

Some Thoughts On Baptism

From the book, The Memoir of David King, the nineteenth century evangelist - Ministry in the Church of Christ.

Upside Down (pages 323-394).

"THESE THAT HAVE TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN, HAVE COME HITHER ALSO." - Acts xvii:6.

THE reader is invited to picture the comfortable, homely parlour of a middle-class farmhouse, about fifty miles from London. The room may be furnished to his own imagining, but he must consider that his mental visit is an evening one, and that Mrs. Stone has made an extra blaze upon the hearth, lit an additional candle and seated herself beside a work-basket of no inconsiderable size. Mrs. Stone is to be known as the truly Christian wife of Farmer Stone and the mother of I know not how many little Stones, in whom are manifest her good results of right training. We are now to listen to a little common-place talk between this good lady and her husband. Do I call a farmer's wife a lady? Certainly I do! That is, if she be a lady - and the one in question belongs to God's nobility and therefore her title must be considered good.

"I am right glad to see you return, William. Have you any letters?"

"Nothing for us at the Post-office except the *Precursor of Unity*."

"Have you done upon the farm?"

"I have no need to go out tonight."

"I have made all right with the servants, the children have retired, and I hope to get on with my sewing. Suppose you let me hear an article or two from the *Precursor*. We may thus combine work, pleasure and edification. It is always a pleasure to hear my husband read our excellent magazine.

"You know it don't suit me overmuch to read aloud, but a wife's pleasure and edification are no small inducements, and therefore I'll see what I can do."

The Precursor of Unity is to be known as a monthly, devoted to the defence of Christianity as it was at the first, and to the union of all believers in one body, as a result of returning to the primitive and apostolic order, and Mr. and Mrs. Stone are to be known as not only readers of the *Precursor*, but as numbered with those who, in divine things, return to the old land-marks, and carry out what they know. But to their conversation.

"But what shall I read? 'Contents - The Kingdom of Heaven - The Disciples, who and what are they? - Positive Divine Institutions - The Laws for the Church are in the New Testament - Human Creeds - Is Baptism Essential to Salvation? - Pleas for Reformation - Regeneration and Remission of Sins - The Strife of Sects - Items of News - Hymns for the Lord's Table,' etc. Now then! Where shall I begin?"

"Let us have Items of News. You know my order of reading - first notices upon the cover, then news from churches."

"Be it so. First there is a letter 'To the Editor of the *Precursor of Unity* - Dear brother, I am happy to inform you that during the last month, the old truth has again proved itself powerful. The little church here is rejoicing over the addition last Lord's day, of *seven* to its number - one by letter, two from the Wesleyans, and four by immersion. In one of the four we feel particularly interested. Thomas Bell, having lost his parents early, was provided for by a relative, zealously affected towards the State Church, who has several livings at his disposal, for one of which he determined to prepare his *protégé* by finishing his education at one of the Universities. Some four years since our young brother felt the power of the cross and gave himself, by solemn consecration, to the Lord. Believing that godly men had lived, and could live, in the established church, he saw no cause to decline further preparation for its ministry. Being, however, in this town during the vacation, he met with one of our brethren, a working man, who presented him with a copy of your excellent magazine. For the first time the things of the kingdom, as presented by the apostles, came before him, and the truth, falling into a "honest and

good heart," brought forth fruit. After due examination, and intercourse with brethren, he declared the whole course of his life changed. He saw that this would leave him without employment and, perhaps, without a shilling, yet he boldly confessed the faith and went down into the water. He has considerably exercised himself in public speaking and bids fair for usefulness. I may add, that his case is rendered more trying by the fact, that, in full expectation of being amply provided for, he recently married an amiable and accomplished lady. We praise God that His truth finds now and again, men whom it can move to surrender all for Christ. May the Lord make plain this brother's path, and use them to His own glory! Yours in the one hope, J.B."

"A truly interesting account! I wish we could have them here for a few weeks."

"I have no doubt my wife does wish them here! Her heart I know is large enough, if only her house and purse could admit of it, to have all the faithful within her gates. What a company of preachers and needing saints we should have."

"Be that as it may - I think it quite likely that when my company had gathered, you would find another or two to add to it."

The reader may consider the conversation interrupted by the introduction of the Rector, the Rev. Barnabas Blackham.

"I have called, Mr. Stone, to make your acquaintance, having heard of your recent possession of the Manor Farm. I had hoped to see the farm pew occupied, and then to become known to yourself and family, but I think we have not seen you at church."

"No, Sir. We worship at home."

"Worship at home! Of course. So do our communicants generally. But then there are public ordinances we are commanded not to neglect, as, alas! too many do. These require the service of the clergy and for them family worship, which I am glad to find you attend to, is no substitute."

"You will excuse me, Sir, if I speak plainly?"

"Certainly! I like to know every man's mind, and, indeed, I consider that nothing should be concealed from the minister."

"Well, then, I will not conceal anything. According to my understanding of the New Testament, the clergy is a human institution, foisted upon Christianity by the apostasy. I am fully aware that there are ordinances for which family worship may not be substituted, but I also know that in apostolic times, one was addressed in connection with the church in his own house."

"True, but then consecrated buildings had not come into use, and in the church to which you allude, though small, the sacraments were duly administered."

"That believers were baptized, I doubt not - that they continued steadfastly in the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers, is certain. But all this can be done, and is done, here - not without priests either, for, according to Peter, every Christian is a priest to God, and the whole church is God's lot, heritage, or clergy. We, then, attend on the first day of the week to all the ordinances which a church is called to observe. We are not a large church - myself, wife, eldest son, a friend who resides with us, and one worthy disciple who labours upon the farm, are at present the church."

"Well, Sir, yours is the dissidence of dissent. I thought it bad enough to have a Methodist conventicle, a Baptist chapel, and the Congregationalist meeting room in the neighbourhood, but you outdo them all. You are a dreadful Dissenter! I trust you don't mean to spread your views."

"You mistake altogether, and I should prefer that you do not designate me unjustly. I am, to use your own language, High-church. Dissent I hold to be sin, and can have no connection with a dissenting church. The Church of Rome and the Established Church of England are dissenting churches - they have forsaken the faith and order of the apostolic church. It is because you, Sir, are a dissenter that we could not admit you to our fellowship, and, for the same reason, we worship in our own house, and not in the parish church."

"Never in the whole course of my life have I been thus met! Let me, however, say a word to Mrs. Stone. You have children, and one only a few months old?"

"I have, Sir."

"Then, at least, you should get your infant christened as soon as possible. The Prayer Book recommends that this most important duty be not delayed longer than the first or second Sunday after birth."

"But the Prayer Book, Sir, is no authority with us."

"Still, as a Christian mother, you should remember that it is certain by God's Word that children which are baptized, dying before they commit sin, are undoubtedly saved."

"Yes, Sir, but I also know that men of equal learning have disproved the claim - that men on your own side of the question, who stand second to none, admit that infant baptism was not of apostolic origin. Then, as to Christian burial I know that the Scriptures say nothing about it. I am also aware that your church refuses what you call Christian burial to a sinless babe, and on the same day reads its burial service over a man steeped in crime and known to have died impenitent. The truth is, Sir, I do not value what you term Christian burial. It has pleased the Lord to remove some of our dear ones by death. We called not for the clergyman, but consigned them to the earth within the walls of our garden. We knew that they had not sinned, and that as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. We look for their resurrection as a result of Christ's death, and for their eternal happiness as they are without sin. As to infant baptism doing no harm, we come to a widely different conclusion. It makes void a divine ordinance - it substitutes will-worship for that appointed of the Lord - it deceives the subject, leading in after life to the conclusion that those who are not the children of God, have been His children from infancy."

The reader will perhaps be content to leave Mrs. Stone and her Reverend Visitor to complete their conversation. It may not require much imaginative power to reach the conclusion that the Rev. Gentleman left without restoring the wandering sheep to the parish fold. It may also be readily supposed that Mrs. Stone was

far more interested in Thomas Bell, than in her priestly neighbour. If the reader be at all acquainted with such a woman, he will not be surprised to hear that, at her suggestion, Mr. Stone wrote to the writer of the letter, which had so much interested them, to the effect - "That if J.B. would invite the brother, whose conversion is recorded in the last number of the *Precursor of Unity*, to spend a few weeks at ----- they would be happy to make his acquaintance, having no doubt of his finding opportunity to enlighten a few benighted souls."

However, let it be considered as written and posted, and ourselves at liberty to look at the surroundings of one who cast himself and his young wife upon the world, or rather upon God, in preference to enjoying profit and ease in a position, by the multitude counted desirable and honourable. We then see Thomas Bell, no longer a member of the Church of England, and without means of supporting himself and wife. Yet he must live, and that wife, unused to hard labour of any kind must be provided for. But how? Yes, that is the question! He could teach the usual branches of an English education, together with Latin, Greek, etc., but the difficulty in all such cases is to find an opportunity. We can imagine that the sympathy of the little church of which he had become a member would be largely called out, and are prepared to find Mr. and Mrs. Bell sojourning at the house of good old Pastor Blair, to whom the letter of invitation from Mr. Stone had been addressed. But how are we to picture Mrs. Bell? Thus - the truth, by embracing which Thomas Bell had destroyed his worldly prospects, is wholly new to her. Friends, firmly attached to the State Church, well to do, might be expected to help in the event of her remaining faithful to her church. When her husband placed before her the startling proposition he had set himself to examine, she followed him in the investigation without giving an opinion - it was plain that his acceptance of the new views would bring them to poverty. When he declared them in accordance with the Word of God, and that he must act accordingly, she neither offered encouragement, or presented one word of objection. On her account he would have held back - for the Saviour's sake he went forward. He believed, obeyed, communicated with his relative, and received an angry and discarding answer, without producing on her part any further declaration than - "My husband, do what you feel to be right in the sight of God!"

We have now to consider them as without resources, anxious to obtain, but enable to meet with, remunerative employment. As a matter of course, Thomas must be anxious for his wife to obey the truth, but being wishful that this should be done to the Lord, and not on his account, he prudently refrained from urging, and, indeed, from tendering even the faintest invitation. Let us now trespass upon the privacy of their social intercourse.

"You remind me, Thomas, that if you have offended your friends, I have done nothing to affect the conduct of mine. Whether you intend this as a consolation or as a rebuke, I know not; but in either case I shall not long be able to accept it. I know you are right - not only right in doing what you are convinced is the Lord's will, but right as to what His will is. I see that the church of my ancestors is fearfully apostate, that we have no power to reform it, and that, consequently, every Christ-loving soul is bound to leave it. I perceive that the faith we have rejoiced in, and which I trust has purified our hearts, is to be consummated by immersion into the divine name for the remission of sins. And now, my dear husband, I want you to baptize me as soon as possible."

"You do indeed gladden my heart, and I will at once see your kind Elder and request him to immerse you."

"But, Thomas, I wish *you* to do it. Let the good man be satisfied as to my fitness, and then surely you can baptize me. I am sure, though our way is now dark, that you will preach the Gospel and baptize many, and why not let your wife be the first? It is not that I feel any reluctance to be baptized by the good old man, or by any other Christian, but I am brought to see and yield to the truth by your conduct, and would in thankfulness to God, stand as your first convert."

