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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DOROTHY PAGE ***

Dorothy Page

BY
ELDRIDGE B. HATCHER
AUTHOR OF
THE YOUNG PROFESSOR
AND
THE HITTITES

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TO THOSE WHO
SEEK THE TRUTH AND PURSUE IT.
E. B. H.

CHAPTER I.

[Pg 5]

DOROTHY ARRIVES.

"You may see her tonight," said Mrs. Sterling to her son Gilbert.

"When does she arrive?"

"At six-twenty this afternoon. They say, son, she is beautiful."

"From what point of the compass does the lovely paragon come?" asked Sterling with a smile.

"She has just graduated from some college in the North. Her father and mother went to be with her in the closing exercises and will bring her home today."

The subject of this conversation was Dorothy Page, whose palatial home was next door to the home of the Sterlings. The two families had become friends as well as neighbors.

"Come over this evening, Sterling, and help me to celebrate the arrival of the family," called out Roland Page from his porch.

Sterling agreed.

At half past eight o'clock, as he entered the library of the Page home, he looked upon what seemed to him the most beautiful girl his imagination had ever pictured. He knew in a moment that he was a captive. As he walked down the front steps after his visit he felt sure that an epoch in his life had occurred.

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"A splendid young fellow!" remarked Mr. Page after Sterling had left. "Although he is only twenty-nine years of age, he has in his own right a cool two million-dollar fortune. He inherited it from his father and he himself is one of the most progressive business men in the state and seems bent on using his fortune for the good of society."

"He was very quiet," remarked Dorothy.

Mr. Page's statements concerning Sterling were very true. He might have added that Sterling was an elder in the Presbyterian church and was one of its most devoted members.

Sterling found his mother in the sitting-room on his return home that night.

"Well, son," she said, "how do you like your new neighbor?"

"Mother, don't ask me to describe her," he replied; and then for half an hour he continued talking about her. Before retiring he said:

"Mother, how is it that I have never been told about Miss Page before?"

"Well, son, I have known very little myself. The Pages, you know, have lived here less than a year and Dorothy has never been here before. A few days before Mrs. Page left to bring Dorothy home she told me a good many things about her."

"How long was Miss Page at the college?"

"Three years. The Pages were born in Virginia, but when Dorothy was six years old the father, because of failing health, purchased a large ranch in the West and he moved his family there and became very prosperous."

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"She is a child, therefore, of the South and West," said Sterling.

"Yes, she has Southern blood and Western experience. Mrs. Page said their home was ten miles from the nearest store and the nearest neighbor was seven miles distant."

"That must have been a dismal life for Dorothy. You say she lived on the plains from six years of age until three years ago, when she went to the college? Did she have no other schooling?"

"Oh, yes. Her education was directed at home by a governess of unusual culture and refinement. I learned also from Mrs. Page that none of the family make any pretensions to religion, and that the governess was as irreligious as they."

"What a home!"

"She said that there was no church near them in the West and that Dorothy had never been in a church up to the time she went off to the college, and that she doubted if she had ever attended church while there."

"You make her out a wild girl of the plains," remarked Sterling with a smile. "I could easily see the traces of it tonight in her open, eager, almost wild manner, and yet through it all there was a culture, a sweetness, a loveliness that is indescribable."

Mrs. Sterling continued: "Mrs. Page said that Dorothy, perfectly at home on the wildest horse, roamed untrammled over the ranch, and reveled in its beauty and its freedom. But let me continue the story. At seventeen she went to Carrollton College and at the end of three years she won her diploma."

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"I'll venture she came out at the head of the list, mother; she is as bright and sparkling as a diamond."

"You are right, for she took the honors of her class. A year ago Mr. Page sold his ranch and came here to Kentucky to live, but this is Dorothy's first sight of her Kentucky home."

CHAPTER II.

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DOROTHY'S CONVERSION.

"Oh, a tennis court! How glorious!" exclaimed Dorothy next morning as she stepped out on the porch and caught her first glimpse of the side lawn.

Sterling considered it a special providence that no intervening fence separated the two residences, and nearly every afternoon found him on the tennis grounds, an eager contestant in the game with Dorothy.

"Good-bye, Mr. Sterling," she said to him one afternoon at the close of the game. "I must hurry in and do some packing. I shall turn traveler tomorrow."

"What—going away?" he asked with a startled expression.

"Yes, I am going to Chicago for a few weeks to visit a girl friend."

The light fled from the sky for Sterling. For the next three weeks not only Dorothy, but the center of the universe seemed to him to be located in Chicago.

During Dorothy's visit a crisis occurred in her life. While attending a church service with her girl friend she heard a strange sermon. How new and startling it sounded. The preacher's theme was "Salvation Through Christ", and she heard things she had never dreamed of before. Wild questionings set her heart aflame and there was no rest for her that night. Her soul's destiny was a subject to which she had never given serious reflection.

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She felt that the man whose sermon had thrown her into this dark confusion was the only one who might give her light. She sought him out. A father in Israel he was—Rev. Dr. Moreland, one of the most eminent ministers in that city. He saw that as a little child she was eagerly groping in the dark, and with the Bible as a lamp he led her step by step into the light. She saw herself in God's sight a sinner, guilty and condemned, and how helpless and hopeless to her seemed her condition.

The story of the Gospel sounded to her like music from Heaven. The love of Christ for sinners melted her heart and she yielded herself in child-like trust to him. In her own room at night the surrender was made and it was complete.

"Son, I could easily tell that Dorothy is coming tomorrow," said Mrs. Sterling.

"How do you know, mother?"

"By your face. You would have passed for an undertaker during the past three weeks, and I have tried by every art, but in vain, to chase away your funereal countenance."

Sterling broke into a hearty laugh.

"Mother, your imagination is out on a frolic. You will have to put a bridle on it."

Mrs. Sterling was right. Gilbert had learned that Dorothy would arrive on the morrow.

Dorothy had written her parents about her new-found joy, but they understood it not. They thought that it was some girlish emotion that her home life would quickly dissipate.

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The news of her conversion came to Sterling as a burst of sunlight. In speaking of it to his mother he said:

"Of one thing I am sure, and that is that she will make a glorious Christian. What a light she will be in her home. And, mother, how fine to have her in my church!"

Dorothy had shortened her visit that she might hurry home and tell her loved ones of the change in her life. She could not explain the change, but she knew that for her old things had passed away and all things had become new.

She was anxious to tell her parents the simple story of Christ's love and sacrifice for sinners. She recited it almost immediately after her return, but their eyes seemed holden that they could not see. Possibly they did not want to see. At any rate, Dorothy received her first biting disappointment in the reception that her parents gave to her report about her new-found Savior.

With Mr. Sterling it was different, and in him she found a sympathetic listener to her story. Not that she impulsively bared her secrets to him; he was eager to know it all, and his keen interest in contrast to the utter lack of responsiveness on the part of the parents encouraged her to confide in him, and to Dorothy, with her new and trembling faith, Sterling was a friend in need. [Pg 12]

A week had passed after her return, and one afternoon Sterling said to her at the close of a tennis game that her coming into his church would make their membership exactly 300.

"Mr. Sterling," she replied, "I am anxious to talk with your pastor, Dr. Vincent, about which church I ought to join."

Her words smote him. The possibility of her uniting with any other church than his own had not occurred to him, and the bare thought of it put a load on his heart. He asked her what she meant by her remark regarding Dr. Vincent.

"Dear old Dr. Moreland," she said, "whose church I attended in Chicago, and who so kindly led me into the light, told me that I must be sure to join some church, and when I asked him what church it should be he told me that I must study my New Testament and let that guide me. I have carefully read it through twice, and I cannot see that it has helped me at all to decide about my church membership. I really do not know what he meant."

Sterling was relieved and the load rolled off his heart, for he felt sure that with her New Testament as her guide she would turn her steps towards the Presbyterian church.

By this time they had reached the front porch, where the rest of the family were seated, and when Dorothy made her last remark the brother, who was sitting nearby, heard and said:

"What's the need, sister, of your joining any church? You don't think the church will take you to Heaven, do you?" [Pg 13]

"Hold on, son," spoke up the father, "I am not an expert on religious matters, but it is a plain proposition to me that if Dorothy has accepted Christianity and become a Christian, the place for her is the church."

"But what good will it do, father?"

"I believe in a person being one thing or the other," said Mr. Page. "If you are not a Christian, then of course keep out of the church; if you set up to be a Christian, then take your medicine; if you claim to be a soldier, then march up and put on the uniform and join the army."

"Oh, I never thought of not joining a church," said Dorothy.

"But I still hang to my point," said the brother. "Why does Dorothy have to join the church? Do you think, sister, joining the church will save you?"

"What a question, brother! Of course not. I hope I am saved already. I have faith in Christ and I am looking to him for my salvation. Simply having my name entered as a church member will not save me; I am very ignorant about these matters, but Dr. Moreland told me that Christ founded the church as the place in which he wished all who believed in him to be gathered. If he formed the church for his believers, then is it not the place for me?"

"Daughter, you are right there to a dot. If Christ organized the church for his followers and you have given yourself to him, then if you should refuse to enter the church I should doubt whether you had given yourself to him; but I think you are wrong on one point. You spoke just now about studying the Bible to learn what church you ought to join. That's one on me. I never knew the Bible told a person what church he ought to join; in fact, I did not think it made any difference what church or denomination a person selected. I thought it was just pay your money and take your choice." [Pg 14]

"I thought," said the mother, "that all the churches were aiming in the same direction and that all claimed to be founded on the Bible. Do you think, daughter, that the Bible will tell you to join one particular church or denomination rather than some other?"

"Mother, you are right there, as you generally are," said the father. "Here is the Presbyterian church, the only strong church in town, and it seems to be a mighty good one from all that I can hear of it. Do you imagine, daughter, that you must study the Bible to learn whether it will tell you to join this church or some other church that may be off somewhere nobody knows where?"

Dorothy seemed lost in reflection.

"I wonder what Dr. Moreland could have meant?" she said. "I notice there are different names by which the churches are known: for example, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, etc. They call them, I believe, denominations. Are these denominations the same? Why do they have the

different names, and why do some people join one denomination and some another?"

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"That is not strange, daughter," spoke up the father. "There are different kinds of dresses, and one woman prefers one kind and another another. Some people like the Presbyterian church, some the Methodist church and so on. It is not a Bible question, simply a question of taste."

"Miss Dorothy, the denominations differ in matters of doctrine," said Mr. Sterling.

"You mean, then," said Dorothy, a light coming into her eye, "that the people who believe that the Bible teaches certain doctrines go into one church, and the people who believe that it teaches another set of doctrines go into another church, and that each one joins the church of his own beliefs?"

"You are entirely correct," said Sterling, confident that when she compared the denominations his church would win the day. "The Presbyterian church is founded on the bed rock of Scripture and draws its life blood from its sacred pages."

"Do you not see, father," said Dorothy, "that in order for me to decide which church I ought to join I must study the Bible for myself and then join the church that seems to come nearest to what the Bible seems to me to teach?"

"I don't agree with you, sister," said Roland. "You say you must join the church that comes nearest to what the Bible seems to you to teach. But you know very little about what the Bible teaches. Had you not better take what old Dr. Vincent, who has been a life-long student of the Bible, says the Bible teaches than to take what you, after a few readings, decide it teaches? Why, certainly. I'd rather a thousand times trust him to tell me what that Book teaches than for me to decide myself."

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"But, brother, I think you miss the point. Dr. Vincent can tell me what he thinks the Bible teaches, but some learned minister in another denomination might tell me the Bible taught something different. Mr. Sterling says each denomination has its own doctrines which it believes the Bible teaches. If I am going to take what some learned Bible student says, then which one must I follow? One will tell me that the Bible teaches the Presbyterian doctrines and another will tell me it teaches the Methodist doctrines."

"Exactly; and no matter what you do you cannot be sure you are right. I think one is about as apt to be right as the other. The only thing is to take a man that you believe is an honest and wise student of the Book and ask him to tell you its teachings."

"Oh, brother, that doesn't appeal to me at all. I dare not take another person's word for what this Bible teaches. I can take his counsel and the counsel of everybody else that I can secure, but I must give the final decision, I must study this Book for myself. Dr. Vincent is a good and wise man, of course, but I cannot look into his heart for all the thoughts that have led him to his decision. The question before me is not what church does Mr. Vincent think comes nearest the Bible, but what church do I think comes the nearest."

"Daughter," said Mr. Page, "you are on the right track. You can get all the light possible from Dr. Vincent and anybody else you choose, but you are the judge that must bring in the verdict, and when you make the decision there is no court of appeals. But you have a huge job on your hands. You must first study all the denominations and then you've got to master your Bible to see which one of all the denominations squares with the Book."

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"Oh," said Dorothy in a tone of despair, "how can I ever decide such a big question? Won't you help me, Mr. Sterling?"

Sterling felt that he would like to spend several centuries, beginning with that very second, in the single matter of helping her. He remarked with a smile: "Miss Dorothy, I think you need not be alarmed; you are not as much in the wilderness as you imagine. Suppose on examination you find that the doctrines of our church are in accord with the teachings of the Bible, then your duty is plain, is it not?"

"Yes," she replied with a sigh of relief, "and won't you tell me what are the doctrines of your church?"

His eyes answered her request before his lips had an opportunity to respond.

"Now you are getting out into the road," said the father. "Tell it to her, Friend Sterling, and I guess she will find that your church plumbs the track. In fact, I reckon most of them do."

"Dinner is ready," called the mother.

"There, now," said the father, "that breaks up the meeting at the critical point, but come in to dinner, Sterling, and we will open the campaign again after dinner."

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"Yes, please do come, Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy. "I am so anxious to know what are the doctrines of your church."

Sterling was compelled to decline, inasmuch as he had promised to be at home for dinner to meet a business friend of his father's, but he assured them that he would be on hand for the discussion very soon after dinner.

STERLING STATES HIS CASE.

At eight o'clock they gathered in the library.

"Now, Sterling," said Mr. Page, "we are all attention. Open up your Presbyterian treasures, for you have our curiosity aroused."

Sterling was anxious to bring to Dorothy's attention the facts about his denomination. He felt confident that the history and doctrines of Presbyterianism would prove very attractive to her and lead her into his church.

"I fear I cannot do my denomination justice," he said. "It deserves an abler champion. It has had an illustrious history and on our honor roll are such notable names as John Calvin, John Knox, Thomas Chalmers and a host of others."

"What are the doctrines of your church, Mr. Sterling?" asked Dorothy.

"We believe in God as the creator and preserver of the world, in Christ as the Savior of sinners, and in the Bible as the Word of God."

"How about those doctrines, daughter?" asked Mr. Page. "Can you accept them?"

"Of course, father. The Bible teaches them plainly."

"Good! Give us some more, Sterling."

"We believe that Christ offered himself on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of men, that he was buried, rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven, where he sits at the right hand of the Father. We believe in the Holy Spirit as being sent by the Father to convict men of sin and righteousness and judgment to come."

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"What about that, daughter?"

"Father is pinning me down, Mr. Sterling, as we go along," she said with a smile. "I think I can accept those doctrines because the New Testament teaches them—at least that is my recollection from my reading of the New Testament."

"We believe that Christ in organizing the church gave two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper; that baptism is a sign and seal of God's regenerating grace and that the Lord's Supper is a memorial of his death—the bread typifying his broken body and the wine his shed blood. We believe that Christ speaks of his church as his bride."

"Yes, I remember that."

"Sterling, you seem to be making good progress," said the father. "Do you accept the doctrines as he has announced them thus far, daughter?"

"I think so. They seem to be in accord with what I have read. I have only read the New Testament through twice."

"In mentioning our doctrines," he said, "I am not attempting a logical order, nor am I confining myself to strict theological terminology. I am giving our doctrines just as they come before my mind."

"Go ahead," said the father. "I think Dorothy will soon find herself a Presbyterian."

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"I ought to have stated," continued Mr. Sterling, "that we believe that salvation comes by faith in Christ. All of the redeemed in Christ will be received by him when he shall come again and shall live with him in everlasting happiness, but the unbelievers will be banished into everlasting punishment."

"Hold on," said Mr. Page; "you don't endorse that last awful doctrine, do you, daughter?"

"It is awful, father, but I have to endorse it, for I have read it in the Bible with my own eyes and I remember it was declared by Christ himself."

Sterling was delighted at the progress he was making. The thought of Dorothy coming into his church filled him with joy.

"Another doctrine," he said: "We believe in Christ's words concerning the little children—'of such is the Kingdom of Heaven'—and that, as Peter said, God's promise is unto his people and to their children and their children's children, and as baptism is the door to the church—"

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Dorothy, "I saw a baptism once. Do I have to be baptized, too, Mr. Sterling?"

"Yes, indeed."

"That was a very interesting baptism I saw in Nebraska, where I was visiting. It was in a river and they put the people under the water."

"Oh, Miss Dorothy, that was not baptism," exclaimed Sterling, apparently horrified by her

remark.

"It was not? What was it, Mr. Sterling?"

"It was merely an odd practice observed by certain curious sects. I beg that you will get that well fixed in your mind." [Pg 22]

"Well, you know I have to learn about these things. What do you mean then by baptism?"

"Baptism is performed by having water sprinkled or poured gently upon the head of the candidate. It is a very impressive ceremony."

"That is strange, for do you know I saw in the Bible just the kind of baptism that I witnessed that day in Nebraska?"

"Oh, never. Bible baptism is by sprinkling and sprinkling alone."

"Well, I read in one or two places about people being baptized by being put under the water; that is, unless I am very much mistaken."

"Hold on," said the father. "I guess you had better clear up that point about baptism before you go any further."

"Not at all," said Sterling very earnestly; "there is nothing to clear up. It is a plain fact of history as well as of Bible teaching that baptism was done by sprinkling."

"Do the denominations differ about baptism?" asked Dorothy.

"Not worth talking about; nearly all the denominations agree that the baptism of the Bible is by sprinkling or pouring."

"Daughter, get your Bible and let's see that passage where you say the people were put under the water."

"I must not be too sure," she replied. "I know so little about the Book that I may have been mistaken, but I don't think I can be." [Pg 23]

The Bible was brought in, and as Dorothy opened it and began turning its pages she said: "One passage was the account of the baptism of Jesus."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Page. "Was he baptized—Jesus Christ? Well, well, that's one on me."

"Oh, father, how can you speak so?"

"I beg your pardon, daughter. I surely did not mean to be irreverent. But let us have that passage telling how he was baptized. That ought to be mighty interesting."

"It is the third chapter of Matthew," said Mr. Sterling.

Dorothy read: "'Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him.'"

"The Jordan was a river, was it not?" asked the father.

"Yes," replied Sterling.

"And you say that Jesus went to that river to be baptized?" asked the father.

"Yes," answered Sterling.

"And you say he went there to have some water sprinkled on him instead of being put under the water?"

"Certainly he did."

"Do people generally go to rivers now to be sprinkled?" asked Dorothy.

"I do not know that they do, but they could certainly do so if they should so desire."

"Did you ever hear of anybody doing so?" asked the father. [Pg 24]

"Why, possibly not; but that doesn't prove that it never has been done; but let us have the rest of the passage."

She read: "'And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.'"

"Hello!" said the father, "that sounds curious. Why did he go down into the water, Sterling, if he was simply to be sprinkled?"

"Why, he simply walked a little way into the stream and stood there while John gently sprinkled the water on him. It must have been a beautiful ceremony."

Dorothy was consulting her concordance.

"Here is another passage in the third chapter and twenty-third verse."

"Let us have it," said the father.

She read: "'And John also was baptizing in Aenon, near to Salem, because there was much water

there."

"Much water!" exclaimed Mr. Page. "What about that, Friend Sterling?"

"I think that is plain. There were great multitudes following John and camping around him, and he selected a place where there would be abundant water for the cattle. The country was dry in many places."

"But it says he was baptizing there because there was much water there," said Dorothy.

"That simply means that he did his baptizing in that section because of the abundance of the water for the cattle," insisted Sterling.

"What is your reason, Mr. Sterling," asked Dorothy, "for saying it was the cattle that John had in mind?" [Pg 25]

"You mentioned the passage as indicating immersion," continued Sterling, "and I replied that the mention of much water did not necessarily prove immersion, because it may have had reference to the cattle rather than to the mode of the baptism. And besides, the dryness of that Oriental country is another fact that indicates that John selected the place for watering the cattle."

"But is it necessary to have a place of much water in order to water cattle?" asked Dorothy. "Would not a small stream be sufficient for many cattle?"

"Come, come, children," said the father, "why not take the words as you find them? By the way, did John do anything for the crowds except baptize them?"

"Oh, yes," said Sterling, "he was a great preacher for the crowds. That was his principal work. Baptism was a very small and almost insignificant part of it. They did not make the ado about it then that certain sects do now."

"Exactly; that is what I am getting at. You say preaching was the main thing John was doing. I should think, then, that if it was the cattle that made him select the place, it would have read 'John was preaching at Aenon because there was much water there'. But it says he was baptizing there, and that would indicate that the baptizing part of his work brought him to that place. He could have preached where there was not much water. You think, Sterling, that his baptizing had nothing to do with his selecting that place. Why, then, did it say he was baptizing there because of the much water? It looks mighty plain to me that the baptizing was mentioned because of the much water." [Pg 26]

Dorothy was puzzled.

"I don't see how I am ever to get at the meaning of the Bible," she said, "if I am not to take what seems to be the natural meaning of the passages, but must rather suppose that something else was intended."

"Evidently we can't agree on that verse," said Sterling with a smile. "Let us have another, Miss Dorothy."

"Here is a passage, Acts 8:35-39: 'Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way they came unto a certain water and the Eunuch said: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip said: "If thou believeth with all thy heart thou mayest." And he answered and said: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And he commanded the chariot to stand still and they went down both into the water, Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip that the Eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing.'"

"You see they stepped down to the water's edge," said Sterling, "and Philip sprinkled him."

"But it says they both went down into the water and both came up out of the water. Why did they go down into the water if the Eunuch was simply to be sprinkled?" [Pg 27]

"Look here," said the father; "life is too brief to be squandering it on debating a question like that. That's as plain as a chimney on a house. You could never make me think that all that going down into the water and coming up out of the water was simply to have a few drops of water sprinkled on the man. Sterling, I know you don't mean to do so, but it looks as if you are afraid of the natural meaning that lies on the surface."

"But the surface meaning in the Bible is not always the true one. We know from other passages that baptism was by sprinkling, and when we come to one like this, that may mean either kind of baptism, we know from the general teaching of Scripture that sprinkling and not immersion was the mode here intended."

CHAPTER IV.

GETTING INTO DEEP WATER.

"Here is another passage about baptism," said Dorothy, "in Luke 12:50: 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?'"

"But hold on, Miss Dorothy," said Sterling. "Why should we be spending so much discussion simply on the question as to the quantity of water in baptism? It seems a waste of effort. There are far more important doctrines than this."

"It is not simply the quantity of water we are considering, Mr. Sterling. We are trying to find out how baptism is performed. Surely we ought to try to get it right."

"That's good logic," said the father. "Get one point settled before you proceed to another."

"All right," said Sterling with a smile, "I'm all attention. Read that passage again, Miss Dorothy."

She read: "'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!'"

"Who is that talking?" asked Mr. Page.

"It is Christ," said Sterling, "and he is talking about his coming sufferings which were to end in his death."

"And what is it he says about his sufferings? Read it again, daughter."

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She read it once more.

"You say, Sterling, that Christ here speaks of his future sufferings and said he was to be baptized in them?"

"No, he does not say he will be baptized 'in' them, but 'with' them, thus showing that he was not to be immersed but sprinkled."

"You mean, then," said Dorothy, "that Christ said he was to be sprinkled with his sufferings?"

"Yes."

"But is it not far more impressive to think of Christ being immersed in his terrible sufferings than simply of his having a few drops of suffering sprinkled on him?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Page; "we often speak of people being plunged, overwhelmed, in sorrow or suffering, and that is nothing but an immersion."

