

tion :—surely we are bound to thank the great Head of the Church for the gift and grace of repentance come by what means it may.

It would be unjust—it would be wicked, to deny that many dissenters have been most excellent men, and able preachers of the word : and strange indeed would it be if God should discard the honest intention of ignorance itself, when exerted with a view to his glory, —or deny fruit to the word when it is heard with an obedient heart. The Church has many sins—let her put them away,—let her, as far as the case may require, imitate the Church under the good kings of Israel, and as Josiah did, win back by her godliness such of her strayed children as are willing to be won by such means. Let her explain the true doctrine of Church unity by a faithful discharge of the duties of the sacred office : for to such a comment very many would be glad to listen, and willing to accept the doctrine in consequence, when evidence from the dead would otherwise be disregarded.

AN INQUIRY INTO THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.—No. I.

The Editor of the Christian Sentinel proposes to examine, in a few short essays, the much disputed doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration as held in the formularies of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and endeavour to ascertain by the warrant of Scripture, whether or not it is the true doctrine. He is fully aware that it is, as held by the Church, offensive to the generality of dissenters, and in some instances a hindrance to their cordial return to her fold. He is convinced, however, that this is from misapprehension, and an impression that some of the doctrines of grace are by it driven out of their place as they stand in the Gospel. But he fully believes that the doctrine as held by the Church can be clearly maintained without any sacrifice of truth : while all the others shall be allowed to hold their due weight. Repentance, faith, renewal unto holiness, obedience, progress in “knowledge and virtue,” renovated or changed affections from bad to good, sanctification, justification,—all these must be retained—and if they are not injured in any way by the doctrine in view, we need be under no alarm.

But before we proceed to the examination of the doctrine, we deem it expedient to consider an opinion of some, that when the Church in the office of Baptism declares the baptised person *regenerate*, she merely does it *charitably*. For this purpose we shall select the language of BISHOP GRISWOLD, of the Eastern Diocese in the United States, as given in the Episcopal Watchman of August 7, 1830, under the head “Review.”

“Baptism represents the new birth, in like manner as the Lord’s Supper does the body and blood of Christ ; and the outward part, and the thing signified, are not more necessarily connected in the one sacrament than in the other.”

Now, what is merely a *representation* can no more be a sacrament than a shadow can be a man. For in what lies the sacramental force of baptism ? Truly in that it is an original transaction and not a representation of one, in that it is an agreement between two parties, in which the first takes the second to be his child by adoption and grace, and covenants to be his *Father* ; and the second takes the first to be his *Father*, and covenants to be his obedient *Child* ; in which reciprocal and mutual transaction there is a bond and compact of fidelity to each other, on pain of forfeiture and disinheritance to the adopted orphan in case of apostacy. But this child, in passing through the formulary of adoption, and coming into a covenant relation of sonship under an oath of fidelity as the Bishop intimates, only passes through a shadow, and not a reality ! And this shadowy sacrament can possess no sacramental character, because it is only significant of some reality as a shadow is of a substance ! His adoption into God’s family the Church does not constitute him a son by adoption, but only in a shadowy sense signifies his sonship or that he is a son ! If baptism be only a representation of the new birth or entrance into God’s family, we are wholly at a loss how it can confer, or rather constitute Church membership, or union with Christ’s body the Church.

But the Bishop tells us, that, “The outward part and the thing signified, are not more necessarily connected in the one Sacrament

than in the other.” True ; the necessity of connection is the same in both. * But how one thing can be the outward part of another thing, and yet have no connection with it, we verily believe would have puzzled the Council of Trent itself to determine.—Let us throw it into something resembling a syllogism.—A man’s skin is the outward part of a man, and represents a man. But a representation of a thing being only the outward part of a thing is no part of it, but only its shadow : therefore a man’s skin has no more connection with him than his shadow, and is his shadow ! But no substance can suffer by the loss of its shadow. Admirable logic this !

Arguing in this manner, the Bishop goes on to assert, that “The washing of regeneration, means, then, a washing which signifies regeneration.”—Illustrated thus : The name of *Peter*, means then, a name which signifies *Peter* ; but it is not Peter’s name and designation by which he is known from John !!! But perhaps he means that the washing of regeneration signifies regeneration prophetically.

But let us attend to the grammar of this expression. The washing of regeneration. The noun regeneration is in the genitive case, which signifies possession or property : namely, the washing which belongs to regeneration : and yet the Bishop insinuates that there is no connection between them !—If one should say, the head of John, would he not be understood to mean John’s head ? But if another should say, there was no connection between them, would it not be fair to conclude that John had been beheaded ? And so when we find the connection between regeneration and its washing denied, are we not at liberty to suppose that the doctrine has suffered martyrdom ?—Episcopal jurisdiction should not be so extensive.

But also—along with the expression, “the washing of regeneration,” St. Paul coupled “the renewal of the Holy Ghost.” But the Bishop’s mode of reasoning would tear the Holy Spirit and his renewal asunder, and deprive us of the grace of God !—a thing which he could not contemplate.

Again he says : “The notion that they who are born of water, are of course renewed in the spirit of their mind, is too evidently erroneous to need refutation.” True ; and because regeneration is not such renewal, to the washing of regeneration St. Paul added the renewal of the Holy Ghost ; and so earnestly contend the very persons with whom the truly good Bishop is “beating the air.”—“The renovation of the heart is represented in baptism.” Certainly, the same as all the acts of allegiance are represented by the oath of allegiance ; and therefore all consistent Churchmen are careful not to confound renovation with baptism—not to confound the act of adoption and becoming a child of covenant grace with what is to follow in order to successive growth in grace towards the fulness of stature in Christ. Ordinarily, the act of adoption into the household of faith is the extreme beginning, and no more. The way to have the heart renewed, as St. Peter teaches, Acts ii. 38, is to be baptized ; and then, being in covenant with God, to receive the renewing Spirit by a holy faith, which he promises to baptized persons, and with which he will supply them as long as they do not resist him. Adoption into a family signifies that we should live in that family and be conformed to its man-

* In our humble opinion, the sacramental force of the Lord’s Supper consists in its being a renewal of the covenant and oath of allegiance entered at baptism, and broken by our daily shortcomings. The outward part of this Sacrament is, the elements, and the action of giving and receiving. The inward part, sincere repentance, humble faith, with new resolutions, and the presence of the invisible Spirit, together with his acceptance of the worshippers, and their pardon for the time being for past sins. And that the heinousness of sin, and the motives of repentance, and the grounds and reasons for gratitude may be the more striking, the death of Christ is commemorated, and its commemoration is a part of the substance of the renewal of the oath of allegiance, figuratively sealed afresh, as it were, by the Saviour’s blood. “Do this in remembrance of me.” And this places the sin of unworthy participation on the footing of the most awful perjury ! But as the sin is great, so on the other hand, the benefit is great—an oblivion to past offences—the gracious renewal of a broken covenant and forfeited favor ! Thus this sacrament, like the other, is both a real transaction, and a figurative representation, and has both an outward visible and an inward invisible part—the one on the part of man ; the other on the part of his merciful God.