

good *water*, refreshing *water*, pure water, purifying water, soul-satisfying water. But though all this is true it does not appear to us to be the truth taught in this passage. We apprehend that Our Lord did not refer to the word of the truth of the Gospel when he uttered the heart stirring words: "Except a man be born of *water* and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Many suppose that our Saviour had reference to baptism with *water*, or in *water*, when he said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of *water* and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And there are some who even fancy that water baptism is here declared to be as necessary as the baptism of the spirit itself. But the Saviour, as it seems to us, has no reference to the ordinance of water baptism in any part of his conversation with the Jewish Ruler. That subject it is true is introduced at the twenty-second verse of the chapter, but it is quite manifest that the new section which commences with that verse has no reference to the interesting interview which our Lord had with Nicodemus. We believe that water baptism is an ordinance of Christ's own institution,—we look upon it as a delightful ordinance,—a teaching ordinance,—a very significant ordinance, and when properly understood, and observed, Christian parents and their infant children derive spiritual benefits and blessings through its medium. But we do not believe that either adults, or infants, are in any sense of the word born again by water baptism. The regenerating influence is not in the water, never was in the water and in the nature of things never can come out of, or flow from the water. To be born of *water* therefore in the sense in which our Lord uses the expression is a very different thing from being immersed in water, or baptized with water. We have reason to believe that multitudes, nay millions, have been baptized in water, and with water, who were not born again—born of the spirit. The form of godliness is often observed by those who are total strangers to its power.

We apprehend that the word *water* in the passage which we are examining is not the emblem of the Gospel, nor the material element which is employed in dispensing the ordinance of baptism, but is emblematic of the *Holy Spirit*, that great and gracious agent whose influences are indispensably necessary to regenerate the heart. There are not two distinct things referred to in the expression "of *water*, and *the spirit*," but only one, under the