"But," said Sterling, "if he had meant immersion, why did he not say he had a baptism that he had to be baptized 'in'? But no; he said he had a baptism to be baptized 'with'."

"I don't think it makes any difference whether you use the word 'in' or 'with'," said Dorothy. "When a person is immersed he is baptized 'with' water as well as 'in' water, and when Christ said he had a baptism to be baptized with—and Mr. Sterling says he referred to his sufferings—why, it is far more natural to think he had in mind an immersion, an overwhelming, rather than a mere sprinkling."

"Have you any more passages, daughter?"

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After some examination she answered: "Here is a strange passage, Romans 6:4: 'Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life.'"

"Isn't that a wonderful passage?" exclaimed Dorothy; "'buried with him by baptism'. That looks like immersion."

"That verse seems to be against you, Sterling," remarked Mr. Page.

"Not at all. Christ is not talking here about water baptism."

"What is that?" asked Mr. Page quickly; "not talking about water baptism? Have you got still another kind of baptism?"

"Certainly. The Bible speaks of a baptism of the Spirit. It is mentioned in several places."

"All correct," said Mr. Page, "and now proceed with your argument to show that the passage just read about baptism does not mean water baptism."

"Paul here speaks of a spiritual baptism."

"Why do you say that?" asked Dorothy.

The fire of questions seemed to stun Sterling somewhat. He had never had these passages pressed upon him in this fashion, but all his life he had had an open track for his Presbyterian tenets. He continued his explanation of the passage:

"Paul is here writing to people about their conversion and he is trying to show them that if they have been truly converted they must forsake sin. He says here in the verse: 'We who died to sin, how shall we longer live therein?' You see he speaks of dying to sin, and that brings him to the idea of a burial. He wants to show them that when they were converted—if they were really converted—that their conversion was a baptism of the Spirit; that just as Christ died, was buried

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and rose to a new life, so the converted soul through the work (or the baptism) of the Spirit on him died to his old life and rose to a new life, and therefore such an one must not sin. The passage therefore reads: 'Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also must walk in newness of life.'

"Well, now, let me see," said the father. "You say the writer compares the conversion of a soul to a baptism of the Spirit?"

"Yes, he speaks of it as a spiritual experience; not a mere outward reformation, but an inward spiritual experience, and when he says buried with him by baptism he means a baptism of the Spirit."

"Why does he call it a baptism?" asked Dorothy.

"That's the point exactly," said the father. "Sterling says the writer is not talking about a water baptism. Well, I don't see why it may not be a water baptism. It says nothing about a spiritual baptism. But anyhow let it be a spiritual baptism; the important point in this argument is that he calls it a baptism, and note carefully he calls the baptism a burial. No matter whether it is a water or a spiritual baptism that he is talking about, he shows what his idea of a baptism was. It was like a person being buried and being raised again."

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"I think, Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy, "that the verse shows that the important thing about baptism is the way it is performed; that it is not water that makes the baptism; that it may be water, or it may be the Spirit, or possibly it may be something else; but that the important thing is the way it is performed. In other words, it must be like a burial and a rising again. It looks to me as if Paul is showing what a wonderful experience a person's conversion is."

"Exactly," said the father, "and I suppose the writer could not express that spiritual change in conversion better than to call it a baptism by the Spirit, and he showed mighty clearly his notion about baptism; to him it was a burial and a rising again."

"I think there is something more wonderful still about that passage," said Dorothy. "I think you can see two baptisms in the verse, the water baptism and the Spirit baptism. Paul draws a picture of the conversion of a soul. It is a change worked in the soul by the Spirit, and as the Spirit works on the soul the soul dies to his old life and rises to a new life. But that is just like what takes place when the person is baptized in water. He is buried out of sight in the water and then rises again, and the water baptism is an exact picture of the spiritual baptism. Surely Paul must have had the two baptisms in mind when he wrote this."

"It looks mightily that way," said Mr. Page.

"Another thing," said Dorothy, all aglow with her interpretation of the passage, "doesn't this show why Christ commanded baptism? You see, he knew that every true Christian must pass through this spiritual experience at conversion—the baptism of the Spirit—and he decided to give his people an outward ceremony that would be a sign, or picture, of the inward spiritual change that they must have, and so he commanded immersion, as if he would say: 'Here is a picture of what I command of everyone—this burial in the water and rising again; it is the picture of that spiritual change that must occur in everyone that would be my follower'. He commands two things, a spiritual burial and rising and a material burial and rising; two baptisms, one of the Spirit to come first and a baptism of the water to come second as a sign of the first baptism."

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"If that is true, Friend Sterling," said the father, "then it would seem a pretty serious thing to change the form of the baptism. If the founder of Christianity commanded these two baptisms, one a picture of the other, then it looks to me mighty risky to tamper with either of them. Now, if you put sprinkling in the place of immersion you destroy the whole meaning in the work of conversion. The two don't go together at all. You don't have a burial by sprinkling a few drops of dirt on a person. It is not a matter of much water or little water. The important thing is that it be a burial and rising again."

It was a new experience for Sterling, He had begun the discussion with the thought that Dorothy would be delighted with the doctrines of his great church. She had seemed on the point of joining. He was irritated that the conversation had been hung up on the baptismal controversy. Besides, the passages in favor of immersion bewildered him. His religious life had been spent largely among close adherents of Presbyterianism and he had rarely heard his doctrines called in question. Whenever he had heard allusions to the Baptists and their beliefs it was generally accompanied with a smile or a sneer and he had come to regard the dippings of the Baptists as a joke. The passages which they had just considered unveiled New Testament baptism before him in a new light, and while he could not believe that immersion was Bible baptism, yet he felt that he could never as formerly treat immersion in a joking manner.

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The discussion was becoming exciting for him. He saw that the battle was on. As he thought of Dorothy drifting away from his faith and his church he had a sinking of heart, and yet he also felt that if he could not win her by the truth to his position he would not win her in any other way. Consequently he warmed to the fray.

He had promised to join the family circle on the next evening and resume the discussion. His work kept him closely confined at his office during the morning. He hurried home for a tennis game in the afternoon, and promptly that evening he appeared in the library at the Page's ready

CHAPTER V.

HANDLING THE THREE THOUSAND.

That evening Sterling opened the discussion: "Miss Dorothy, I have listened in these discussions to what are evidently stock passages of the immersionists. But let us go deeper into the matter."

"But why do you call them stock passages of the immersionists?" asked Dorothy in surprise. "I did not get them from any immersionists. I told you I thought I saw passages in the Bible teaching immersion and you said no. I was asked to show these passages and I have been showing them."

"Very well, we will not dispute on that point, my fair debater, but I will try now to show you that it was impossible that immersion could have been intended in these Bible passages. I think I can show you that certain baptisms could not have been immersions."

"Good for you," said the father. "Now the contest is getting spicy. Show that immersion was impossible and you have won the day."

"Father, you speak as if Mr. Sterling and I were engaged in a battle. My only desire is to learn what the Bible teaches about baptism, and I shall certainly follow its command as nearly as I can, cost what it may. Why do you say immersion was impossible, Mr. Sterling?"

"Because in the account of the baptisms on the day of Pentecost we are told that three thousand persons were baptized and that of course could not have been done by immersion in one day."

"Were they all baptized in one place?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes, all were baptized at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost after a great sermon by the Apostle Peter."

"How many persons did the baptizing?" asked Dorothy, as if she was trying to picture the scene.

"That is not stated."

"Let us have the passage, Sterling. My curiosity is excited," said Mr. Page.

Sterling read from Acts 2:41: "Then they that gladly received his Word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Dorothy read the verse over carefully and then remarked: "Why, that doesn't say they were all baptized on the same day. Notice it says there were added to them on the same day about three thousand. Why may not some of the number have been baptized before that and during Christ's life?"

"That is a fact," said the father, looking over the passage. "The verse does not say that they were all baptized that day; but do you suppose, Sterling, that it would have taken a great deal longer to immerse them than it would to have sprinkled them? Not if the sprinkling ceremony that I saw was a sample of the way the three thousand were baptized. Do you not have a ceremony connected with sprinkling just as they have one connected with immersion?"

"Oh, yes, there is always a little ceremony connected with the sprinkling."

"Who did the baptizing that day?" asked Dorothy.

"Good for you, daughter," said the father. "That is a stunner. One man would have had quite a job on his hands whether he sprinkled or dipped that host of folks. But with several baptizers it was a different proposition."

"Oh, father, why do you speak so jokingly about these Bible matters?"

"You are right, Dorothy. Forgive me. I always make a muss of it when I tackle religion. I'd better call in my tongue before I get into trouble."

"I repeat my question," said Dorothy: "Who did the baptizing on that day?"

"I guess that Peter, one of the apostles, did it."

"Oh, yes," said Dorothy, "there were twelve apostles, were there not? And if they all took part in the baptizing, that would have made it much easier. And I notice back here in the fifteenth verse of the preceding chapter it says there were one hundred and twenty disciples there when Peter preached his sermon and that three thousand were converted."

"Hello," said the father with a smile, "you keep on and you will get more than enough people to baptize two or three times three thousand persons."

"You don't imagine," said Sterling with a smile, "that the one hundred and twenty disciples all took a hand in putting the three thousand under water? That would have been a spectacle indeed."

"I think it would have been a spectacle no matter how it was done," said Dorothy.

"Another thing," said Sterling: "Supposing that they had enough administrators for the ordinance that day, where could they have performed the baptisms? Do you think they all marched off to the river Jordan? Of course not. But they did not need to go off anywhere in order to be sprinkled. Besides, what about a change of clothing for the three thousand persons if they were all put under water? Remember most of them—according to the account—were strangers from different countries visiting Jerusalem."

"I hope," said Dorothy, "that they had not come from their different countries without some change of clothing."

"Isn't it true," asked the brother, "that over in these Eastern lands, with their loose garments and their sunny climate, they could have arranged for a dipping if they had so desired it? But that other point mentioned by Mr. Sterling has not been answered."

"What is that?" asked Dorothy.

"He asked where in Jerusalem could so many have been baptized?"

"Does it say they were baptized in Jerusalem?" asked Dorothy.

"No, it does not say so, but do you think they went off to a river?" asked Sterling.

"The passage does not state. But are you sure there were not places in Jerusalem where they could have been immersed?" asked Dorothy. [Pg 41]

"Wait," said the brother, "let me get an encyclopedia." He went to the shelf and was soon examining the article on Jerusalem. "Here is a long article on Jerusalem," he said, running his eye down the pages. "Hello, here is something about its water facilities. Here is a reference from Strabo in these words 'Jerusalem a rocky, well-enclosed fortress; within, well watered; without, wholly dry'."

"Now you are making discoveries, son," said Mr. Page. "Give us some more about the water."

"Here is another statement. Dr. Robinson states there were six immense public pools in the city, the largest being five hundred and ninety-two feet long and two hundred and seventy-five feet broad."

"That is enough, son," exclaimed the father. "Sterling, history seems on the side of the immersionists there. I think that five hundred and ninety-two foot pool could have taken care of the whole three thousand."

"I think the important question," said the brother, "is the meaning of the Greek word originally used for baptism. In other words, does the word baptize mean to sprinkle or to immerse? When the people in Christ's day used the word, what did they mean by it—sprinkle or immerse?"

"That hits the target exactly," said the father. "What does the word baptize mean? Let's see, I think you said that the Bible was written in Greek."

"The New Testament was," said Sterling. [Pg 42]

"The question is, then, what word did the people use in Christ's day in talking about a baptism? When Christ told the people to be baptized, what word did he use and what did that word mean? Did the Greek word which he used for baptism mean for the people in that day 'immerse' or 'sprinkle'? When they heard the word from him, did they think of immersion or of sprinkling?"

"*Baptizo*, or baptize, is the word which he used," said Sterling.

"But baptize is our English word that we use. What was the Greek word which Christ used and which meant baptism?" asked Roland.

"That is the point," said Sterling. "'*Baptizo*' is the Greek word, and the people who translated our English from the Greek Bible did not translate the Greek word '*baptizo*' into any English word, but simply put the Greek word '*baptizo*' or baptize into our language as it was without translating it. You see, if they had translated it 'immerse', that would have made the Presbyterians mad, and if they had translated it 'sprinkle' that would have made others mad, and so they did not translate it at all, but simply put the Greek word '*baptizo*' in the English Bible, leaving each person to translate it as he thought proper."

"But why did they not translate it?" said Dorothy, as if vexed by their neglect. "It must mean something, and if they translated the other words, why did they not translate this word right, no matter who might have liked it?"

"They ought to have done so," said Sterling, "and they ought to have put the English word 'sprinkle' instead of the Greek word '*baptizo*'." [Pg 43]

"Oh, I see," said the father. "I guess the Presbyterians, when they came to translate the word into English, would put it 'sprinkle', and those who believed in dipping would translate it 'dipping'."

"That's it exactly," said Sterling. "The translators, in order not to offend the different denominations, agreed not to translate the word at all, but simply to put the Greek word '*baptizo*' in the English Bible and let each one translate it for himself as he thought proper."

"Can't we find out what that Greek word '*baptizo*' means?" asked Dorothy.

"Certainly, here is the Greek scholar," said Mr. Page turning to his son. "Tell us, Roland, what did the Greeks understand by that word '*baptizo*' when they used it?"

"I must get my Greek lexicon for that." And upstairs he hurried and soon returned with Liddell and Scott's Greek and English Lexicon. He turned to the word "*baptizo*" and read its meaning as follows: "To dip repeatedly, to dip under."

"What is that?" exclaimed the father, almost bouncing out of his chair, "'to dip under'?"

"Here it is on page 130."

"It seems to me," said the father, "that would settle it. If the Greek word that Christ used meant to dip under, what right has anyone to say that baptism is to be done by sprinkling?"

"What do you do with a passage like this in 1 Cor. 10:2?" said Mr. Sterling—"were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." They were all baptized, but do you see any immersion in that? It refers, you know, to the time when the Israelites passed through the sea dry shod with a cloud over them. They were baptized, but they were surely not immersed, for they would have been drowned." [Pg 44]

"I did not know of such an event," said Dorothy. "What do you mean by saying that they went through the sea dry shod?"

"God banked up the waters on both sides and let them walk through untouched by the water."

"Did you say the waters were banked on both sides of them and that a cloud covered them?"

"Yes."

"Isn't that a picture of immersion? The ground was under them, the water on both sides and the cloud covered them. It was much more like an immersion than a sprinkling."

"Hold on," said Sterling. "The cloud was not over them, but back of them. The cloud was always either before or behind them, but never over them; consequently they were not covered up and the water did not even touch them—unless perhaps they were sprinkled by the spray from the wall of waters."

"Let me see the passage," said Dorothy. She turned to Exodus 14:21. "But look!" she exclaimed, "it reads, 'and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea'."

"You don't think, Miss Dorothy, that they actually plunged into the middle of the sea?" asked Sterling with a smile. [Pg 45]

"Of course not, Mr. Sterling; and yet their position in that sea gave the idea to the writer of their being in the midst of the sea. To his mind it looked as if they were covered or buried in the sea, and that is immersion. The Old Testament writer calls it a baptism and the Old Testament historian speaks of them as being in the midst of the sea. Which does that look more like—sprinkling or immersion?"

Sterling was getting excited. It seemed to him that Dorothy was moving further and further away from him, and he imagined he saw a chasm opening between her views and his own. But he braced himself for the struggle. To him the mode of baptism was by no means a life and death matter, but Dorothy seemed to recoil from the practice of sprinkling. Sterling cheered himself with the thought that he had certain passages to show her that would turn the tide. He said to her with a confident ring in his voice:

"Miss Dorothy, I have an arrow here from the Bible quiver which I think will give the death blow to the immersion theory and prove beyond the glimmer of a doubt that pouring is the scriptural mode of baptism."

"I thought you believed in sprinkling; why do you say 'pouring'?"

"We make no distinction between sprinkling and pouring. They are practically the same thing. I want now to show you a statement from Christ himself indicating that he believed that pouring was the mode of baptism."

"Do let us have it," said Dorothy. [Pg 46]

"In the first chapter of Acts Christ said to the apostles: 'Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.' The day of Pentecost, which came not many days hence, was the day which he was talking about. He tells them they would be baptized on that day with the Holy Ghost, and I can show you that this baptism was done by pouring."

"Hold a bit," said the father. "Let me see if I get that point. You say Christ promised that the apostles would be baptized on a certain day with the Holy Ghost, and that when this promised baptism came to pass it came not by immersion, but by pouring. Is that your claim?"

"You have it exactly correct."

"All right, and now for your proof."

"Ten days after Christ ascended to Heaven this baptism of the Spirit came. The disciples were in

an upper room and were waiting for this baptism of the Spirit that had been promised, when suddenly the Holy Spirit came. But how did it come and in what way were they baptized? It was poured on them. Don't forget that. When the outsiders, bewildered at the strange manifestation, asked what it meant, Peter stood up and explained it by saying: 'This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.' In other words, Peter said it was what Joel the prophet long ago had prophesied would come to pass. And what did Joel say would happen? Listen to Peter: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.'

"Hello, daughter, he has the dots on you there. The verse declares for pouring."

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"Certainly," exclaimed Sterling. "He does not use the word immerse, but says 'I will pour out of my Spirit'. That was the form that the baptism took—pouring—and Peter was quoting the prophecy to explain the baptism. And look here in the thirty-third verse; he continues in the same strain by saying 'having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth, this which ye now see and hear.'"

"Let me see that passage," said Dorothy. She looked it over intently and in a few moments said: "Mr. Sterling, notice the whole account. It doesn't read as if the Spirit was poured on them as you would pour a little water on a person in baptism. A previous verse reads: 'Suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting.' And in the fourth verse it reads: 'And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.' Think of that, Mr. Sterling. The Holy Spirit came not in a few drops by pouring, but came so abundantly that it filled the house and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. I guess if you were to pour water on a person as the Spirit came upon these persons the person would be drowned. The disciples were surrounded by the Spirit, and that looks like immersion rather than like pouring."

"But not too fast," said Sterling. "It does not say that the Holy Spirit filled the house. It speaks of the wind, but it does not say even the wind filled the house, but simply a sound as of a wind. It was therefore only a sound that filled the house, and sound could not fill the house because sound has no existence except in the ears of those who hear it. Where, then, is your immersion? You say they were immersed in sound that day, and you call that baptism of the Spirit?"

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"Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy in surprise, "you amaze me. The writer must mean that the Spirit filled the house. I saw in my reading this week a foot note that the wind in Scripture often symbolizes the Spirit."

"Certainly," spoke up the brother. "*Pneuma* in Greek means both 'spirit' and 'wind'."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Dorothy eagerly. "That makes it plain. It was the wind that filled the room and they knew it by sound. They heard this sound like a wind and it filled all the house—notice, 'all the house'—and this wind symbolized the Spirit and it was called the baptism of the Spirit, and it certainly looked more like an immersion than a pouring. Why, Mr. Sterling, I think it would lose all its impressiveness if you make it simply the coming of a few drops of the Spirit on them."

"Just listen to that," said the father with a laugh. "She is actually trying to turn your guns on you, Sterling, and to make this verse prove immersion rather than pouring."

"I note one striking fact," said Sterling, "and do not forget it. The passage speaks of pouring, and I do not see the word immersion."

"But I see the picture of immersion," said Dorothy. "The important fact about that scene seems to me to be the abundant way in which the Spirit came. It was a rushing, in fact, a mighty wind. It filled all the house. Suppose some people were in a room and water was poured on them in such a deluge that the room was filled with the water. Wouldn't that look like an immersion rather than like pouring?"

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"No," said Sterling; "you don't immerse people by pouring water on them and covering them up. You don't put the water around them, but you put them in the water. You must put them in the water to have an immersion, but nothing like that was done on that day. Besides, in an immersion you not only put the person in the water, but you bring him up again out of the water to show a resurrection as is claimed. There was nothing like this on the day of Pentecost in the baptism of the Spirit. The disciples were not plunged into the Spirit and they were not taken immediately up out of the Spirit again. If you should use water in baptizing people as the Spirit was used that day, then you must pour water on the candidate until he is covered up, and then instead of taking the candidate immediately up out of the water you must let him remain submerged."

"Sterling," said Mr. Page, "you are getting in some good licks. I don't see that that baptism that day was exactly like either pouring or immersion. It was like an immersion in that they were surrounded by the Spirit, but not like it in any other respect; and it was like a pouring because it came down on them."

"Why, Mr. Page," exclaimed Sterling, "it is actually called a 'pouring'. The word 'pour' is used. Joel prophesied that the Spirit would be poured out on them. How could you wish it plainer than that? And it was called a baptism of the Spirit."

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"Daughter, what have you to say to that?"

"But let me add another word," interrupted Sterling. "People are mistaken in saying that baptism was intended to be a picture of a burial and a resurrection. The real truth intended to be taught in baptism is that the power and grace comes from above, comes down on the person and has its

origin in Heaven, and I think the idea of divine grace coming down from above is a higher truth than the idea of something that the person himself experiences."

"I think the truth pictured in immersion is much greater," said Dorothy. "It is not only the idea that the person has died to his old life and risen to a new life, but it also points to Christ's death and resurrection and puts the two together and says that, as Christ died and was raised, even so the Christian must have the same experience. I don't see how you can have a more glorious truth than that. Your idea in pouring is that grace comes on the person and comes in a few drops, but in immersion you have not merely grace come down, but the giver of grace, Christ himself come down—in fact, come down to death and rising again. Oh, I think it is a wonderful double picture showing Christ and the converted soul bound together in these experiences of death and resurrection. Besides, Mr. Sterling, where does the Bible say that baptism was intended to show forth that truth about grace coming from above?"

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"I don't know that it says so in express terms, but the ceremony of pouring indicates it and the descent of the Spirit shows it."

"Of course the Spirit when he first came had to come down," said Dorothy. "If Christ promised to send the Spirit from Heaven to baptize the disciples, of course the Spirit had to come down before he could surround them, but it does not seem to have been the fact of his coming down that was the impressive fact that day, but the overwhelming way in which the Spirit came and surrounded them. That is what the writer used a good many words to describe."

"You will notice," said the father, "that it says that not only was the house filled, but the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit."

"Yes," said Dorothy, "it says that the wind filled the house and the disciples were filled with the Spirit. The idea seems to be that the Spirit came so abundantly that day that he not only filled all the house, but filled the disciples themselves. That was the great fact, the overwhelming abundance of the Spirit."

"I still remind you that Peter calls it pouring," said Sterling.

"Dorothy, he has not surrendered, you see; his guns are still firing," said the father with a smile.

"Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy, "but your pouring is not like the pouring that day. When you pour the water in your baptism, does it come down with a rush and fill the house? The passage does not teach your form of baptism, because you do not imitate it."

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"Immersionists do not imitate, in all respects, the baptism of Christ," said Sterling, "for they do not all baptize in a river as he was."

"Neither did the apostles when they baptized in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost," said Dorothy. "We have seen that they probably baptized in some of the immense pools in the city. And look here," examining the passage about which they had been arguing, "isn't this interesting? Here in the margin of the passage which we have been discussing are the words 'in the Spirit' as if he had promised to baptize them in the Spirit."

"What is that?" exclaimed the father.

"Here where Christ promised that he would not many days hence baptize them with the Holy Spirit it reads on the margin 'in the Holy Spirit', and a baptism 'in' the Spirit was surely by immersion."

"I guess," said the brother, "that the Greek word translated 'in' there on the margin is the word 'en'. Let's see your Greek Testament, Mr. Sterling." He examined it and found that the original word was "en."

"It is 'en' and it means 'in', and the right reading of that passage is 'ye shall be baptized in the Holy Ghost'. Here, look at this. In this Revised Version it reads just that way. If you had read it that way at first in your King James' Version of the Bible it might have saved you all this argument."

"You must remember, Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy, "that I did not bring this passage up to prove immersion, but you brought it up to prove pouring. You spoke very positively about it, but I think you found that if it represented the coming down of water it was like a cloudburst more than anything else."

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Sterling was compelled to admit to himself that the Pentecostal baptism was more a picture of immersion than of pouring. He turned the conversation now into another line.

