

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

THE CHILDREN OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Such is the beautiful name given by the Swedish Bishop Fegner in his poem translated by Professor Longfellow, to the young communicants whom their aged pastor welcomed "to eat the bread of atonement" and to "drink of atonement's wine cup." We place it at the head of this article for its sweet association of children with the Lord's Supper, and as furnishing the key note to some thoughts about little communicants.

1. At what age should children be admitted to the Lord's Supper? Parents covenant in baptism to bring up their children in the doctrines of the Christian religion, or "to help or cause them to be instructed therein to the utmost of their power," until they shall arrive at "years of discretion." But no church ordinance fixes the limits of those "years of discretion." Some children are more mature at ten than others are at sixteen years of age. It is not a question of age, but of mental and spiritual attainments sufficient to warrant admission to "full communion." Of these, their parents, and the pastors and elders of churches must judge with candor and charity. Knowledge of the essential facts and truths of the gospel and piety of heart and life are the necessary prerequisites. These will vary with individuals, and every case must be treated upon its own merits.

2. How much knowledge is necessary to confession of Christ? Just so much as is requisite to enable the child to "witness a good confession." Opinions and practice differ greatly in regard to this. There may be too much timidity and delay on the one side, and too much haste and lack of care on the other. Between these extremes experience has marked out a middle path of safety, caution and fidelity. It is not wise to be too exacting of the "babes in Christ." They are not expected to be theologians, nor should they be put upon the rack of inquisitorial searching into their experiences. Treat these "little ones" with considerate faithfulness and tenderness. Do not require them to recite the Catechisms of Westminster and Heidelberg nor the Canons of Dort. Do not torture them with questions which would turn their simple confession of Christ into penance and the auricular confessional. Be content with their child-like knowledge and spirit and testimony, knowing that if sincere they will grow into better shape and to higher stature by the grace of God. Child piety is simple, clear, ingenuous, emotional. It is the germ of Christian character and life. Do not expect too much at first. The acorn has in it the substance of the oak, but it is only an acorn. The little Christian has the kingdom of God within him, but it is only in its beginning. If he has knowledge and grace enough to be a Christian, has he not also knowledge and grace enough to be a communicant?

3. What evidences of conversion shall be required of little Christians? Just the same kind of proof that you would demand of adult Christians. In what does the broken spirit and contrite heart of a child differ from those of the adult? What kind of repentance would be required of the grown-up Christian which would not be expected of the child? Sorrow for sin, resolves and endeavors to lead a new life, love to Christ, trust in Him for salvation; the habit of reading the Bible and of prayer, the Christian temper and graces; all these are as much wrought in young Christians by the Holy Ghost as in older people. When these are seen, even though they are but partially developed, it is as safe to open the door for the child as for the man or the woman who manifest them.

4. But is there not great danger in hastily admitting such young persons to the Lord's Supper? Yes; the same danger that there is in admitting adults hastily to that ordinance. It should be always with circumspection, and, if desirable, with wise delay for a reasonable time in cases of doubt or necessity. This is the special duty of the pastor and his advisers. But there have been many sad cases of hypercautious refusals and delays, which indicated too great timidity and produced only disasters. In a certain well-known city church there was a rule prohibiting the admission of children under fourteen years of age to its communion. A younger and very intelligent girl who applied was put off from time to time, under various excuses, by the session, who did not wish to say that they could not receive her. When, at last, the decision

was announced by her venerable pastor, she bent her head upon his shoulder and wept, and then looking up through her tears, she said: "Dr. C., Jesus Christ would not treat me so. He says, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me.'" Then spake out the pastor's heart and soul: "Away with all church rules that conflict with Christ's word!" There is danger in being too repressive. "Why try to lead the children to Christ and then shut the door of Christ's Church against them? Why in our homes and sanctuaries entreat them, with tears and loving words, to be Christians now, and then doubtfully shake the head when the question comes of their admission to the communion?" This was the language of another pastor of very large experience and success.

5. The most important point is the care of "the children of the Lord's Supper" after they have been admitted to the full communion of the church. "Feed my lambs!" That is the Lord's own test of the under-shepherd's love to Himself and care for the flock. If they are nurtured in the bosom of a warm-hearted church, and if they are properly trained at home, their growth is likely to be rapid and strong. Mere instruction is not enough. To the catechism and Bible lessons must be added spiritual care, and watch, and culture, with proper encouragements and safeguards. No fairer fields are open to cultivation than those in which young disciples are to be gathered for mutual help, to learn to pray and to be useful, and to grow in knowledge and in grace. But what can be expected of them in churches which do little or nothing to draw them out, and which practically leave them to come up as best they may under repressive influences. Here is the critical point in child piety, after it gets into church fellowship. Happy the pastors, the churches, and the Sunday-schools that know how to make the most of their young communicants.—*N. Y. Christian Intelligencer.*

CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM.

