

the circumcision of an infant had, besides the parents, a witness or instructor. The same witness, or witnesses, according to Dr. Lightfoot, were required at the baptism of Proselytes. Following such example and authority, the primitive Christians had sponsors for infants at baptism, as Hyginus and Augustine testify; and this custom, followed universally for many centuries, has also the approbation of the Bohemian, French Protestant, Dutch Reformed, and other Churches on the Continent of Europe. (See Falloon's Apostolic Church, page 243, &c.)

Mr. N.—I can readily admit, even if there were no authority such as you adduce, that the Church has power to appoint any office or ceremony which she may think conducive to piety, so long as nothing be done contrary to Scripture, but what is the advantage of the office of sponsors?

Clergyman—In times of persecution (1) it provides for the religious instruction of children in case of the flight, banishment, imprisonment, or death of their parents; and it gives additional security and attestation to the profession of the Christian religion. At all times (2) it supplies means whereby infants, the sick, the dumb, and all who are unable to answer for themselves, may be admitted into the Christian covenant by virtue of an undertaking made for them by their sureties. It establishes a special relationship to see to the religious instruction of children in case of the death of their parents, or their incompetence or neglect; and it provides *witnesses* and *remembrancers* of the Christian profession of those who are able to answer for themselves.

Mr. N.—So far as your reasons go, the office seems useful and expedient; but is it ever in practice found so useful? Do sponsors generally fulfil their duties? I have known many, who seemed neither to be religious themselves, nor to care for the religion of others, and they certainly never interested themselves in the religious instruction of their godchildren.

Clergyman—What you say is no doubt true, and greatly to be lamented, but if the office itself is a useful one, we ought not to abolish it because some do not fulfil the duties of it. Our aim should be to have it better understood and more faithfully carried out. Some blame, I fear, must be attached to parents in choosing irreligious persons as sponsors for their children; whereas, if they would comply with the Church's rule, and choose none but communicants for that office, there would be less objection on this score. While too many sponsors are utterly