

ORIGINAL.

OBJECTIONS TO SPONSORS REMOVED.*

Let us suppose, my brethren, that we all performed these our duties—the parents the godparents and the spiritual father of the parish, what an alteration would it not make in a few years. Such superintendence and such guardianship would, with the divine blessing, secure the advancement of religion, and the will of God would be done among us on earth almost as it is by angels and saints in heaven.

Conceive the ill effects of a clergyman in any community who should be utterly regardless of the behaviour of those committed to his charge—who should hear them take the name of God in vain, or disregard the day the Lord has hallowed—or he—steal, and yet give no warning of the awful fate which will inevitably follow such wicked habits.

Conceive further what would be the consequence of his setting an example of such depraved habits. We might expect that his example would be generally followed, and that impiety, profaneness and irreligion would assail our eyes and ears at every step. Less mischief, I allow, may arise from the neglect or bad example of a single Godfather; but little less will attend the neglect or misconduct of sponsors generally.

What sincere comfort must it afford a christian parent, especially when he is walking through the vale of the shadow of death, to reflect that some friends have undertaken to lead his children in the way to heaven, unless they be so perverse as to despise all admonition. This comfort is increased by the belief that these friends feel an interest in the extension of Christ's kingdom, and that at least their lives will be humble patterns for the imitation of their offspring.

If parents, my brethren, were sensible that a well grounded faith in Jesus Christ is the one thing needful for the children, God has given them, they would make it their first duty to select the most pious of their acquaintance as Godparents for their infants.

And if we would all meditate on the splendid promises God has made to those who give but a cup of cold water to a little one because he is a disciple of Christ shall in no wise lose his reward—or reflect on the duty imposed upon us in the text, "to do good, especially to the household of faith,"—if we would meditate on these things, we should hail with pleasure the offer of any parent to make over to us a special power and authority thus to forward the salvation of their children's souls, and give us such an opportunity of obtaining for ourselves a glorious recompence at the Lord's hand.

It is by no means an uncommon observation when asked to stand sponsor for a child; 'I cannot indeed, I have stood to several, and have resolved not to do so again.' But surely it ought not to be a common answer of any who call themselves disciples of the God of love. Shall any christian refuse to do more good to the 'household' because he has already done a little? Shall not the unlimited love which Christ has shewn to each of us constrain us to extend ours as far as God shall give us opportunity?

I must, however, acknowledge that good christian parents are seldom heard to complain of a difficulty in procuring sponsors. The difficulty, I believe, is chiefly found by such as are suspected of being careless about the conduct of their children; and who set them an example which will lead them anywhere but heavenward. That such should experience trouble we can readily imagine; and it requires a considerable degree of charity to undertake a charge for such thoughtless parents. But even in these circumstances we should call to mind that it was for sinners our Saviour purchased with his blood the blessings of Redemption. It was sinners he came to save from death eternal: it was our comfort, it is our joy, it is our glory that He came from heaven to save sinners. And let it be remembered that our profession is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and we should not shut our ears, or close our hearts to the cry of infant innocence because it is unfortunate enough to receive little affection from its parents.

This difficulty, however, of wicked parents displays the wisdom of God in the government of the world, and the care of Christ as the head of his church on earth; for if sponsors were duly attentive to the performance of their duties, it would tend mightily to the reformation of parents. For the sake of their children they would restrain themselves—to acquire these guardians for their little ones, they would themselves cease to do evil and learn to do will.

It is to be feared that an immense amount of sin is the consequence of a neglect of this very duty—and no small evil done to the church by her enemies who take advantage of it (though unjustly,) to unsettle the minds of the unstable, and then assail the doctrine itself of infant baptism. To this neglect I think it may be attributed that many absent themselves from the house of God, that drunkenness disgraces our public paths, that indecent conversation is so common, and profligacy and debauching so frequently vex our souls. Look around, my brethren for you are all capable of judging of the correctness of my observation, look around and see if these things are so or not. If I am right, and there be any such careless parents in this congregation, let me entreat them to picture to themselves the terrific aspect of the Judges' countenance when it shall be their turn to appear at his dread tribunal—how they will crouch under his awful frown, and sink among those on his left hand, among the wicked who are being bound in bundles to be burned? How will they wish that a millstone had been hanged about their necks, and they cast into the sea, before they had led astray one of Christ's little ones. These thoughts to many are truly awful but if indulged, they must be salutary.

But if we are not wicked parents, we nearly all are sponsors; and, therefore, I may admonish you to discharge the trust you have undertaken faithfully. Great will be your reward in heaven. Think what will be your feelings at the great day, of Judgment, to hear the glorious Judge commend you for having given a morsel of the bread of life to one of his little ones, especially if the morsel through divine grace has afforded saving nourishment to the precious soul. Think, should you be admitted by your Redeemer to the mansions of eternal bliss, how your happiness will be increased, if you have been the humble instrument of leading even one of your fellow-creatures to the city of the living God.