"But there would be an impropriety in it. I am a young disciple, only at present a novice. True, in the church of Christ there is no clerical class whose special duty it is to baptize. Still there is order, and if every young man were to pass by elders, and baptize whom he might think fit, great evil would result, and persons so acting would prove themselves not overburdened with humility. It is, at least, my duty to wait until the elders call me to baptize, or until I find myself instrumental in bringing souls to the Lord in a field

which is, so to speak, my own - that is, where I must baptize, or the parties be subjected to improper delay."

"Well, though my feelings are not subdued, my reason assents, so let it be as you say."

Let us now place ourselves in the little chapel in which Pastor B. had laboured for several years, in order to hear the firm but modest confession of faith made by Mrs. Bell as she stands beside the open baptistery. But suppose we overhear a short conversation between the Pastor and Thomas Bell, during her preparation for immersion.

"Thomas, you are the younger by a good few years, and I think you may as well baptize as allow me to go down into the water. I am convinced that though the way is now dark, the Lord has much work for you. Give yourself to preaching the gospel you must. Your wife doubtlessly would as soon trust herself in your hands as in mine. You have led her to see the right way, now finish the work by leading her into that grave in which the death of Christ becomes hers. May this be the first of many thousands by your instrumentality translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son!"

"My dear brother, I can only thank your kind consideration, and pray that your pious wish may be realized, to the glory of our common Lord."

The reader may now behold Mrs. Bell, attended by two elderly sisters, coming from the vestry, and her surprise and gratification at finding her husband ready to lead her into the water. On such occasions the baptizer, having called upon the name of the Lord, usually declares, as he places the subject under water, "You are now baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," or words to the same effect, and the baptized is gently raised to go on in peace and joy.

We may now return to the letter of invitation to Manor Farm. Let it be understood that, after due consideration, the officers of the church recommend Thomas Bell and his sister wife to accept the kind invitation. The reader may then consider them safely arrived and in pleasant converse in the comfortable little room, into which we were introduced at the beginning. What they did in that

neighbourhood will appear further on. In the meantime looking at what they are, and at what they have become - at their former expectations, and at their present prospects - we may surely say that with them old things have passed away, and all things have become new, or, in conclusion pen the words "UPSIDE DOWN."

Chapter II.

Notwithstanding the difficulties of making known the Gospel, common to districts such as that in which Manor Farm is situate, they have one considerable advantage. Only tell a dozen labourers that a gentleman from one of the large towns will preach in the farm kitchen, place a written notice to the same effect upon the blacksmith's shutters, and in forty-eight hours all the neighbourhood will have the intelligence, and without the aid of bellman, newspaper, or posting-bill, such an audience as the locality affords is secured.

The Lord's day has come - Thomas Bell is at Manor Farm - two of the young Stones have arranged forms, chairs and planks - the Bible is placed upon a stand in a corner of the spacious kitchen, and the boys, with youthful glee, hurry to the parlour to announce that seats are extemporized for a good number, and that people are approaching from several directions. Before the hour fixed for preaching, the room is packed, as also a stairway on which the voice of the speaker could be heard, while outsiders linger about the window. And now for Thomas Bell's sermon. Of course we are not to write it here. Still an outline will be interesting. The text, "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Then -

I. The whole world is here included and therefore *all need a Saviour*.

II. That though Christ died for all mankind, and though His death is sufficient to redeem all, yet salvation is promised only to those who receive, in the appointed manner, the blessings which Christ's death provides for those who obey the Gospel - which blessings include remission of past sins, adoption into the family of God, translation into the kingdom of His dear Son, introduction into Christ and into His name.

III. That of all these blessings the LOVE OF GOD is the *originating* cause - the DEATH OF CHRIST the *procuring* or *meritorious* cause - FAITH and REPENTANCE the *qualifying* cause - and BAPTISM the *receiving* cause. That, therefore, without faith and repentance, man is not qualified to receive the pardon which Christ's death merits and renders accessible - hence, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and "Unless ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Faith and repentance qualify the sinner to receive, but do not put him in possession of, that pardon and adoption which, through Christ Jesus, he may, and ought to obtain; while the baptism of those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, places in their possession, as the free and unmerited gift of God, remission of sins and standing in Christ.

This was, so to speak, the doctrine of the sermon, but with many loving and burning words were the people exhorted to save themselves by fleeing to Christ in the way of His appointment. And now the little company of believers address in earnest song the hearers, who, having been told that only those who have given themselves to Christ can sing an invitation to sinners, sit in solemn quiet, listening to the words -

"Repent and be immers'd,
Says our redeeming Lord;
You all are now assur'd
That 'tis your Saviour's word:
Arise! arise without delay,
And His divine command obey.

Come, you believing train,
No more this truth withstand;
No longer think it vain
To honour God's command!
But haste, arise without delay,
And come and wash your sins away."

During the singing an old man in a round frock stood with tears rolling down his cheeks, and at its close feelingly said - "God helping me I will! I have known myself a sinner long enough - I have regularly gone to church, taught the little ones their letters in the Sunday school, read my Bible and prayed over it, and

constantly listened to the clergyman, but I never saw how I could certainly obtain pardon, but I see it to-night! Thank God, I see it tonight! I am a sinner! I do believe in Jesus! I do want to serve God! Will you, Sir, baptize me?"

"I am deeply thankful to hear your confession," said the preacher, "and would gladly immerse you this moment had we water, but, as it is, we must make the earliest arrangement possible."

Farmer Stone "thought it could be done immediately - the seven-acre pond not being far, the water clear and the bottom firm." Soon the whole company, the confessor and the preacher having changed their garments, were moving by lanterns' light to the water, where the man who had long sought the way was laid beneath the wave and raised to walk in newness of life. It was indeed a night of rejoicing, the old convert went on his way with overflowing heart; and we may digress to add, that the remainder of his days were bright indeed; and when, after two years, the preacher visited him a short time ere he crossed the Jordan, he was looking with holy joy to the glory of the other side. Sunday after Sunday the Manor Farm hearers listened to Thomas Bell, and heard the confession now of one, then of another. Over sinners repenting there is joy in heaven, and joy also among the farm believers, but to the parish church it extends not. The Rev. Barnabas Blackham is indignant. True, the old man first put into the water was only a labourer, but he had attended church fifty years - conspicuously, too, from his position in the singing loft. Then he had ignored the baptism of the priests by submitting to another, administered by one without holy orders. The people, too, talk and wonder - hints are given to the effect that the farm-people go by the Bible, and that the Rector does not. The thing must be stopped, and therefore the Rev. Blackham talks with Farmer Stone's landlord, and he determines to end the preaching, or remove the occupant. Mr. Stone receives a remonstrance, with more implied than openly said, and prepares himself to suffer loss for the truth's sake.

But the commotion is not confined to churchdom. The Non-cons. of Muddleton, three miles from the farm, are glad that Nonconformity has lifted its voice in a district in which they have desired in vain to get footing, but then the Newcomers denounce all sectarian names, ignore infant baptism, and treat Methodist,

Calvinist, Baptist, and Primitive as though their respective systems had never been "owned of God." Mr. Sovereignty, minister of Bethel chapel, and Mr. Freedom, Primitive Methodist, stationed in the circuit which includes Muddleton, suspend their free-will controversy and invite leading members of the six Nonconformist denominations of the town to a private meeting. At the meeting Mr. Sovereignty thought that "the New-comers might do more good than harm by making inroad upon the Established church." Mr. Freedom "would have been of the same opinion but for the fact that a promising young woman, who had gone heart and soul with the Primitives, had been drawn away and baptized by Mr. Bell." He, however, hoped she would see her error and return, as mighty prayer had been offered by the Lord's people, and such prayer and its answer had been likened to the two buckets in the well - as the one goes up the other comes down. Then Sister Fireland, her zealous class-leader, who is often favoured with spiritual visions, had been shewn the true state of the poor deluded people at the farm, and she has sent her vision to the wandering sister, in hope that she will not longer resist the spirit. He had a copy of the communication and would read it if agreeable."

Mr. Clearthought intimated that he had once met Mr. Bell, and, as an Independent, he thought him in the wrong, but he saw enough of him to produce the conviction, that if turned from his course it must be by an appeal to Scripture and not by the visions of excited sisters. He had no idea that Mrs. Fireland's letter would gain, or that it merited, a moment's consideration.

Mr. Freedom was hurt at this rev. brother's unbelieving tone, but letting that pass, he would not trouble them with the whole of the letter, it being rather wordy. Suffice it to say that, after anxious prayer for the erring one, Mrs. Fireland, in her sleep - if indeed she was sleeping - found herself in a house of many rooms, all blazing with light, soft, and clear, and beautiful. To this house was attached a sort of room or lobby, which did not seem a part of the house, and which had a half glass door. This room was nearly dark - there was no light within, and very little could get through the door, for the panes were broken and patched with dirty rags, clay, and filth. Within the room were Mr. Bell and all the people of the farm, including the sister who had left us - they were all tumbling over one another on the floor, everyone wounded somewhere, and

the wounds were all bound up with dirty rags. Upon waking, Mrs. Fireland had instantly a vivid impression as to the spiritual meaning of her vision. The large house, full of light, is the church universal - the different rooms denote the evangelical sects - the room attached stands for those who, under a plea of religion, strive to save themselves by ordinances, while they pass over the blood of Christ. The glass-door denotes the Word of God. The top corner pane, broken and filled up with rags, may represent the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, which these people renounce. The bottom panes are all covered with thick dirt, and may denote baptism of the Holy Spirit, which these poor creatures have covered over with their perversion of dipping in water for the remission of sins. The centre panes were -

"Perhaps," interrupted Mr. Clearthought, "we have had enough. We are not very likely to get much light through Mrs. Fireland's dirty windows. You seem to think that a terrible heretic has found his way into our quarter, and the question is, what are you about to do with him? I came here without knowing the exact purport for which the meeting was called, or perhaps I might not have come. But now what do you propose? Will you hang Mr. Bell on the next lamp-post? or do you propose to wait till he is converted by the prayers and visions of our Primitive neighbours? My proposal is, that we preach the truth as we understand it, and without naming the farm-preacher, set forth those points on which we deem him in error. If we meet him, kindly suggest wherein he is wrong - bear in mind that we don't know everything, and let us think more of God's glory and man's salvation, than of our own Bethels and Sects, of the latter of which I for one am heartily tired."

"We must do more than that," responded Mr. Freedom. "For my own part I must be up and doing. I shall call upon our people to warn everyone against the man who denies salvation by faith alone, puts water in place of the blood of Christ, and sets aside the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I consider that he commits the sin against the Holy Ghost!"

It was the opinion of Mr. Clearthought that, though Mr. Bell exaggerated the importance of baptism, and held extreme views on other points, the talk of Mr. Freedom was mere slander, and his determination to start his people on such ground nothing less than persecution.

The Baptist minister gave it as his opinion, judging from what he had heard elsewhere, that Mr. Bell had said some sensible things in reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that of course he was right in not admitting infant baptism, but very wrong in excluding pious unbaptized persons from the Lord's Table, and quite wrong in preaching baptism for the remission of sins. He added that he had met Mr. Bell, and found him a gentleman and a scholar, kindly and Christian-like in his deportment - that Mr. Bell had invited him to discuss, through the *Precursor of Unity*, the question of close or open communion, and that he had declined because he had neither time, talent, nor inclination for the task. He would advise that everyone remain silent as to Mr. Bell, and his doings, for the more people heard, the more they would desire to hear.

Mr. Clearthought felt that silence is best for people who have not time, talent, nor inclination to discuss - that it would be quite as well for them to retire - he felt not the least afraid that Thomas Bell would turn the world of Muddleton upside down.

