

THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

THREE RIVERS, FRIDAY 31 FEBRUARY, 1851.

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

We proceed with Bishop Griswold:

He says furthermore: "Our Church, in her ministrations, wisely follows where the sure word of God directs her." She also speaks of baptism as the washing of regeneration; as a religious and very solemn transaction denoting the new birth. But mark how the good Bishop dilutes her sound doctrine by the last number of the above sentence. Does he mean to say that baptism is a *type* *figurative* or *prophetic* of regeneration? What, to the "born of water AND the Spirit" a mere representation or figure of spiritual regeneration? The word "denoting" however appears not well chosen for the diluting process; for in truth it carries the idea that we cannot find the new birth without baptism by water, as our Lord told Nicodemus. To denote is to mark, to point out. For instance: a thing has two parts; an outward and visible, and an inward and invisible. Now, if you wish to find this thing, which part will you go in search of, the *visible* or the *invisible*? And if you find one half of that to which you know the other half is attached, are you not sure of the whole? If you find baptism, the outward part of regeneration, and which designates and points it out by being so, are you not by baptism directed how and where to find regeneration? The outward part—the *Scriptural* formula of words, the substance of water, the speech and action of the minister; and the passive reception of the rite by the baptized person—the invisible part, the acceptance thereof by God the Holy Ghost, and a numbering of him as a covenant child among those who enter the household of faith, namely, the Church of the living God, and who vow allegiance and true faith to the King of heaven.

The Bishop proceeds:—"Without interrupting the solemnities with any suspicions of hypocrisy, in the language of that charity which 'hopeth all things and believeth all things,' she supposes that the person or child baptised possesses, or through God's grace in a time accepted, will possess the requisite qualifications." Admirable logic this! What could be more liberal and accommodating to those who are constantly on the watch to pull down the barriers which the reformers erected to preserve sound doctrine, and who are eager to catch at every thing of the kind coming from a son of the Church? Does he intend to insinuate the doctrine of *intention* as affecting the *validity* of a sacrament? We do not mean the *moral effect* on the understanding and the heart, but the ceremonial or sacramental validity of the transaction. We think he did not:—But the charity of the Church! Had he forgotten that she declares the thing done, without a prospective allusion to "requisite qualifications" to follow "in an accepted time"? Does she doubt the validity of her own act, and distrust its acceptance with God? Does the apostolic commission to baptise permit such a supposition? Does it suppose exceptions, and call for this singular *official* exercise of Charity? We think not. But having declared the baptised person regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, the Church exhorts her people in the proper order of time and circumstances, to thank God that it is done, and pray (and here comes the *charity*, where it ought to come,) that the baptised person may lead the rest of his life according to this good beginning, which would insure, not the "requisite qualifications" to be admitted into covenant with God for the purpose of Christian instruction and growth in grace, but that growth itself, and the "requisite qualifications" for a happy eternity. Does not her catechetical instruction for children assume the fact of their regeneration or admission among God's covenant people by baptism? Does she not teach them to say, that they are children of their heavenly Father, and on this ground the precept requiring them to pray for grace to become obedient children? And if there is no "outward and visible sign" of their adoption, no mark of assurance by which to establish their faith, with what

confidence short of enthusiastic presumption could the feeble in faith say *our Father*?

But she declares the thing done, and with assurance, yet knows nothing about it, and charitably hopes that it may be done hereafter! She takes the instruments which Christ has given her, the water and the word, and as he directed sets a graft into the body of his church, reminds the congregation of it, and returns thanks for it, and charitably hopes that it may be no delusion! Baptism in such case can surely *signify* but little besides an uncertain formality. How would bride and bridegroom relish being dismissed from before the altar as "no more twain but one flesh," if that ministerial act were a matter of such uncertainty?

But the Church must possess *infallibility*.—Be not startled, gentle reader; for if she does not she cannot possess existence. The gates of hell have not, and cannot prevail against her. Her ministers must infallibly be in *due orders*, and able to commit their posterity. They must infallibly be able to administer *real sacraments*, and exercise *valid ecclesiastical authority*, and actually graft members or branches into the vine Christ Jesus, and introduce them into God's covenant as his adopted children. The Church must also be able infallibly to preach the Gospel, (to do which is simply to read the Bible to the people,) and give believers all necessary assurance of salvation, according to the declared will of God. More than this is needless: and less cannot begot credence in the Gospel and its ordinances. More than this is to claim unwarranted exemption from the possibility of error and corruption: less is to surrender the existence of the Church altogether.

That all men from the beginning might have an adequate assurance in these things, the official transactions of the Church have ever been open and before the world. The people all knew what authority the Apostles possessed and how they came by it, and that they committed it to others for the sake of its preservation in the Church. Preaching was public—the Scriptures were public—baptism was public—confirmation was public—the Lord's Supper was public—ordination was public—in secret she did nothing.

Finally, it is plain that the language of the Church in these matters must be that of *authority* and not of charitable suggestion. She must be able to say, *THUS SAITH THE LORD*, or be satisfied with mere human authority, which no man is bound to respect. It is important also that the people should understand these things, that they may have a rational attachment to the Church and her ordinances, and regard them as the instruments of God's choice, not man's for the salvation of their souls. It is true that he can save us all without any of these means; but such is not his pleasure. He has built a Church, made her "the pillar and ground of the truth," and committed to her the keeping of the Word, and the instruction of the people out of it, and commanded all mankind to obey him in and by the Church. If they have a right understanding of the meaning and use of the ordinances, they will be far readier to receive them, and far less liable to forsake them afterwards.—Infidelity never uttered a truer falsehood than when it asserted that *ignorance is the mother of devotion*.

CANADIAN WATCHMAN AND ST. IGNATIUS.

The Watchman has discovered "POPERY IN ANOTHER GUISE" in the Sentinel, in the summing up of the Epistles of St. Ignatius and charged him with indirectly excluding all but Episcopacy from the mercy of their maker. Such an inference cannot fairly be drawn from any thing the Sentinel has said, and he utterly disclaims it. But aware that the summing up is true and tallies exactly with the Epistles, the Watchman has endeavoured to kill the evidence of Ignatius by making it appear that his Epistles are totally unworthy of credit; and for that end he, in another number, has adduced a passage from Milton, written in that spirit of magnanimity which is a singular feature in Milton's character, as the following will shew. Speaking, in his treatise on the Reformers, vol. 2, p. 275, of the English Bishops, he says: "But they—this by the impairing and diminution of the true faith, the distress and servitude of their country, aspire to high dignity, rule, and promotion here, after a shameful end in this life (which God graciously