

RELIGION BY PROXY.

FROM MILTON.*

TRUTH is compared in scripture to a streaming fountain ; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth ; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy. There is not any burden that some would gladder post off to another than the charge and care of their religion. There be who knows not that there be ! of protestants and professors who live and die in as errant an implicit faith as any lay papist of Loretto. A wealthy man, addicted to his pleasure and to his profits, finds religion to be a traffic so entangled, and of so many peddling accounts that of all mysteries he cannot skill to keep a stock going upon that trade. What should he do ? Fain he would have the name to be religious, fain he would bear up with his neighbours in that. What does he therefore, but resolves to give over toiling, and to find himself out some factor, to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religious affairs ; some divine of note and estimation that must be. To him he adheres, resigns the whole warehouse of his religion, with all the locks and keys into his custody ; and indeed makes the very person of that man his religion ; esteems his associating with him a sufficient evidence and commenda-

* Speech for the Liberty of unlicensed printing.