At this point Mr. Truman remarked - "I am not a preacher - the Down Chapel, where I am deacon, is without a minister, and the fact is, we have offered the chapel to Mr. Bell for two or three weeks. If he has some things new to us, we are willing to hear how far he can find them in the Bible. So Mr. Bell will be somewhat more in your midst."

"Fearful! awful!" responded Mr. Freedom, "I must move our people - we must have special prayer-meetings every night, and a revival preacher to keep the flock at home."

"Tomorrow evening," resumed Mr. Truman, "Mr. Bell is to meet a few friends at my house, and if you, Gentlemen, will join the party we may hear Mr. Bell on the topics, upon which you deem him so much in error, and you can then state your strong reasons in favour of the other side. He may be corrected, and we may derive benefit."

"I should deem it a wilful running into temptation," said the Primitive - "No, indeed! I don't want to quench the Holy Spirit by rushing into debate with a man who is next to an Infidel. I'll not be there."

"Well, Gentlemen, Mr. Bell will be there, God willing, and I shall be glad to see any of you. I think the wise, who can come, will come, but you must please yourselves. My time is fully gone, and I wish you a very good night."

Chapter III.

The party at Mr. Truman's was neither uninteresting nor unfriendly. True to his resolve Mr. Freedom was not present, but his views were represented by Mr. Maitland, who expressed his pleasure at meeting Thomas Bell, and his regret that he differed so widely from the preachers and active friends then present.

"This difference," he said, "must certainly be deplored, as 'tis a good and pleasant thing for brethren to dwell together in unity, which is next to impossible, when a ministering brother holds views upon baptism as opposed to those of his brethren generally."

Mr. Clearthought seemed highly taken with this assumed unity, and assured Mr. Bell that he considered him very naughty for destroying the exquisite harmony which had always prevailed among them, but of which they might never have been fully conscious, had his voice not been heard in their neighbourhood.

"Only look at our remarkable uniformity," continued Mr. C. "Mr. Maitland teaches that water is not essential to the one needed baptism, (which he insists is that of the Holy Ghost) but his view I entirely oppose. Then I teach that baptism may be administered by sprinkling, or pouring, but Mr. Vapid and the church of which he is pastor insist that without immersion there is no baptism. Then some of us practise infant baptism, but Mr. Vapid would not baptize an infant were he permitted to dip it seven times. Neither are we agreed as to the eligibility of certain infants - one of our number will only administer the ordinance to those who have a believing parent, while others altogether disregard the condition of the parents. Our worthy neighbour on my right (whom no doubt all are glad to see, as we don't often get a curate in our midst) by baptism makes infants children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, but all present consider him in error. Our Baptist friends, too, are not agreed. Mr. Vapid gladly receives to the Lord's Table those who, in his view, are not baptized, but Mr. Firmling, of the Old Chapel, would refuse a saint as holy as the

Lord Himself, could such be found, if he had not been under water. Certainly then, Mr. Bell, you ought to think as we do, and not break in upon our uniformity. The man who cannot agree with our happy family ought to keep out of Muddleton."

Mr. Bell intimated his regret at finding such diversity of opinion among men to whom the people look for plain instruction. He was glad that his coming would not make the matter worse, and would even venture to hope that he might rather help them to a better understanding of the subject under notice. He would enter upon the mode of baptism, but propose for their consideration two questions. Is the one baptism - which Paul to the Ephesians places with the one Lord, one God, one Spirit and one faith - a baptism in water or in the Holy Spirit? and, Are infants proper subjects for baptism?

Mr. Maitland could answer the first question at once - "The one baptism is the baptism of the Holy Ghost - nothing else is needed - water is nothing!"

Mr. Clearthought suggested that Mr. M. had better prove his assertion - mere declamation could not be received.

Mr. Maitland contended that he had the evidence in the fact that the Holy Spirit who had led him to Jesus, and taken of the things of God and shewn them unto him - shewn him his need of faith and repentance, and given him the blessed Spirit-baptism - would certainly have made known to him the need of water-baptism, had there been any need for it. The fact, therefore, is plain - the one baptism is baptism with the Holy Ghost.

"Why then do you baptize infants with water?" interposed Mr. C.

"Because I am not a Quaker. All denominations use water except the Quakers."

"Then you have two baptisms, and yet say there is but one. The Society of Friends are consistent, but you are not. They say the one baptism is that of the Spirit - that Paul taught that only one baptism appertains to Christianity, and that, therefore, water baptism was merely a Jewish institution, retained for a short time. You should give up water baptism entirely, or admit that there are two

baptisms." Having thus said, Mr. C. was asked to state his own view of the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' to which he replied that his mind was not fully made up - "he did not clearly see what was intended by the phrase, baptism with the Holy Spirit, but, as to the perpetuity of water baptism he had not the slightest doubt."

Mr. Truman feared that Mr. Clearthought's position might turn out not much more consistent than that of Mr. Maitland, unless, indeed, Mr. C. intended to be understood as doubting the continuance of Holy Spirit baptism.

Mr. Bell suggested that the New Testament testimony to baptism in the Holy Spirit would be found quite sufficient to settle the question in every case in which the enquirer is concerned only for the truth. But to men who determine to support a theory, or who give themselves up to the guidance of a light within, and count as communications from the Holy Spirit their opinions and convictions, the Scriptures are useless.

The Curate had something to say upon Mr. Bell's second question - who are the proper subjects for baptism - but feeling deeply interested in the present enquiry he would wait. He would be glad if Mr. Bell would read all the texts in which baptism with the Holy Spirit is named, for the purpose of ascertaining what was promised and what was, or is to be, received. Books were produced and the company took the appearance of a Bible Class.

"The first mention, gentlemen," said one of the party, "will be found in Matt. iii:11 -

'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.'"

"I think there is no other mention till we come to Mark i:7, 8. -

'And John preached saying, There cometh One mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.'"

"Where is the next allusion?"

"Luke iii:16 -

'John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. '"

"To these we may add the only remaining mention in the gospels, John i:31, 33:-

'And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record saying, I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not; but He that send me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. '"

Mr. Vapid intimated that the texts read contained the entire testimony of the four Gospels upon the points in question. Mr. Bell referred to Acts i:4, as containing the only other record of the promise -

"And being assembled together with them commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

"From these citations," observed Mr. Bell, "we learn important particulars -

1. The baptism in the Holy spirit was to be administered by Jesus Himself, and not by His disciples
2. That up to the time of His ascension it had not been administered.
3. That it was to be realized not many days after His last interview with His apostles.

We have, then, to look to the events of the days immediately following for an answer to the question, What is baptism in the Holy Spirit?"

Mr. Truman inquired, Why Mr. Bell generally used the words *in the Holy Spirit*, when the New Testament reads *with the Holy Ghost*? In reply he was informed, that though the Common Version reads "*with*", the Greek has "IN", and that Mr. Bell preferred the apostolic form.

Mr. Clearthought submitted, that, after seven days from the citation by the Lord of the promise of John, the Holy Spirit was poured out, as predicted by Joel, and that then the promised baptism of the Holy Ghost, or at least an instance of it, took place.

Mr. Bell continued - "Yes, and what did take place? Not the conversion of sinners by baptizing them with the Holy Spirit, for though three thousand were that day converted, yet they were not the persons who were thus baptized. The second of the Acts gives full particulars. The Apostles and other disciples, about one hundred and twenty, were together, waiting as the Lord had commanded - a sound was heard as of a mighty rushing wind - the whole house was filled with a manifestation of the Spirit, and these waiting, believing followers were immersed in the Spirit. Tongues like as of fire sat upon their heads, and supernatural powers were gifted unto them - not merely holy feelings, burning zeal, happy states of mind, or conviction of adoption, but miraculous manifestations, seen and heard by all around. This then is, upon the authority of Jesus Himself, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and we have no authority to apply the phrase to anything short of this. These gifts we have not now, and therefore the baptism in the Holy Spirit does not abide in the church. We have one baptism, in water, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

The Curate said, "No doubt but that the instance cited was really that to which the Lord alluded when He re-intimated the promise of John, but he would ask whether these extraordinary manifestations might not be considered merely as the *unusual* fulness on that particular occasion, and whether the *ordinary* influence of the Spirit, perceptible only to the subject of it, might now be included in the term baptism of the Spirit?"

"That," replied Mr. Bell, "conviction of sin, change of heart, joy and peace in the believer, are to be attributed to the Holy Spirit, is freely admitted, but we are looking for Scripture usage in regard to

the phrase in question. We find the Lord applies it to the great Pentecostal bestowment - that it was not a converting, heart-changing influence to those who received it, but a gift to men already converted, and wholly a supernatural manifestation. Not only so, but the phrase is never once applied to the Spirit's ordinary work in conversion and sanctification, and never once applied to anything short of a full bestowment of supernatural powers direct from heaven, without the intervention of human hands. I make the last remark because, though many received the Holy Ghost, after baptism, by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, yet none of those disciples are ever said to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. These men had the Holy Spirit, and the fact was in each case evident by a miracle-working power, but they obtained the gift not by that direct bestowment from the Lord, which alone is termed baptism in the Spirit, but by the ministration of the apostles. The impartation of the Spirit by laying on of hands, was exclusively committed to them, as the sign of apostleship, and was as distinct from baptism in the Spirit, as it is possible for one thing to be from another."

"In view of this limitation," enquired Mr. Vapid, "what other instances of Holy Spirit baptism have we on record? I presume only that of the house of Cornelius."

"There is only that instance," resumed Mr. Bell, "to which the phrase is applied. Some have thought that all the converts of the day of Pentecost afterward received baptism in the Holy Spirit as a peculiar privilege bestowed upon those who turned to Christ upon the first day of His proclaimed reign, and that the event is recorded in Acts iv., which informs us of the imprisonment of Peter and John, who, after their release went into their own company (which is understood to be the disciples as a whole), and reported all that had been done to them, which when they heard, they lifted up their voice with one accord and prayed the Lord to grant healing power, that signs and wonders might be manifested in the name of Jesus, the result of which was, that, "when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit and spake the word with boldness." Thus they received the bestowment direct from heaven and the external signs were present. But, counting this or not, as we may consider proper, the house of Cornelius stands out as the

only instance granted to the Gentiles, and the case appears thus: - At the beginning of the preaching to the Jews this baptism manifested the seating of the Lord at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and identified the apostles as His ambassadors. It was granted on the *first* preaching to the Gentiles to demonstrate that the Lord willed their incorporation with the saints, without regard to the law of Moses. This use the Apostle made of it when defending himself before the brethren. His words were -

'Then remembered I the words of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized in water, but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Forasmuch then as he gave unto them the like gift, as he did unto us, what was I that I could withstand God?'

It was *the like* gift! We are expressly told that the Holy Spirit came upon them as upon the Jews at the beginning, including tongues, etc. As, then, in the New Testament we have no other mention of baptism in the Spirit, these texts give us its history and definition, and, therefore, there remains to us the one baptism in water, by which the believer puts on Christ."

"That, to say the least," remarked Mr. Maitland, "is a very cold conclusion. give me the fire! I can't do with the baptism of water! The Spirit and fire for me - not water!"

