

ORIGINAL.

RELIGION.

Where a Spirit of Religion exists, there is the force of Heaven itself quickening and entwining those who are influenced by it. As on the other hand, all such unhallowed and defiled minds are within the attractive power of hell, and are continually hastening their course thither, being strongly pressed down by the weight of their wickedness. Sin doth not hover, as it were, over the bottomless pit, or mere flutter about it; but is continually sinking lower and lower. Neither doth true grace make some feeble attempts toward Heaven, but by an energy within itself is always soaring higher and higher. It is not an airy speculation as a thing to come that can satisfy a good christian's longings, but the possession, if so it might be, even in this life.

It is to be wished, that there be not among some so low an estimation of bliss as makes them more to seek after assurance of Heaven, only in the idea of it as a thing to come, than after heaven itself, which indeed we can never be well assured of, until we find it rising within us and glorifying our souls. When true assurance comes, Heaven itself will appear as it were upon the horizon like the morning light, chasing away all dark and gloomy doubts before it.

We may be too nice and vain in seeking for signs and tokens of Christ's spiritual appearances in the souls of others, or even in our own. Let us rather wait until the works that He shall do within us may testify of him, and let us not be over-credulous, till we find that he doth those works which no one else could do. As for a true and well-grounded assurance, say not so much "who shall ascend into Heaven," to fetch it down from thence; or "who shall descend into the deep" to bring it up from beneath, for as in the growth of true internal goodness it will freely unfold itself within us, so will it in the progress of true Religion, stay until the grain of mustard seed itself breaks forth among the clouds that buried it,—until through the descent of the heavenly dew it sprouts up and discovers itself openly. This holy assurance is indeed the budding and blossoming of felicity in our souls; it is the inward sense and feeling of the true life, spirit, sweetness and beauty of Grace, powerfully expressing its energy within us.

U. T.

Messrs. Editors,

Seeing in one of your late papers an exhortation to the clergy to exert themselves in removing the objections to sponsors, I enclose you a sermon preached not long since in my parish church with that express design. And if you think it likely to produce good by a more extended circulation, you are welcome to it for your paper.

Galatians 6 verse 10.

"As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith."

In this text, the only words that require explanation are the last. The command to do good to all men is very plain; but it requires a little attention to discover who in the Apostle's estimation those are who have such an especial claim upon our good offices—who those are that constitute the household of faith. If we look through the same apostles' letter to the Ephesians we shall find that all christians—all whose faith was established in Christ Jesus—who trusted in him as their Redeemer and depended on him as their Saviour, are called by an expression very similar, "the household of God;" and they are there said to bow the knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if we look into the epistle to the Hebrews we read that all those are of the household of God who hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope in Christ firm unto the end.

Bearing in mind therefore that in those days the church of Christ was undivided into sects as in the

present day, and that it was at unity in itself, we learn from these passages that the words household of faith mean generally all christians, as being alike children of God, adopted into his family through the atonement of Christ; and more particularly such as being united in one place and in one church are more immediately bound together by one common interest as brethren.

You must perceive very plainly that as christians we are required by our heavenly Father to do good whenever opportunity is afforded us to any of mankind—more particularly it is required of us to be kindly affectioned to all christians; and most especially we are bound to be ready on all occasions to promote the temporal and spiritual interest of such christians as belong to the church of which we ourselves are members.

From these words, therefore, I propose calling your attention to a preeminent means which God has placed within the reach of all of us of doing good to this household of faith, in the office of sponsors to children brought for admission by baptism into this household of God. I shall first endeavour to throw some light upon the difficulty (for I am sorry to observe that many persons find a difficulty in getting sponsors for their children,) which I fear must arise either from a mistaken notion of the Godparents' duty; or else from what is far worse, a carelessness of the spiritual condition of our fellow creatures.

The portion of Scripture selected for the gospel in the baptismal service (if there was no other) we consider sufficient authority for bringing our infants to that sacrament; and if children are to be thus early admitted into the church of Christ, and to the privileges therein conveyed, it is but reasonable every precaution should be taken that such infants may as early and as effectually as possible be trained in such knowledge as may secure the benefits, and be taught to avoid that ignorance and those vices which will assuredly deprive them of them.

To secure such instruction as effectually as may be, the church has enjoined that in addition to the parents whom we must in christian charity suppose to be anxious above all things for the eternal happiness of their offspring, that some persons should for God's sake, and for the promotion of the kingdom of Christ, be entrusted with authority to lead these infants into the ways of righteousness as they grow in years. And surely a more effectual opportunity could scarcely be afforded to a christian of doing good to his helpless fellow creatures who belong to the household of faith.