"Even granting," he said, "that immersion is the baptism practiced in New Testament times, it has never seemed to me to be such a prodigiously important matter."

"Oh, Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy with some impatience, "I can't understand such a remark. What do you mean by the word important? If Christ was immersed and commanded it of his followers; if the early Christians were all immersed, and immersion, as Paul indicates, was selected as an outward picture of the spiritual baptism that takes place in conversion, then how can you say it is not important?"

"The fact is, Miss Dorothy, I have never made an exhaustive study of the matter of baptism. I never thought Christ laid any stress upon form, but rather upon the condition of the heart."

"If it is simply a matter of the heart, why baptize at all? Maybe the whole matter is unimportant," said Dorothy. "Would your church like to give up baptism altogether?"

"By no means."

"Would your church accept any kind of baptism except sprinkling or pouring?"

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"No, I am sure it would not."

The matter had reached a puzzling stage for Sterling. The question stared him in the face as to whether he had been Scripturally baptized. In infancy he had been sprinkled, but he had to confess to himself that the Bible teaching seemed to lean towards immersion. In fact, in the recent investigation and discussions he had hardly been able to see anything else but immersion.

He did not return to his office that afternoon, but spent the time at his home searching through the Bible. The discussions at the Page's had filled his mind with passages about immersion, but upon later reflection he felt sure that the trend of Scripture pointed strongly to sprinkling and pouring, and with this thought in mind he turned to his Bible study.

CHAPTER VI.

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ONE POINT GAINED.

In their discussion on the next morning Dorothy remarked: "Mr. Sterling, let me tell you what I did. I looked up the passages that had the word 'baptize' in them and in each case I put the word 'sprinkle' in the place of the word 'baptize' and it surely made curious reading."

"Good for you, daughter," said Mr. Page. "That was an ingenious procedure. Let us have the passages to see how they sound. It ought to be a perfectly fair method, because if baptize means to sprinkle then you ought to be able everywhere to put the word 'sprinkle' for the word 'baptize' and it would read all right. That's a fine idea, and now for the passages."

Dorothy began with the account of Christ's baptism: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be sprinkled of him'."

"That sounds all right," said Sterling.

"Here is the next one," said Dorothy: "'I have a sprinkling to be sprinkled with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!' Just imagine Christ speaking of his sufferings in that way, Mr. Sterling. His sufferings were not a sprinkling. But here is another: 'And John also was sprinkling at Aenon near Salem because there was much water there.'"

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"Again: 'John truly sprinkled with water, but ye shall be sprinkled with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.'"

"That doesn't sound natural," said the father, "to be sprinkled with the Holy Ghost. That would have been a rather light affair."

"Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy, "you remember you said the baptism on the day of Pentecost was by pouring. Suppose you put the word 'pour' in this passage and read it, 'John truly poured with water, but ye shall be poured with the Holy Ghost not many days hence'. You could not speak of anybody being poured. You could speak of water or the Spirit being poured, but not of a person being poured. It would not be proper to say you shall be poured with anything. Something could be poured upon you, but you could not be poured with something. That is another reason why the baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost could not have had reference to pouring, because from this passage, you see, it would not make sense to put the word 'pour' in it. And besides, Mr. Sterling, I think you are uncertain whether baptism is by pouring or sprinkling."

"Give us another passage," said the father; "they are quite interesting."

Dorothy continued: "'And they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch and he sprinkled him.'"

"Let us have another passage," said the father.

Dorothy continued: "'Therefore we are buried with him by sprinkling into death.'"

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"Oh, my," said Mr. Page, bursting into a laugh, "where did you ever see anyone buried by sprinkling a few drops of earth upon him? Say, Friend Sterling, how did this idea of sprinkling get into so many churches? It certainly does not seem to have a single leg to stand upon."

"I can give you some passages where the word sprinkle would sound natural; for example this passage: 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel unto every creature, and he that believeth and is sprinkled shall be saved.' That sounds just as natural as if it read 'he that believeth and is immersed shall be saved.'"

"Maybe so," said Mr. Page, "but it sounds just a little limp to me. Besides, you could hardly put the word 'pour' in that passage. If you want to make a real point you must give some passage

where the word 'sprinkle' would sound natural and the word 'immerse' would seem out of place."

"Yes," spoke up Dorothy. "Can you give us such a passage, Mr. Sterling?"

"I have such a passage and it will show that immersion could not have been the mode of baptism."

"Out with it," said Mr. Page.

"It is the words spoken to Saul. It reads: 'Arise and be baptized.' Now that baptism could not have been an immersion. Saul was evidently seated and he was told to arise or to stand up. What was he to stand up for? To be sprinkled, of course. You would not ask a man who was seated to stand up to be immersed."

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"He would have to stand up before he could be immersed," said Dorothy. "Why could it not read, 'Arise and be immersed'? Maybe they went off to be immersed. And notice the first part of the verse. It reads: 'Now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' Those first words 'why tarriest thou' explain the other part. In the first place, he had to arise; that is, to get up in order that he might go off to some place where he could be immersed. In the next place, he tells him not to tarry, not to wait, but to arise and be baptized."

"Good for you, daughter. It does look as if you were telling him not to delay his baptism, but to get up and attend to it."

There was a lull in the conversation for a moment, and then the father asked: "What kind of baptism did they have in the churches just after the apostles died? Don't we find anything in history about the kind of baptism that was practiced?"

Dorothy spoke up promptly: "I was reading in the library yesterday in some of the encyclopedias about baptism and I copied something about that very point you mentioned. Let me get it."

She hurried to her room, brought the book and read as follows: "'Not less than sixty of the ancient baptisteries are found in Italy alone, of which seven belong to the fourth century, four to the fifth, eleven to the sixth and fourteen probably to the seventh.' Then after describing these baptizing pools found in these ancient church buildings the writer continues: 'Now baptisteries such as described above are found in all parts of ancient Christendom, and their presence makes it impossible to doubt the form of baptism in the patristic and medieval churches. Such structures were plainly intended for immersion. Their size and form and arrangement entirely preclude the idea of their use for sprinkling or pouring.'"

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"That is a great point. What were those baptizing pools doing there in the churches if they were not for immersion? If the churches in the fourth century baptized by immersion, it surely must have been because that mode had been handed down to them from the beginning."

"There is one argument against immersion that I have not mentioned," said Sterling.

"Exactly," said the father with a smile. "You are going now to bring out your Imperial Guards. You've been holding them back for the last assault, I suppose. All right, trot them out, Sterling."

"Oh, father, what awful figures you use about these Bible matters."

"That's right, daughter, call me down. I will jump the traces every now and then, and I beg pardon. And now, Sterling, what is that argument against immersion that you have not mentioned?"

"It is this: Immersion cannot be right, for it would make infant baptism impossible."

"Infant baptism," exclaimed Dorothy with a very puzzled look. "You don't mean that you baptize infants?"

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"Certainly."

"Why do you baptize infants?" asked Dorothy, with an expression almost of horror on her face.

"It is one of the sacred ordinances of the church and is really one of the most beautiful and effective."

"Do you mean little children just two or three years old?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes, indeed, and often only a few weeks old. Where have you been that you have never heard of infant baptism?"

"I never heard of it. You know I have been to church very little in my life and have known almost nothing about church matters and have had no one to tell me. I am very sorry it has been so, for I feel I have missed a great deal. But, Mr. Sterling, I do not remember seeing anything in the Bible about sprinkling infants. I must have overlooked it."

"You must have overlooked it, for it is taught very plainly."

"Infant baptism?" she said in a questioning, puzzled tone. "Mr. Sterling, the little infants do not know what you are doing to them. I thought the baptism of a person was a picture of what had already taken place in that person. It looks strange to baptize an infant, and besides I should

think you would drown the little things to put them under the water."

"Ha, ha," exclaimed Mr. Sterling with a laugh. "Not too fast. We do not put them under the water; we sprinkle them."

"Of course. I ought to have known that, for you baptize by sprinkling. But do tell me some more about it. Why do you do it, Mr. Sterling?" [Pg 61]

"It is one of the most sacred ordinances of the church. I wish you could witness the ceremony. But I see we will not have the time to go into the subject as we ought. It is a great subject, and if you do not object we will take it up tomorrow night. I hear no objection and so the motion is unanimously adopted."

Sterling felt as if the battle had been going against him so far as winning Dorothy was concerned. But he did not despair. He girded himself afresh for his task. He decided, however, that instead of attempting single-handed to defend the doctrine of infant baptism, he would seek reinforcements and call in his pastor, Dr. Vincent.

The Doctor was regarded as an encyclopedia of Presbyterian lore. Sterling visited him and told him that Dorothy Page, the daughter of his friend and neighbor, had recently been converted and was concerned about the subject of baptism, and that she was strongly turning towards immersion. "I am dreading, Doctor," said Sterling, "that if she insists on immersion she will be drawn into the Baptist church and we would all regard that as a disaster."

"Did you mention infant baptism to her?" inquired the Doctor. "You know the Baptists would deny to infants this rite and would deny to parents the privilege of such dedication of their children in baptism. That fact ought to keep her from the Baptist heresy, and if that fails to save her from it then surely their doctrine of close communion will settle the business with her." [Pg 62]

"We are to take up the subject of infant baptism tonight. We began it last night, but were interrupted before we got fairly launched upon the discussion, and yet not before Miss Dorothy had made some remark about infant baptism showing she thought it a curious practice. I am sure, Doctor, you could set her right."

"I will come if you think I can be of service," he said, for he saw an anxiety on Sterling's face that he could not understand.

CHAPTER VII.

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THE CALL FOR REINFORCEMENTS.

That evening Sterling and the old Doctor arrived. The Doctor was acquainted with all the Pages except Dorothy. After a preliminary skirmish in the conversation Dorothy remarked:

"It is very kind in Mr. Sterling to be trying to instruct me in these church matters, for I feel very ignorant. He and I have not agreed on all points, but the discussion has helped me greatly."

"I think Miss Dorothy is afraid to take me as her guide as she is trying to climb these heights of Bible truths," said Sterling with a faint smile, "and I have brought over a more skilled and experienced leader."

"Maybe she will not endorse your selection," said the Doctor with a smile at Sterling.

"I see you are making me out as being not only hard to please, but also very ungrateful to my friends. You will find me a very interested and appreciative listener, Doctor, to anything you may be kind enough to say to me."

"We are to talk about infant baptism tonight, and, Doctor, if you are willing, I suggest that you give the reasons for this practice," said Sterling.

"You are laying out quite a program for me. I will attempt, however, to bring it within brief compass. The first fact I would mention is Christ's treatment of the little children." [Pg 64]

"Did he baptize them?" broke in Dorothy.

"Hold on, daughter," said the father. "You open up your artilleries too soon. The Doctor was merely making a skirmish."

"Pardon me, Doctor Vincent. I ought not to have broken into your remarks so abruptly, and yet I am sure you understand that I ask because I am deeply interested."

"Break in at any time and I shall be glad."

She repeated her question: "Did Christ baptize the little children?"

"We are not told expressly that he did, but we read in Matthew 19:13 that when the little ones were brought to him the disciples sought to prevent it."

"Just as a good many people would do today," said Sterling.

"Yes," continued the Doctor, "but Christ said, 'Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven'."

"Maybe they were bringing the little children to him for him to baptize them," said the father. "What about that, Doctor? Doesn't it tell what they brought the children for?"

Dorothy had turned to the passage and remarked: "Yes, it tells what they brought the children for. They brought little children to Christ that he might put his hands on them and pray. There is nothing there about baptism. It looks plain that they did not bring them to be baptized, because it simply says 'to put his hands on them and pray'."

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"At any rate," said the Doctor, "it showed Christ's tenderness for little children. The point is this: He said 'of such is the Kingdom of Heaven'. Think of that. It is a remarkable statement about the little ones."

"What did he mean by the words 'of such is the Kingdom of Heaven', and what have they to do, Doctor, with baptism?"

"A great deal, my daughter. They mean that the little child has the heavenly nature."

"I think that is a beautiful idea, but what has that to do with the baptism of infants?"

"Why, this: If anybody is entitled to baptism, surely a little child with its heavenly nature is. We may make mistakes in baptizing old persons who claim the right of baptism, but never can we be mistaken in the case of a little child."

"I can understand about the beautiful nature of a child before sin has taken hold of its will," said Dorothy, "but why that little helpless one should be baptized I cannot understand."

"I thought you were deciding all these questions by the Bible," said the father. "What does the Book say about it, Doctor? Do you baptize them because you think it is appropriate to baptize the sweet little ones or because you think the Bible commands it?"

"It is from the Bible alone that we get the authority."

"Where is it commanded in the Bible, Doctor?" asked Dorothy.

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"It is not definitely commanded, but it is implied in many ways. We baptize grown people who profess to be born of the Spirit of God and to be regenerated by his grace. How much more, therefore, should we baptize an infant who does not need to be regenerated, because, according to Christ's own words, it possesses the heavenly nature. It is often claimed by our opponents that infants must not be baptized because faith and repentance—in other words, regeneration—must come before baptism. All right, I answer; the infant possesses those necessary qualifications for baptism. It does not need regeneration. It already, according to Christ's own words, possesses the heavenly nature and needs not to go through the process of regeneration. In another place Christ said: 'Unless ye become converted and become as a little child ye cannot see the Kingdom.' There you see conversion is compared to the condition of the child nature. Christ said a person desiring conversion must become like a little child. Now we know that a converted person is entitled to and must receive baptism. Why, then, could not a child be baptized?"

"Doctor Vincent," said Dorothy, "it seems to me that the whole matter hinges on the question as to who was commanded in the Bible to be baptized. Does Christ say that all persons having the heavenly or child-like nature must be baptized? If so, why did he not baptize the little ones the day they were brought to him? It looks as if the disciples did not know anything about baptizing the little ones."

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"No, they seemed to know very little about Christ's attitude towards children."

"Let me ask this question, Doctor," said Dorothy. "You spoke of the heavenly nature of the infant. When an infant is baptized and grows up, does the baptism cause the heavenly nature to stay with the child?"

"Not necessarily."

"What good, then, does the baptism do? Do you mean that a baptized infant might grow up to be a fearful villain?"

"Yes, it is possible."

"Well, do the baptized infants have a less tendency to sin than the unbaptized infants?"

"No. I can't say that the baptism itself has any effect on the infant. Neither does it have any effect on the grown person that is baptized and disgraces his baptism received in later life."

"But is there not this difference, that in the case of grown people you baptize only those who desire baptism, but in the case of infants you do not make such distinction?"

"It seems to me," said the father, "that the important question is, who in the Bible are commanded to be baptized? Does the Bible say that infants must be baptized or not?"

"No," replied the Doctor, "it does not say that."

"Well, who are entitled to baptism?"

"Let me get my concordance," said Dorothy, rising from her seat, "and look at the passages about baptism so as to see who are commanded to be baptized." [Pg 68]

She began with the aid of the concordance to pick out the passages having the word "baptize" in them. She read: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

"Hello!" said the father. "Who said that?"

"Those are the words of Christ," said Doctor Vincent.

"That looks as if a person had to believe before he could be baptized. But give us another one, daughter."

"Here is one: 'When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women.'"

"There it is again," exclaimed the father, "believing coming before baptizing."

"And notice," said Dorothy, "it says they were baptized 'both men and women', but it does not say 'and children'. But here is another: 'See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And he said, if thou believest with all thy heart thou mayst be baptized.'"

"There it is again," spoke up the father. "If he believed then he could be baptized. Evidently that writer considered believing essential to baptism."

Dorothy read on: "'Many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized.' Isn't it strange? Every time it is those that believed that were baptized. Here is another: 'Then Simon himself believed also, and when he was baptized he continued with Philip.' And again: 'Then they that gladly received his Word were baptized.' They do not use the word 'believe' in that passage, but the words 'gladly received his Word', and these are practically the same; they not only heard his Word, but received it, and received it gladly." [Pg 69]

"Oh, they were genuinely converted," said the Doctor. "There can be no doubt about that. It occurred on the day of Pentecost and those converts continued in the apostles' doctrine and bore good fruit."

"You see, Doctor," said Dorothy, "that those who were baptized in New Testament times first believed. You say that infants ought to be baptized because they have the heavenly and converted nature; but the Bible does not say that. Those who were baptized first believed. Now an infant cannot believe. I do not feel, Doctor, that I know a hundredth part as much of the Bible as you know, but don't you think that Christ meant by those words about little children and the Kingdom of Heaven that they must cultivate the qualities of a little child and that the child nature was a type of the heavenly nature? He did not connect this with baptism."

"Did you know that whole families were baptized?" asked the Doctor. "Many times baptisms were administered in homes not simply on those who believed, but on the whole family, young and old."

"But are you sure, Doctor, that there were infants in those families?"

"Not absolutely sure, but almost; at any rate the burden of proof is on those who deny that infants were in any of those families." [Pg 70]

"Show us some of the accounts of family baptisms," said the father. "It does look a little curious, daughter."

They turned first to Acts 16:13-15: "'And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized and her household she besought us, saying.'"

"How do you know there were any infants in her household? It does not even say she was married," said Dorothy. "She was a seller of purple and maybe she was an unmarried woman working for her living. At any rate I do not see that you can prove that she had any infants in her household."

"It looks to me," said the father, "as if that woman was a working woman and as if her household were her fellow-workers, and that there were probably no infants among them."

"Here is another passage," said the Doctor, "in 1 Corinthians 1:16: 'And I baptized also the household of Stephanus.' Will you affirm there were no infants there? How many households do you think I could baptize without hitting upon an infant? Why do you exclude infants?"

The brother was busy looking through the concordance to see if he could find out something more about this Stephanus and his household, and in a few moments he exclaimed: "Here is some light on the household of Stephanus in 1 Corinthians 15:15. It reads: 'Ye know the house of Stephanus.' There you have it again—'the house of Stephanus'. That must have been an interesting house: 'Ye know the house of Stephanus, that it is the first fruits of Achaia and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.'" [Pg 71]

"You see, Doctor," said Dorothy, "it seems that that household were intelligent people and acted for themselves, and therefore were not infants. Just notice what it says—that the house of

Stephanus were 'the first fruits of Achaia'. What does that mean—"the first fruits?"

"Why, the first fruits are the first grain that is gathered in a harvest."

"Oh, I see. Then the members of Stephanus' household were the first ones to accept Christianity in Achaia, and if they accepted Christianity of course they were not infants."

"But it may have meant that they were the first ones in Achaia to be baptized—"the first fruits' in that sense—and if so, there could have been infants in the house."

"But notice what comes in the next verse: 'And that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.' You don't think, Doctor, he would speak of infants addicting themselves to the ministry of the saints, do you?"

"It looks as if you will have to surrender on that point, gentlemen," said Mr. Page. "I am a novice in Bible teaching, and yet it does seem plain that that household were intelligent folks—the first to be converted in Ach—"

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"Achaia," spoke up Dr. Vincent.

"Thanks for the word, the first fruits of Achaia, and they also 'addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints'. I don't think you had better look for any young ones in that bunch."

"I give you another household," said the Doctor. "It is in Acts 16:33. It is in the story of Paul and Silas' experience in prison and the conversion of the jailer at midnight. It reads: 'He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes and was baptized, he and all his straightway.' Now, my fair debater, I suppose you will declare in most solemn tones that there were no infants in the jailer's family. May I ask for your verdict on that point?"

"Look here," said Dorothy, who was examining the passage: "It says plainly that all of them 'did believe'."

"Stop, daughter," said the father. "You are joking about that."

"Listen to the next verse," she said: "'And when he had brought them into his house he set meat before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.'"

"Take down your flag, gentlemen," exclaimed the father impulsively. "Your guns are silenced. The jailer believed in God with 'all his house'. Well, I guess that means that all his house believed with him, and they must have been very sprightly infants and quite overgrown to have joined their father in that believing."

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"It says they all rejoiced also," said Dorothy. "And look at the verse preceding: 'And they spake the Word of the Lord to all that were in the house.' That came before they were all baptized. They 'spake the Word to all'. Notice the 'all', to all that were in the house. I guess that 'all' that were in the house must have been old enough to understand his preaching if he spoke the Word to all of them. Doctor," she asked, "do you think you can find an infant in that attentive, believing, rejoicing household?"

"Read us about another household baptism," as she noted that the Doctor seemed to be closing the Bible.

"This completes the list of household baptisms. I think they are sufficient."

"But, Doctor, not one of these households are said to have had children in them, and if they did have children the children must have been old enough to believe, because it is stated in the case of every one of them that those that were baptized believed or received the word that was spoken. They were all old enough to hear, to understand and to believe the Word."

"From all the passages which I have heard in these discussions," said the father, "one thing seems to stand out very plainly about baptism, and that is that in the Bible times faith had to come before baptism."

"If this is so," said Dorothy, "then infant baptism is unscriptural, because it is a baptism without faith. Infants can not exercise faith."

"Daughter," said the Doctor, "you are mistaken. I can show you that in the case of every infant baptism there is always a faith that precedes the baptism."

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"What do you mean, Doctor?" asked Dorothy in great perplexity.

At this moment the telephone bell rang and Dorothy was called to speak to a girl friend, who extended to her an invitation for a carriage ride on the next afternoon. In a few moments the conversation was resumed.

CHAPTER VIII.

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WRONGING THE LITTLE ONES.

"Doctor Vincent," said Dorothy on her return to the room, "you were saying that the baptism of an infant is always preceded by faith. How can that be? Can an infant exercise faith?"

"Not the infant, but the father or mother."

"Oh, you mean it is the parent that has faith! And do you baptize an infant because the parent has faith?"

"Yes. Either the parent or the god-parent must have faith."

"The god-parent!" exclaimed Dorothy in a puzzled tone. "What is a god-parent?"

"If the child has not a parent, then some Christian man or woman believes for the child and is thus called its god-father or god-mother."

"And so the infant, in order to have baptism, must have some person to believe for it?"

"Yes, my daughter, you catch the idea exactly."

"I thought you said just now that infants ought to be baptized because of their heavenly nature, and now you say they cannot be baptized unless they can get some Christian man or woman to believe for them."

The Doctor for a moment was startled as he saw where his arguments had brought him. He saw in a flash that both of the statements could not be true.

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"Doctor, which fact must I accept?" she asked. "Must we baptize infants because of what they are in themselves with their heavenly natures, or must we baptize only those infants who can come and have somebody believe for them?"

"I see your point, and it has a show of logic in it."

"Oh, Doctor," she said, almost impatiently, "why do you say a show of logic? Can both of these positions be true? If the child's nature entitles it to baptism, then all children are entitled to baptism; but if it is the faith of some parent or some god-parent that entitles the child to baptism, then it is only a certain class of infants that can be baptized and the baptism is put on the basis of the faith of another."

"That sounds a little strange to me," said the father. "I did not know that one person could be religious for another. I thought that every tub had to stand on its own bottom in religion. This thing of one person believing for another person so that the other person, especially a little infant, is entitled to baptism—well, that sounds very new and strange. How can the parent make the child fit for baptism? Do you mean to tell me that if I had a little infant and I should believe in Christianity that that would be a reason why not only I should be baptized, but my little infant also?"

"Is it thought, Doctor," asked Dorothy, "that the baptism does the infant any good?"

"Oh, no," said the Doctor, "the baptism has no power in itself."

"I think the baptism does the infant a wrong," said Dorothy. "Baptism is a religious ceremony which everyone ought to obey of his own will and accord. In the Bible it comes after believing and is a sign of what has taken place in the person's heart. Now, when you baptize an infant you force on him a religious ceremony. Suppose he grows up and is converted and desires to obey Christ in baptism and then learns that baptism was forced on him in infancy. Instead of believing and then being baptized he is first baptized and then many years afterwards he believes."

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"And suppose, Doctor," said the father, "he never believes; then what have you got? You have a person walking around baptized who ought never to have been baptized, though he is not to be blamed for it. If the baptism does no good, why do you baptize him? Why not follow the regular course and get him first to believe and then to be baptized?"

"I have an idea," said the brother, "that infant baptism started with parents with dying infants who they thought would be lost if they were not baptized."

