rubrics). The examination of adult candidates for baptism is properly assigned to the more experienced minister.

The probation of the diaconate, before any person is intrusted with the full authority of a Christian minister (and consequently before he can hold a benefice), is a wise and salutary regulation, founded on scripture (see 1 Tim. iii. 16). Now, if the deacon were permitted to perform every ministerial act, than there would be no distinction; while on the other hand, if his authority were too limited, inconvenience would frequently arise in employing deacons as curates, in which capacity they are intended to learn the ministerial duties. Now the prominent ministerial acts of a gospel minister are the preaching of God's word and the administration of the sacraments. And in each of these sacraments the deacon's authority is somewhat limited—just enough to prove the probationary nature of their office, and to render it anomalous to leave them in sole charge of a populous parish, yet not enough to cause any ser-

\* In the absolution of the daily service, as also in that of the communion service, the priest declares God's pardon and forgiveness to all penitent believers; and therefore, in making this declaration, every minister of the Church is actually, and apostolically, binding on earth what is bound in heaven, and loosing on earth what is loosed in heaven" (Dr. M'Nelle's Lectures on the Church, ii. pp. 93, 94). And the fact that deacons do not pronounce these forms of absolution until they have received authority according to the form of ordination which has been before discussed in an additional argument in favor of the interpretation of that form which was there advanced, Hooker too speaks of "sermons as keys to the kingdom of heaven" (b. v. c. 22 s. 1).

† The most simple course for the officiating deacon to pursue in the absence of the priest is, perhaps, to make a slight pause, and then to proceed at once to the Lord's prayer. If any prayer be used in this place, that which may be said after any of the former, viz., "O God, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy," &c., seems the most suitable (see Bishop Mant's prayer of the communion service.) "The Lord bless us and keep us," &c.—seems a more suitable substitute for the benediction—"The peace of God," &c. for the use of deacons, than "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c., which is always used in the course of divine service, and which therefore needs not to be repeated when there is choice of another prayer. That "the Lord bless us and keep us," &c., is a prayer and not a benediction, may be proved by Wheatly's arguments on the prayer, from 2 Cor. xiii. 14, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c., in c. iii. s. xxvi. p. 160, all of which are equally applicable to it, though he seems to forget this, and calls it a "blessing," i. c. xiv. p. 496.

‡ It may at first sight seem as if the deacon were to preach as well as baptize only "in the absence of the priest;" but as the bishop afterwards gives him authority to preach the gospel with no other limitation than the bishop's license, it is clear that when so licensed he is at full liberty to preach as well in presence as in the absence of the priest.