"If you mean the warmth of love and zeal in the heart," resumed Mr. Bell, "have as much of it as you like, and, believe me, water baptism is not a substitute for burning zeal and ardent love. But don't darken your hearers by words without wisdom. If the earnest feeling which you call fire is, in Scripture, represented by the phrase baptism with Spirit and fire, then so speak of it, but if the phrase in question is only used to represent other and widely different things, then don't pervert Scripture by making its words stand for ideas they were never by the Apostle intended to represent. The baptism in the Spirit, as it includes miraculous powers, you cannot have. The baptism of fire, as it is a fearful retribution, you would neither be able to bear, nor disposed to request."

"What!" vehemently exclaimed Mr. Maitland, "the blessed baptism, promised by my dear Saviour, a fearful retribution! Why, Sir, you border upon blasphemy!"

"Moderate your feelings," replied Mr. Bell, "your Saviour never promised them the baptism of fire."

"Did He not say, Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire not many days hence, and did not fire come upon them on the day of Pentecost?"

"No, Sir, He did not promise to baptize them in fire. John said, 'He shall baptize in the Holy Spirit and in fire,' but the Saviour left out the fire and promised to baptize them in the Holy Spirit, as we have already seen from Acts i. Then, it is not said that fire came upon them, but that tongues, *like as of fire* sat upon them - not *of* fire but *like* as of fire. There was no burning flame, no fire, but only a likeness. The baptism in fire did not take place on that occasion."

"Such doctrine," resumed Mr. M. "will never do for me! I must have the fire!"

"Then you understand," added Mr. Clearthought, turning to Mr. B., "that John had two distinct baptisms in view, both of which the Redeemer was to administer - one of blessing and one of punishment - that the one was intended for the obedient, and the other for the nation, upon its rejection of Him?"

"That is very near the meaning of the promise."

"But that cannot be," urged Mr. Vapid, "for John addressed himself to all the people, and therefore the baptism, whatever it is, was for all."

"Not so," resumed Mr. B., "for, understand it as you please, it cannot be for all. All the nation did not receive the baptism of Pentecost, whether you view it as in Spirit only, or in fire also. Only some were subjects of it, and John's intimation, clearly was to that effect - He *will* baptize in the Spirit, or in fire - Go ye and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may share the blessing of the former, and escape the dreadful results of the latter."

"Why, Sir, you will have the fire nowhere!" put in Mr. M. "I cannot do with this."

"We will have it in its proper place," resumed Mr. B. "Let me ask attention to a remarkable division of the subject which obtains in the Gospels. Note, if you please, the following facts:

"1. When the Lord cited the promise of John and declared that it would be strictly fulfilled, He omitted fire, and merely said, 'Ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence.'

"2. The last chapter of the Old Covenant Scriptures marks out a baptism of fire -

'For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts.' - *Malachi iv:1.*

Let it be remembered that this same chapter, in some measure, couples the Baptist with this prediction. It reads - 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.' We may now note that John, in a remarkable manner, combines the burning of the wicked and the baptism in fire.

"3. This is seen in the structure of the Gospel histories. Each of the four writers gives the promise, that Jesus will baptize in the Holy Spirit, but only two of them add '*and with fire.*' Then the two that record an allusion to fire explain that fearful baptism thus -

'Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into His garner; but he will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.' - *MATTHEW.*

'The axe is laid at the root of the trees: every tree therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and he will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable.' - *LUKE*

On the other hand, Mark and John have not a word about the burning up of chaff - nothing about the floor, the wheat, the garner. Why not? Because they make no mention of *baptism in fire*, and therefore had no need to define it. I conclude, then that

this dreadful baptism came upon them in the fiery overthrow of their Temple and city, and that it may find its completion in the destruction which Jesus, when he is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, will bring upon all who reject Him.

The company, with the exception of Mr. Maitland, accepted Mr. Bell's conclusion. Mr. M. would never be deprived of baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire, to make way for a mere water salvation. The Curate was desirous to prove the apostolic origin of infant baptism, but the time of departure brought the discussion to an end, not, however, without a promise to renew the investigation on a subsequent evening.

Chapter IV.

The gentlemen whose conversation furnished the last chapter, with several others, having again reassembled, the Curate, according to promise, entered upon his defence of infant baptism. He begged them to notice the most ample proof of its very early existence. "IRENEUS wrote about eighty years after the apostolic age, and was then an aged man. He was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John. Permit me to read his words from *Wall's History of Infant Baptism* - 'He (Jesus) came to save all persons by Himself; all, I mean, who by Him are regenerated unto God, *infants* and little ones, and children and youths, and elder persons.'" Mr. Vapid remarked that "the quotation says nothing about baptism," to which it was replied, "that though baptism is not named it is nevertheless implied, as the early writers use the words interchangeably." "Granting that interchange," responded Mr. Clearthought, "are you able to affirm that the one invariably stood for, or implied, the other? If not, baptism might not have been at all in the mind of Ireneus when he wrote that sentence." "Do you know of any writer earlier than TERTULLIAN who has actually mentioned infant baptism?" asked Mr. Bell.

"I do not, and I admit that proof of an earlier mention has not been found."

"Did Tertullian, who, so far as we can discover, is the earliest writer who names infant baptism, advocate or oppose it?"

"He," continued the Curate, "urged the delaying of baptism, and wrote against the baptism of infants."

"Then, Sir, you admit that there is no proof that anyone, before the third century, named infant baptism?"

"Yes, so far as actual mention is concerned, but they imply it. Justin Martyr, for instance, who was born near the close of the first century, wrote about the middle of the second century, 'There were many of both sexes, some sixty and some seventy years old, who were *made disciples in infancy*.' Now the Baptists generally admit that all disciples were baptized, and therefore, though baptism is not named, it is without doubt implied."

"No, Sir," resumed Mr. Bell, "nothing of the sort. It is written that 'the Lord made *and* baptized more disciples than John.' The disciples were first made, and then baptized. He baptized disciples, and not babes in order to make disciples by baptism. The young persons spoken of by Justin were made disciples by teaching - a disciple is a learner, a scholar, and it is quite clear that in the ancient church catechumens were trained before they were baptized, a fact that cannot be accounted for upon the supposition that infant baptism prevailed."

"But," replied the Curate, "the young persons referred to could not have been of that order, as they are expressly called *infants*, and therefore, if disciples, they must have been made so by baptism, and not by teaching."

"Here, sir, you repeat the error into which Dr. Wall and others have fallen. The word *pais*, used by Justin Martyr, is applied to persons of from twelve to thirty years of age. Jesus, when twelve years of age, is designated by the same term, and it is also applied to Him at the time of the combined opposition of Herod and Pilate, (Acts iv:27.) Eutychus, the young man mentioned in Acts xx. is called *pais*. Justin Martyr's infants, then, may have been from twelve to twenty years of age. At all events they were old enough to be taught, for only the taught can be disciples. You may rely upon it, gentlemen, that infant baptism has no historical basis. Not one of the five Apostolic Fathers - Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, or Polycarp - either name it or allude to it, but they do say what implies believer's baptism and that only. The like

may be said of the oldest of the Greek Fathers. Papias, Dionysius, Tatian, Melito, Ireneus, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria, never mention it. In saying this I do not wish to insinuate a doubt as to its early origin. The Mystery of Iniquity advanced with rapidity, and no doubt infant baptism had commenced by the time of Tertullian, as his protest against it proves. But then those early writers who do name it, also indicate that infant communion in the Holy Supper was at the same time common. Let me read two or three passages from my note-book -

"The Lord's Supper was considered as essential to salvation, for which reason it was even thought proper to administer it to infants." - Mosheim's Church History, century III.

"St. Augustine, I am sure, held the communicating of infants, as much an apostolic tradition as the baptizing of them." - Chillingworth.

"That in the primitive church children received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is obvious from what Cyprian relates concerning a sucking child, who so violently refused to take the sacramental wine, that the deacons were obliged to open her lips and pour it down her throat." - Dr. Hood, Dean of Chichester.

"The reason for laying aside infant communion in the Latin church was, lest by puking up the holy symbols, the sacrament should be dishonoured." - Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

"The Roman church, about the year 1000, entertaining the doctrine of transubstantiation, let fall the custom of giving the holy elements to infants; and the other Western churches mostly did the like, upon the same account; but the Greeks, not having the same doctrine, continued, and do still continue, the custom of communicating infants." - Dr. Wall - History of Infant Baptism.

"He, then, who will accept infant baptism, because it existed in the third century, must take infant communion along with it, and very much more that any person present would reject. But, gentlemen, could you prove it to have been practised immediately after the death of the apostles, you would do nothing. I refuse to admit the divine origin of an ordinance for which Bible sanction cannot be

produced - and now I call upon those who hold infant baptism to give your strong reasons from the one unerring book."

Mr. Maitland assured the meeting that he knew nothing of the early writers they had been discussing. He argued like Mr. Bell, "that the question must be settled by the Bible, and that if infants are baptized on account of what the fathers say, they must on the same authority receive the Lord's Supper." He considered that the matter could be soon settled. "Let those who say that the baptism of infants is wrong, shew that the Bible forbids it. Let Mr. Bell do this, or let him mind his own preaching, and say nothing against a baptism with which men as good as he are satisfied, and against which he cannot bring a 'thus saith the Lord.'"

"Our friend is not at all logical," responded Mr. Clearthought, "The burden of proof does not rest with Mr. Bell. Those who practise infant baptism either view it as an unauthorised expedient, or claim for it Bible authority. If the former, then it must stand with penance, holy water, the baptism of bells, and other vagaries of the Scarlet Lady, but those who claim Bible authority for it must produce that authority. To call upon the Baptists to shew that the Bible forbids it is absurd. If a text cannot be found which forbids dancing as a part of Christian worship, must we therefore conclude that leg-service of that kind is of divine authority?"

Mr. Maitland expressed his surprise at Mr. Clearthought's speaking against his own practice. "Let," said he, "such persons go over to the other side - *we* don't want the support of men who practise one thing, and speak in favour of another."

"I do not," replied Mr. C., "speak against what I practise, nor am I speaking against infant baptism. I would not, however, support it by false reasoning. If we have divine authority it is our business to produce it, and if we cannot, then it behoves us to give it up, or maintain it as a human tradition. Mr. Bell has really nothing to prove - we have to produce Bible authority, he has merely to examine what we present, shew its insufficiency, or admit reverse."

Mr. Vapid congratulated his "Brother Clearthought" on his straightforward putting of the case. He insisted that thus "to put the

matter in its proper light is due to truth, and would drive infant baptism out of the field."

"I admit," interposed Mr. Atkins, "that I am bound to find Bible authority for your practice, to give it up, or to abandon Protestant ground. The Congregationalists, with whom I minister, often make too little of the ordinance. I believe it authorised by the Bible, and therefore defend it. I look upon it as a serious omission when parents treat it with neglect, and I would not receive to fellowship an unbaptized person."

"Very good," replied Mr. Bell. "Our friend Atkins can serve us by putting that authority forward at once. It may, however, save time if we bear in mind that Bible authority can only exist in the form of -

1. COMMAND.

2. APPROVED EXAMPLE, or

3. NECESSARY INFERENCE.

Let me ask whether any of you can produce a command to baptize infants, given by Jesus or His apostles?"

After some little conversation, all admitted that infant baptism is not directly commanded in the Bible.

"Is there one instance of infant baptism recorded in the New Testament?" asked Mr. Vapid. After a few words, *pro* and *con*, all admitted that the Book does not contain any clear and unmistakable affirmation of the baptism of an infant.

"Then," added Mr. Bell, "You are shut up to inference. Having neither command nor example, your practice has only an inferential foundation."