May I now leave you, my brethren, to carry home in your hearts these reflections, and may I hope that you will recall them to your minds on your pillow to night. May those who are fathers hearken to this instruction. May all godfathers hearken to it, and may I your spiritual father hearken to it. May we all zealously apply ourselves as we have opportunity to do good unto all men, but especially unto those who are of the 'household of faith.'

Messrs. Editors,

The following graphic description of the death scene of an ungodly old man is striking in itself, and perhaps might be useful to some of the readers of your very useful publication, I send it you for insertion if you think it likely to be of any service. It is an extract from the Practice of Piety, by Lewis Bayly. This work was printed about the year 1610. This book was intended for the use of Charles the First, then Prince of Wales, to whom it was dedicated. It is written in a plain, forcible and practical manner, and contains much excellent instruction. A. G.

"MEDITATIONS OF THE MISERY OF THE BODY AND SOUL" IN DEATH.

After that the aged man hath conflicted with long sickness and having endured the brunt of pain, should now expect some ease. In comes death (Nature's slaughter-man, God's curse and Hell's purveyor) and looks the old man grimme, and blache in the face. and neither pitying his age, nor regarding his long endured dolours, will not be hired to forbear, either for silver or gold; nay, hee will not take, to spare his life, skin for skin, and all that the old man hath. but batters all the principall parts of his body, and arrests him to appeare before the terrible Judge. And as thinking that the old man will not dispatch to goe with him fast enough: Lord! how many darts of calamities doth he shoot throw him,

stickes, neches, cramps, feavers, obstructions, rowmes, flegme, colicke, stone, winde, &c.

Oh, what a ghastly sight it is, to see him then in his bed, when death hath given him his mortal wound: What a cold sweat ower-runnes all his body: what a trembling possesseth all his members? the head shooteth, the face waxeth pale, the nose, blacke, the nether jaw-bone hangeth down, the eye-strings breake, the tongue faltreth, the breath shorteneth, and smelleth earthly, the throate rattleth and every gaspe the heart-strings are ready to breake assunder.

Now the miserable soule sensibly perceiveth her earthly body to begin to die: for as towards the dissolution of the universall frame of the great world the sunne shall be turned into darknesse, the moon into blood, the starres shall fall from heaven, the aire shall be full of stormes and flashing meteors, the earth shall tremble, and the sea shall roare, and mens hearts shall faile for feare, expecting the end of such sorrowfull beginnings: So towards the dissolution of man, (which is the little world) the eyes which are the sunne and moone lose their splendour and see nothing but blood-guiltinesse of sinne; the rest of the senses as lesser starres, doe one after another faile and fall: his Mind, Reason, and Memory, as heavenly powers of the soule, are shaken, with fearful stormes of despaire, and first-flashings of Hell; this earthly bodie begins to shake and tremble, and the humours like an ower flowing sea, roare and rattle in his throat, still expecting the wofull end of these dreadful beginnings.

Whilset he is thus summoned to appeare at the great Assises of God's Judgement, behold a Quaint Sessons and Gaole delivuerie is held within himself, where Reason sits as Judge, the diuel puts in a book of incitement, as large as that book of Zaccary wherein is alleaged all thy evil deeds that ever thou hast committed, and all the good deeds that ever thou hast omitted, and all the curses and judgements that are due to every sin.—Thine own conscience shall accuse thee, and thy memory shall giue better evidence, and death stands at the Bar ready, as a cruel executioner to dispatch thee.—If thou shalt thus condemn thyselfe, how shalt thou escape the just condemnation of God, who knowes all thy misdeeds better than thyself? Faine wouldest put out of thy minde, the remembrance of thy wicked deeds, that trouble thee: but they flow faster into thy remembrance, and they will not be put away, but crieth thee, *We are thy works and we will follow thee.* As whilset thy soule is thus within out of peace and order, thy children, wife and friends, trouble aske to have thee put thy goods in order; some crying some craving, some pitying, some cheereing, like Flesh-flies, helping to make thy sorrowes more sorrowfull. Now the devils, who are come from Hell to fetch away the soul begin to appeare to be and wait, as soone as shee comes forth to take her land and carrie her away. Stay shee would within, that shee sees the body beginne by degrees to be cold and ready like a ruinous house, to fall vpon her head.—Fearful shee is to come forth because of the Hell bounds, which wait for her coming, Oh, that shee had it, for one houres delay, that shee might have space, to repent and to recouila herselfe to God. But it cannot bee, because her Bodie which is ioyned with her in the actions of sinne, is altogether now vsit to ioyne with her in the action of repentance; and repentance must bee of the whole man.

Now shee seeth that all her pleasures are gone, if they had neuer seen: and that but only torments remain which neuer shall haue an end of being. What can sufficiently express her remorse for her sins past, her anguish for her present miserie, and her terror for the torments to come?

In this extremity shee looks euery where for help, and shee finds herself euery way helpelesse. Thus her greatest miserie (desirous, to heare the least word of comfort) shee direct this or the like speech to her Eyes, O Eyes who in times past were so quicksighted, can yee spie no comfort, nor any way to might escape this dreadful danger? But the heart-strings are broken, they cannot see the candle that burneth before him, nor discern whether it be day or night.

*A Sermon—concluded from our last No.