

of personal repentance and faith, obscures the primary and essential significance of the rite by misplacing it, and confusingly requires a discrimination of character which is amply asserted in the conditions of true celebration of the Lord's Supper.

#### THE MEANING OF BAPTISM.

It should be remembered that the New Testament nowhere furnishes a concise or categorical explanation of baptism. Its meaning, place, and use, have to be gathered from these various incidental considerations. It was a religious observance with which the Jews had all along been very familiar. Our Lord connected Christian baptism with His claim of "all power in heaven and in earth." We regard it, therefore, as the ritual token of His sovereignty over all men. The formula, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," as clearly exalts it as the symbol of the mercy of the Godhead in the provision of the Gospel offered unto all nations. Its continual association with the baptism of the Spirit, points us to that great and peculiar blessing of the Christian dispensation. It is emblematic of that baptism, of the purity which it imparts (Mark i. 8; Acts i. 5, ii. 38, 39, xi. 15, 16; Tit. iii. 5, 6; John iii. 5, &c., compared with vii. 39, xv. 26, &c., and with Isaiah xlv. 3, 4, lii. 15; Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27; Joel ii. 28, 29.) It is linked, too, with circumcision (Col. ii. 11, 12); and we are reminded hereby of the analogy of the circumcised descendant of Abraham receiving the sign of God's covenant to be "a God unto him and his seed after him," and the baptized receiving the sign of the same covenant with far richer assurances. The covenants are one (Gal. iii. 7, 8, 14.)

**BAPTISM SPEAKS RATHER OF GOD'S GRACE THAN MAN'S FAITH : INFANTS, THEREFORE, ELIGIBLE.**

In all these radical references to baptism, we are greatly struck with this : that the rite is much more expressive of the Lord's claims and of His grace than of the recipient's faith, of Divine provision and promise than of the recipient's trust ; and hence, not only is there no inherent incongruity in infant baptism, but an actual charm and completeness which cannot be realised in adult baptism. Adult baptism is, doubtless, a duty and privilege ; but before it takes place much of the life claimed by Christ has gone. Few things surprise us more than the way by which it is sometimes sought to discredit infant baptism from the supposed incompatibility of infancy as ignorant and unconscious. As if infants were not baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea ! As if infants were no part of all the nations who are to be baptized ! As if God had not appointed infants of eight days' age to be circumcised ! As if Christ had not taken infants up into His arms and blessed them, saying, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven !" As if it was certain there were no infants in the households of Lydia, the gaoler, and Stephanus ! As if the Gospel revealed a God less mindful of the "little ones" than earlier dispensations ! As if infant baptism carried in it no appeal to the hearts of parents and guardians at the time, and no retrospective appeal to the child in subsequent years ! As if baptism was not in all cases to be followed by sedulous and faithful instruction in the truths and facts of our faith !

#### THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

The mode of baptism we deem of much less importance than the subjects ; but we protest that immersion is not indispensable. We believe that pouring or sprinkling is sufficient to constitute the rite, the principle of which is the application of water to the subject while solemnly pronouncing the prescribed formula. To insist on immersion we regard as a misrepresentation of the term baptism, since it is certainly used where there is no immersion ; and a confusion of the appropriate emblem of the rite, since the bestowment of the Spirit, to which it alludes, is never spoken of, either in prophecy or history, as an immersion, but always as an effusion (Isaiah xlv. 3, lii. 15; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Joel ii. 28, 29; Acts ii. 3, iv. 33, x. 44, xi. 15.) Such incidents as the baptism with water of the Jews unto