"You Baptists," retorted Mr. Atkins, "are too much in the habit of decrying inferential proof when this question is in hand, though you take to it readily enough on other matters, and have no other by which to support much that you believe. You observe Sunday as a Sabbath, and admit women to the Lord's Table, merely upon

inference. There is no command to change the Sabbath, and it is nowhere said that females partook of the Sacrament. Why, then, as inference is a good foundation in these matters, do you decry it when infant baptism is in view?"

"You quite mistake," resumed Mr. Bell. "I do not decry inference. Did I not name *necessary inference* as one of the three methods by which Bible authority can be established? I merely said, that having admitted that the Bible contains neither command, nor example, you have now reduced the enquiry to the region of inference. I am prepared to accept any legitimate, that is, *necessary* inference, if even one text can be found which leaves no other inference possible, I will at once take to baptizing babies. But you also mistake in regard to the Sabbath and female communion. I do not observe Sunday as the Sabbath without a command, for I do not observe it as a Sabbath at all. I observe it as the Lord's day - as the First of the week, set apart for commemorating the Lord's death, and for this there is clear and undoubted apostolic example. I do not observe the Jewish Sabbath, because it was only enforced upon Jews, and Paul declares 'WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW.' I therefore pay no regard to the Jewish Sabbath, and though I do not observe the Lord's day, yet I do it, not as a substitute for, or change in, the Sabbath, but as a New Institution ordained by Jesus, and made known and established by the plainly recorded examples of the Apostles and Primitive Church. Then, as to female communion. The table is for disciples, and converted females are disciples. In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, and all the privileges of the church are consequently open to the sisterhood, unless expressly prohibited. Women are also expressly mentioned as number with the disciples, who 'continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, the Fellowship, the Breaking of the Bread, and the Prayers.' So manifest is this - so absolutely necessary is the inference, that none deny women access to the Table - no one has a conscience against his believing wife partaking of the feast. But not so with infant baptism - it has been denied from its first mention, and hundreds of thousands of the best of men have not been able to see, in Scripture, a shadow of warrant for its use. Establish it upon the same ground as the observance of the Lord's-day, and female communion, and I will gladly accept it."

"But," resumed Mr. Atkins, "household baptisms are recorded and, therefore, it is presumed that in some of the homes there were infants."

"That is not the point," interposed Mr. Clearthought. "It is admitted that we have to furnish the proof. It is our duty to prove that there must have been an infant in one or more of the houses mentioned."

"But," said Mr. Atkins, "I put it to Mr. Bell, whether it is not reasonable to suppose that, in some of the households, there were infants?"

"Then you mean that our case cannot be proved, unless Mr. Bell will help us by kindly *supposing* in our favour. The fact is, we cannot prove that the households contained a single infant. If otherwise, do so and settle the dispute."

"Mr. Clearthought," said one of the company, "is a strange man to sprinkle infants, and yet talk thus. One would suppose that Mr. Bell has made a convert of him."

"I have before told you," he replied, "that I will not accept such aid as you offer. Mr. Bell has not changed my views, but I advise him not to be led for your convenience into a maze. He has nothing to do but to examine your proof, and as yet, you have not presented any. The household argument stands thus. We must prove -

1. That one of the households did certainly contain an infant; and
2. That every member of that household was baptized.

Now will you, Mr. Atkins, affirm that for a *certainty* there was an infant in any one of the households?"

"No, Sir - but I say there *may have been*."

"Yes, and there *may not have been*. Your argument, then, stands thus - There may have been, and there may not have been, an infant in one of the households named in the New Testament, therefore infant baptism has apostolic sanction. I presume that Mr. Bell will not need to reply to the argument."

"But, Sir, as there are several cases of household baptism recorded, the probability that an infant was in one of them is very strong."

"There are three - Lydia, the Jailor, and Stephanas. Of the Jailor it is said that he 'rejoiced, believing in God with all his house' - of Stephanas and his house it is recorded that they addicted themselves to the work of the ministry."

"True," rejoined Mr. Atkins, "but that does not prove that those houses were without infants. Paul and Silas speaking the word to the Jailor's house no more proves that there were not infants therein, than my saying I preached last Sunday to my congregation would imply that there were no infants in the assembly. The Jailor's believing with all his house, would only intimate that those of the house who were fit subjects for faith, believed. The same holds good with the family ministering to the saints. To minister is to serve. If, then, because the family of Stephanas addicted themselves to ministering to, or serving the saints, they were all adults, then when Joshua said, 'As for me and my house we will serve the Lord,' there must have been no children in his family - they were all adult believers. The thing is quite preposterous. The children of Israel were commanded to 'take a lamb for a *house* (a family) according to the number of souls,' and eat it 'with their loins girt, and their shoes on their feet and their staff in their hand.' Now is it to be supposed that there were no infants in those families, because infants could not comply with the requirements here specified? Ridiculous and irrational as these conclusions would be, they are quite as conclusive from the premises, as is the argument that because the family of Stephanas ministered to the saints, all its members were adult believers. We may speak of the hospitality of a family, and of their kindness to us, making our acknowledgments to its members collectively, without intending to convey the idea that the babe in the nursery performed any special service for us. In such cases the thing affirmed is predicated *only* of those members who are *fit subjects* for the work or operation mentioned."

Mr. Clearthought begged to thank Mr. Atkins for having thus completely refuted the household branch of the argument. "For," continued he, "it is admitted that we cannot prove the presence of infants in any one of the households, and now Mr. Atkins has clearly shewn that, if present, there is no proof that they were

baptized. Does not Mr. Atkins see that the argument which proves that the language with respect to the faith of the Jailor's house, and the ministering of that of Stephanas, is consistent with the idea that there might have been infants in those houses, equally proves that there might have been infants in them without being baptized? Thus the households are finished up."

Mr. Maitland thought that Mr. Clearthought said more to oppose his own practice than did Mr. Bell, and he considered that Mr. C. had better present his own strong reasons for infant baptism, or declare himself one of Mr. Bell's converts. In reply Mr. C. intimated that certain inferential considerations inclined him to favour infant baptism, and he would submit them to the meeting. If they could be overturned he would not administer the ordinance to an infant. At the next meeting he would do his best to defend a custom which, to say the least, was common in the ancient church.

Chapter V.

After some amount of desultory conversation, Mr. Vapid asked permission to read a few words bearing upon the stage of the investigation at which the last meeting terminated. He thought that part of an article upon baptism in *Dr. Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature* so well expressed some of the conclusions arrived at when they were last together, that it would be well to hear it, more particularly as all the parties concerned in its production were advocates of infant baptism. The article was written by Dr. Jacobi, of the University of Berlin, and approved by Dr. Neander. with this explanation he would read it:

"Infant baptism was established neither by Christ nor His apostles. In all places where we find the necessity of baptism notified, either in a dogmatic or historical point of view, it is evident that it was only meant for those who were capable of comprehending the word preached, and of being converted to Christ by an act of their own will. A pretty sure testimony of its non-existence in the apostolic age may be inferred from 1 Cor. vii:14 since Paul would certainly have referred to the baptism of children for their holiness. But even in later times, several teachers of the church, such as Tertullian and others, rejected this custom; indeed his church in general (that of North Africa) adhered longer than others to the primitive regulations. Even when the baptism of

children was already theoretically derived from the apostles, its practice was nevertheless for along time confined to a maturer age. In support of the contrary opinion, the advocates in former ages (now hardly any) used to appeal to Matt. xix:14; but their strongest argument in its favour, is the regulation of baptizing all the members of a house and family (1 Cor. xvi:15; Acts xvi:33; xviii:8). In none of these instances has it been proved that there were little children among them; but, even supposing that there were, there was no necessity for excluding them from baptism in plain words, since such exclusion was understood as a matter of course. Many circumstances conspired early to introduce the practice of infant-baptizing. The confusion between the outward and inward conditions of baptism, and the magical effect that was imputed to it; confusion of thought about the visible and invisible church, condemning all those who did not belong to the former; the doctrine of the natural corruption of man, so closely connected with the preceding; and finally, the desire of distinguishing Christian children from the Jewish and Heathen, and of commending them more effectually to the care of the Christian community - all these circumstances, and many more have contributed to the introduction of infant baptism at a very early period. But, on the other hand, the baptism of children is not at all at variance with the principle of Christian baptism in general, after what we have observed on the separation of regeneration and baptism. For, since it cannot be determined when the former begins, the real test of its existence lying only in the holiness continued to the end of man's life, the fittest point for baptism is evidently the beginning of life. Nevertheless the profession of faith is still needed to complete it; confirmation, or some equivalent observance, is therefore a very necessary and important consummation. The fides infantium is an absurd assumption, of which the Scriptures know nothing. On the other hand the baptized child is strongly recommended to the community, and to the Spirit of God dwelling therein, becoming the careful object of the education and holy influence of the church (1 Cor. vii:14). Nature and experience teach us, therefore, to retain the baptism of children, now that it is introduced."

Mr. Vapid urged that they had here a very fair surrender on the part of learned and influential advocates of infant baptism.

Mr. Maitland reminded him that the persons alluded to, distinctly declare that infant baptism ought to be retained.

Mr. Vapid was quite content to let their unauthorized statement, that it ought to be continued, go for what it is worth, after their distinct intimation that it was neither introduced by Christ, nor His apostles, and that neither in the households, nor anywhere else in the New Testament, could a shade of proof be found. Then, too, there is the distinct admission that the *fides infantium* - the faith of infants - is an absurd assumption, of which the Scriptures know nothing. But Luther advocated and retained infant baptism on that very ground. He wrote, "We assert that little children should not be baptized at all, if it be true that in baptism they do not believe." According to these high authorities infant baptism had not the sanction of the Word of God, its only foundation being *nature and experience*. Perhaps Mr. Clearthought would now take up the question as intimated at the last meeting.

"I have stated," said Mr. Clearthought, "that the Bible contains no direct command to baptize infants - that there is no proof that infants were in the households mentioned in the New Testament, and none that they were baptized, even if it be granted that they were therein. I spent the usual time at our college, and there I was not taught to search the Scriptures in order to determine the question for myself, but rather instructed in the methods by which the practice is defended. My previous consideration (not the result of investigation, but of faith in early teachers, increased by the common practice of nearly every sect) were in favour of it. After leaving college, and taking a church in which no one questioned infant baptism, and in which I could not remain if I did so, there was really nothing to impel me to investigation. Still I have thought upon the subject, and there are considerations which lead me to think it more in accordance with Holy Writ to admit the children of believers, than to restrict the ordinance to converted persons. These considerations I will endeavour to put before you. First, then, I conclude that *as the church has existed from the days of Abraham, and as infants by divine appointment, were for a long period in it, that therefore they should be in it now.*"

"Certainly, certainly!" said Mr. Maitland. "Perfectly reasonable, unless, indeed, you find a Bible command for turning them out."

"Let us look at it calmly," interposed Mr. Bell. "In the first place, Sir, your major premise is merely assumption. The Bible nowhere teaches that the church was in existence in the days of Abraham. Will you tell us what you understand by the phrase, *the church*?"

"I understand by *the church*," responded Mr. C., "a people separated from the world for the service of God, having divinely-appointed ordinances, including some rite, or mark, by which its members are known. The Jews were a body of people thus separated and they had such ordinances and distinctive mark of membership."