"Oh, never," said the Doctor.

"Well, I remember in a house where I was boarding while at college that a mother thought her little infant was about to die and she sent off immediately for the preacher to baptize her child, for she said she was afraid it would be lost if it died without baptism. Now, if that mother had that idea about baptism, why may not many others have the same idea about baptism?"

"Since I come to think of it," admitted the Doctor, "I myself have had quite a number of excited mothers to ask me to baptize their sick infants because they were afraid for them to die without baptism; but they are the exceptions and of course their fears were entirely groundless. This is a Catholic doctrine. The Catholics teach, that baptism saves the infant, but we teach no such doctrine."

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"But is it not natural for the mother to get such an idea about baptism?" asked Dorothy. "They come to think that it keeps the child from being lost and the child, as it grows up, would get the idea from the mother that it was saved because of its baptism in infancy. If the mother thought the baptism saved her child, why would she not be apt to tell this to the child, and how awful it would be for a child when grown to think that it was saved when actually it was lost. Doctor

Vincent, this doctrine seems to me to be a frightful one. It looks as if it might do a world of harm, and I cannot see where it does a particle of good; and besides, it is so different from that principle which father said just now was one of the characteristics of religion, and that is that religion must be a personal matter. Each soul must be accountable to God, and it is what I do and not what somebody else does for me for which I shall be held responsible."

"My daughter," said the Doctor, "I have let the discussion run along for awhile in this fashion without mentioning the main feature and benefit of infant baptism. It is a dedicatory ceremony. The parent brings the child and offers or dedicates it in baptism to God; and not only that, never forget that the baptism does not stop with that."

"With what?" asked Dorothy.

"With the sprinkling of the water."

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"You say the baptism does not stop with the sprinkling of the water? What else, then, Doctor, is added?"

"Why, the parent not only dedicates the child to God, but solemnly promises to watch over the child and to seek to train it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

"Ought not every parent to do that?" asked Dorothy.

"Exactly; that is what I am contending for, that every parent—I mean every believing parent; we could hardly expect an unbelieving parent to do so—every believing parent ought to dedicate in baptism his infant and to make the promise for its religious training."

"Is it necessary to baptize the infant in order for the parent to make the promise?" asked Dorothy.

"Miss Dorothy," said the Doctor, with a faint smile, "you amuse me; you almost astonish me. What grudge have you against the simple baptismal ceremony? Do you think there is anything wrong when the parent brings its little one to dedicate it to the Lord to have a few drops of water sprinkled upon the little one?"

"Certainly not. Sprinkle as many drops upon the infant as you please; sometimes the more the better. But why call it baptism? I think the wrong consists in calling it Bible baptism."

"Oh, you object to the sprinkling. Do you think we ought to plunge the infant in water?"

"Not at all, Doctor. It is true I do not believe sprinkling is baptism, and in that respect I do not think you have even baptized the little one when you sprinkle it; but admitting that sprinkling is scriptural baptism, I think it is wrong to call the ceremony baptism. It is all right for a parent to dedicate its child and to use water with it in any shape, but do not let the parent call it baptism. Baptism is something that the person receives of his own accord, and that comes after believing and as a sign that the person has had a change, that the person has died to his old life, as we read the other night, and has risen to a new life; but don't call the sprinkling of water on an infant baptism and thus deprive that child ever afterwards of having a regular Bible baptism, performed on himself by his own choice. I find myself all confused, Doctor, as I try to understand your reasons for infant baptism. You must let me tell you frankly how it appeals to me. At first you said the child deserved baptism because of its own heavenly nature, and next you said it deserved baptism not because of its own condition, but because of the faith of its parent, and now you mention this other idea of dedication and pledging on the part of the parent. This last characteristic seems to have more reference to the parent than to the child, and seems to make the baptism something that is used for binding the parent to do his duty to the child. In that case you make the baptism a matter of the parent doing his duty, and if there is any religion in the ordinance it seems to be on the part of the parent instead of the child. If you call that Bible baptism, I think you put baptism in the wrong place."

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Sterling presented a picture. He had hung his hopes high on the Doctor's arguments. In fact, he came to the house with a feeling of triumph and wondered why he had not thought of bringing the Doctor into the discussion earlier. But as he had tried to follow the Doctor in his different arguments, he had found himself lost in a wilderness. He kept up his courage, however, believing that ultimately victory would come.

"Doctor," said Dorothy after she had remained thoughtful for awhile, "is there not great danger in infant baptism that people will get the idea that salvation comes through a ceremony rather than from Christ? You spoke of the mothers thinking baptism would save their infants. If those mothers think so, then do you not see that the practice of infant baptism in a community helps to spread abroad in that community the idea that salvation comes by some outward magical performance?"

At this point Dorothy was called to the door by a party of young people, who were returning from a walk, and who, seeing a light in the Page home, had run in for a few minutes.

"Father," said Dorothy, "you must listen to the Doctor for me and give me the points when I return."

CIRCUMCISION TO THE RESCUE.

"Let me say," continued the Doctor, "that I have not yet mentioned the strongest reason for infant baptism."

The remark waked new hope in Sterling.

"What is that reason, Doctor?" asked the father.

"It is the argument of circumcision. In the Old Testament times the command was that every male child of Jewish parents should be circumcised. This circumcision made the child a member of the Jewish church and of the covenant of grace. Now in the Christian dispensation, after Christ came, circumcision was done away with and baptism was put in its place, and it is now baptism instead of circumcision that admits one into the church."

"You are getting into deep water for me, but let me make the effort to catch your point. You say that in the olden times—"

"Yes, in the days of the Old Testament."

"Well, you say that in those days every male child of Jewish parents was circumcised and thereby admitted into the Jewish church, and so in the Christian church every male child—"

"No, not simply every male child, but every child, both male and female, who was baptized was admitted into the Christian church."

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"Well, why this difference? If they circumcised only the males in the old church, why do you not baptize simply the males in the Christian church if baptism is put in the place of circumcision?"

"There is no reason why the females, as well as the males, should not be baptized, but there was a difference in the matter of circumcision."

"This is surely a new kind of argument for infant baptism."

"I think it is a very natural one. God does not change his plans of dealing with his people. In the first covenant all Jewish children were admitted into the covenant simply because their parents were members of the commonwealth or church, and the condition of their admission was their circumcision. Now if God would admit the children in the old dispensation, would he not admit them also in the new? And what is the sign under the new dispensation? Is it circumcision? Oh, no; it is baptism. That seems plain and unanswerable."

"So then it is not the inherent heavenly nature of the child, but the fact that one of the parents is a Christian that makes you baptize his little ones."

"Yes, that is the reason. The parent must of course promise to train the child aright. Circumcision was the door to the Old Testament church, while baptism is the door to the New Testament church."

"Here is a foot note in this family Bible on this passage," said the father. "It says that 'in the old dispensation all the natural children of Abraham were by circumcision admitted into the Jewish church; so now all who are the spiritual children of Abraham are by baptism admitted into the Christian church'."

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"Exactly so," exclaimed the brother. "The contrast is between the natural and the spiritual children of Abraham. The natural descendants of Abraham, who were of course Jews, were admitted by circumcision. I think if you wish to run the parallel you must follow that line. In the Old Testament it was a natural relationship and in the New Testament it is a spiritual relationship."

"Son, you are surely on the right track. This foot note here says 'all believers are the spiritual children of Abraham'. Christ said he could raise up children unto Abraham, who was the father of the faithful. Every such believer is entitled to baptism and church membership. Why, that is plain. It runs this way: In the old dispensation all natural children of Abraham were admitted by circumcision. In the new dispensation all spiritual children of Abraham—that is, all believers—are admitted by baptism; but you will notice, Doctor, if the spiritual children are believers there can be no infants among them."

The brother was busy looking in the subject index of the Bible for passages about circumcision in the New Testament, and he soon remarked: "Here is an account of a discussion in a council concerning circumcision. It is found in the book of Acts, the fifteenth chapter."

"Read it," said the father. "We want light on this subject."

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"That council met in Jerusalem and was made up of the apostles and other disciples to consider certain doctrinal matters," said the Doctor.

Roland began to read the account of the council: "And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."

"Now you are getting at the core," said the father. "You see they are discussing whether they have to be circumcised. I guess the apostles will say they need not be circumcised because baptism has been put in its place. Read along and see if it does not say that."

He ran his eye down every verse, but could find no such statement.

"Do I understand that they came together in that council to discuss whether circumcision was necessary for salvation, and that nothing was said about baptism having been put in its place?" asked Mr. Page.

"It certainly looks that way," said Roland.

"What did that council decide?" asked the father.

"The council decided that it was not necessary for the Gentiles to be circumcised," answered Mr. Sterling.

"Who were the Gentiles?" asked the father.

"They were all the people who were not Jews."

"You mean that they were discussing whether it was necessary for the Gentiles to be circumcised, and that it was decided that it was not necessary, and now do you say that nothing in this discussion was said about baptism having taken the place of circumcision?"

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"Oh, this may have been said in the discussion, but there is no record of it."

"They would hardly have left it out of the record if there had been any mention of it in the discussion. I notice here in this chapter they give the different reasons for their views; but the word baptism is not mentioned. If baptism had taken the place of circumcision, would it not have been natural for one of the apostles to have said something like this: 'Why, of course it is not necessary to be circumcised, because baptism has taken the place of circumcision.' That would have settled the question."

"I have another point," said Doctor Vincent, "but let's wait a few moments for Miss Dorothy's return."

In a few minutes Dorothy rejoined the party and the Doctor remarked:

"I can show you that the Bible teaches plainly that God will take the faith of the Christian parent for that of the child."

"Do show it to us," said Dorothy, eagerly.

"Paul declares that the faith of a parent makes the child holy and sanctifies the child."

"I don't know what you mean by sanctifying the child, but show us that passage, Doctor."

"Let me see if I understand your point, Doctor Vincent," said Mr. Page. "You assert that the Bible declares that the faith of a parent will make the child holy?"

"Yes."

"I want to see that passage."

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The Doctor turned to 1 Cor. 7:14 and read: "'For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean but now are they holy.'"

"Hello," said Mr. Page, "that sounds like it."

"It is very plain," said the Doctor. "The apostle has said that a believer must not marry an unbeliever; but then someone may say: 'Suppose a believer has already married an unbeliever, must the believing wife leave her unbelieving husband?' 'No,' says Paul. 'The believing wife sanctifies the husband and thus the marriage is not unclean, but a proper one.' The fact that one of the parties is an unbeliever does not make the union an unclean one, but he says the child of such a union is holy. Note that. What does he mean by that word 'holy'? The Jews, according to the old covenant, regarded all who were not Jews as unclean or unholy; that is, as not partakers of the holy covenant. But all of Abraham's descendants were holy; that is, were partakers of the covenant, and Paul here states that the children of Christian parents, even though only one of the parents was a believer, were holy."

"But, Doctor," said Dorothy, "I do not see anything about infant baptism in all that."

"This is related to infant baptism. The point before us now is as to whether the faith or belief of a parent makes the child holy, and Paul says it does. The question was asked where the Bible taught that the faith of the parent was taken for the faith of the infant, and I mentioned this passage."

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"But does this passage teach that?"

"It undoubtedly does. It declares that one believing parent sanctifies the child; that is, makes the child holy, and that is the same thing."

"I am not much on Scripture," broke in the father, "and I guess I had better keep my hands off of

this part of the argument, and yet that passage sounded to me as if the writer was trying to keep married couples from separating simply because one of them might be an unbeliever."

"That is correct," said the Doctor.

"Exactly," continued Mr. Page. "The writer wanted the Christians who were married to those who were not Christians to understand that their marriage was O. K., and that their children were also O. K. Otherwise a Christian wife might feel that her marriage and her children were unclean. Is that right, Doctor?"

"Yes, but do not lose sight of the main point, which is that the faith or holiness of the parent makes the child holy."

"But look here!" exclaimed Dorothy, as if she had made a discovery. "It says that the believing wife sanctifies not only the child, but also the unbelieving husband. Do you believe that a believing wife sanctifies an unbelieving husband?"

"Of course not the husband. A believing wife cannot make an unbelieving husband holy and a member of the covenant of grace."

"But it says here that the believing wife sanctifies the unbelieving husband," insisted Dorothy.

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"That means that in the case under consideration the marriage must not be considered an unclean relation so as to make the wife leave the husband or consider herself involved in an unclean relation."

"When it says the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, does his sanctification mean becoming a member of the covenant?" asked Dorothy.

"No, not at all."

"Why, then, do you say that the child who is made holy by the parent is made a partaker of the covenant? Do the words 'holy' and 'sanctified' mean the same thing?"

"Yes, they are practically the same."

"It seems clear as a sunbeam to me from that passage," broke in the father, "that whatever was done to the child by the faith of the believing parent was also done to the unbelieving husband, for it plainly says so. Let us have that passage again, daughter."

She read: "'For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife—'"

"There you have it plain," said the father. "And the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband, else were your children unclean but now they are holy."

"And look here!" exclaimed Dorothy, examining the passage closely. "In a verse or two below it says: 'For how knowest thou, Oh wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?'"

"There, now," said the father, "'save thy husband'. He evidently was not saved by his believing wife. It shows that, even though he was sanctified by the faith of his wife, yet he was not saved. Sanctification did not mean much for him, and maybe it did not mean much either for the children. The writer was trying, I think, to keep those marriages intact, and I guess he had a hard time of it sometimes. Even though that husband was sanctified, yet he needed saving. That looks mightily as if the sanctifying part had reference to the marriage relation of that husband and wife and not to any spiritual or religious condition of the husband, and therefore not to anything spiritual as regards the child."

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"Look here," said the Doctor with a smile, "I think Mr. Page will have to start a commentary."

"I see you have a twinkle in your eye," retorted Mr. Page, "and consequently I will not extract any compliment from your remark."

The conversation ended at this point. The Doctor stated that an engagement compelled him to hurry from what to him had been a very interesting discussion, and that he would be glad to renew it. He bowed himself out and Dorothy remarked:

"Father, I cannot tell you how strange I feel. I appreciate Doctor Vincent's efforts to help me to know my duty, but this conversation tonight has made one thing clear to me, and that is that I can never join a church that teaches and practices sprinkling and infant baptism."

"Miss Dorothy," said Mr. Sterling, "I think you could join my church, and I think you ought to do so, even though you do not believe these two doctrines."

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"Daughter, if you won't join the Presbyterian church, I don't know which way you will look."

"But why, Miss Dorothy, can you not join my church?"

"Because I feel it would be wrong for me to join your church believing as I do about these matters."

"Wrong for you to join that church, daughter? I can't see where any wrong would be involved in your joining any decent church."

"Don't you think, father, that it would be wrong for me to join a church that teaches that infants

ought to be baptized and that sprinkling is baptism, when the Bible seems so clearly to me to teach that infants ought not to be baptized and that only immersion is baptism? What about my baptism? I would have to be sprinkled if I joined your church, would I not, Mr. Sterling?"

"I think you ought to be sprinkled," he replied.

"Do you think I ought to be sprinkled when I think the New Testament teaches so clearly that immersion is baptism?"

"But, Miss Dorothy, will you set your judgment up against the judgment of the learned divines and scholars of the churches?"

"I do not set myself up against them, but Dr. Moreland said that each one of us must study our Bible and go where it led us; and besides, Mr. Sterling, I have considered all your arguments for sprinkling and all Dr. Vincent's arguments for infant baptism, and I take for granted that you have brought out the strongest passages on that side, and yet in the face of them it seems to me that none of the passages point to sprinkling and infant baptism, while many passages point clearly to the baptism only of believers and to immersion as the only baptism. I must not put away my judgment and go directly against that to follow the judgment of another, must I? Suppose I should join your church, believing that your church was doing wrong in putting something else in the place of Bible baptism; think how uncomfortable I would feel. I would either have to keep silent about what I believed or else I would be constantly engaged in argument with the members."

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"Maybe that would be a good thing. You might convert some of us to your way of thinking."

"But is that the right basis on which to select a church? Do you choose a church without reference to what they or you believe, or do those who believe other things go together in another denomination?"

"You will never find a church where everybody in it believes exactly the same thing about Bible teaching."

"Of course not; but I thought you were mentioning the principal doctrines of your church about which all your members are agreed."

"You are correct about that."

"I cannot get away from the belief that I ought to join that church that seems to come nearest to holding those truths that I hold."

"Maybe there is no such church, daughter," said the father. "What other churches are there, Mr. Sterling? I know of a few—the Methodist, the Episcopal, the Catholic—"

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"I am sorry I must leave this charming circle, but let us take up the other denominations tomorrow evening."

"Good," said the father. "We shall expect you, then, tomorrow evening."

CHAPTER X.

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THE DISCIPLE PREACHER.

The next morning was spent by Dorothy at the library searching through encyclopedias and making full notes. On the next evening the discussion was resumed.

"Well, here we are," said the father, coming into the library a short while after supper. He had heard Mr. Sterling's voice. "Now let us take up the subject of the other churches."

Sterling was anxious to get into that subject, for he felt confident that the result would be that Dorothy would find it as easy to decide for the Presbyterians as for any of the others, and probably more so. He began with the remark:

"The other denominations—the Methodist, the Episcopal and the Catholic—which you mentioned last night believe just as we do about sprinkling, and infant baptism."

"There now," said the father, "you are shut out of four denominations at the start."

"That may be true," said Dorothy, with a troubled look on her face, "and yet what else can I do? Is there no church, Mr. Sterling, that believes that only immersion is baptism and that only believers ought to be baptized?"

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"Yes, there is one denomination—the Campbellites, or rather the Disciples—for they do not like the first name. The Disciples believe only in immersion and the immersion of believers. They are the only denomination that teach this except, I believe, the Baptists; but of course you would not join them."

"It looks, daughter, as if you are shut up to the Disciples."

"But think, Miss Dorothy, these Disciples have just started up not a great many years ago. They are a small denomination and with few churches."

"That does not make any difference. Believing as I do about the Bible, I would certainly feel more comfortable with them, than with some other denominations whose doctrines I could not accept. It seems to me I would have to cry out and not keep quiet."

"But how do you know that you would believe the other doctrines of the Disciples? You seem to have fallen suddenly in love with them."

"What do they believe?"

"They believe in baptismal regeneration."

"My, those are words!" said Dorothy with a smile.

"What do you mean by that, Mr. Sterling?" asked Mr. Page.

"They believe that a person's sins are washed away in baptism."

"Washed away in baptism?" asked Dorothy with amazement. "Are you sure they believe such a strange doctrine?"

"I know it. I have heard their ministers say that a person was not saved until he was baptized." [Pg 97]

"What, even though the person had believed in Christ?"

"They say that such a person is only partly saved and not completely saved until he is baptized."

"I can't understand, Mr. Sterling, what you mean by being partly saved. Don't you reckon you have been misinformed about these people?"

"I have been told that there is a Disciple preacher that lives here in town," said the father, "and that he has two churches out in the county, but makes his home here. Suppose you capture him, Sterling, and march him up here to speak for himself, and tell him you have a prospective member for him." The last remark was accompanied with a smile at Sterling and a wink towards the daughter.

"No, indeed, you must not tell him that," spoke up Dorothy. "And yet I should like to hear about the doctrines of his church. I want to know my duty and I desire all the light I can get."

Sterling felt sure that Dorothy would recoil from the doctrines of the Disciple church.

On the next evening at eight o'clock Mr. Sterling arrived, bringing the Rev. Mr. Garland, the Disciple minister. He was a striking figure. Young, tall and with classic face and fluent speech, he commanded attention at his first word. Sterling saw that he was captured immediately by Dorothy's beauty, and he thought that he also noticed that the handsome young preacher was not entirely unobserved by Dorothy. But the shadowy suspicion flitted out of his mind as rapidly as it had slipped in. Not a great many words were spent in preliminaries. Mr. Sterling soon remarked: [Pg 98]

"Miss Dorothy, I have told Mr. Garland about the earnest study you are making of the different churches. The question came up, Mr. Garland, as to the doctrines of your church. I told them your church believed in immersion as baptism and also in the immersion of none but believers."

Mr. Garland with a bow indicated that Sterling had stated the case correctly.

"I also said that your church believed in baptismal regeneration."

"Oh, never!" replied Mr. Garland.

"I thought you believed that a person was not saved until he was baptized."

"Yes, but that is a very different statement from your first one."

"What is the difference? If he is not saved until he is baptized, then I should think his baptism must have something to do with his salvation."

"Here is my position: 'The Bible declares that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved'. Note that not he that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. That shows that it takes both believing and baptism to save a person."

"How about the thief on the cross? He was saved without baptism, don't you think so?"

"Baptism was impossible for him, and God does not require impossibilities. Besides, that was an unusual case and Christ made an exception in his conversion and salvation." [Pg 99]

"But does the Bible say it was an exceptional case? If he could be saved without baptism, why not others? But let me remind you that you did not read to the end of that passage that you quoted just now. You read a part—"he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"—but read the remainder of the verse."

Mr. Garland repeated the other part of the verse as follows: "He that believeth not shall be damned."

"Exactly," said Sterling. "That seems to teach that believing is the important thing. He does not

say that a person is lost if he leaves out both believing and baptism, but simply if he leaves out believing, as if believing was the necessary thing for salvation. If baptism had been a necessary part of salvation, Christ would have said 'he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned'."

"Not at all. There are two things necessary to salvation, believing and baptism, and leaving out either one of them is sufficient to cause a person to be lost. You have to mention both of them in stating what is necessary for salvation, but you need mention only one of them which, if neglected, will cause a person to be lost."

"You think, then, Christ could also have said 'he that is not baptized shall be damned'? Would a believer in Christ be lost if he were not baptized?"

"If he could be baptized and would not be, then I think he would be lost."

"Mr. Garland," said Dorothy, "really I cannot understand what you mean. Mr. Sterling said that he thought your denomination believed that in baptism the water washed away a person's sins. You say you do not believe that. Do you think the water has any magic about it? If Mr. Sterling should immerse a person, would that water help to make him a saved person?"

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"No, not that. I do not believe the water has any spiritual cleansing or saving efficacy, and I don't think it does anybody any good whatever unless the person first believes in Christ. I think believing is one part and that baptism is the second part."

"You don't think, then," asked Mr. Sterling, "that a person is saved simply by believing?"

At this point a message came for Mr. Sterling that he was wanted at his home on an important matter. "Too bad," he said, "for this discussion is getting mighty interesting. I hate to miss any of it."

"We will hold it until your return," said Dorothy. "I will try to keep Mr. Garland contented during your absence."

Sterling could not understand why she should be so contented to have him leave and should so happily accept Mr. Garland's company. The thought that he might not be able to return that night irritated him. Fortunately, he was successful in attending in a few minutes to the matter that called him home, and in less than twenty minutes he was hurrying back across the lawn to the Page library.

"Hello," said the father, "you must have chartered the lightning express. But we held up the proceedings until your return and are now ready to get down to business again. Where were we when you left?"

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"I had just asked Mr. Garland if he believed a person was saved simply by believing, and he remarked that he did not. I would like to ask Mr. Garland this question: What about the inquiry that the Philippian jailer put to Paul and Silas? You remember that when the jailer was converted he came in trembling before Paul and Silas and said: 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And what did they answer? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' Not one word, you see, about baptism."

"You would think," said Dorothy, "that they would have said 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized and thou shalt be saved', would you not, Mr. Garland?"

"Yes, but you notice that just a little while afterwards that very night the jailer was baptized. You see the baptism had to come. In fact, baptism always came immediately after believing. It was a necessary part, and the work was not complete until the baptism had taken place."

"But does that prove that the baptism was a part of the man's conversion or salvation?" asked Sterling. "Suppose the person had fallen dead just after he had believed and before any baptism was performed on him, would he not have been saved? If so, I think it proves that he was saved simply by believing, and that baptism is simply a matter of obedience."

"By the way, Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy, "you remember that passage in Romans where it speaks of being buried by baptism. We found that baptism was a picture of something that had already taken place in the person's heart and life—that he had been buried to his old life and risen to a new life. It is not baptism, therefore, that helps to make the change in a person, but it simply pictures the change that has already taken place."