Hence it is plain that parents impart to the sponsors a privilege and power to train their children in the ways of godliness, and it is a power which all good christians ought to be glad to undertake. How is it possible that a man from his heart can say the Lord's prayer and implore God that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven, that is, that salvation through the death of Christ may be extended to all the world, and his laws be universally obeyed, unless he feels a desire to do all in his power to effect it.

Therefore instead of refusing the office, we really ought gladly to embrace the offer, and use our influence to train the young in such paths as shall be most likely to advance it.

That such was the highly honourable design of the office of Godfathers, we may learn from the practice of the christians in the days of the apostles, when the majority of the people were heathens, and therefore comparatively few were fit to be entrusted with the office. In those days the Communicants as a body undertook the charge, and as soon as the baptized were old enough to learn, they were regularly brought together before the communicants on the Lord's day, who instructed them by catechizing in all the rudiments of religion, and who were vigilant to notice their ordinary conduct, and reprove them whenever they saw anything contrary to their profession.

We can readily imagine the pleasure these early christians felt when numbers of children were brought for baptism, and how their joy would increase as their power increased of instructing a multitude of infants in the truths of the gospel. And such would be our feelings if in this day we were such christians as they were, such would be our feelings whenever a parent should be supposed to place such confidence

in us as to give us a like influence over them by our offspring.

So needful was it considered to train children early in the ways that they should go, that besides parents and the sponsors, the church has made their effort to instruct the youth, by providing a ritual instructor to feed the lambs of Christ's flock. And it was on account of this duty of their office that the clergy obtained the appellation of Fathers, which is still retained in the Roman Catholic and some other churches at the present day. And although our church the name is dropt, yet the duty still laid upon the clergy, for they are bound to be every child in their respective parishes what a sponsor is to the child he brings to baptism, it is my duty, and the duty of every brother clergyman, to call upon the children under our charge to go to church and hear sermons, and to provide that they may learn the creed, the Lord's prayer and the commandments, as well as such other things a christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health; and to endeavour that they may be brought up to lead a godly and a christian life."

To be continued

MINISTERIAL.

REMARKS ON THE CLERICAL OFFICE.

By the Bishop of Limerick, (Dr. Knox.)

If stations of honour and trust among men require persons of knowledge, fidelity, and zeal to fill them, how infinitely more does our office require that we should be possessed of qualifications, in some measure corresponding to the high and holy vocation whereunto we are called. Yes, my brethren, whatever contempt the ministerial office may have lain under from the misrepresentations of the enemies that surround us on every side—or how much sorer it may at times have been disgraced and rendered unwelcome, even injurious, by the careless or indolent, or unworthy conduct of such as have thrust themselves into it from base and mercenary views; yet, in its nature and in its natural tendency, it is the most noble, benevolent, and useful office in the universe. To be the minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the fellow-worker in the salvation of precious and immortal souls. To make a multitude of wretched and perishing sinners rich in the unsearchable treasures of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let those therefore who are called to this blessed work, join with St. Paul and thank the Lord Jesus in "that he counted the faithful putting them into the ministry." Let them magnify their office, not by assuming airs of superiority or making claims to power they do not possess, but by acting up to their high character, and by so exercising it, as to render it an extensive blessing to the world.

Beloved brethren—if Aaron could have trifled when he stood before God—between the living and the dead to stay the plague—if Abraham could have trifled when he petitioned the Almighty to save the cities of the plain—if David could have been negligent and heartless, when in the midst of a perishing multitude he pleaded before God under the very scourge of the destroying angel—if Moses could have found time for foolish vanities, when he raised the brazen serpent in the poisoned and perishing camp—then may we devote our time to merely human pursuits, unconnected with our ministry and "be guiltless!" But how can we be so, when we consider that, in the circumstances of interest, attached to any case what they may—they were as nothing, compared to the solemn crisis in which we stand—as offering salvation, everlasting salvation, to perishing souls. Our office, my brethren, is of a heavenly origin—our employment is of a spiritual character, and its fruit is to remain, not for a time only, but for ever and ever. We are called, to make full proof of our ministry—publicly and from house to house, testifying repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

But if instead of preaching, "Christ and him crucified," which ought to be the Alpha and Omega of our discourses we are content to preach Socrates or Seneca;—if we make no other use of our high commission, as Bishop Horsley remarks, "than to come abroad one day in seven, dressed in solemn looks"