

of truth. The Bible must be our only standard of appeal. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Why examine the subject at all, if we are unwilling to accept the conclusions to which a prayerful and dispassionate examination of the whole question conducts us? Why profess to search for truth, if we have determined to accept no other conclusion than one already adopted? Those who maintain that all that is comprehended in this question is fully settled in our connexional writers, assert more than can be easily proved. If so, whence arises the diversity of opinion that on this subject undeniably exists amongst us? Our standard theological writers are essentially sound, as far as they go, but there is a want of explicitness in their explications of the moral condition of infants, which has left a corresponding vagueness in the opinions of both ministers and people on an important subject, in which our theoretic views determine our sense of duty. Before proceeding to examine "the relation of baptized children to the Church," there are other questions underlying this, and interwoven with it, that materially affect our ultimate conclusion, which claim our attention. It is undeniable that our views of the nature and design of baptism—of the constitution of the Church—and the moral condition of infants before baptism, must determine our decision on the relation of children to the Church after baptism. If it be thought that the discussion of these topics is not necessarily involved in our theme, let it be remembered, that an exposition without this would be erecting a building without examining the foundation. This would imply the assumption, without examination or proof, of the points on which the solution mainly turns.

We will therefore first examine what the Holy Scriptures impartially interpreted, give us to understand, respecting the moral condition of infants, and their relation to the Atonement of Christ.