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"What is the use of a person being baptized?" asked Mr. Garland, "if he can be saved without being baptized?"

"Mr. Garland, I trust that I have already been saved by believing in Christ. I want to be baptized, however, not to help me to be saved, for if I am not saved now I certainly do not think my going down into the water will make me any more saved. I simply want to be baptized because Christ was baptized and because he commands all who believe in him to be baptized, and because all those who claimed to believe in him in the days of the apostles were baptized. I reckon I will find from the Bible that there are a great many other things besides baptism that I must do, but that does not mean that the doing of all these things is a part of my conversion or salvation."

"I guess you take up these duties because you are already a Christian and already saved. If you were not already a Christian I guess you would not feel like doing them," said the father.

"I do not exactly agree to that," remarked Mr. Garland, "and yet I do not think we are very far apart. There are some people of our denomination who go to an extreme and declare that the water does wash away sins, and they seem to put more stress on the baptism than on the believing. My doctrine is that every believer must be baptized, and that unless he does become baptized he has no right to consider himself saved."

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"But that is different," said Dorothy. "Of course, if a person refuses to be baptized, although he believes that Christ commands it, why, such a person has no right to claim to be converted. I can't imagine a converted person flatly refusing to do what he believes Christ commands. I cannot understand, Mr. Garland, just what your doctrine about baptism is."

"We have another doctrine which I am sure you will like," said Mr. Garland.

"What is that?" asked Dorothy, who was eager to learn everything possible about the denomination.

"We believe in what is called open communion rather than in what is called close communion."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"I mean this. The Lord gave two ordinances to the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper."

"Yes, that is what Mr. Sterling told us."

"Now as to communion, one of the questions of the day about which Christians are divided is the question as to who ought to be admitted to the communion."

"Let me understand clearly about the Lord's Supper. I have read about it in the New Testament, but I wish you would explain it to me fully."

"Christ, on the last night that he spent with his apostles, instituted this supper of bread and wine."

"Yes, I have read that."

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"He told them that the bread typified his body that was that night to be broken for them, and that the wine poured out typified his blood that was that night to be poured out for them, and that when he was gone they must repeat that ceremony, and they must do that in remembrance of him; and that as often as they did that they would show forth his death until he should come again."

"What a beautiful thought! And so that is why the people in the church have the communion? I see it clearly now. What, then, do you mean by open communion?"

"I mean that we throw the door to the communion table open. We do not say that nobody but members of our denomination should come to our communion table, but that anybody who loves the Lord may come."

"You mean anybody who is a Christian?"

"Yes."

"Well, that would certainly seem proper. Does the Bible specify who ought to come to the communion?"

"We simply have to take the practice of the apostles and early Christians. It looks as if all people who loved the Lord were welcome to the table."

"Don't all people believe alike on that point?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes, all except the Baptists. They believe that none but Baptist people have any right to the communion."

"Oh, how selfish!"

"They believe that unless you have been immersed you must not come to the table," said Mr. Sterling, "and they will not let anybody come to the table when they have it in their church unless he has been baptized in their way."

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"Why not?"

"I don't know, unless it be because they are so ignorant and narrow."

"Maybe they believe," ventured Dorothy, "that a person ought to be baptized before he takes the communion."

"Of course," said Sterling, "that is just what they do believe; and since I come to think of it, our church holds the same position as to baptism. Our church believes that a person must first be baptized."

"You mean," said Dorothy, "that your church and the Baptists believe alike on the communion question?"

"Not exactly. We both believe that baptism must come before the communion, but we differ as to what constitutes baptism."

"Does the Bible teach that a person must be baptized before he can commune?"

"The Bible teaches that all who believed were immediately baptized. That always seemed to be the first thing they did."

"It seems the natural thing to me," said the father, "for baptism to come first, and before the other duties of the Christian life. In the passages which we have studied baptism seemed to follow on the heels of believing. The question is, however, does the Bible have anything to say on that subject? Does it teach that baptism must come before the communion?"

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"I think it would look strange for a person to be going to the communion table before he was baptized," said Dorothy.

"Excuse me, Miss Page," said Mr. Garland. "Is it a question as to what you or I might think ought to be done, or is it a question as to what the Bible teaches? I affirm that the Bible does not state that baptism is a prerequisite to the communion."

"That is a somewhat new question to me," said Dorothy, looking at Mr. Sterling, as if he were the proper one to give the answer.

"We do not have from the lips of Christ the actual words," said Mr. Sterling, "'ye must be baptized before partaking of the communion', but I think it is definitely implied in Scripture. In the first place, take the command of Christ: 'Go ye into all the world and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' There you have first baptism, and next observing all things that Christ has commanded, and the Lord's Supper is one of these things."

"Very true," said Mr. Garland, "but you exclude the great body of Christians from the table simply on your interpretation of that one verse."

"Isn't this the proof?" asked Dorothy. "In nearly all the passages about baptism we have read we found that baptism always came immediately after the believing; and father, I feel that I must not delay my baptism. What shall I do, and whom shall I ask to baptize me? I think, Mr. Garland, that I ought not to go to the communion table until I have been baptized. That seemed to be the custom in the days of the apostles."

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"Suppose people in the days of the apostles did become baptized quickly after conversion," said Mr. Garland, "would that prove that no one has a right to commune before he has been baptized?"

"I think it does, if we find that in every case the first thing people did after believing was to be baptized. It must mean that they were instructed by the apostles that baptism came first."

"Do you mean that it would have been wrong for them to have done anything whatever before baptism?"

"Of course they could not cease all activity."

"Why, then, do you pick out the Lord's Supper as something they must not engage in until they were baptized?"

"Because," said Sterling, "there are two ordinances, and if the ordinance of baptism always came first, then the other ordinance must not come first, and so I think it is clear that only baptized persons had the right to the table. Don't you remember about the people converted on the day of Pentecost? It reads 'then they that gladly received his words were baptized', and then in the next verse we read that 'they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrines and prayer and in breaking of bread'. Notice 'breaking of bread' came after baptism."

"Does the Bible say anything about who ought to commune or who did commune in those days?" asked Dorothy.

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"Get your concordance, daughter," said the father.

Dorothy did so and soon turned to a passage about the Lord's Supper. "In First Corinthians, chapter nine, the writer is writing to some people about celebrating the Lord's Supper."

"Is that so!" exclaimed the father. "Find out then whom he is writing to and who are taking part in that supper, and that will answer your question."

"It was the Corinthian church," said Mr. Sterling.

"If it was the members of the church who were taking communion, then they must all have been baptized, don't you think so, Mr. Garland?" asked Dorothy.

"I guess the members of that church at Corinth which was founded by Paul were all baptized."

"It does look plain, then," said Dorothy, "that all those early Christians were first baptized and then took the communion and then performed the duties that came up."

"Yes," spoke up Mr. Sterling, glad to join the forces with Dorothy against Garland, "baptism was a duty to be performed once and for all time and in the beginning, but the communion is something that is to be observed right along through the Christian life at regular times."

"Mr. Garland," said Dorothy, "I can't understand why anyone should want to come to the communion table before he is baptized. Why does he not do the first duty first?"

"I don't see the point in all this," said the father. "I think it is a clear proposition that baptism always comes first after believing and before communion. But all the churches baptize—Presbyterians, Disciples, Methodists and the rest. Why, then, cannot they all commune together?"

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"Ah!" said Mr. Garland with a smile, "there is the point. These other denominations have been sprinkled, but according to the Bible they have not been baptized. Now if I believed that baptism had to come before communion, I would not commune with the Presbyterians, Methodists and others who sprinkle, because I do not believe they have been scripturally baptized; but even though I think them unbaptized, yet I would invite them to the communion, because I do not think baptism is necessary to the communion."

"That certainly sounds strange," said Dorothy. "Why, I thought you considered baptism so important that a person could not be saved unless he was baptized; and now you say baptism is not necessary for the communion. That seems contradictory. I should think if baptism is essential to salvation it surely would be essential to taking the communion. Do you think a person ought to take the communion who has not been converted?"

"Of course not."

"This is what puzzles me," said Dorothy. "You say a person can't be converted without baptism. If an unbaptized person should come to your communion table claiming to be converted, would you not have to deny his conversion because he had not been baptized? You say you do not require baptism before communion, and yet when you require conversion before communion you thereby require baptism before communion, because you say there can be no conversion without baptism. In other words, you must hold that an unbaptized person cannot come to your table."

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"That does look like a clear proposition, daughter," said Mr. Page.

"Let me ask you this question, Mr. Garland," said Dorothy: "Why do you admit members of other denominations to your table?"

"Because it is not my table, but the Lord's table, and I have no right to shut any of his people out."

"You think the members of other denominations are Christians, then, do you?"

"Certainly they are; probably as good Christians as we are. We do not set ourselves up as being better than others."

"How can you think they are Christians? You do not think with their sprinkling and pouring they have been scripturally baptized, do you?"

"No, I do not."

"How, then, can you think them converted? I understood you to say that none are perfectly converted and saved until after baptism, and you say that sprinkling and pouring are not Scriptural baptism. Therefore you must think they are not Scripturally converted and saved."

"But such people think they have been scripturally baptized, and they do what they consider right."

"But do you think it is right?"

"It is right for them."

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"Do you think anybody will be saved if he will only do what he thinks is right for him? Suppose a person should come up and say that he believed that touching the tip of the little finger in the water was baptism, would you say that baptism would be all right for him?"

"Well, hardly," he said with a laugh.

"I declare, Mr. Garland," said Dorothy, "you confuse me. I really don't understand what you believe. It may be my stupidity. I wish I did understand. One thing, however, seems clear to me, and that is that in the Bible teaching the first thing that comes after conversion is baptism. I certainly do not think that I ought to go to the communion table in a church before I have been baptized."

"You don't seem to be able to accept the views of Mr. Garland's denomination," said Sterling.

"I want to say," said Mr. Garland, "that there are variations within our own ranks. In some sections of the country our denomination is more radical in its views than in other sections. In the East our people are not so pronounced as we of the West are in regard to the relation of baptism to salvation."

In response to Sterling's remark to Dorothy about her accepting the doctrines of the Disciples, she replied:

"No, I cannot accept the views of Mr. Garland. I am not sure that I understand clearly what his doctrines are, and yet from what he has said about free or open communion and baptism I must say they do not seem to me to be in accordance with the Bible teaching. I am speaking frankly,

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Mr. Garland. I have been interested in your statement of the doctrines of your church, and I thank you for telling me about them."

"I am sorry that you have not had an abler champion of our doctrines to present them to you," said Garland with a smile. "If you can't join us you can't join the Methodists, nor the Presbyterians, nor the Episcopalians. You are therefore shut up to the Baptists."

"Oh, I do not think I could join them, either. What do you mean, Mr. Sterling, exactly by their close communion?"

"I mean that they think they are better than anybody else, and that nobody but Baptists have any right to partake of the Lord's Supper. They are an ignorant, bigoted set and think that nobody can be saved who is not put under the water."

"Well, the Disciples believe that, don't they, Mr. Garland?"

"Ah, but not in the way the Baptists believe it," spoke up Sterling. "Miss Dorothy, there is a little Baptist mission here in the eastern part of town. I will take you over there that you may take a look at their base of operations, and I think a sight of it will set at rest any further inquiries as to the Baptists."

The members of the little Baptist mission to which Sterling referred worshiped in a plain, unsightly frame chapel. The city had raised the street that ran in front of the building so that the lot on which the chapel stood was left several feet below the level of the pavement and could be reached only by a rough board stairway from the street to the door of the building. Here a Baptist minister had been ministering to a small and struggling flock in connection with two other churches out in the county. The members were poor and many of them unlearned, and the pastor with such a poor building equipment found his task a difficult one.

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"Daughter, I think you want to keep away from that Baptist crowd," said Mr. Page. "They are very small fry and I would hate to see you tied up with such folks."

"I have no intention of joining them, and yet I am much bewildered over this matter of church membership. What must I do? I cannot unite with any of these denominations that I have heard about without doing wrong to my conscience."

"Miss Dorothy, you do not have to endorse all the beliefs that every member of your church holds," said Sterling. "Where will you find such a church? Each person must interpret the Bible for himself and be accountable to God only. If a church is composed of Christian people, why is not that the essential thing, and why can you not join with them? You will have to live in Heaven with them, and why can you not live with them here?"

"I am living with them here. I mingle freely with them, but when Christians divide themselves up and group themselves according to their interpretations of Bible teaching, then I must join myself with those who interpret the Bible as I do."

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"But suppose you cannot find any church group or denomination that interprets the Bible as you do; what will you do? You have not found such a people yet. Suppose you do not find such, will you stay out of all the churches?"

"That is a puzzling question. I am not sure just now what I ought to do if I find no denomination believing as I do. But really, I would rather stand alone, keeping loyal to my convictions regarding the Bible, than to compromise them in order to join some church. This is all very new to me, but I am determined to stand alone rather than go against my religious convictions. I know that each individual must interpret the Bible as best he can, and it must be his own conclusion, his own conviction, and I certainly shall not join a church whose doctrines I think are contrary to the Bible. Such a church is no place for me. I would be uncomfortable and I would be in constant controversy with the members."

"Well, there is no sin in controversy," said Sterling. "Our discussions, I hope, have not been very wicked. In fact, such discussions are often the best means for bringing people to see the truth. Why not come into our church simply on the ground that we are Christians like yourself, and then try to teach the other members the truths which you hold and which you think we ought to embrace? In other words, I should think you would have the best reason for coming in among us because we need the truth—according to your view—and you could come and sow the good seed among us."

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"Oh, Mr. Sterling, what a strange thing you are saying. You surely don't mean it. Do you say that your church will take in people no matter what they believe?"

Sterling saw in a flash that in his eagerness to save Dorothy from joining some obscure sect he was advocating an impossible procedure.

Dorothy continued: "Your church has its own special doctrines, does it not?"

"It does," said Sterling, seeing in advance the point to which she was aiming.

"Would your church accept a person who should apply for membership who should declare he could not accept the teachings of your church because he thought them unscriptural?"

"I surrender on that point, my fair antagonist," said Sterling with a smile. "But I will take down the church bars any fine morning for you and help you over the line into our ranks whenever you

decide to come. I think I could swallow my Presbyterian doctrines or lay them on the shelf for a few days under those conditions, because I think in a short while after you had come in and gotten well acquainted with our denomination you would discover we are not far apart after all."

"Oh, Mr. Sterling, how can you talk in that fashion? I like a person who believes something, and though I may not agree with him, I can respect him for his convictions."

"That's a straight thrust you are giving me, and I guess I deserve it, but it was the thought of the fair recruit for our ranks that got my logic and my Presbyterianism into a mixup. So if I was guilty of inconsistency I must blame my accuser. But seriously, it looks as if you are shut up to joining the Baptists."

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"No, Mr. Sterling, I do not have to join any denomination unless my convictions lead me to them. But why do you keep mentioning the Baptists? Are my beliefs nearer to theirs than to those of any other denomination?"

"Oh, no; I was joking that time. You do not believe as they do. Please consider them out of the question."

"Mr. Sterling, you make me curious to know what these Baptists do believe. Could we not get the pastor to explain their doctrines?"

"Miss Dorothy, that is not at all necessary," with a show of impatience. "I can give you their views. It is true they believe in immersion, but they have a horrible view about it. They believe that unless you are dipped you are doomed. They think infant baptism was born in the lower regions, and as for the communion they are as close as a clam, and in addition to this they have achieved brilliant success in the matter of ignorance and bigotry."

"Daughter," said Mr. Page with much earnestness, "keep on the other side of the road from that gang. There are some things that a father knows better than a daughter."

"Father, you would not object to my hearing a Baptist preacher tell what his denomination believes, would you?"

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It occurred to the father that that would be the quickest plan for curing Dorothy of any curiosity she might have about the Baptists. He thought that a sight of that preacher would show her the impossibility of her linking herself with his people, and so he said:

"Yes, daughter, that will be all right. Hear the preacher. Let us all hear him and get his side of the question."

"Mr. Page," said Sterling, "I think it would be humiliating to you and your family to be entering into negotiations with that preacher about the views of his sect."

"Mercy, are they so very terrible?" asked Dorothy.

"They are not a wicked people, so far as I know," said Sterling. "They are a fairly good sort of people probably. In fact, our country is a fruitful soil for all manner of sects, with all sorts of peculiar doctrines."

"Are the Baptists a regular denomination like the other denominations?"

"In a sense I guess they are, and yet they are not in a class with the other prominent denominations."

"Sterling, suppose you get hold of that Baptist preacher and march him up for our investigation," said Mr. Page.

Mr. Walton was the pastor of the little Baptist church. He was also pastor of two country churches, each of them several miles from town, but as the town was about midway between the two points, Mr. Walton chose the town as his home.

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He was much surprised next morning to receive a visit from the rich young Presbyterian elder, and still more surprised when Mr. Sterling told him the object of his visit. He listened with interest as Mr. Sterling told of Miss Page's desire to know the beliefs of the different denominations, "and of course", continued Mr. Sterling, "she does not wish to leave out any denomination." He said this in a tone that seemed to hint that, while the Baptists were hardly worth considering, yet they called themselves a denomination and therefore could not be omitted. Mr. Walton stated that he held himself ready always to give a reason for the faith that was in him, and that if Miss Page desired to know the doctrines held by his people he would cheerfully explain them to her. He was unwilling, however, he said, to force his views upon the young lady. It was finally agreed that Mr. Walton would call at Mr. Sterling's house, and that together they would go next door to the Pages'.

CHAPTER XI.

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A BAPTIST ON THE WITNESS STAND.

At eight o'clock that evening Mr. Sterling and Rev. Mr. Walton were ushered into the library of the Page mansion. Mr. Walton was fifty-three years of age, a man of native gifts, a certain degree of culture and also with college and seminary training. He could not exactly explain it, but he had not been put entirely at his ease by the bearing of Mr. Sterling on that morning in their first conversation. He had determined, however, to make the visit and meet the issue as it came. The family soon appeared and a battery of curious glances were opened upon the preacher in his plain but neat garb. Mr. Page thought that Dorothy's first view of the brother would settle the question for her. There was a self-containment and a lack of self-consciousness on the part of the preacher that was not unnoticed by Sterling. Soon after the arrival of Mr. Walton, Rev. Mr. Garland, the Disciple preacher, also appeared. On the previous evening he had been invited by Dorothy to return and join the circle on the next evening, when Mr. Walton was to tell about his denomination. After some preliminary chatting the conversation was turned into the main channel.

"Mr. Walton," said Mr. Sterling, "in our discussion last evening I stated that the Baptists believe that immersion is the only form of Scriptural baptism. Did I state your position correctly?"

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"You did," quietly replied the visitor.

"I also stated that your denomination teaches that infant baptism is wrong. Is that a fact?"

"It is."

"Next as to communion. Your denomination believes, does it not, that none but Baptists will be saved and that therefore only Baptists can come to the communion table?"

"Mr. Sterling, I am sure you do not intend it, but your statement woefully misrepresents my denomination. We hold no such theory. I am aware that we are often charged with having a lofty opinion of ourselves and a contemptuous opinion of other denominations. Such a statement does us great injustice. We do not think ourselves better than others; in fact, they may reach higher standards of piety than we do. Certainly we have no words of praise for ourselves. We love all our brethren in Christ and are happy to join with them in different forms of activity."

"What about the communion?" asked Mr. Sterling. "Are you willing to let other denominations commune with you?"

"That is a matter they must decide for themselves."

"Would you permit a member of another denomination to come to your communion table?"

"If the person considered himself qualified to come I would not seek to put him out."

"Why, that is startling, Mr. Walton," said Mr. Sterling. "I understood that Baptists thought the other denominations were not qualified to come to the table."

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"Very true," said Mr. Walton. "But you asked me first if I would permit such a person to come to the table, and I said I would not seek to keep such a person out. We keep no policeman to guard the Lord's table, but if you ask me whether I think such a person is qualified to come and ought to come, that is another question and I answer, no."

"Why not?"

"My reason is this. The Bible teaches that all who partook of the Lord's Supper in the days of the apostles first believed in Christ and next were baptized upon a profession of faith. In other words, the New Testament seems to lay down these steps—first faith in Christ, next baptism and then the partaking of the communion and the other duties of the Christian life."

"We invite to our table all who love the Lord," said Mr. Garland. "We care not what church a person belongs to if only he is a consistent church member."

"Would you invite me to your table in your church, Mr. Walton?" asked Sterling.

"You speak of my inviting you to my table as if it were a table in my dining room. But remember, it is not my table at all. It is the Lord's Supper spread in my church. The members of my church anxious to carry out the command of Christ that we observe this supper in memory of him come together at regular intervals for that purpose. I have never felt called upon to look out over the entire community to decide whom I would invite to this table."

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"But is it not your duty as a Christian minister to invite the people to come?"

"It is my duty to explain the nature of the supper and also to state the qualifications that ought to be possessed by those who come to the table. I am always willing to try to make it plain who I think are entitled to come to the table, but I hardly think I am commanded to pick out a list of people to be invited to the table. I state the conditions and each one must decide whether he ought to come."

"Well," said Mr. Sterling, "I will put my question in another form. Do you think I am entitled to come to the Lord's table in your church and commune?"

"In reply I would say that, while I have respect for your Christian profession, yet I think you are not entitled to come to the communion because I do not think you have been baptized."

"Yes, I know you think that, but why do you not leave the communion matter to me? If it is the

Lord's table, and if I am satisfied with my baptism and am baptized in the manner in which the Bible seems to me to teach, why should I not commune?"

"That is for you to decide, Mr. Sterling, but I think you have left out one of the steps that, according to the Bible, ought to precede the supper, and that is baptism. I am bound to think you have left out that step, and therefore I think the thing for you to be interested in is not the taking of the communion, but the being properly baptized. For me to invite you to the table would be wrong. If I felt called on to invite you to anything it would be to the proper Scriptural baptism. If you come to my table I will not put you out. You are responsible for your actions, but if my opinion is asked about your action I can only say I think you would be communing without having taken the previous step of baptism which the Bible requires."

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"But according to my best judgment, I have taken the step of baptism. I have chosen the form of baptism which I believe the Bible teaches. Would you ask more of me than that?"

"I endorse your sincerity, Mr. Sterling, but you surely would not expect me to say I believe that you have followed the Scriptural baptism. I am bound to believe that you have not met the Scriptural requirements for coming to the table. I do not try to force my opinion on you. I simply have my opinion, which of course I am ready at any proper time to state. People who have not been immersed know that we have this opinion regarding their baptism, and they seem to take offense because we hold such a view regarding their baptism. Because we think they have omitted one of the preliminary steps to the table they call us close in our communion."

"It looks as if you are close in your baptism rather than in your communion," said Dorothy. "And is that what is meant by the close communion of the Baptists?"

"I do not know what our critics always mean when they speak of our close communion," said Mr. Walton, "but that is our position. I know that here and there in our own denomination there are those who are open in their communion—that is, they will invite Christians of all denominations."

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"What, whether they have been immersed or not?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes."

"Oh, I can't see any consistency in that. If I were a Baptist I would certainly be a close communion Baptist in the sense that Mr. Walton has explained it; that is, I think that people ought to be Scripturally baptized before coming to the communion table, and I certainly don't see anything so terrible in holding such an opinion."

"It is a very ugly doctrine in the eyes of many," said Mr. Walton, "but I take this view of it. If the Bible had given us the two ordinances, baptism and communion, and had said nothing at all about the order in which they were to be observed and we were left free to choose their order, then we would not be able to speak so positively; but when we find in the Bible that baptism is always put immediately after believing, and that the Lord's Supper is never put in this order, then I think it is clear that baptism is expected always to come first. And if it came first in Bible times, why should anyone now wish to reverse the order?"

"Let me ask you a question," said Sterling. "You say a person ought to be immersed before coming to the table. Suppose a person has believed in Christ and been immersed and joins a Methodist church. You would then have a Scripturally baptized Christian. Would you permit such a person to commune with you?"