Mr. Vapid thought that "Mr. Maitland might be supplied with authority for 'turning them out,' as Paul to the Galatians, in allusion to the Old Covenant and those under it, commands that we 'cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.' Of this casting out of the children of the flesh the exclusion of Agar and her son is an allegory. It is thus clear that if infants, by virtue of their fleshly relation, were in the Jewish church, they are excluded under this dispensation because the flesh profits nothing, a new creature in Christ Jesus being the only subject. And this is further intimated in connection with the two covenants - the Old and the New. During the continuance of the Old Covenant, God promised to make a New Covenant with the house of Israel - these two covenants are represented as differing in a most important particular. Under the Old Covenant, which embraced Abraham's seed according to the flesh, without regard to age or faith, it was necessary for adults who knew the Lord, to teach the young to know Him - that is, the children who, with themselves, were under that covenant. But under the New Covenant it is specially stated that all would know Him - that is, not the whole world, but all who are under the covenant. They were not to say, 'Know ye the Lord, for all shall know Him, from the least unto the greatest.' This could not be the case were infants in the church or parties to the covenant, for then, as under the former covenant, we should have to teach the very thing which the Lord declares there shall be no need to teach. All then, who are born, not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God - of 'water and the Spirit' - all such, and none other, are proper subjects for the church, and only such are under the New Covenant."

"What, in the name of common sense, are we coming to now?" exclaimed Mr. Maitland. "Infants are not to be taught to know the Lord! Pray at what age will you teach them the way of salvation? When they are twenty-one, or after they are married, or when?"

"Our good friend," continued Mr. Vapid, "is quite amusing. I have said nothing against preaching the gospel to the young. Do it by all means so soon as they can understand it. Early hearing of the gospel and witnessing its blessed fruit, are among the blessings peculiar to the children of Christian parents. Preach the gospel to them - teach them to know the Lord. Do the same to unbelieving adults - but then, neither the one nor the other are under the New Covenant. You preach the gospel to them in order to bring them into that relation and not because they are already in it - to make them Christians, and not because they are Christians."

"Let me ask your attention," resumed Mr. Bell, addressing Mr. Clearthought. "Admitting all that Mr. Vapid has advanced, when the question is considered in the light of the covenants, we come to another matter in dealing with your argument. You really assume that the Jewish nation and the Church of Christ are one and the same. If not, your entire assumption falls to the ground. The moment you look at what is called the Jewish church, as distinct from the Christian Church, your proposition dissolves. If the churches are *two*, then it does not follow that the conditions of membership are the same in each. Then, the sense in which you use the word *church*, is not admissible. You say 'a body of people separated from the world,' and that 'the Jewish people were such a body.' It is true that the Church of Christ is separated from the world, but separated in a sense that will not apply to the Jews. As a nation they were separated from other nations, but they were still *of* the world - not born again - whereas the church is not *of* the world. They had divinely appointed ordinances and so has the church, but the ordinances are not the same - those of the one are must unlike those of the other. But this is not all. You start with a mere assumption. The church has not existed from the days of Abraham. There really never was a Jewish church. A church called out from the nations and not of the world, and an entire nation chosen for certain positions and blessings, are ideas so widely different that a careful observer could not for one moment

confound them. The Jews had a religion, but never were a Jewish church."

Mr. Maitland begged to differ. "The Apostle speaks of the church in the wilderness, and had there been no church at that time he could not have done so."

"Granting," replied Mr. Bell, "that an Apostle applied the term to the people in the wilderness, would that prove that God had then a church, in the sense in which the word is generally used by Jesus and the apostles? If so, then was that Ephesian mob which worshipped Diana the church of God, for it is designated the *ecclesia*, though in the English Testament this fact is not seen, as the translators have put it: "And when he had thus spoken he dismissed the *assembly*.' In the same chapter that *lawful convocation*, to which the Town-clerk intimated their disputes should be submitted, is expressed by the same word. A people then called out from others for any purpose is a church in the general sense of the word *ecclesia*, but the church of God, of Christ, of the First-born, is a very different church, and is never said to have existed till after Jesus, its chief corner-stone, had been laid in the tomb. He came to lay its foundation, not to build up one already laid. His church was future when he came - His words were, 'I *will* build My church.' Judaism did not possess, and never was intended to possess, *a church* in the New Testament acceptance of the term - a fact which our State-church friends always manage to forget. With the Jews and with Pagan nations the religious and political commonwealths were identical. That a society should exist in an exclusively religious interest was incompatible with every idea of the Jewish theocracy, and would not have been tolerated for a single hour. Their system recognized no distinction between the men of the commonwealth and the true-hearted who worshipped God in a spirit of holiness. As, then, the church did not exist in the days of Moses and the prophets, and Jewish children were not in it, the argument falls to pieces.

"Baptism," said Mr. C., "we were always taught, came in the room of circumcision, and it was argued that, as infants were circumcised they should be baptized. This I felt to be appropriate."

"Felt to be appropriate! Do you settle a question of this sort by feeling?" responded Mr. Bell.

"No, Sir - not when I deal with it as a logician. But I have told you that I have not been previously induced to examine the question. I am now more than ever disposed to do so, and therefore, I give out what I have held under the influence of early teaching and in consciousness of fitness, and not as the result of logical enquiry. I have said that I did not want to be disturbed, neither do I now desire to get into trouble by discovering that infants are not proper subjects for baptism. I would much rather hold to my present practice, but I am here, and I have no intention to run away from the truth, and still less to shuffle it out of the road. You may therefore deal with my remarks upon circumcision."

"Very well! Let us look at it. Infants were circumcised, therefore they should be baptized, as baptism is in the place of circumcision. This we have fairly to carry out. Infants were to be circumcised at eight days old, therefore infants must be baptized at eight days after birth! Then, only male infants were circumcised, therefore, only male infants are to be baptized. Again, servants bought with money, and captives taken in war, were to be circumcised, as property and without regard to faith, and therefore such servants and war-prisoners without reference to faith in Jesus, should also be baptized. I am afraid our friend Clearthought will get into trouble over this question, for if he has not to give up infant baptism altogether, he must, upon his own ground, set it aside in regard to females, and he must also undertake to baptize certain adults without faith or repentance. But further - in this case, as in the last, the major premise is a falsehood. 'Baptism came in the room of circumcision!' Where is the proof? Where is proof that it came in the room of anything that ever existed in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth? Baptism came into its own place, and came not in the room of anything. The opposite position is pure invention, to support a practice which has not one inch of solid ground to rest upon."

"Is not baptism called by Paul, 'the circumcision made without hands?'" asked Mr. Atkins.

"No, Sir. Baptism is mentioned in the next verse. The circumcision made without hands is that of the heart, which comes in the room of that which was outward in the flesh, and on that very account, infants are not its subjects, and so, as the baptism is the burial of those whose hearts are circumcised by the truth, infants are

certainly ineligible. But who refers to baptism as a circumcision made without hands? I never yet knew a person baptized without hands. Hands are as much necessary in baptism as in circumcision."

"I regret," observed Mr. Clearthought, "that I have to leave early this evening. Pray extend your charity so far as to give me credit for not running away from the investigation, and I will reward your liberality by resuming the subject at your next meeting."

Chapter VI.

"Before Mr. Clearthought resumes," said one of the company, "permit me to ask attention to 1 Cor. vii:14, where the apostle speaks of infants as holy. Is it not reasonable to conclude that those who by the mouth of the Holy Spirit are declared holy must be fit subjects for baptism.?"

"That," said Mr. Bell, "depends in part upon what is understood by the word *holy*, and also upon the design of baptism as stated in the New Testament. Baptism is expressly said to be '*for the remission of sins*' (Acts ii:38), and Peter also stated that baptism 'doth also now save us' (1 Peter iii:21). If then infants are holy, in the sense of having no sin, or of being already forgiven and saved, they certainly are not proper subjects for baptism - the alleged holiness would alone be sufficient to disqualify."

"But, Sir," interposed Mr. Vapid, "the Baptists never admit baptism as a saving ordinance - baptism for remission of sins is Popery."

"But faithful Christian preachers are content to tell men who believe the Gospel to repent and be baptized for the remission of sin, in doing which they but repeat the very words of the Holy Spirit. But let that matter stand, the mistakes of Baptists on this head may remain, and at another sitting we will hear Mr. Vapid in full. To return to 1 Cor. vii:14. Let us for a moment grant that Paul's intimation of infant holiness is sufficient ground for baptizing infants, you will then be driven to the necessity of declaring the unbelieving wife of a Christian husband holy in the same sense and therefore also a fit subject for baptism, for Paul

expressly declares that 'the unbelieving wife is sanctified (or holy) by the husband.'"

"If this text does not teach that an infant whose parents are Christians is holy, while the infant of unbelieving parents is unholy, do, pray, tell us what it does teach."

"My dear Mr. Maitland," responded Mr. Bell, "if the text does not teach that the unbelieving wife of a Christian husband is holy and, therefore, a proper subject for baptism, will you kindly tell us what it does teach?"

"I don't want to talk about baptizing adults," said Mr. Maitland. "Our subject is infant baptism and not wife or husband baptism."

"Very good, Sir. As you do not comprehend the bearing of the one upon the other, I leave it for those who do."

"But what is taught by this text?"

"The question had been mooted in Corinth whether a Christian and a Pagan ought to continue to live together as husband and wife. Paul, in reply, used the words *sanctified*, *clean*, and *unclean*, in the current ecclesiastical and Jewish sense. He insists that the unbelieving wife is sanctified to the believing husband, and the unbelieving husband to the believing wife and adds 'otherwise were your children unclean, but now are they holy.' As food is said to be 'sanctified by the word of God and prayer,' so he uses the word, not to denote real holiness, but that holiness, or lawfulness, in the use of persons and things requisite to proper civil connection with them. It is not the legitimacy of wives, husbands, and children, but whether believers and unbelievers thus related may continue to live together. Paul's conclusion is - they may live together, for *to each other* they are, in their respective relations, sanctified, clean, or holy persons. If the unbelieving wife may not remain with the believing husband, *your* children, argues Paul, must also be put away, for they too, like the unbelieving wife, are not Christians - not in the church. He does not say *their* children, meaning the children of parents one of whom only is Christian, but '*your children*' - those of Christians generally, all of whom, he implies, stand to their Christian parents in the same position in regard to the church and Christianity as the

unbelieving wife or husband. This is the plain argument of the text. What does it prove? That the church in Corinth had no idea of infant baptism, for if it be admitted that infants were baptized, the argument of Paul falls to the ground as the veriest blunder possible. Grant that the Corinthians knew anything of the baptism of infants and they would have been able to answer - 'No, Paul! we retain our children, though they do not yet believe, because they have been baptized, and therefore are not at all upon a par with our unbelieving, unbaptized, and unsanctified wives and husbands. I therefore insist that in this incident we have clear proof that to the Apostle Paul, and to the apostolic church, infant baptism was unknown."

"I never," said Mr. Maitland, "heard the passage treated in this way, and I am not willing to accept an interpretation so perfectly novel. It is not likely that the true meaning of this passage has been thus long concealed from the Christian world."

"No, Sir! it has not been concealed at all. It is the plain and simple meaning which lies upon the surface of the passage. Paul teaches that *all* the children of Christians, in their unconverted state, are just as ecclesiastically unclean as the unbelieving husband or wife. and that if the Christian may not in civil life live with an unconverted partner he must on the same ground put away his children. This disposes of the matter, and no Pædobaptist in the world can refute it."

"Well, well, I will not detain you any longer," concluded Mr. Maitland. "It is only one text and you had better hear Mr. Clearthought."

