

ENTIRE ABSOLUTION OF THE PENITENT.

SERMON II.

JUDGE THYSELF, THAT THOU BE NOT JUDGED OF THE LORD.

A SERMON

PREACHED

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF CHRIST, IN OXFORD,

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BY THE

REV. E. B. PUSEY, D.D.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF HEBREW, CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, AND
LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE.

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1 COR. xi. 31.

If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

IN my last Sermon, I dwelt upon that authoritative act, whereby God, through the ministry of man, conveys His own sentence of pardon to the soul of the penitent, sets him free from the guilt of his past sins, opens to the blessed influx of His grace the channels which sin had stopped, and often pours at once large grace and love into the soul. But, since the efficacy of Absolution depends upon the penitence of him who receives it, the deeper that penitence, the fuller will be the grace. And so, since special confession, gathering into one before the soul all its greater sins, until it shrinks and recoils and sickens at the miserable sight, mostly brings with it a lowlier self-aborrence, deepens its cry for mercy, and issues in greater love for Him Who loved it amid such loathsomeness and misery, special confession will mostly obtain more grace and have more assurance of pardon. And this I say, not (God forbid!) to lessen the comfort of such as have not been led by Him to desire any other than the general Absolution of all true penitents in the whole congregation, when confession has been made to God only, but as a source of increased comfort to laden or anxious souls who feel that they need what is more special to themselves. The Church (I am compelled to repeat) allows us both ways. In particular cases, she recommends special Confession, and Absolution in form more authoritative. For in the Visitation of the Sick, she directs her