The mythologies of most nations bear witness to the aptness of the mind of man to form symbols of higher conditions of existence, possessed of greater and more varied gifts and powers, by different combinations of the parts of animals. The sphinxes of the Egyptians, the winged bulls of the Assyrians, and the monsters of Greek mythology, are instances familiar enough. The reason of this tendency is obvious. Each kind of animal has organs adapted to its limited mode of life, which are denied to others. It follows that by the combination of what is peculiar to each one of several kinds, an illustration is obtained of existence more or less set free from the limitations of existing material natures. The word "cherub" might have been applied by the Hebrews to any such combinations which bore to themselves a religious significance. Many writers have sought to derive the cherubim of the Hebrews from the winged men or the sphinxes of Egypt. Others have traced their resemblance to some of the sculptured figures of Nineveh. From both these sources points of resemblance are collected which are curious and interesting. The external likeness of some of the Egyptian arks, surmounted by their two-winged human figures, to the ark of the covenant, has often been noticed. But as regards the cherubim, as they are brought before us in Scripture, it seems gratuitous to ascribe them to any particular foreign origin. The four cherubic animal forms—man, the ox, the lion, and the eagle—are common to the symbolical combinations of the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and other nations; and it seems that they are of more frequent occurrence than any other forms. It appears at least as likely that the selection was suggested to different nations by the natural fitness of the creatures for the purpose in view, as that it was derived by one nation from another. We may be sure that the minds of the legislator and the prophet were so directed as to select those symbols which were best adapted to convey spiritual truth to the minds of the people, whether they had become acquainted with them by witnessing their use among other nations, or by observation and reflection upon natural objects.—*Bible Educator.*

AMEN.

1. *Its origin.*—Amen is a Hebrew word, of Hebrew origin. Prior to the time of Christ it was found in no other language but the Hebrew. Pagans did not make use of it in their idol worship. But with the introduction of Christianity, it has found its way into the

languages of all nations, who have received the Christian as their religion. In the Greek, Latin, German and English tongues, it is the same in orthography, in signification, and, with very slight deviations, also in pronunciation. It has been left untranslated, and has been transferred from the Hebrew just as it is found there, because there cannot be found in any language any single word that expresses its precise and complete sense and meaning.

2. *Its sense.*—Luther, in his Smaller Catechism, defines it thus: "Amen, amen, that is; yea, yea, it shall be so." Cruden says of it. "Amen in Hebrew signifies true, faithful, certain." It is used in the end of prayer in testimony of an earnest wish, desire, or assurance to be heard; "Amen, be it so! So shall it be." Webster says: "Amen, as a noun, signifies truth, firmness, trust, confidence; as a verb, to confirm, establish, verify; as an adjective, firm, stable. In English, after the oriental manner, it is used at the beginning, but more generally at the end of declarations and prayers in the sense of, be it firm, be it established." All these definitions agree in making amen to mean: "Verily, true, certain, be it so, so shall it be." Some ancient forms of ritual have rendered it into English, viz.: "So mote it be."

It is used in address by man to his Maker, and by Him to us, and accordingly, as used by either, differs somewhat in application, as must be evident. For man makes favors, and God bestows them; God makes promises, and man pleads them. When man says amen, he claims the divine assurance; when God says amen, He confirms it.—*Lutheran.*

CRITICS, APOLOGISTS, AND CHAMPIONS.

Ours is a *critical* age. No doubt it is so, and in more senses than one. The criticism threatens a crisis. It is not because the dread and danger are great in themselves from fair investigation and reasonable inquiry, but the petty carping of unsatisfied theologues, through mere reiteration, is apt to tell upon "those of weaker capacity." There is room, and every advantage should be given, for the exercise of honest thought and judgment. Truth cannot suffer by the most thorough exposure. Let there be the keenest and fullest sifting of our doctrinal systems and biblical records, but with the earnestness and sacred tenderness of one engaged on a high and holy enterprise. What we shrink from is the rash and reckless handling of the hallowed oracles as an ordinary book of human history and of temporary interest. The ark of God is not to be looked into with prying eyes or touched by forward hands. Reverence and love ought to guide the scholarship and science that deal even with a human compendium of truth long and deeply honoured, and how much more in examining the Scriptures. In such critical investigations there is always a possibility, generally a probability, of enthusiasm getting the better of discretion. The searcher claims his own discovery as the great "find" of the age. The traveller imagines the little road he has explored to be the only avenue leading up to the yet unseen palace of truth. And the means and methods employed are often so one-sided as to bring out issues painfully uncertain. There is undue stress laid upon the special instrument of investigation, to the neglect, partial or complete, of other aids equally competent and useful. Internal evidence may at times be the most available, but it is not always the most reliable. In ordinary literature it is often a very precarious guide to the character of the author, or the age in which he lived. External testimony is required as a counterbalance. Nor is this in turn to override the other, to the ignoring or rejection of any information that may be gained by the careful study of the volume. Each strengthens the hands of the other.—*Presbyterian Monthly.*

WHILE God corrects with one hand, He supports with the other, and makes us say, even in affliction, "His mercy endureth for ever."

LOST! Two golden hours, each bound with sixty golden bands, and each band set with sixty diamonds. No reward is offered for their recovery, for they are lost forever.

IT is quite possible, nowadays, to caricature the old-time religion, and how the people kept Sunday. If we bring up our children as well as old-time people brought up their children, we shall do well. If it were not for the Sunday school taking the place of the old-time family discipline, many families would be morally shipwrecked.—*Talmage.*