

Standing on this undisputed ground, *one class* of the advocates of the validity of Romish baptism maintain, that inasmuch as the want of faith, piety or good intention on the part of the administrator or of the recipient of baptism, does not invalidate the Ordinance; nothing can destroy out a corruption of the Sacrament itself, either in the element used, or in the formula employed. Grant the correctness of this method of solving the problem, and there can be no very serious dispute as to the validity of Popish baptism. Romanists use water, and they retain the formula prescribed by Christ. Additions are made, but no subtractions. As far, therefore, as the tests in questions are concerned, the performance might perhaps, in the judgment of charity, be accounted Christian baptism. This method, however, of verifying the validity of baptism wears the mark of the Beast. It is the natural offspring of the doctrine that baptism is essential to salvation; and hence Romanists and their so-called Protestant followers charitably admit both the validity and the efficiency of baptism by women and laymen, and even by Turks, Jews, Infidels, or Protestants. It is true that they require the child to be afterwards re-baptized by the priest, *cum ceremoniis*. This however is designed as a denial not of the *validity* of *obstetric* baptism, but only of its *regularity*. And they firmly believe that, should a little one thus initiated into the Church die before the arrival of the deputy of Peter to sign his papers, he is as truly regenerated, and gets as safe a passport to heaven by the midwife's baptism, as if he had been crossed, oiled, spituled, salted and sprinkled by any of the successors of the apostles or of their deputies. This theory was born of baptismal regeneration. It came into the Church on the bark of that dogma, and with that dogma it will die. It savours so strongly of Babylon, that although it is the only hypothesis upon which Protestants can, as we think, consistently admit the validity of Romish baptism; it has found little favour among the Reformed Churches. Calvin, indeed, has used some ungrounded expressions which countenance this notion; but the great mass of the early Reformers based the validity of their own Romish baptism upon the supposed fact that the Church of Rome is a part of the Visible Church.

But if all that is essential to baptism is that water be applied, and the gospel formula employed, "by whomsoever at all, as Calvin says, it may have been administered," then will not only the baptism of modern Unitarians, who for the most part, we believe, comply with these requisitions, be valid; but wherever a person has been sprinkled with water, accompanied by the use of the baptismal formula, be it by Mahometan, Mormon, Infidel, Jew or Christian, by Church, Temperance Society or Railroad Company, there we have valid Christian baptism! This, who can believe? Baptism has in all ages been regarded as the initiatory Ordinance of the Christian Church, by which it recognizes its members. But how can baptism by an open infidel, or by any person not himself in the Visible Church, constitute the recognition of another as a member of the Church? The administrator has no connection with the Church, that he should, in his own right, initiate members. He was never authorized by the Church to act for it. He was not appointed by the Head of the Church to such an office. How then can baptism by him be the recognition of another, as a member of the Visible Church; wherein is it more valid than for a man to baptize himself? It was not to infidels, but to the church that Christ gave the command to disciple and baptize the nations. And with the commission he gave to his Church the promise which secures the efficiency both of the Word preached, and of the ordinance dispensed, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The doctrine of our standards, and as we believe of the Word of God, is that unto "the Visible Church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God." Conf. chap. 25, sec. 3. Ministers are the servants of the Church for Christ's sake; 2 Cor. iv., 5. They are the organs through which the Church