Mr. Clearthought was much obliged to Mr. Maitland for handing him out at the moment most convenient to himself. He continued - "Without close examination, and on the ground of harmonizing with my prepossessions and with the innocence of infancy, I have concluded, that infant baptism derives support from the conduct of Christ, who called little children to Him, blessed them, and declared that of such is the kingdom of heaven. And certainly all who are of the kingdom of heaven are entitled to baptism."

"But," replied Mr. Bell, "it is not implied that He baptized them. On the other hand the narrative proves that infant baptism was not

then known, for had the apostles been accustomed to the baptism of infants they would not have refused them access to the Saviour. All that passage proves is, that during the Lord's sojourn on earth little children might be brought to Him in order to receive a blessing at His hands. At most this could only authorise the blessing of infants - it does not even look near to baptizing them. In the next place, the words, '*for of such is the kingdom of heaven,*' do not, as Mr. C. seems to conclude, import that the kingdom contains infants. The word translated '*of such*' does not mean *of these*. It denotes likeness, or resemblance, *of this kind, of such as these*, and never absolutely THESE. Jesus then taught that the kingdom is composed of those who, in some particulars, are like little children, and when so doing he talked of the punishment which would overtake the men who would offend one of those little ones who believe in him. It is, then, a case of comparison - the subjects of the kingdom are likened to little children, and all must perceive that the persons of the comparison could not be compared with themselves. Then, that the kingdom of heaven does not consist of infants Pædobaptists themselves admit. They hold that it contains also adults, yet if their use of the phrase '*of such*' is proper, their conclusion is false and the kingdom consists of little children only. But, in addition to this, it must be observed that our friend C. strangely reverses an important matter. He says, 'Certainly all who are of the kingdom of heaven are fit subjects for baptism.' Now the truth is, that not one in the kingdom is a subject for baptism, and that because the unbaptized are not in the kingdom. Jesus taught that unless a man is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom. Baptism translates into the kingdom of God's dear Son - that is, when preceded by faith and repentance - and, therefore, if it were shewn that infants are in the kingdom, that would prove, not their right to baptism, but their unfitness for it and their right and duty to receive the Lord's supper. No one can prove that the kingdom of heaven (by which we mean, not heaven, but the kingdom which Christ has set up on earth, the subjects of which are members of His church) contains any one, old or young, who has not been baptized."

Mr. Clearthought admitted the seeming conclusiveness of the argument, and would consider it fully at his leisure. For the present, let us turn to the commission given by the Lord, and recorded Matt. xxviii. -

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." -

"I certainly consider infants included in the nations."

"So," replied Mr. Bell, "are Atheists, Secularists, and hosts of unbelievers. They unquestionably are part of the nations. Would you baptize them also?"

"They are not willing to be baptized. We could not baptize them if we would, and thus in its application the command limits itself, and there I have thought it safe to leave it. We baptize the nations as far as we can, and those who refuse to submit, bear the responsibility."

"But looking at it in that light, would you carry out your own rule? Suppose a known unbeliever and reviler of Christ, received in a drunken fit, a serious wound which leaves him helpless, insensible, seemingly about to die, and entirely at your disposal, would you then baptize him, on the ground that the commission embraced the nation of which he is a part, and is no longer, in his case, limited by inability to perform the act? I know you would not! But have you ever carefully examined the original of the verse now before us?"

I cannot say that I have, but I have a Greek Testament in my pocket, and shall be happy to look into it."

"Turn to the passage then, if you please. I render it thus - *All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go, therefore, and disciple all the nations, immersing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* Do you admit this reading?"

Yes, Sir. It only differs from the Common Version in conformity with the original. But will you indicate its bearing upon the question in hand?"

"I hold that this commission not only does not include infants, but completely, and for ever excludes them. Keep your New Testament open, if you please. You perceive that the word *nations* is not the antecedent to the word *them*. A pronoun MUST be of the same gender as its noun, and the words *nations* and *them* do not thus agree - *nations* being neuter and *them* masculine. Hence the latter cannot stand for the former."

"To what then is the pronoun relative - to what does it refer?"

That must be decided by bringing into view another well-known law, namely - '*The word to which an adjective or pronoun is relative, is sometimes not expressed, but merely implied, in some preceding word, or suggested by the context.*' In the New Testament, this is particularly the case with the demonstrative pronoun used in the clause under notice. Where then shall we find the word in which the persons represented by *them* are implied? There is only one word in the sentence which can meet the demand, viz. -*Matheeteuoo*, in the Common Version translated *teach*, and correctly, in the translation just given, DISCIPLE. The noun here *implied* is *Mathetees* - a masculine noun, the plural of which is the *implied* antecedent of *them*. The full sense of the passage then is - Go ye therefore, and disciple, by teaching (or making scholars of), all nations, baptizing the disciples thus made, into the name of the Father, etc. Thus the very grammar of the text, excludes infants, by requiring that the baptized shall be persons who have, by teaching, been already made disciples. Till then, by the preaching the gospel, and teaching the things of the kingdom of God, you can disciple babes, they must remain uncovered by this commission."

"I admit," responded Mr. Clearthought, "that I have not till now critically examined this verse, and that there is no escape from the construction you have pointed out, so far as the laws of the language are concerned. But then the word *disciple*, or rather its Greek equivalent, was commonly used to denote *reception* into the number of those who were under the tuition, care, or authority of a given philosopher or teacher. It did not imply that the persons thus received were all *believers* in the doctrine taught by their instructor, but, simply, that they had come to, or were put under him to learn his doctrine, and that being thus placed they were subject to him, called by his name, and recognized as his scholars."

Now, as this was the position and character of a *disciple*, among the sages of Greece and Rome, why should the word have a more restricted meaning in the New Testament? Why may not all who place themselves under Christ, or who are so placed in infancy, be deemed His disciples, and consequently proper subjects for baptism?"

"Admitting," replied Mr. Bell, "that persons were enrolled as disciples under Greek philosophers, who had neither believed nor understood all their doctrine, and that their business was to acquire that knowledge, let me put it to you, as a reader of the Classics, whether an instance can be found in which a babe, unable to understand a single sentence, or to distinguish the name of a Greek sage from that of a crabfish, was constituted a disciple?"

"Well, I cannot find an instance of such very early discipling, but certainly many disciples knew very little of the doctrine taught by their masters."

"Granted, and, to a certain extent, this is true of Christ's disciples. How little did those whom He called at the first know of His doctrine! They were continually blundering, and often opposing their Master, but then, in every instance, they knew at least enough of the teacher to enable them to recognize His wisdom, and to incline them to follow Him. And the like holds good still. The commission did not call upon the apostles to teach, in order to make disciples, all that Christ's disciples need to learn. They were to do three things - 1, To make disciples, or scholars by teaching - 2, to baptize the scholars thus made - 3, then further to teach them all things that the Lord had commanded. When, then, their hearers saw enough of Christ to influence them to follow Him without reserve, they then confessed their faith and were baptized."

"But the Baptists require a considerable Christian experience before baptism."

"True. But we are not concerned to defend the Baptists. We are searching for Apostolic practice, and not for Baptist deviations. The three thousand upon the day of Pentecost, had no Christian experience to give, and none was asked for. They saw that they were sinners, and that the Crucified was the Messiah, and they wanted to give themselves up to Him, and they did so by being

baptized into His name. But could you prove that infants were sometimes enrolled among the disciples of heathen philosophers, will you say how we would constitute them disciples of Christ?"

"By baptizing them into His name."

"Clearly not! For we have already seen that the apostles were required to baptize *disciples*, and not in order to make disciples. And this agrees with the Gospel, which reads thus - '*Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John.*' The disciples were not made by baptism, but were *made* and then baptized. How then could we, in view of this practice and commission, make disciples of infants, in order, that when thus made, we may baptize them? It cannot be done. When the infant can be taught, and when he will learn, we can make him a disciple, and when we have thus made a disciple, he is called upon to be immersed into the name of Jesus, that he may go on to learn all things commanded. And with this agree all cases of discipling recorded in the New Testament, and, also, the entire usage of *Matheeteuoo* which is found but in three other instances. Its first occurrence is Matt. xiii:52, where it is translated *instructed* - in Matt. xxvii:57, Joseph is termed *a disciple* - and in Acts xiv:21 it is rendered *taught*. It is then our duty to make scholars of all the nations, and as we thus disciple them, to baptize them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Chapter VII.

Mr. Truman expressed regret at the absence of Mr. Clearthought, from whom he read the following note

"DEAR FRIENDS, - Imperious calls requiring my presence in another direction, I am deprived of the opportunity of informing you in person as to my conclusion upon the question under consideration. After careful consideration I perceive that neither command, example, nor fair and undeniable inference for infant baptism can be obtained from the Bible, and that, consequently, it should be repudiated. The baptism commanded by the Saviour is unquestionably - preceded by faith and repentance - into, or for, the remission of sins - a pre-requisite to the salvation promised in the commission. As, then, since I became a believer I have not

been baptized, it is incumbent upon me forthwith to obey the Redeemer in this particular, as I desire to do in every other.

"At present I am not satisfied that baptism cannot be performed by pouring, but I am certain that it can be done by putting the individual into water. That the word used in the commission primarily signifies to dip is everywhere admitted. That immersion was the practice of the primitive church is affirmed by Churchmen, Wesleyans, Independents - and, indeed, generally. I, therefore, do not intend to defer baptism until I have determined whether it can be administered otherwise than by dipping, because there is safe ground upon which I can advance. As I hope to be instrumental in making known the truth to others, it will be requisite for me to determine this question, but for my own obedience it is not. All admit immersion - pouring and sprinkling are counted valid by some, and rejected by many. Immersion, then, is common and safe ground. When I have been immersed all will acknowledge that the command to be baptized has on my part been complied with. I am sure that the word used by the Saviour included immersion, though I am not clear as to whether it stands simply and only for immersion, or includes the application of water by other modes. I, then, desire to be immersed without delay. Should I afterwards include pouring within the compass of the commission - that is, as one of several allowable modes - I shall still deem immersion preferable, because it was common in the primitive church, and also on the ground of Christian union, to which diverse opinions upon baptism are a barrier - though, as I now consider, most needlessly, for if all agree that immersion is baptism, and only some admit that pouring is baptism, let us for the sake of union adopt that which is certain - which is admitted by all - and let the doubtful yield in order to the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

Yours in the joy of believing. HENRY CLEARTHOUGHT."

"Well! I thought Clearthought would turn round, yet I was not prepared for his rushing into the water, without settling whether immersion is the appointed baptism or not."

"In speaking thus," said Mr. Bell, "Friend Maitland does Mr. Clearthought injustice. His letter indicates two things, settled to his complete satisfaction - that he has not yet obeyed the command of

the Lord - that he can, without doubt, obey that command by being immersed. His decision, then, indicates both piety and wisdom. If I were commanded to London, and found the people disputing as to the best of two roads, some denying the possibility of reaching the Metropolis by one of them, but all admitting that the other terminated in the centre of the city, why should I, if satisfied that my journey could be well accomplished by the latter line, decline to undertake it because of doubts as to the terminus of the other? That there is one safe, undisputed, and reliable way is enough for any man."

Mr. Maitland did not see the use of meetings which resulted in men becoming dissatisfied with their churches and baptism, and, for his part, he should attend no more.