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"You speak of my permitting such a person to commune with me. In the first place, I doubt whether such a person would want to commune with me. I never find such people coming to our church asking to commune with us. We do not have guards before our table. We simply have our views as to those who are properly qualified and the people know it."

"Would you think that this immersed Methodist ought to commune with you?"

"Why do you say 'commune with me'?"

"I will change the question, then. Do you think that an immersed Methodist ought to partake of the communion anywhere?"

"I think not, as long as he occupies that position. But of course he can follow his own convictions. If, however, he should ask my opinion, I would tell him I think he is living in disorderly fashion. He believes that immersion only is the Scriptural baptism, otherwise he would not have sought immersion when the prevailing mode in the Methodist church is sprinkling. Believing thus about baptism he yet throws his membership with a church that seeks to put another form of baptism in the place of the Scriptural baptism. I think that is wrong. He is a Baptist by conviction, and yet for social or other reasons he joins a church of a different faith. Why does he not join the church of his own faith? Besides, in joining that church he is linking himself with an organization that teaches and practices not only sprinkling in the place of immersion, but also infant baptism. I would have to say to such a person, if he should ask my opinion, 'Sir, I think your first duty is not to go to the communion, but to get the matter of your church relationship straightened out'."

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"But suppose he should say he believed in infant baptism and therefore could not join the Baptist church? Suppose he should say he believed in all the other doctrines of the Methodist church except their view of sprinkling, and that even on the point of baptism the Methodists believed in immersion as one form of baptism, else they would not have immersed him. What would you say

to him then? There you would have a person Scripturally baptized and joining the church that came nearest to his convictions, and now do you say that such a person ought to keep away from the communion?"

"Mr. Sterling, I think that is an impossible case. In the first place, how could that person believe in infant baptism if he believed in immersion? Infant baptism is only by sprinkling. Could that person endorse the sprinkling of infants? I doubt whether you will find a person believing that only immersion is baptism and yet believing that infant baptism is Scriptural. But granting this, you ask if that person ought to keep away from the table. I answer that if that person thinks his position is correct, and he desires to commune, let him take the responsibility. I think he is violating the Scripture. I do not believe the apostles would have advised such a person going to the communion. I think they would have instructed him on the subject of infant baptism and any other important Bible doctrines that the person was neglecting, and they would have sought to set him right on these things before advising him to go to the communion, and if he had refused to follow the Scripture, even though he was sincere in his action, I do not believe the apostles would have countenanced his partaking of the communion. That is simply my view of it. The responsibility rests with him, and he must follow his conscience; only let him be sure that he studied the Bible teaching on the point as thoroughly as possible. I certainly would not invite such a person to our table, because if such a person were a member of my church and should accept and practice the infant baptism and give his influence to propagating that and the other doctrines of the Methodists, he would have to be excluded from our membership; and if such a person would have to be excluded from our membership he surely could not be invited to our communion table. There would be no consistency in that."

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"That seems plain," said Mr. Page, who had been a silent, interested listener.

"This is what we believe on the subject, but, as I said a moment ago, we do not force our views on others. They are generally brought up against us. They attack us about our close communion and thus compel us to state our views as to the communion. People know that we have positive convictions about the relation between baptism and the Lord's Supper, and yet they seem horrified if we stand by these convictions and follow them to their logical conclusion."

"Well, well," said Dorothy, "I think this abuse of the Baptists is much ado about nothing. I do not see how the Baptists could occupy any other position than they do about the communion as long as they believe as they do about baptism."

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"Mr. Walton, what about myself?" asked Mr. Garland. "Would you permit me to commune at your table?"

"Permit you? Mr. Garland, I have stated that we do not turn anybody away."

"Exactly. But you make it plain whom you want and it amounts to a prohibition. Nobody wants to go where he is not wanted. But tell me, do you think I have taken the necessary steps before communion? I have accepted Christ as my Savior, I have been immersed and am a member of a church that believes in immersion as the only baptism and that does not believe in infant baptism. These are the same doctrines as those held by the Baptists. Would you therefore say that I am qualified to come to the table?"

"I have always understood, Mr. Garland, that your view of baptism was not the same as ours; that you regard baptism as a necessary part of conversion, and in that respect we think you have made a mistake regarding baptism. Scriptural baptism is one of the steps laid down to be taken before the communion, and consequently I think you have not taken that particular step. Those who partook of the communion in Christ's day were baptized because they had believed and were already saved, but you have been baptized in order to be saved. Yours is a different kind of baptism from the Bible baptism."

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"I thought immersion constituted baptism?"

"Ah, that is a mistake very frequently made. There is something else in baptism besides the form. There must be the right motive as well as the right mode. I think that when you go down into the water, not that you may typify your death to your old life and your rising to a new life—a change that has already taken place within you—but in order that in some way your baptism may complete your salvation, you rob baptism of its chief glory. It is not the same baptism that Christ commanded. He did not go down into the water in order to be saved nor in order that it might work any change in him, but simply to show forth certain truths and to fulfill all righteousness."

"I don't believe you have answered my question," said Mr. Garland. "Do you think I am entitled to partake of the communion?"

"I am not your judge, but if you ask my opinion I am bound to say that I do not think your baptism was after the Scriptural order—that is, if in your baptism you regarded it as completing your salvation."

"But do you think I have a right to commune?"

"You must follow your conscience on that point."

"Would you yourself commune with the Disciples, Mr. Walton?" asked Sterling.

"Why ask such a question, Mr. Sterling? Why should I go to their church to commune with them?"

I have my own church in which to commune."

"I know, but suppose that while visiting in a community you attended service at a Disciple church, and they had the communion and the elements were passed around. Would you partake of the supper there?"

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"I have never been placed in such a position."

"What would you do, Mr. Walton?"

"There are many who claim that my communing with you would endorse not only your act in communing, but also your baptism as you teach and practice it. If my act would be a practical endorsement of your communion and your baptism, then I certainly ought not and would not join with you."

"I think you would endorse them," said Dorothy, "if you should sit with them and commune with them."

"I think not," said Mr. Garland. "Each one would be acting for himself and your act would not be misunderstood."

"Why should he commune with them?" asked Dorothy. "Must not a person always have a reason for communing? Must he commune every time he may see the table spread before him in any church? If Mr. Walton should retire from the communion in the Disciple church, or simply should not take the supper, the people would understand that he differed from them as to the Scriptural steps required before communion, and it is a person's duty to let his beliefs about Bible teaching be known."

"No, the people generally would not understand Mr. Walton's act in that way," said Sterling, "but would simply think Mr. Walton thought himself too good to commune with them, and this would have a bad effect, and this is the harm of close communion. None of us are perfect, Mr. Walton. We Presbyterians may fall short in some particulars; the Baptists also may not hit the mark at every point. Why not recognize this, and with charity for each other come together around the table of the Lord and avoid making such unbrotherly distinctions?"

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"Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy, "that does not appeal to me at all. If a thing is right it is right, and I do not believe we will gain anything by putting that aside just to come together. If I believe that the Disciples' baptism is not the Bible baptism I do not know of any better way I could say that to them than by not joining with them in their communion. I should think that such loyalty to conviction would do no harm and oftentimes might do good."

"Is it not a fact, Mr. Garland, that the different denominations very rarely commune with each other?" asked Mr. Walton.

"You are correct," said Mr. Garland. "Although we practice open communion, it is the rarest thing in the world for a member of another denomination to commune with us or for any of our members to commune in the church of any other denomination."

"I can respect a person who differs from me," said Dorothy, "but a person who seems to be so anxious to appear on good terms with me as to be willing to smooth over or minimize his convictions—oh, I want none of that. If we differ in our views and think the other is not keeping the Scripture requirement, then let us differ and not pretend that we are together or that our differences do not amount to anything."

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"I think that their doctrine of close communion has greatly hurt the Baptists and kept from them many who would otherwise have joined them," said Mr. Garland.

"I must differ with you," said Mr. Walton. "If the Baptists abandon their position on the communion question they could not hold their position on immersion. You know that in England, where the Baptists are not gaining, many of the open communion Baptist churches also have open church membership, thus admitting people to the church who have not been immersed. Do you know why the Baptists of the South have grown so much more rapidly than the Baptists in all other parts of the world?"

"No, I do not," answered Mr. Garland.

"It is because they are strict in their views and stand loyally by their denominational convictions."

"What is another doctrine of your denomination, Mr. Walton?" asked Dorothy.

"Another doctrine is the 'independence of the local church'."

"Independent of what?" asked Dorothy.

"I mean that no pope, priest, presbytery nor bishop, nor any ecclesiastical power has any authority over any local church, but that the church in the conduct of its affairs is entirely independent."

"That sounds like pretty good democracy," said Mr. Page.

"It is democracy, pure and simple," said Mr. Walton. "The Baptist doctrine is that every individual has equal religious rights with every other individual, that all members are on a level, that the local members are capable of managing their own affairs. And, by the way, Mr. Page, did you

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know that Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence, got his ideas of democracy largely from a little Baptist church?"

"What is that?" asked Mr. Page, leaning forward in his chair. "You say that a Baptist church gave to Mr. Jefferson his ideas of democracy? If you will prove that, Mr. Walton, you will be giving us the liveliest bit of sensation that I have gotten hold of for many a day."

"I have the newspaper here in my pocket that proves what I say. The writer is Rev. Dr. Fishback, of Lexington, Ky., and he writes for the Christian Watchman, and he tells of a conversation he had with Elder Andrew Tribble, who was a Baptist preacher and whose church was near the residence of Thomas Jefferson, and it was this Baptist church of Mr. Tribble that gave to Mr. Jefferson his ideas of democracy."

"Do you have in that paper a letter from Mr. Tribble about it?" asked Mr. Page.

"No, but I have a letter from Mr. Fishback telling of the conversation he himself had with this Mr. Tribble about the matter."

"All right, let us have it."

Mr. Walton opened the paper (The Christian Watchman, a paper that bore the marks of age) and said: "Here is Dr. Fishback's letter:

"Mr. Editor: The following circumstances, which occurred in the state of Virginia relative to Mr. Jefferson, was detailed to me by Elder Andrew Tribble about six years ago, who since died about ninety-two or ninety-three years old. The facts may interest some of your readers.

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"Andrew Tribble was the parson of a small Baptist church which held monthly meetings at a short distance from the Jefferson home nine or ten years before the American revolution. Mr. Jefferson attended the meetings of the church several months in succession, and after one of them asked Elder Tribble to go home and dine with him, with which he complied. Mr. Tribble asked Mr. Jefferson how he was pleased with their church government. Mr. Jefferson replied that it had struck him with great force and had interested him much, that he considered it the only form of pure democracy that then existed in the world, and had concluded that it would be the best plan of government for the American colonies. This was several years before the Declaration of Independence."

"Well, well," exclaimed Mr. Page, "that is mighty interesting. That surely is a big tribute to the Baptists, and that does seem the natural form of government for a church."

"But does the Bible say that a church ought to be governed that way?" asked Dorothy.

"I think the Presbyterian form of government is taught in the Scriptures," said Mr. Sterling; "in other words, that a church ought to be governed by a body known as the presbytery."

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"That means that a larger body should be governed by a smaller body, does it not?" asked Mr. Page.

"Yes," answered Mr. Walton.

"That may be Scripture," said Mr. Page, "but I don't like it."

"I think it is wise as well as Scriptural," said Sterling. "You know that today in all great bodies it is a few leaders that do the thinking and planning and directing. Even in the Baptist church, that claims to be a democracy, I'll venture that a few men in each church hold the reins. How much better to have a body of wise men to whom all important questions shall be submitted and who shall have general oversight over and direction of the affairs of the church."

"I must differ with Mr. Sterling as to the Scriptural plan of church government," said Mr. Walton. "I think the Bible clearly teaches that each local church in the days of the apostles managed its own affairs. Where have you any record in the Bible, Mr. Sterling, of any presbytery or smaller body of men controlling the affairs of any local church?"

"I can cite you a case."

"Good," said Mr. Page. "Let us have it."

"The council at Jerusalem drew up a list of requirements that were to be binding on the churches. That looks very much like a body of men legislating for local churches."

"Of course the apostles in their day gave direction for the churches," said Mr. Walton. "They were inspired to give directions to the churches. In fact, they were the founders of the churches. Christ gave through them the rules for the churches not only of that day, but of all succeeding days."

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"It looks as if the apostles directed the churches, and why do you say the churches managed their own affairs?" asked Sterling.

"No, I do not think the apostles managed the churches. The apostles at the first had to give rules for the founding and starting of the churches, but even in the first days the apostles threw upon the churches the responsibilities of their own government. You remember that when an apostle was to be chosen to take the place of Judas he was not chosen by the other apostles, but by all the disciples just as if they were all, disciples and apostles, on a level when it came to voting for anything. They cast lots, and I have seen it stated that this casting of lots was simply a voting by

ballot, and that is the democratic, Baptist way. You remember that Christ said that a person having a grievance against another person must, as a final step, tell it to the church, and if the offender would not hear the church then he must be as a heathen and a publican. There you see the ultimate authority was lodged in the church to deal with the offender and not in some presbytery or in some ecclesiastical council. How were the deacons elected? They were told to look out seven men of good report. This was said to the multitude of disciples, and this multitude was to look out from among them the seven men who should be appointed for the purpose. Notice it was not the apostles that picked out the men, but they made the selection the work of the people. In fact, in every church mentioned in the New Testament it is plain that there was no ecclesiastical interference in the affairs of the church. Even Paul, the founder of the churches, in his letters, throws upon the churches the responsibility of dealing with their problems. In the case of the incestuous man he said 'when your church is come together' cast out this man; that is, 'get your church together and let them act on it'."

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"I think you make out a good case, Mr. Walton, and this principle of democracy is the best thing about the Baptists that I have yet heard," said Mr. Page.

"There are other interesting facts about the Baptists," said Mr. Walton, "but I find I must leave at this point. If you should care to learn more about our denomination I should be glad some time to give you further information."

"Can't you come again tomorrow night?" asked Dorothy in an eager manner.

"An engagement will prevent this, but I could come on some other night."

It was so agreed, though the Pages did not suspect the surprises that were in store for them.

CHAPTER XII.

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DISCOVERY.

After the party broke up after their last discussion Mr. Page complimented the Baptists on their democratic principles of church government. "But, daughter," he said, "it will be impossible for you to mingle with that class of people. I am glad for you to know about the different denominations, but joining one of them is a horse of a very different color, and I am sure you could never be happy tied up with these Baptist people. They may be good folks, but they are evidently a poor and obscure folk. I guess they have sprung up mostly in country districts. I remember in the valley of Virginia where I was reared there was a little Baptist church in the country five or six miles from us. The Presbyterian church, I think, was the strongest and the Baptists cut very little figure in that section, though I confess I did not pay much attention to any of them."

A large part of the day was spent by Dorothy at the public library ransacking the encyclopedias searching for something about the Baptists. To her surprise she found a great deal. She was amazed as she read of the part that the Baptists had played in history. Knowing that the people at her home would be interested, she made copious notes during her reading.

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She hurried through her lunch that day and informed her mother that she was getting some very important information about the Baptists, and that by dinner time she hoped to have it in shape to lay it before the family.

The mother thought that of course she was unearthing unfavorable information about the Baptists that would show Dorothy that she could never identify herself with them.

That evening Mr. Page, when he reached home, was greeted with the words from Dorothy: "Oh, father, I have made a discovery!"

"Is it a gold mine under the front porch?"

"It is a discovery about these Baptist people. But wait until Mr. Walton and Mr. Sterling come and I will tell you."

Soon after dinner the two visitors were gathered in the parlor and ready.

"Dorothy announces a big discovery," said Mr. Page. "Let us have it, daughter."

"I don't know that any others will be interested in it, but it greatly surprised and interested me. I have learned that these Baptists have had a remarkable history."

"Remarkable for what, daughter? For obscurity?"

"No. They have played an illustrious part in this world's history."

The father's face darkened. The thought of his daughter falling in love with the Baptists struck him in an unpleasant point of his anatomy. The little Baptist chapel with its plain-looking people and pastor put the denomination in a sorry light before the public.

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"Father, I have been in the library hunting for facts about the Baptists. I have read their

doctrines and they surely seem to believe exactly what the Bible teaches, and their history is a noble and inspiring one."

"What did you find out about these Baptists? Where did they come from?"

"That is the interesting part. Do you know they are next to the largest denomination in the world except the Catholics?"

"What is that, daughter? You evidently got into some fairy tales in the library. Why, the Methodists are as large as all the other denominations put together, and as for the Baptists, they are but a drop in the bucket. Look at them in this town, and I guess the bunch here is a pretty good sample of them everywhere."

"Oh, father, either those books in the library are wrong or else you and lots of other folks are terribly mistaken. The Baptists and the Methodists are the two largest denominations in the world, except the Catholics."

The father wore an incredulous and bewildered look.

"There may possibly be a lot of Baptists scattered over the earth," admitted Sterling, "but you must have quality as well as quantity, and quality is what the Baptists have not."

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"You are prodigiously mistaken," replied Dorothy in a vehement manner. "I could hardly believe it myself as I read it; but it is a fact that the Baptists hold a high place in history. One writer says that the Baptists are in the front ranks in the matter of education. Two writers say that the great Foreign Mission movement of the present and the past century was started by the Baptists of England. Another book says they have led in founding and perfecting Sunday schools."

"England?" said the father. "I didn't know that any Baptists had ever found their way across the seas to England."

"Why, father, England owes much of her present greatness to the Baptists. In the Puritan movement that saved England from Catholicism and kept her Protestant the Baptists are said to have played a large part."

"When did they come into existence?"

"They claim that they have always been in existence since the days of the apostles."

"Well, well, that is a clincher sure."

"Father, it does look as if the truths which the Baptists hold are the truths which Christ taught and which the first Christians practiced; and if so, then the first churches were in that sense Baptist churches."

"All of the other churches knocked out at the first blow," said the father with a laugh, "and Christianity starting off with only Baptist churches."

"This history which I read also said that all through the centuries since Christ there seem to have been bands of Christian people believing substantially what the Baptists of today believe. This was not proved with absolute certainty, but all the evidence points that way. The great Roman church came into power and ruled the religious world, but there were always bands of Christians protesting against Catholicism and standing up for those truths and practices which they believed the Bible taught. Baptist historians say that these persecuted churches held very largely what the Baptists of today believe."

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"Exactly," said Sterling. "You say that the Baptist historians claim that these Christian sects who in every century protested against Catholicism and stood up for Christianity were Baptists. Of course Baptist historians claim that these Christians were Baptists. Suppose, however, you had read Presbyterian histories; who knows but that you would have read that there were in every century Presbyterian churches?"

"But how could this be? I read in two or three places that the Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians and many of the other denominations were the fruit of the Reformation, and came after the sixteenth century."

"Daughter, you seem to have these histories at your finger ends."

"I do not know very much about them, but I have read everything in the library that would throw light upon the matters that we have been discussing, and I have made full notes from my reading."

"Your statements sound strange, Miss Dorothy," said Mr. Sterling, "for the Baptists evidently were one of those numerous sects that sprang out of and were a part of the Protestant Reformation."

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"Two or three of the books that I examined said that the Baptists existed before the Reformation and helped to bring about the Reformation, and that they did much to shape the Reformation both in Holland and in England and in other places."

"Miss Dorothy," said Mr. Sterling, "the idea seems preposterous to me that the Baptists existed before the Reformation."

"Here is a statement that I read in 'Mosheim's History of Antiquity', in which he says 'the origin of the Baptists is lost in the depths of antiquity'."

"Does Mosheim say that?" asked Mr. Sterling. "Why, he was a noted writer."

"I found that three or four hundred years ago the Baptists were called Anabaptists, and that they gradually dropped the first part of their name."

"What does the word Anabaptist mean?"

"It means a rebaptizer. It seems that they insisted when a person who had been baptized in infancy was converted in later life that he should be baptized on profession of faith. They claimed that his infant baptism was not Bible baptism, and so the people called them rebaptizers or Anabaptists. And here is one statement that I read: 'It is said that two of the presidents of Harvard College were Anabaptists'."

"What is that!" exclaimed the father, almost bouncing out of his chair. "Two of Harvard's presidents Baptists? Where did you find that statement?"

"On page 338 of Gregory's 'Puritanism in the Old World and the New'."

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"And you say the Baptists and the Anabaptists are the same?"

"Yes, indeed. I find that the names are used interchangeably in the histories, and gradually the shorter name took the place of the longer."

"Two presidents of Harvard? Well! Well! If that Gregory knows what he is talking about, then that is a stunner. I would never have thought it. But go ahead and give us some more."

"Here is something about the Baptist soldiers in Oliver Cromwell's army: 'The men who made up the new army of Ironsides, which won the victories of Naseby and Dunbar, the men who smiled only as they went into battle and never counted the odds against them, were not Presbyterians, * * * they were Independents, the Baptists forming the largest element, men who believed in self-government in the church as well as in the state'."

"Where do you find that?" asked Sterling with an interested expression.

"It is on pages 394 and 395 of Campbell's 'The Puritan in His Three Homes, Holland, England and America'. And listen to this from the same author: 'Thus it came about that the persecuted Anabaptists of Holland, taking their doctrines from the early Christians, gave birth to the powerful denomination of Baptists, which has played so important a part in the history of England and America'."

"Miss Dorothy, you amaze me," said Sterling.

"I learn from my reading that the religious liberty which the Christian world is enjoying today is largely due to the Baptists."

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"Julius Caesar!" exclaimed the father. "What do you think of that, Sterling?"

"Do you mean to say, Miss Dorothy," asked Sterling, "that you found in your reading that the great blessings of religious liberty that are enjoyed in this country, and to a certain extent in Europe, are due to the Baptist denomination?"

"I find that fact positively stated in many places. Here is something from the same book of Campbell, 'The Puritan in His Three Homes, Holland, England and America', which I mentioned just now. It is on pages 202 and 203: 'But no words of praise can be too strong for the services which the English Baptists rendered to the cause of religious liberty. They went down with Cromwell and suffered a relentless persecution after the restoration of the Stuarts, but they have never lost their influence as a leaven in the land. In purity of life and substantial Christian work they have been surpassed by the members of no other religious body. Having been the first British denomination of Christians to proclaim the principle of religious liberty, they were also the first to send out missionaries to the heathen.'"

"Just listen to that!" exclaimed Mr. Page.

Dorothy continued: "'In fact, if the Anabaptists had done nothing more for the world than to beget such offspring they would have repaid a thousand-fold the care shown for their liberties by the Prince of Orange in his contest with some of the narrow-minded Calvinists among his associates.'"

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"Hold on there, you take my breath away," said the father.

"Please note what that says," remarked Mr. Walton. "Those words call attention to the purity and high Christian character of the Baptists, and to the fact that they were the first in these centuries to send out missionaries to the heathen. It is a fact that the great Foreign Mission movement now encircling the world was first started by the Baptists a little over a hundred years ago under the lead of William Carey, a Baptist. Notice it gives to the Baptists the honor of being the author of religious liberty for the world."

"But who is that Campbell?" asked Sterling.

"His book is one of the great books of the day."

"Of course," said Sterling with a smile.

Dorothy read on. "Here is another statement from Gregory. He is writing concerning the Anabaptists: 'The history of that remarkable people is yet to be written, and when it shall have been written an heroic chapter shall have been added to the history of the world. The Dutch Anabaptists were Puritans before Puritanism had sprung into recognized existence and held all that Puritanism afterwards contended for.'"

"Think of that," said Mr. Walton. "We all know one of the greatest religious movements of the past was Puritanism. It saved England from the blight of Catholicism and made and kept her Protestant. But there were two wings of the Puritan movement; one wing stayed in the English church and sought to work reforms within the church, and the other wing fought the battle on the outside of that church, and of this party the Baptists were the foremost fighters. They sounded clear and strong the demand for absolute religious liberty."

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"Here is something from Masson's Life of Milton," said Dorothy.

"Let us have it," said Sterling. "That is a standard book."

