

The Provincial Wesleyan.

Anna Clayton;

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The Enquirer after Truth.

CHAPTER III.

[Continued.]

"Evidence so direct and unmistakable needs no comment," said Halley. "There is but one more point to examine, and that is truth needs nothing but the simple testimony of John. He says that what he was doing, that would Christ also do; and we have shown from Scripture proof, that in operation and effect, they must of necessity be utterly unlike. Then it follows, if there is no resemblance in form, John utters that which is not true. He was doing one thing, and Christ would do something altogether different. Who will take upon himself the responsibility of giving John his lie! For one dare not, for Jesus says, 'Verily, I say unto you, among the sons of men, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.' But do you ask how things can be like in form, and utterly unlike in value and use? I am sure we have every day examples of this. There was an exact imitation of a gold dollar—perfectly like in form—resembling it in size, color and stamp, and yet it was not gold, mind. Anna, I have seen flowers so perfect that the eye could not determine the real from the copy. Yet there was one in substance value. Still, the two flowers were a perfect type of the real flowers—and the bogus dollar of the real dollar. Now, Anna, what the truth of which there can be no question, have we found by an examination of this chapter?"

"It is," she replied: "that John declared that what he was doing with water, the same would Christ do with the Spirit. And by further examination we found that the resemblance was neither in the operation nor the effect, and therefore it must of necessity be in the form of the water."

"Please note that down," said Hatley, "as a point determined in this investigation, as a truth; and it remains to be seen if others will not cluster around it speedily—truth bearing witness to this truth, and corroborating it."

"I have done so," said Anna; "but it occurs to me that here is something to throw light on the form or mode of baptism. They were baptized in Jordan, and Jesus went up straightway out of the water."

"What does it indicate?" said Halley.

"That they went down into the water," she replied.

"Is that positive evidence of form?" asked Halley.

"No, it only indicates that it was more conveniently done by going down into the water."

"Very well, then we will consider it for what it is worth by and for; but it does not properly come up here. Is there any more testimony to be deduced from this chapter, except what is found in the disputed word?" he asked.

"I cannot see as there is," Anna replied; "but there is a query in my mind about the position already taken. I always thought immersion to be in likeness of Christ's death and burial; but I cannot now trace the connection, if water baptism is a type of spirit baptism, as it seems most clearly to be."

"I presume you are not the first one," said Halley, "who has believed it without knowing a reason why!"

"But immersion is in likeness of the death and burial of Christ," said Elder Clayton, rather, warmly; "as he was buried in the earth, so the believer is buried in the baptismal waters. It always looked as solemn as literal death and burial to me. You know Paul says: 'Buried with him in baptism'."

"By baptism," said Halley, "Suffer me to correct you: a small word sometimes changes materially the significance of a sentence. Why, Elder, you almost tempt me to omit, for the present the intervening texts, to show you what a broken reed you lean upon; but we will come to it in time."

"I don't believe you can make that mean anything else," said Elder Clayton. "It is just as plain to my mind as that twice two makes four. There are other passages, too. I know it can be made out very plausibly, that immersion is in likeness of the death and burial of Jesus Christ. You know I said I was posted on these subjects, but Brother Burton is coming in a week, to sit over the Sabbath; he has all these texts on his tongue's end. Perhaps we had better wait until he comes!"

"What pleases the ladies are," said Halley. "Did they ever undertake a cause, and not sweep all opposition before them? Then, if we are all agreed, suppose we meet out on the shady end of the balcony this afternoon, to make further progress."

"Just look here!" exclaimed mother Clayton, holding up and measuring off all two fingers of knitting-work. "Look here, I believe I've accomplished more than any of you, such a jumble of books and Matthew! I never heard before; I couldn't make anything of it, or hit cashing!"

"Even so!" exclaimed Anna; "it was George, 'in your—no, to ours, and I to mine; come, Halley, let's go down town before dinner, or my blood will stagnate!'

To Anna there was opening a new field of thought. She had never attempted to trace the connection or consistency of Gospel principles; and she wondered now, how she could have neglected, so long, so delightful a field for investigation. If we look out on the universe, she thought, all there is harmony and consistency, a beautiful index of the Divine mind. The same principle, that holds a drop of dew suspended from a grass blade, controls worlds and systems of worlds, whirling with impetuous velocity around their central suns, and whilst them, too, in turn, around some central point, in immense circles, a wheel within a wheel, until the finite is lost in the infinite. This gives us some idea of the wisdom and power of the God-head. But the Bible is from the same author, and is given to us to reveal other attributes of his character which run parallel with those displayed in his works of creation and providence, and which must more than harmoniously in their operations and effects; otherwise, he would not be a God of infinite perfection—as he declares himself to be, both in his word and works—one perfect!

CHAPTER IV.

"It is great, 'tis mainly to divide disciplines—Religious or spiritual, or prove our strength."

"The Lord shall make us known."

"The secret of the commandments."

"And all its love import."

"The dealings of his hand."

"With such as to his commandments,

"And love to do his will."

The afternoon finds our friends comfortably seated in the balcony, with a fresh breeze that started up about midday, shak-

ing the pendant honeysuckles over and around them. But the circle was not complete. Mother Clayton excused herself with the plea that a press of household duties detained her, and wondered if the Elder had forgotten to prepare his sermon for the Sabbath. It was well enough for the young folks to spend their time in that way, but she was sure it looked foolish for people of her age and of the Elder's, who were established in the faith, to trouble themselves about such matters. Elder Clayton was evidently of another mind. He had been consulting the Concordance, and appeared with his Bible under his arm, anticipating an easy victory.

"The next chapter," said Halley,

"where Matthew employs the word baptism,

is the 29th, 22-23 verses, where it is stated

that the mother of Zebedee's children asked

of Jesus, 'that they might sit, the one on

the other, in his kingdom.'

And Jesus answered, 'We know not what ye ask.'

'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I

shall drink?' said the mother.

'Ye shall drink it,' said Jesus.

'We know not what ye ask.'

'Are ye able to be baptized with me?

'We are able.'

'And ye shall be baptized with me.'

'We are able.'

'Do ye believe in me?'

'We do.'

'If ye do, then follow me.'

'We will.'

'If ye will, then there must be one place where baptism is not made immerse.'

'What is that place?'

'The Jordan River.'

'We have not seen the Jordan River.'

'It is there that I will baptize you.'

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