Mr. Vapid regretted his friend's want of patience. He could see no harm arising from these conversations. That Mr. Clearthought saw the need of believers' baptism was not to be deplored, though it might be regretted that he attached too much importance to the ordinance. But no doubt they would be able to shew him that baptism is not for the remission of sins, but a blessed means designed for those who are already members of Christ, and therefore pardoned and saved.

Mr. Bell doubted whether they would be able to shew Mr. Clearthought anything of the sort, because, evidently, he is determined to have a "Thus saith the Lord," and because the Scriptures no more authorize the administration of baptism to a Christian - to a pardoned and saved person - than they authorize the sprinkling of an infant.

"Baptismal regeneration! soul-destroying doctrine!" responded Mr. Vapid. "Baptism saves no one. It would be out of character with the spiritual religion which Christ came to teach, to make salvation depend upon mere ceremony. What connection is there between water and the remission of sin? Certainly none. The lives of many immersed persons shew that they are not regenerated. Baptism is the avowal of faith. The believer is Christ's soldier, and in baptism he puts on his regimentals. I honour baptism, but do not, I pray you, tell me of baptism saving, or of baptism for the remission of sins."

Mr. Bell suggested that it might assist were Mr. Vapid to compose himself, and give Scripture testimony to the design of baptism. "Baptism is not for the remission of sins.' Very well! But what is it for? 'The putting on of regimentals.' But the New Testament says not this. Let Mr. Vapid tell us in Scripture terms what baptism is for."

"At one time," said the Curate, "I was sorely pressed by Baptists. They moved me to examination, and said things which appeared to make considerably against the baptism of my church. They, however, chiefly urged that baptism is only for Christians - for the saved and pardoned, as Mr. V. expresses it. I determined to look this point fully through, and I am thankful to Baptist friends for thoroughly confirming my views. I see plainly that baptism is not for the Christian, not for the saved, not for the pardoned, but that it is an ordinance in which, according to the appropriate language of our church, the subject is 'made a member of Christ, the child of God, and the inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.' We, therefore, heartily thank God that the *baptized* is 'regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ's church.' Here we have something to baptize for. Baptism with us is no unmeaning ceremony. The putting on of regimentals is a mere fancy. Our church is not ashamed nor afraid of its belief, because we have the warrant of God's Word, and relying on that we hold fast and glory in the truth that baptism, rightly received, is no empty sign, but a living reality, from which, through the life of the risen Jesus, we receive our new birth and remission of sins through His precious blood. Baptism is not efficacious instead of Christ, but through Christ. It is the appointed means whereby, through His grace, we are grafted into the church which is His body, and by it we are indeed made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven."

"And you not only say this of baptism, but apply it to infant baptism. With you an infant is regenerated, converted, saved, without faith, without repentance, without knowledge of sin or of Christ. Purely mechanical salvation, on a par with the praying windmills of Thibet, and worse than the climbing up and down of Pilate's staircase, to which Luther subjected himself in the days of his darkness. Water baptism cannot save."

"Mr. Vapid," retorted the Curate, "makes strong statements which absolutely contradict the apostles. He affirms that baptism *cannot* save, Peter says 'baptism *doth now* save us.' Then, in part, he misunderstands me. I do not hold that an infant is converted in baptism, but that he is regenerated. Regeneration, as the word signifies, means *new birth*. To be regenerated is to be born again. Now, *to be born* denotes a change of situation, in which change the child is passive - something done *to* the child, not *by* it. Nor should we think of ascribing the birth to mental action on the part of the new-born child. And so regeneration, or the new birth, is a change in our spiritual situation - something done *for* us, and not *by* us. Regeneration may therefore be defined as that act whereby God takes us out of our relation to the old Adam, and makes us actual members of the new Adam. But this is not conversion, which must never be confounded with regeneration. They are distinct terms, and differently derived. Regeneration is the work of the Spirit in the use of water, but conversion is the joint work of the Spirit and man - or rather, perhaps, the yielding of the man's will to the Spirit of God. By baptismal regeneration, then, I mean that imparting of the nature and life of Jesus to souls dead in sin, which takes place in baptism."

Mr. Atkin could but express his dissatisfaction with all. Mr. Vapid he considered wrong in rejecting infants, but quite right in denying saving efficacy to baptism. On the other hand, the friend who had last spoken, while wrong in ascribing regenerating power to baptizing infants, was right in baptizing them. Mr. Bell he considered wholly wrong, for he rejects infant baptism and gives to the ordinance saving efficacy.

"And pray, Sir," enquired Mr. Bell, "for what purpose do you baptize infants?"

"To dedicate them to God. What can be more appropriate than this consecration of the child that God has given? What can be more pious and godly?"

"Pious it may be, but many things are piously done by Romanists and Pagans which we have no authority for introducing into the church. Godly it is not, for that only is godly which God has appointed, and we have seen that infant baptism is unauthorised.

As to dedication, or consecration, which our friend considers so appropriate, hardly anything can be more inappropriate. We can dedicate to God *things*, but not *persons*. I can consecrate, or set apart for the exclusive service of God, or His church, a house, a horse, money, or other property, or I may give myself entirely to special service in His kingdom, but no man can dedicate another. Wherever a son of Adam is consecrated to God, it must be an act of self-consecration. God accepts from man only voluntary service. Infant baptism viewed in this aspect is mere folly - an attempt to do what man cannot do, dedicate another to God, who values no service save that which springs from a willing heart. The folly of the thing is further seen when we look at results. Not one in a hundred of these dedicated infants serves God at all. The land is full of baptized Infidels - that is, of those who, according to Mr. Atkin, have been *soappropriately* consecrated to God, and who, according to our other friend, have had *imparted to them* the nature and life of Jesus."

"But, Sir," responded Mr. Atkin, "you are certainly in error. Did not pious Hannah vow that if God would bless her with a son she would give him unto the Lord for His service all the days of his life, and did she not carry him to the temple and by solemn dedication fulfil her vow?"

"She did. But it was under a former and very different dispensation. There was a vast temple service to be provided for, and the whole nation was in covenant relation to God. This child was committed to the care of Eli, and ministered to the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. A mother at that time could devote her offspring to this kind of work, as now a parent may determine his son for the army, navy, or the law, and so long as that son is dependent on, and subject to, his parent, he may be kept in the particular service to which he is appropriated. Our nearest approach might be for a mother to devote her son to the office of chapel-keeper, to which office she might secure his attention so long as he remained subject to her rule. But service merely external has no place under this dispensation - Those serve God who from the heart obey His commands. Men may build or clean chapels, print Bibles and circulate them, and do a hundred other things useful to the church without serving God, for the heart may be far from Him. Such persons are not consecrated to God though

they spend all their days in useful work - neither can anyone be consecrated by another, under a dispensation which admits only of heart-service, unless that other can hold the reins of the heart and keep it in subjection to the will of God. Infant baptism, when considered in the light of dedication, is a gross fallacy, and it is equally so when administered for the purpose of imparting the nature and life of Christ. View it as you will, it cannot be found in the Bible, is not of God, and ought to be abandoned with the remains of Roman rubbish found in Protestant churches."

Mr. Maitland wished a parting word, "Having now to leave, and not intending to be here again, I observe, in conclusion, that Mr. Bell is making fearful havoc of God's truth. I hold to infant baptism, but not to water salvation. Baptism for remission of sins is a delusion. I follow the good Wesley and preach salvation to believers without water. When the Spirit baptizes all is well, and without the Holy Ghost nothing will do."

Mr. Bell resumed - "If our friend were to follow Mr. Wesley he would not talk as he does. Wesley, referring to the baptism of Cornelius, which took place after he had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, guarded his readers against supposing that those who were baptized in the Holy Spirit did not need baptism in water. He also distinctly affirmed, that *baptism administered to a real penitent is both a means and seal of pardon*. On page 147 of his Treatise on Baptism he says, 'The merits of Christ's life and death are applied to us in baptism. He gave himself for the church that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (Eph. v.) - namely, in *baptism, the ordinary instrument of our justification*.' Further on, he adds, 'By baptism, we enter into covenant with God.' On page 150 he says, 'It is true the second Adam has found a remedy for the disease which came upon all by the offence of the first. But the benefits of this are to be received through the means which He has appointed; through baptism in particular, which is the *ordinary* means appointed for that purpose, and to which God has *tied us*, though He may not have *tied Himself*. Indeed, where it cannot be had the case is different; but extraordinary cases do not make void a standing rule.' Such are the admissions of John Wesley, and his followers should be careful not to affirm the opposite while professing to follow him."

"I think," intimated the Curate, "that Mr. Bell scarcely does Wesley justice. Truly he affirms that baptism administered to a real penitent is both a means and seal of pardon. But with him it is the same seal and means when administered to an infant."

"I have," said Mr. Bell, "neither today nor at any other time cited Wesley unfairly. I did not quote him against infant baptism, but merely to show that he attributed to baptism that which Mr. Maitland, while professing to follow him, declares false. Wesley and our friend occupy the same ground - both teach what the Scriptures do not, that infants are saved by baptism, and both plainly imply that infants dying unbaptized are doomed to eternal misery. They both put upon the infant the guilt of Adam's sin, which the Bible does not. Infants die as a consequence of Adam's sin, just as a son may spend his days in poverty, who would have enjoyed immense property, had it not been confiscated on account of crime committed by his father, but guilt is no more charged upon them than upon that son. The whole race die on account of Adam's sin, but the whole race will rise from the grave on account of Christ's obedience. 'Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them which had not sinned after he similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many. ... Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.' Thus the justification unto life is as wide as the condemnation unto death - as the condemnation extends to all the race, so does the justification. It is not a justification *offered to all*, but a free gift *which has come upon all*. It is not a gift of, or justification unto, *eternal* life, but a gift of life from the grave, a resurrection - whether to everlasting glory or to a second death will be determined when, before the judgment-seat of Christ, each shall receive according to the deeds done in the body,' and not according to, or on the ground of, Adam's transgression. Infants and infant baptism by this truth are affected thus - Raised from the dead, infants are delivered from that death which came upon them through Adam's transgression. Having committed no sin, they cannot be condemned to the second death - the 'everlasting shame and contempt' due to violators of

the law of God. Baptized or unbaptized they are saved, and therefore baptism to them, as a saving ordinance, is useless. As, therefore, the Fathers, the established church, Wesley, and our friend, base infant baptism upon 'original sin,' and administer it to free the infant from imputed guilt and everlasting misery resulting therefore, and as deliverance from the results of Adam's transgression is, by the death of Christ, already sure to every infant, their practice has no foundation. But perhaps it would be well distinctly to mark off our respective positions. Mr. Maitland has withdrawn. The discussion is now confined to our friend of the Establishment, Mr. Vapid, Mr. Atkin, and myself. I submit the better course is to examine, one by one, all the New Testament allusions to baptism and to note down the plain sense of each text, that in the end we may present, as a sort of *sum-total* the exact results. Mr. Vapid, like a true Baptist, is earnest in his protestations against infant baptism, and so far he is sustained by Scripture. But he as earnestly contends that baptism does not in any sense save, is not for the remission of sins, and should be received only by Christians. Here he denies the words of the apostles. Our Churchman contends for infant baptism and is left without one word of Scripture in his support, but he affirms of the design of baptism that which Mr. Vapid denies, and in doing so can, and does, express himself in the very words of Scripture. Mr. Atkin clings to infant baptism, without a text to rest it on, and rejects or passes over every Bible declaration as to its design. My own position may be briefly put. The only proper subject is one who has faith in Jesus, and to such a one baptism is into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - into Christ - into His death - and for the remission of sins.