"On page 90, Vol. III., find this: 'Not to the Church of England, however, nor to Scotch Presbyterianism, nor to English Puritanism at large does the honor of the first perception of the full liberty of conscience and its first assertion in English speech belong. That honor has to be assigned, I believe, to the Independents in general and to the Baptists in particular.'"

"Well, well," said Mr. Page. "Sterling, this daughter of mine has indeed made a discovery. I think it is an eye-opener for both of us. But go ahead, daughter. You seem to have yet other surprises up your sleeve."

"Here is something very interesting."

"And where does it come from this time?" asked the father.

"It is also from Masson's Life of Milton, and it is on page 101, Vol. III.: 'In a confession of faith or declaration of faith, put forth in 1611 by the English Baptists of Amsterdam, just after the death of Smith, this article occurs: "The magistrate is not to meddle with religion or matters of conscience, nor compel men to this or that form of religion; because Christ is the King and the Lawgiver of the church and conscience." It is believed,' continues Masson, 'that this is the first expression of the absolute principle of liberty of conscience in the published articles of any body of Christians'."

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"Just think of that publication by the little Baptist church in Amsterdam," said Mr. Walton. "Consider the circumstances. The religious world was at that time under the domination of the Catholic hierarchy. The church and the government locked arms in absolute control of men's forms of worship as well as of every phase of human action. The king and pope prescribed the prayers, the Scripture readings and the forms of worship of every citizen; and in the face of it all this little band drew up its declaration of faith to the effect that the government had no right to meddle with a man's religion nor to compel men to any form of worship because Christ was the King and Lawgiver. Think of the boldness of such an announcement. It was an ultimatum hurled by that little flock at the king, the pope and the civil government and the hierarchy."

"That explains all the horrible persecutions of the Baptists in Holland that I read about this morning," said Dorothy.

"Very true," said Mr. Walton. "Of course the thunderbolts of the higher powers fell upon the heads of the rebellious Baptists, but persecution only fanned the flame of their faith and zeal. They grew and spread. They planted the seeds of their faith on English soil, and we read that after 1660 the English prisons were full of Baptists, and Miss Dorothy has already read of the brave Baptists who formed the flower of Cromwell's Ironsides."

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"What do you mean exactly by saying that the Baptists have given religious liberty to the world?" asked Mr. Page.

"I mean this," said Mr. Walton. "Up to the sixteenth century the Catholic Church held the so-called Christian world in its grip, controlled men's consciences and decided how every man was to worship. The Baptists rebelled against any interference with the religious life."

"I thought it was Martin Luther with his Reformation who broke the power of the Catholic Church and thus gave birth to religious liberty," said Sterling.

"The Reformation under Luther did strike a prodigious blow at Catholicism, but it was not a fight for absolute religious liberty. Never forget that. Lutheranism simply threw off Catholicism to substitute a state church of its own. In the Reformation in England the church broke from Catholicism, but it sought to set up a state Episcopal church. In Scotland a Presbyterian state church was set up, but during all this time the Baptists were ever sounding their demand for absolute religious liberty without any interference or help from the government and for complete separation of church and state."

"Did not the Baptists bring these principles to this country?" asked Dorothy. "I think I read that they did."

"You are right, Miss Dorothy. Roger Williams, who was a Baptist—"

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"What is that!" exclaimed Sterling. "Roger Williams a Baptist?"

"He surely was, and he was the apostle of religious liberty for America. And how did the clause in the Constitution of the United States granting religious liberty get in there? It was brought about by the Baptists of Virginia, who pleaded for it and fought for it and suffered for it. Bancroft, the historian, states that the Baptists gave religious liberty to America, and John Locke states that the Baptists were the authors of religious liberty. And, gentlemen, it is a fact to be borne in mind that, while all Protestant denominations in America today practically believe in religious liberty, yet it was not always so. The Baptists in this country, single-handed, took up the cause and fought it through to a finish, and now all denominations are enjoying the benefits of it."

"By the way, Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy, "I read today that John Milton and John Bunyan were Baptists."

"Hold on, Miss Dorothy," said Mr. Sterling.

"It is a fact," said Mr. Walton. "They agreed with the Baptists in their fundamental doctrines. You must remember another thing, and that is that the principles of democracy that are sweeping over the world are largely the trophies of the Baptists."

Mr. Page, with a laugh: "There he goes gathering up some more of our treasures and claiming them for the Baptists."

"Come, let us vary the exercises with some ice cream," said the mother. [Pg 152]

"You think the discussion is getting too warm, do you, mother?" asked Dorothy.

They adjourned to the dining room and a recess was taken.

CHAPTER XIII.

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BAPTIST PRINCIPLES ON THE MARCH.

"Now let us have the facts about the part the Baptists have played in giving the principles of democracy to the world," said Mr. Page.

"History shows," said Mr. Walton, "that up to the sixteenth century the Catholic Church, in league with the government, not only controlled the religious life, but also the civil life of the people. There was neither religious nor civil freedom. The king and the pope ruled all. Then came the demand of the Baptists for absolute freedom, and although their demand had reference to religious freedom, yet the inevitable result of this principle is civil freedom; and in the wake of this came democracy, which is simply the rule of the people."

"But I do not see that religious liberty necessarily leads to democracy," said Mr. Page.

"I think it does. Where absolute religious liberty exists for every individual you then have equal rights for all the people, and this is democracy. Besides, coupled with the doctrine of religious liberty is also the doctrine of the Baptists regarding church government. They believe the Bible to teach that every local church is independent of every other local church and of any higher government. They believe not only in the independence of the local church, but also of the individual. In other words, each local church was a democracy in which all members were on a level, each entitled to a vote in its management and the majority controlling. This is democracy. These principles of democracy have, like a leaven, penetrated the nations." [Pg 154]

"You remember, father," said Dorothy, "it has already been mentioned how Thomas Jefferson got his idea of democracy from a little Baptist church."

"You are right, daughter; all this is mighty interesting. Go ahead with it."

"See the rapid strides that these Baptist principles are making," continued Mr. Walton. "They are on a world-wide tour of conquest. In England the Baptists have been in the front of the fight for freedom. Their household goods have been sold again and again in these latter days. Look at Russia. What mean those uprisings of the people against tyranny? It is the stirrings of democracy, and the Baptists are bearing the brunt of the battle. I saw at the Baptist World Alliance in Philadelphia some of the Russian Baptists, and I tell you they were stalwart-looking heroes indeed. See how in Spain and Portugal the power of the hierarchy and of the monarchical government is crumbling. Behold China! What does it mean except the rule of the people supplanting the rule of the monarch?"

"Yes," said the father, "I noticed in the paper yesterday that the new president, Yuan Shi Kai, had announced religious liberty for the new republic." [Pg 155]

"Think of that. And whence came that boon of religious liberty which the new Chinese president is so generously offering to his great nation?" asked Mr. Walton. "Who deserves the largest credit? I believe the Baptists, who suffered, who fought, who died that they might win it and bequeath it to the world, and but for the Baptists I doubt whether there would be any absolute religious liberty—and I had almost said no pure democracy—in the world today. At least that is

my conviction, and I believe that had it not been for the Baptists we would be having today a state religion in Europe and in America in the sections which are not dominated by the Catholic Church. The Baptists refused to creep under the shelter of the government or to receive any benefits whatever from it, but declared themselves in their religion absolutely independent of the government."

"Well, gentlemen," said the father, "if all these statements are facts of history—and of course I do not deny them—then this is the biggest eye-opener that I have ever encountered. I could only wish that the Baptists in this part of the country—present company excepted, of course, Mr. Walton—had only remained true, in quality, to the original stock. But maybe my opinion, Mr. Walton, may also be due to my ignorance; don't you reckon so?"

Mr. Page spoke with a smile, and Mr. Walton smiled back.

"Another interesting thing I found in my reading—" Dorothy remarked.

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"Hello, is there something else?" asked the father. "I guess this time we will be told that the Baptists took part in the creation of the world and in the illumination of most of the stars."

"Father, don't make fun of me. These facts deserve serious consideration."

"Good, daughter, go ahead. I really feel very solemn about it all."

"The other thing I found about them was their fearful suffering."

"Yes, that has already been alluded to."

"I know, but you have no idea what a chapter in the world's history these sufferings make. I saw two volumes filled simply with an account of the persecutions and sufferings of the Baptists of Holland. They were subjected to all manner of cruelties and tortures to make them give up their faith, but they stood firm and thousands and thousands in Holland alone were put to death. John Milton and John Bunyan were both imprisoned for their faith. It was a time when the governments were bitter in their punishments and the Catholic Church, and later on the other denominations also, were back of these persecutions."

"Yes," said Mr. Walton, "it is a fact that all the denominations were against the Baptists, and in a sense that has been the case ever since. In this country grievous punishments were visited upon the Baptists during their fight for religious liberty. They began their fight alone, but the world is gradually accepting their beliefs. Other denominations may not take our name, but they are taking our doctrines. I have spoken about religious freedom. Take the case of infant baptism. And, by the way, our doctrine of infant baptism has not been picked up by accident. It is logically connected with the doctrine of religious liberty."

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"How can that be?" asked Sterling. "I fail to see any connection between infant baptism and religious liberty."

"The doctrine of religious liberty means that every individual is accountable to God only, and that each man's religion must be an act of his own free choice, and therefore no religious ceremony must be forced upon anyone, infant or adult, without his own consent. Infant baptism violates the principles of religious liberty and individual accountability. In fact, I think you will find that there is a logical, as well as Scriptural, connection between all our Baptist doctrines. This, however, is parenthetical. I started to speak of the spread of Baptist principles among other denominations. Three or four hundred years ago the Baptists were almost the only ones to lift their voices against the universal practice of infant baptism. How is it today? Though it is still on the creed books of the other denominations, yet it is a fact acknowledged on all sides that the practice is becoming rarer and rarer. The Baptist teaching about this practice is permeating the other denominations."

"What is that?" asked Mr. Sterling. "Infant baptism going out of use?"

"I do not say that it is on the point of going out of existence, but I do say that under the influence of Baptist teaching it is becoming rarer and rarer."

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"Even though it should be somewhat on the wane—which I do not at all admit, Mr. Walton—yet supposing it to be the case, what have the Baptists to do with it?"

"I thought such questions might come up and so I came prepared," Mr. Walton replied, drawing a newspaper clipping from his pocket. "Here is something written by Lyman Abbott in the Outlook of November, 1897."

"Is he a Baptist?" asked Dorothy.

"No, indeed," replied Sterling.

"Does he believe in infant baptism?" she asked.

"Yes. What is your quotation from Dr. Abbott, Mr. Walton?"

"Dr. Abbott is writing about the Baptist Congress that had held a recent meeting."

"The Baptist Congress?" exclaimed Dorothy. "What is that?"

"It is a meeting where Baptist men from different parts of the country come together once a year

and discuss different religious subjects, and they call it a Baptist Congress, but of course they make no laws. Now, Dr. Abbott was writing about one of these Baptist Congresses, and he says: 'They (the Baptists) all hold, and hold as strongly as ever, that apostolic baptism was a symbolic expression of repentance and faith, and that to baptize infants that can neither repent nor exercise faith is a change of the original ceremony from its original purpose. Historical scholarship abundantly confirms this contention. Infant baptism was unknown in the apostolic church. The change can be justified only on the ground that no rite is of the essence of Christianity, and that the same spirit of Christian liberty which allowed the Christian church to dispense with circumcision allowed it to change baptism from a symbolic act of faith by a penitent to a symbolic act of consecration by a parent.' This is not directly connected with the matter of infant baptism going out of existence which we were talking about just now, but I have read it as showing what this noted advocate of infant baptism has to say. He declares that infant baptism did not exist in the early church, but that the church has changed it."

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"I can't understand that at all," said Dorothy, in a perplexed tone. "I thought we went to the Bible to learn about Christianity and to the teachings of Christ and his apostles for our guidance. I thought that being a Christian meant taking Christ as our Master and the Bible as our guide; and now to say that we can change these commands and put something else in the place of them—why, suppose Christ does not want them changed? If we can change one command, why not any of the commands? If it is not important to obey one of the commands, why is it important to obey any of them? Let others do as they please, but I have taken that Book as my guide and I shall stand by it as closely as I can. If I break from it at one point I fear I will start adrift out to sea."

"Here is the quotation that I was looking for showing the decadence of infant baptism," said Mr. Walton. "I read from the Congregationalist of January 18, 1882. This is not a Baptist publication. It reads: 'The simple fact appears to be that the doctrine of the evangelical denominations as to infant baptism is in a transition state and has at present a materially loosened hold upon the popular conviction. * * * * Congregationalists, under the attrition of Baptist friction on the one side and the force of their own principles of individualism on the other, have become a good deal demoralized in this particular.' Think of that," continued Mr. Walton. "You have this Congregationalist paper saying of the practice of infant baptism by its own denomination that it was diminishing partly because of the influence of Baptist principles."

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"If infant baptism is wrong," said Dorothy, "it is a good thing you see to have these Baptist principles, for they work against the unscriptural infant baptism."

"Here is another quotation. It is stated that at one of the presbyteries of the Dutch Reformed church held in 1879: 'In view of the great neglect of infant baptism'—notice that—'in view of the great neglect of infant baptism a paper was requested by Rev. F. H. Van Deveer, D.D., on that subject'. There you have a Dutch Reformed presbytery, because of the great neglect of infant baptism, requesting one of its distinguished members to write a paper on the subject. Baptist principles, you see, are at work among other denominations. This is also true as to immersion. The Baptists have won the fight for immersion also. Here and there you will find some that deny that immersion is Bible baptism, but the scholarship of the world has yielded that point."

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"Mr. Walton, you amaze me," exclaimed Mr. Sterling. "Are you not mistaken about prominent men of other denominations agreeing that immersion was the original Scriptural mode of baptism? Can you give us the names of them?"

"I can, for I brought along a copy of some of these statements. For example, I have the words of John Wesley, John Calvin, Martin Luther and Cardinal Gibbons."

"What is that!" exclaimed Mr. Sterling. "Why, three of these men are the founders of their own denominations and the other is the head of the Catholic Church in America, and all of their denominations practice sprinkling and not immersion."

"I will read their own statements, and I can give you the very place where you can find their words in print."

Sterling held his breath as Mr. Walton began to read.

"Here are the words of John Calvin. I believe he is regarded as the founder of your denomination, Mr. Sterling."

"Very well, what does he say?"

"He writes as follows in Book IV of his Institutes, Chapter XV: 'The very word "baptize" signifies "to immerse"; and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.'"

"Mr. Walton," said Sterling, looking at him with an intense gaze, "do you assert that John Calvin, the great champion of Presbyterianism, wrote that?"

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"I do, and you will find it just where I have quoted it. Listen to John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church. You will find his statements in his Notes on the New Testament in his comments on Roman 6:4, 'We are buried with him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion'. In other words, Wesley says that Paul in this passage about baptism was referring to immersion, and I guess Paul was pretty good authority. Martin Luther, the founder of Lutheranism, says in his works, Witten Ed., Vol. II, page 79: 'For to baptize in Greek is to dip, and baptizing is dipping. Being moved by this reason I would have those who are to be baptized to be altogether dipped in the water as the Word doth express and as the mystery doth signify.'"

"You mentioned Cardinal Gibbons, the head of the Catholic Church in this country," said Mr. Page. "Do the Catholics immerse?"

"Oh, no," said Mr. Sterling. "What does Cardinal Gibbons have to say?"

"In his book, 'Faith of our Fathers', page 275, he writes: 'For several centuries after the establishment of Christianity baptism was usually conferred by immersion, but since the twelfth century the practice of baptism by affusion has prevailed in the Catholic Church, as this manner is attended with less inconvenience than baptism by immersion.'"

"Well, gentlemen, I am amazed," said Mr. Sterling.

"Mr. Sterling," said Dorothy, "can it be a fact that the founders of these denominations declare for immersion and yet the denominations follow some other mode? Do you suppose that it is possible that these denominations, like the Catholics, have adopted pouring because it was more convenient?"

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"That is just how the practice has come into existence," said Mr. Walton. "Cardinal Gibbons lets the whole secret out when he states that in the twelfth century pouring was adopted as the mode of baptism because of its convenience. Now remember that at that time there were no Presbyterians, nor Methodists, nor hardly anybody except the Catholics—except, of course, the Baptists," Mr. Walton remarked with a smile in which all the others joined.

"Yes," said Dorothy, "you remember it was stated tonight that in every century there were bands of Christians worshiping by themselves and protesting against the practices of the Catholic Church, and that these people seemed to believe, in substance, the principal doctrines held by the Baptists today."

"The point I was making," continued Mr. Walton, "is that all of these Protestant denominations, either directly or indirectly, came out of the Catholic Church three or four hundred years after the twelfth century, when the Catholic Church abandoned immersion, and when they did come out they brought with them the custom of pouring, which at that time was practiced in the Catholic Church. If the Reformation had come, however, before the twelfth century, then the Protestant denominations would be practicing immersion, because before the twelfth century the Catholic Church was practicing immersion. That is the history of the change, and explains, Mr. Sterling, why you and your church practice pouring. You inherit it from your Catholic ancestors. You have it because the Catholics abandoned immersion and put their seal on pouring. I do not say it in any unkind spirit, but am simply giving you some ancient history."

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"Father, it does look as if the main part of the Christian world is using a substitute for the baptism which Christ has given us, and that they received this mode from the Catholics. Mr. Sterling, how can you be willing for the Catholic Church to dictate your baptism in that way?" Dorothy's eyes flashed as she uttered the question and she seemed horrified at the thought.

"Mercy alive, let me run out and catch my breath," said Mr. Sterling. "These are startling things that I am hearing tonight. If it is true that we have sprinkling or pouring simply because the Catholic Church happened to have it when the Reformation came, then I must confess it puts our denomination in the attitude of having our baptismal ceremony foisted on us by the Catholics, and we are now seeking from Scripture to justify our position. But, Mr. Walton, that cannot be so."

"I refer you to history. I have given you the places where these statements can be found."

"How did we get back into the subject of immersion?" asked Mr. Sterling.

"I was stating," said Mr. Walton, "that the truths of the Baptists were gradually permeating the ranks of the other denominations, and I remarked that the principal scholars in the different denominations admitted that immersion was the original Scriptural mode, the implication being that, though it was the original mode, yet the church—and you see it was the Catholic Church—had the right to change it. It is a fact that members of other denominations are asking for immersion at the hands of Baptist ministers. Only last fall I baptized a very prominent Methodist minister who had become convinced from his study of the Scriptures of the evils of infant baptism and the scripturalness of immersion."

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Mr. Page, with a smile and a wink at Mr. Sterling, remarked: "Exactly, and you had better be on the lookout, Sterling; these Baptists will have you under the water yet."

Mr. Sterling colored considerably, for Mr. Page's banter had struck deeper than Mr. Page thought.

"What I can't understand," said Mr. Page, "is how these Baptists can be such wonderful people and yet occupy such an obscure position in this part of the country."

"But they are not obscure in America," said Mr. Walton.

"No," said Dorothy. "Don't you remember, father, how I told you that the figures state that the Baptists are next to the largest denomination in the United States except the Catholics?"

"In Georgia," said Mr. Walton, "one person out of every four is a Baptist, and it is almost that way in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. I understand that the Baptists of Georgia pay over half the taxes of that state. They are a mighty army in the South and in the world."

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All of these things were a revelation to Mr. Sterling. As to Dorothy, her mind had been made up many days ago, and her path of duty was as clear as a sunbeam to her, and it led straight to the Baptist church. Mr. Sterling had within him a storm of thoughts that he could not still. His efforts to win Dorothy for his faith and his church seemed to have utterly failed, and she appeared to be drifting further and further away from him. He was tortured by the thought that he might lose her. Besides, there was the chaos in which his mind had been left by the recent discussions and disclosures. The evidence in favor of immersion as the Bible mode of baptism, and the violation of Scripture teaching in the case of infant baptism, as well as the Bible teaching regarding church government, stared him in the face. It rose above all his ties of kindred and church and above all arguments that he could summon to his aid in favor of his position, but he dared not let anyone suspect his state of mind.

He was eager to follow the matter still further, though he felt as if he were moving towards a precipice. It may to some thoughtless ones seem a trifling matter for one to abandon a position as to doctrinal matters and accept other truths. Men are constantly altering their opinions: but for a Presbyterian elder—especially one filled with an ambition for high usefulness in his church, whose ancestors on his father's and mother's side have been of his faith—for him to come out before his church and before the public and acknowledge that he was wrong, to give up his doctrines and his church and his prospects and his large circle of kindred and friends and link himself with an obscure and almost despised band of people meant a crisis, and he did not even permit himself to consider it. He merely tried to regard the restlessness in his mind as transient and to think that soon he would settle into his former composure and confidence. That night as he sat in his room he remembered having seen in the afternoon paper the statement that Dr. R. L. Boardman, one of the most learned professors in the Princeton Theological Seminary, a leading Presbyterian institution, was to lecture that evening in the adjoining town about ten miles distant. In a moment Sterling decided on his plan. He determined upon a desperate attempt. Next morning by telephone he gained Dorothy's consent to a conversation with Dr. Boardman in case he could persuade him to come over for that purpose. Before nine o'clock the next morning Sterling had reached the Doctor by telephone and made an engagement to meet him, and in less than an hour his automobile had whirled him to the next town, and there Sterling told the Doctor of his friend who was seeking to know her duty as to church membership, and he besought him to return with him and in the evening to visit with him his friends at the Page home and to set the young lady right on the matter of sprinkling and infant baptism and church membership.

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Sterling won the day and a few hours later he and the Doctor were speeding along the road to Sterling's home. Sterling hung his hopes high on the Doctor, who was a noted authority on Presbyterian doctrines. He felt as if he were staking everything on the conversation of that evening.

Mr. Page, when he learned that the Princeton professor and the Baptist preacher would both be on hand that evening, knew that the discussion would be lively.

CHAPTER XIV.

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STERLING BRINGS IN HIS RESERVES.

That evening after dinner Mr. Sterling brought over his distinguished friend. Dorothy had invited Mr. Walton to return and form one of the group.

"Doctor," said Mr. Page, with a smile and a wink at Mr. Sterling, "I guess you will have to set us all straight. Mr. Walton here is about to enlist Dorothy and Mr. Sterling under the Baptist flag."

"Miss Dorothy seems to think the Bible commands her to be put under the water," remarked Sterling, "and she does not believe at all in infant baptism. She insists that these things prevent her joining our church, and she talks as if the Baptist doctrines are nearest to the doctrines which she believes the Bible to teach."

"Am I stating it correctly?" asked Sterling of Dorothy.

"Mr. Sterling is right in saying that I believe in immersion and not in infant baptism, and therefore I do not feel it would be right for me to join his church."

"May I ask why you feel that you cannot join his church?" asked the Doctor in a gracious manner.

"If I think the doctrines of the church are wrong, do you think I ought to select that as the church for me to join?"

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"May I ask another question?"

Sterling's hopes rose as he saw the Doctor entering upon the discussion. He felt there could be but one result.

"Mr. Sterling has mentioned that you thought very favorably of the doctrines of the Baptists. One of the cardinal doctrines of the Baptists is religious liberty. That means they believe in the right of every individual to interpret the Scripture for himself. Do you believe in that doctrine?"

"Certainly. Don't you, Doctor?"

"I see you are putting me on the witness stand," he said with a smile. "I answer that I assuredly do believe in such individual liberty; but it seems to me that the Baptists are inconsistent. They demand individual liberty and yet they cry out against us Presbyterians because we interpret the Scriptures in a way different from them. You say, Miss Page, you cannot join the Presbyterians because of their beliefs, but I should not think that that ought to concern you. If you hold that everyone must interpret the Bible for himself, then that is what the Presbyterians are doing. In doing that they carry out the Baptist doctrine of individual accountability to God."

Sterling was delighted. It was just as he had expected. He saw in a flash that if the Baptists were true to their doctrine of religious liberty they could not demand that he change his faith, but must accord him a perfect right to his belief.

