

led to read it with care and attention, that I might understand your view of the subject.

Your first inquiry, as being solemn and important, is worthy of being proposed to the reader, but I cannot agree with you respecting the criterion by which persons ought to judge of their spiritual state.

I think the marks of the new birth are so clearly revealed in the New Testament, that all persons who will read it with prayerful attention may easily perceive whether they have experienced it or not; and I think further, that when we presume either to speak or write on this subject for the benefit of others, our statements should not only be scriptural, but also correctly applied, as it is evident there is nothing more likely to lead the unsuspecting inquirer astray than to bring forth scripture and apply it to cases for which it was never intended. Now Sir, it certainly appears to me that you have done this in saying that the water and the blood are two of the witnesses whose testimony is necessary to inform the believer that he is born of God, or if you please, that he is a member of the Kingdom of God. It is true the Apostle John in his first Epistle v. 8., speaks of the *water* and the *blood*, in connexion with the spirit, as bearing witness to the personality and divinity of Jesus Christ. But when speaking, of believers he says, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us because he hath given us of his spirit." And again, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Now, with these passages before us, let us read the epistle through, and see if ever the apostle speaks of the *water* and the *blood* as having any thing to do with the believer's evidence of his adoption into the family of God; and if he does not, why should any person make use of his words, and apply them to a subject for which they were never intended?

Let us now notice your remarks on "this mundane system." Your argument appears very plausible at first, because of the *analogy* between the *creation* of the *world* and the *new birth*; but on examining the subject more closely, and at the same time noticing the conversation which took place between Nicodemus and our Lord, I can find nothing in the whole narrative that will furnish us with the slightest ground for believing that our Lord had any reference whatever to the foundation of the earth. It is also evident that Nicodemus did not understand our Lord in that sense—and therefore it must be improper for one, who takes the liberty of explaining our Lord's words, to endeavour to do it by a subject which was quite foreign to the text.

Your inquiry on the same page is worthy of remark: "Would the Saviour, think you, use an ambiguous word when addressing an inquirer on a subject of so great importance?" To this I reply, if the words "born of water" mean Baptism, then they are ambiguous words; inasmuch as there is not another place in the New Testament in which the words are used in that sense. Not only so, but in all the conversation there is not another word that could have any tendency to persuade Nicodemus that the new birth spoken of by our Lord meant baptism. If the words "born of water and the spirit" are to be understood in a figurative sense, as ap-