"Excuse me, Doctor," said Dorothy, "I do not think you understood me. I do not blame the Presbyterians for drawing their own conclusions about the Bible and believing just what they think the Bible teaches rather than what somebody else thinks it teaches. I grant them this right, but it does not follow that I must therefore join their church. I say let the Presbyterians follow what they consider to be the teachings of the Bible; but let me do the same and let me not feel that I must join their church."

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"No, my young friend, I would not say you must join the Presbyterian church; but may I ask why you should find it impossible to join that splendid body of Christian people? If everybody must follow his own convictions of Bible teaching, would you say you cannot fellowship those who do not interpret the Bible as you do?"

"Doctor, I do not say I could not fellowship the Presbyterians, or anybody that may understand his Bible differently from me. I can respect them and believe them to be better Christians than I am. But I don't think I ought to join their church unless I believe their doctrines."

"Well, my daughter, you will never find a church with every member believing just as you believe."

"What does a denomination mean, anyhow, Doctor? Does it not mean a body of people believing a certain set of doctrines?"

"Yes."

"It seems to me to be somewhat after this fashion. I guess I have no right with my small knowledge about these things to be theorizing, and yet is it not this way? Here in the world we find a multitude of Christians. As they read the Bible some understand it one way and others understand it another way, and still others another way, and those therefore who understand it one way get together in one great company and those understanding it another way get together in another great company and so on, and these large groups are the different denominations, and this simply means that people believing alike naturally come together and fall into line under one name."

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"Why, yes; that certainly sounds sensible, daughter," said Mr. Page. "I guess that those people who believe as Mr. Walton believes about baptism and other matters are called by the name Baptists, and that those who believe the doctrines that Dr. Boardman believes call themselves Presbyterians. Now of course you would not respect a person believing as the Baptists do and joining the Presbyterians. He is not a Presbyterian in belief and he ought not to call himself such nor be known as such."

"Doctor," asked Dorothy, "would you want a person to join your church if he would not accept the doctrine of your church?"

"Since I come to think of it, my fair questioner, I don't think we would take in such a person. If you cannot accept the teachings of the Presbyterian church, then probably you ought not to join, though I confess I am not as strict as some of my brethren. If a person is with us in the fundamentals, then we can overlook such minor matters as baptism and the like. I think the trouble with the Christian world today is that we are magnifying the non-essentials and neglecting the weightier truths."

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"You say baptism is a minor matter?" asked Dorothy with some surprise.

"Why, certainly, my daughter. Christ himself must be pained when he sees his people so anxious about external forms rather than about matters of heart, of life."

"That greatly bewilders me, Doctor. It has been intimated several times that these matters about immersion and infant baptism and church government are minor matters, that there are other doctrines that are of greater moment; but let me ask, are we to disregard and treat these as we please? Must we not try to obey these commands as they were originally commanded and practiced? Besides, Doctor, it seems to me that this beautiful ordinance with its impressive teachings was given great prominence by Christ. His last great command to the apostles had baptism in it, and when people were converted under the preaching of the apostles the first thing they always did was to be baptized, as if baptism was one of the things that had to be done and done at once. Christ was himself baptized and he commands us to be. I don't see how you could wish it to be plainer than that. I cannot understand how a person can say that one command of Christ is not as important to be obeyed as another. When you talk that way about a command,

does it not sound as if it did not make much difference whether we obeyed the command at all?"

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"Well, my daughter," said the Doctor, "I glory in your zeal and courage and I bid you follow your convictions; but you must remember one thing, and that is that you will probably never find a church all of whose members believe exactly alike. Suppose you find some in the Baptist church that believe something that you do not believe. How can you conscientiously stay in with them?"

"I do not think it is a question as to what every individual member believes, but what are the doctrines by which that particular denomination is known? There are certain truths which the Baptists believe, and when you say you are a Baptist people know just what you believe. As I understand it, there are certain truths which all Christians believe, and on those points we are all one; and although we may not be in the same organization, yet I think we are like soldiers, all fighting in the army of our King."

"Yes, my daughter," said the Doctor, "we all belong to what is called the church universal."

"But," continued Dorothy, "there are other matters about which there are differences, and this makes the army break up into different regiments; but we all still have the same Commander."

"You are quite a little theologian," said the Doctor with a smile. "May I ask my young theologian a question? How do you manage to swallow the Baptist doctrine of close communion?"

"They do not seem close in their communion," promptly replied Dorothy, "not any closer than you Presbyterians."

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"You surely are a valiant defender. How do you prove that?"

"You believe, do you not, Doctor, that no one ought to come to your communion table who has not first been baptized?"

"Yes, that is our rule. I certainly would not advise one who has not been baptized to come to the table."

"The Baptists believe that, too."

"But the Baptists do not think I ought to come with them, and yet I have been baptized."

"Yes, but you have not been Scripturally baptized—so the Baptists think."

"But what have they to do with my baptism? I am satisfied with it. I believe it is Scriptural. I thought the Baptists contended for individual freedom in interpreting the Bible. I follow my conscience with my Bible and decide that I must be sprinkled, and now you say the Baptists say I ought not to commune because I have not been baptized the way they prefer. In other words, the Baptists want me to interpret the Bible not as my conscience decides, but as their conscience decides. If I have followed my conscience about baptism, what more could you ask of me as to my baptism, and why should the Baptists therefore refuse me a place at their table?"

"Doctor, I don't think they refuse anybody a place at their table. I expect that is where so many people get the wrong idea about the close communion of the Baptists. Mr. Walton says that they keep no policeman at their table to keep people away. I think that is very important to remember. They believe that everybody must interpret the Bible according to his own conscience, but that does not mean that they think that everybody that does this will interpret the Bible as was originally intended. But they do leave it to every man's conscience."

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"Ah, you are mistaken there, my little lady. That is just what the Baptists do not do. They do not leave it to other folks' conscience, but—"

At this point the Doctor turned to Mr. Walton and said:

"Mr. Walton, I think it is one of the calamities connected with the life of the Christian church today that so much of her energy is expended in arguing about differences rather than in discoursing on their agreements. I think denominationalism is a blight on Christianity, and if we could banish it and unite our forces, presenting a solid front to the enemy in heathen lands as well as in our own land, we would sweep the field for our Lord and Master."

"But, Doctor, how can we get rid of denominationalism?" asked Dorothy. "Can we ever get all men to think alike and to interpret the Bible alike?"

"It is not that, my daughter," said the venerable man. "We must all have our individual peculiarities, but we must subordinate these to the great mission before the church of Christ."

"What do you mean by subordinating our beliefs?" asked Dorothy. "I do not see how it weakens the Christian army for Christians to have their own individual beliefs. It seems to me it makes Christians a stronger people for them to be people of conviction and not for each one to treat Christ's commands lightly. Let us not weaken at the point of conviction in order to strengthen at the point of courtesy and friendship. Why, I should think that the greatest success would come by each denomination pressing forward along its own convictions."

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"Will you let me say," remarked Mr. Walton, "that I believe that the next epoch in the life of the Christian church will be a move not towards denominational unity that is so much talked about now, but rather towards an emphasized denominationalism in the highest sense of that term? The church in her march of conquest loses rather than gains in many of her attempts at union. Mark

you, I do not say in all her attempts at union, but in many of them. True denominationalism means that the Christian church falls into certain divisions according to their interpretations of the Bible. The trouble with many efforts at Christian union is that the chief effort is not towards bringing the church to one view of the Bible truth, but the pressure for union is often along the line of expediency. A thousand times better is it for each denomination to press along the path of its own individual convictions as to Bible teaching; then will each denomination be stronger. There will be higher mutual respect. Some of these denominations may be, and undoubtedly are, mistaken in many of their views, but by such loyalty they at least exalt the Bible to the loftiest place. They put the emphasis on its study, and if true union ever comes it will come from such focusing of study on the Bible. Under the light of its teaching the denominations that are in error may see and abandon their error. Intenser denominationalism in the truest sense of that word is the secret of success. When the slogan is 'one denomination as good as another', the Bible truth fades into minor importance; expediency, custom and other current considerations assume control and Christianity is the loser. If each denomination surrenders its differences in order to come together, they may find after they have come together they have not much left that is worth coming together for. If they put a light value on some of Christ's commands, the danger is that they will come to look lightly upon all of Christ's commands."

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CHAPTER XV.

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CROSSING THE RUBICON.

The path seemed perfectly clear to Dorothy, and she announced to her parents that she must join the Baptist church. The decision was a blow to them. It is true that the discussions of the past two weeks and the remarks dropped by Dorothy had indicated that she was moving towards that point and yet neither of the parents had believed that she would actually take the step. The father had been greatly surprised at the facts that had been brought out in favor of the Baptists, but when the thought of Dorothy identifying herself with the little Baptist band in the town came into his mind his prejudice assumed control and he became rebellious. To him and his wife the announcement of their daughter put a blighting disappointment on their ambitions regarding her future. They had rejoiced in her growing popularity in the best social circles of the town. Besides, they were not entirely unaware of the admiration of the young Presbyterian millionaire for Dorothy and a union with that influential family was a prospect not unpleasant to them. That their daughter should cut herself off from social opportunities and tie herself up with an obscure people that held meetings in one of the cheaper parts of the town—that was to them almost worse than her funeral. They said nothing to her when she announced her decision. She understood what it would probably mean for her, but her convictions pressed her forward. In fact, she felt an eagerness to see and get acquainted with the little Baptist band, for she felt sure that, while that particular church might for some reason be obscure and ignorant, yet they came of royal lineage with an illustrious record behind them and she was glad to link herself with such a people. The parents did not forbid her joining the Baptists, but their silence, their lack of sympathy and their manifest disappointment and grief over it made her burden far heavier than if they had openly opposed it. She felt that she could have braced herself against such opposition and thereby showed her love for Christ above her love for her parents, but their suffering multiplied her own.

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A pall of gloom seemed to have settled over the thought of their daughter picking her way along the narrow streets around to the cheap section of the town and down the rough steps from the sidewalk and into the plain chapel to mingle with the even plainer people was a humiliation that seemed crushing, and they were speechless. This was an experience that Dorothy had never counted on. Her joy in finding what seemed to her the truth, and in following it had not knew what church she expected to attend. The home on that Sunday morning when Dorothy came down to the library dressed for church. The parents prepared her for this cross that rose up in her path. At first she was inclined to resent such lack of sympathy from her parents; but the sight of their disappointed faces put a lock on her lips and a load on her heart. She wavered not, however, in her sense of duty. On to the little Baptist church she wended her way, and it was a sensation indeed for the members when the door of the little chapel opened and in walked the beautiful daughter of the rich and honored, though worldly, Mr. Page. Her entrance was not met by intrusive and impertinent glances. The worshipers were stunned by her arrival, for they had no idea what it meant. But they were too well trained in worship to be ill-mannered in their wonderment. The simplicity of their worship went to her heart and she found herself entering into the spirit of the hymns, although she was not familiar with many of them. In fact, the entire service gave her much joy.

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At the close of the service Mr. Walton walked down to Dorothy, gave her a hearty welcome and proceeded to introduce her to some of his members. How genuine seemed their welcome! The thought that their faith was her faith made her feel at home. It is true that the plain room and the exceedingly plain attire of nearly all the people presented an almost shocking contrast to what she was accustomed to. It made her wince under it, but her better thoughts soon got the mastery. Her sense of duty held her firm and gave her a peace and even a joy in what she was doing.

She told the pastor she had come to ask for baptism and membership in his church. He was not

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greatly surprised, though much delighted. He stated that he would be glad at the conclusion of the night service to receive her for baptism.

That evening, when she started down the steps of her house to go to church, she found the automobile at the curb at the front of the house and the chauffeur told her that her father had told him to have the machine ready to take her to the church, that he did not wish her to walk around to that section alone. She was touched at the thoughtfulness of her father, and yet the silence of it all cut her to the heart. She felt that she was almost an outcast from her parents; but then she judged that they could not understand her and that they were simply keeping aloof with their disappointment. The meals had been eaten in almost perfect silence that day. The mother did not care for dinner and the father ate and talked but little, and then to the other members of the family.

That night Dorothy was received for baptism and it was announced that, on the following Sunday night she would be baptized. By the next Sunday her parents began to relent. At first they were inclined to be indignant with the Baptist preacher, as if he were largely responsible for their daughter's action; but as they recalled the discussions of the past month they realized that their daughter had reached her conclusions largely through her own study of the Bible.

Gradually they came to see that she must have her convictions and they ought not to interfere with her religion. They saw that she was firm, and they decided to accept the inevitable. Husband and wife talked it over and the husband said: "Wife, I think it is a clear proposition. Dorothy has taken the step and the die is cast. It is not according to our fancy or hope, but it is according to her convictions, and I guess we would rather she should be a woman of convictions than for her to be one with no convictions, but tossed about by every kind of influence. I think we must try to make the most of it. Opposition, I fear, would only make matters worse for her and for us. Let us tell her we shall not oppose her."

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And so it was agreed, and that evening Mr. and Mrs. Page talked frankly with Dorothy and the burden rolled from her heart. The parents said they never could attend that church, but that they would not stand in her way.

How her heart yearned to have them present at her baptism, but she dared not ask them, and she knew they would not come! Two of her girl friends went with her, partly out of curiosity and partly out of devotion to Dorothy. Mr. Page told the chauffeur to take Dorothy and her friends to the church first and then to return and take him and his wife for a ride.

As Mr. and Mrs. Page were being driven home in the automobile, after their ride something impelled the father to tell the chauffeur to turn the corner and go up the third street. The little Baptist chapel was on that street. It was a summer evening and the windows of the church were raised and the door was open, and as they approached the church Mr. Page told the chauffeur to slow up. They heard singing, and there through the open door they saw the pulpit and the open baptistry. The machine stopped and they sat quiet as they listened to the singing, and soon they saw a picture that chained them to their seats. Out into the water to the front moved Dorothy at the side of the pastor. The parents were sure that Dorothy never looked lovelier than at that moment, and on her face was a happiness that they had never seen before. It smote them to the heart. They heard the words of the minister as he said: "Dorothy Page, do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior?"

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She bowed her head in assent and they saw her lips move. The pastor then said: "Upon a profession of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in obedience to his command I baptize you, my sister, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

They saw her fade from their sight under the water, and then from the water they saw her rise as the congregation struck up the hymn:

"O happy are they
Who their Savior obey
And have laid up their treasures above."

That was all. Dorothy turned and was led by the pastor out of the baptismal waters and the father bade the chauffeur move on; but an arrow had entered the hearts of the parents.

A new light shone in Dorothy's eyes after that Sunday. Those who saw her as she emerged from the baptismal waters declared that her face looked like that of an angel. Many times during the week she was heard singing in happy tones. The thought that she had put obedience to Christ's commands above every earthly consideration filled her with peace and gladness. To her parents her new joy was a mystery. Association with a band of poor and obscure people suggested to their minds not happiness, but isolation and almost disgrace.

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Dorothy's chief thought now seemed to be her church. Not a day passed that she was not in conference with the pastor or some of the members seeking to familiarize herself with the condition of the church, its needs and its work. To the request of the superintendent that she would take a class in the Sunday school she replied with a startled expression: "Oh, Mr. Randall, I must have someone teach me the Bible before I can teach others." She finally yielded to his appeal and decided to go out among the poor and neglected of the town and gather some girls into a class.

It was an interesting spectacle that she presented on the next Sunday morning as she marched

into the Sunday school with four girls whom she had ferreted out during the week, and who had promised to come with her on the following Sunday if she would come for them. The sight of Dorothy—beautiful in face but far more beautiful in soul—bending with such loving tenderness over her little quartette, put new zeal into the other teachers.

At the first visit that Dorothy made to the church she noticed its bare furnishings, but she gave no sign that she saw these things. Many plans had already begun to form in her mind as to improvements that might be made. When she heard the pastor announce a meeting of the Ladies' Aid Society for the next Tuesday afternoon she determined to be on hand. At the meeting she asked the ladies to tell her what work the society sought to do. They replied that they tried to raise money for different purposes; sometimes for coal, sometimes for pastor's salary, and that they had been hoping to raise something for improving the church building, but the other expenses were so heavy their money was needed to meet them.

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At the next meeting she suggested that they make special effort to raise money for painting the church, and the plan she advised was that they make bonnets and aprons for sale. They agreed to this and set about the task. The women said they had very little money to give. They decided that in addition to the little money that they could donate they would also give some of their time and labor that could be turned into money. They determined to rent an empty store and offer their goods for sale. This was done. It had already been well advertised and the whole town was talking about the enterprise of the little Baptist church, and the happiest of all was Dorothy as she labored with the other women.

It was the announced purpose of the society that every article must be up to the standard in quality and that every purchaser must get the full worth of his money. They asked no buyer to be a benefactor. The women considered they were giving as much, if not more, than they were receiving. The giving and the sacrifice were not on the part of the buyers, but on the part of those women who had given their time and labor. When they counted up their gains they found they netted over a hundred dollars. But some good news awaited them. A paint dealer in the town, hearing of their brave purpose to paint their chapel, asked the privilege of donating a part of the paint. Two of their own members agreed to do the painting by working in the early hours of each day. 'Twas a happy day for Dorothy and for the church when the last touch of the brush was put on the church and the work was completed. They next decided that the church building must be lifted to the level of the street, and the ladies assumed that as their task. The men promised their labor at their off hours. A lumber merchant heard of their valiant struggle and made them a large gift of lumber, and thus the skies brightened for them. Dorothy's fingers, as well as the fingers of the older ladies, were busy making garments to be sold. Without going into details, let it be stated that the little church found itself at last on a level with the street and with an excellent Sunday school room in the basement.

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Dorothy's class had grown to a band of twenty girls and it was a picture worth going far to see—that of Dorothy surrounded by her girls, and herself the happiest of them all.

During all this time Sterling was wrestling with a racking experience. It had become apparent to him that convictions had arisen within his soul that were at variance with the cardinal doctrines of his church. He loved his church and her history; he was devoted to the work in his Sunday school and his church. He determined, however, to remain with his people, even though he felt that his church was in error on certain points.

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Thoughts of Dorothy filled his mind day and night. The past few weeks had been doleful ones for him. When Dorothy joined the Baptists he felt as if he had lost her forever. A gulf seemed to open between her and himself. In a way she seemed to have stepped into a higher realm, far above him.

Her work for her church and her Sunday school occupied the largest part of her time, and it was only occasionally that he had the pleasure of a tennis game with her.

CHAPTER XVI.

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STERLING SCORES.

At this time Sterling found it necessary to take a trip through the West visiting his branch houses. It was a doleful trip for him. The spell of Dorothy was on him and he had never realized how dependent he was on her being near him. It was with a happy step that he bounded from the train at the end of his trip and hastened home with the thought of seeing her that evening.

Dorothy could hardly have explained it, but things had not seemed just right during Sterling's absence. That she was missing him she had not admitted to herself, but it is a fact that she found herself looking forward to his return with eager pleasure.

Each day Sterling sought an excuse for a few words with her. If he could not make an engagement for a tennis game or an automobile ride in the country he would ask for a drive with her on one of her rounds of visiting among her scholars. In fact, it was one of his greatest treats to go with her on such visits. He was sure that no lovelier sight had ever been presented than that of Dorothy in her happy ministrations to her scholars. She found comfort in confiding to him

her plans regarding her class and her church, and in them he was keenly interested. Many of his suggestions were helpful to her.

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He told her one day that his convictions as to Bible doctrines were the same as hers, that the investigations through which they had gone had brought him to that point, but that he did not think that was a reason for his abandoning the church in which he had spent all his life—the church in which there had been a long line of his ancestors before him. He said he expected to remain there and work, but that he would feel free to state his convictions whenever he thought it proper, and he would rejoice if the day should ever come when his church would see and abandon its error.

When Sterling found it necessary again to be absent—this time for a week—Dorothy found herself counting the days until his return. The sympathetic interest that he had shown in her new experience had made his company very acceptable. She started a game of tennis with her brother on the third afternoon after Sterling's departure, but she soon grew tired of the game and announced that she must do some visiting, and she immediately set out for the homes of her scholars. Sterling cut short his trip and arrived home on the third day after his departure. As he went speeding up to his office from the depot he espied Dorothy on the street. What a shock she received as she saw him stepping out of the machine to greet her.

"I know what you are up to!" he exclaimed. "You are off on another one of those angel visits to your neglected ones, and you must let me go with you. My machine will enable you to make twice as many of them happy as you could with your walking."

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Dorothy yielded to his insistent invitation and she found herself whirled along to the other section of the town; and after the visit Sterling headed the machine for a spin into the country.

Thus the days sped by, but there was never a day on which Sterling was not with Dorothy. Into his ear she told all her experiences and her plans in her new church life.

Sterling was called away one morning by a telegram to Louisville. Dorothy knew nothing about it, and when he did not appear on the tennis grounds that afternoon, and she had not yet heard anything from him, she thought it strange; and when bedtime came and still no news, she was first surprised and then resentful that he should act in such neglectful fashion. When she heard nothing from him on the next day she found herself nervous and uneasy. She could not get her consent to make inquiries about him, and when she retired that night it was with a headache.

She was standing in her front porch next morning when his automobile dashed up to his gate and Sterling stepped out. He saw her and hurried over and gave her an almost hilarious greeting. He noticed an apparent reserve in her manner, and yet the thought passed from his mind.

"It seems like a small century since I saw you, Dorothy. A telegram pulled me off for Louisville early Tuesday morning, and from that moment until I boarded the train I have been in a mad dash to finish my work and get back, and I tell you I am prodigiously happy to be here."

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If Dorothy had studied his eyes during the last remark she might easily have read the reason for his desire to return.

"And now I must make up for lost time. I have had no pleasure ride since I left and I must have one this afternoon. Don't deny a dilapidated traveler the pleasure, but be ready at two-thirty for a ride, and after that for a tennis game." Before she could give her answer he decided it for her and told her that he would be on hand at the time mentioned.

For two hours that afternoon they sped along the country road in happy converse. In fact, their ride was lengthened into nearly three hours. That evening found him again at her side. The clock struck eleven. He had started to leave a half hour before the time, and still he lingered. Suddenly he turned his eyes upon her and said:

"Dorothy, do you know why I dashed through my Louisville trip at such break-neck speed this week?"

"Why, you had to get back to your business, did you not?"

"Dorothy, it was you that pulled me back, and I tell you there can be no real life for me without you, and I must have you mine forever. From the first moment of our meeting I have been yours. God intended us for each other."

"You speak very confidently," she said with a smile, but with her heart filled with a strange new happiness.

"Speak, Dorothy, do we not belong to each other?"

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"I do not deny it."

Never had the town witnessed a more beautiful marriage than that of Dorothy Page and Gilbert Sterling. That was the verdict of the people when the blissful pair smiled their adieus at the depot and moved off on their wedding tour.

It amounted to a sensation when the rich Presbyterian elder severed his connection with his great church and joined the Baptists. It meant a bright era for the Baptist church. Before a year rolled around a handsome new building had been erected on a commanding lot in the center of the town. Without offering any opposition to his old Presbyterian church, Sterling plunged into

the work of his new charge with whole-hearted devotion. He made a study of the Baptist denomination in the state of Kentucky and in the South and North. One of his first acts was to subscribe for several Baptist papers, and it was interesting to Dorothy to note with what eagerness he read everything in the papers, and each time his reading was punctuated with exclamations of surprise at the world-wide activities of the Baptists as he saw them recorded in the columns of the papers. He found himself enthusiastic about their history and their present enterprises. The efforts of the State Mission Board greatly interested him, and he determined to get into close touch with it. He told his wife that he intended to identify himself with all these denominational movements and share their burdens.

The Baptists of Kentucky and of the whole country have reason to be grateful for the day when Gilbert Sterling enlisted in their ranks. He is as yet on the threshold of his usefulness. He is studying the needs and tasks of his denomination, seeking to know how he can devote his strength and his possessions most effectively to its upbuilding. There is no happier Baptist family in Kentucky and none destined to a wider usefulness than that of the Sterlings.

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(THE END.)

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DOROTHY PAGE ***

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