

VIEWS OF BAPTISM ;

BEING A

REVIEW OF "THE BAPTIZED CHILD."

THIS book is designed to awaken parents and children, who regard infant baptism as a divine institution, to a more vivid sense of their obligations, arising from the performance of that rite. "The motive in preparing it," says the author, "is, to assist those who practise the rite, to do it with a full sense of its meaning and importance, and to see the beauty and use of the ordinance. The title of the book might be, in part, *The Internal Evidences of Infant Baptism*, as a reasonable and scriptural practice." Here, indeed, an important object is proposed to view, and a most worthy motive to attain it. Considering the number and the character of those who exalt the sacredness of infant baptism, it is surprising, that this department of religious literature is not more amply filled. What a broad and inviting field is opened here, for strong argu-

ment and fervent pleading with the Christian parent, on behalf of the consecrated child, and with the child himself, touching his "special relation to God," and the eternal welfare of his own soul! In the view of such a parent, what sacred and pleasing associations of thought and feeling, must cluster round such a child! What cogent reasonings, what thrilling motives, are naturally furnished by a child's covenant with God, ratified by divine appointment, fitted well to touch, soften and subdue that child's heart, and bring it into sweet submission to the faith of Christ!

Yet, effective as such a moral instrument might seem to be in the work of conversion, by "the wisdom of God," the use of it has not been deemed fitting or proper. Strange as it may seem to some, in all the Bible, there is no motive to action addressed to the child, drawn from the baptismal covenant, no remonstrance, argument, entreaty or address of any kind, made on this ground. Although the Holy Scriptures profess to have been "given by inspiration of God," and to be "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly furnished* unto all good works," yet it contains not a word of reproof, correction, or

instruction, addressed to "baptized children," as such, nor yet the model of an appeal to ministers or parents, on their behalf. Although the epistles of Paul, Peter and John were addressed to the churches at so late a period, that, on the supposition that infant baptism was practised from the first, "baptized children" must have become men, yet no allusion is made to such a class. Although baptized Christians are urged to remember the high profession which they have made, and parents and children are exhorted to perform their mutual duties faithfully, yet not a single precept, warning or exhortation is connected with the prolific theme of infant baptism.

On this account, we have opened the book before us with some degree of curiosity, to see in what manner the appeal which it is designed to urge upon parents and children, is conducted by its well-known and respected author. Aware that he had to strike out for himself an avenue to the hearts he would reach,—that the New Testament sheds no light upon his way,—we desired to see what course he would take, what moral direction he would give to his subject, and how nearly the tone of his address would accord with that of appeals made to parents and children by the Spirit

of inspiration. But alas! a different note is struck, and one which "grates harsh discord," while the simple, spirit-stirring appeals of an apostle still linger on the ear. The moving arguments which the book contains are drawn, not so much from the positive appointment of God, the plain precept, the bright example, the precious promise, or high authority of the great Head of the church, as from the constitution of nature, the fitness of things, the adaptedness of a beautiful ceremony to arouse parental and filial sensibility, to awaken fond remembrances and sweet anticipations, and to soothe a parent's anxiety for the safety of a child, living or departed. In the prosecution of his object, the author's poetic mind has full scope for the play of its powers, and he does not fail to invest his subject with all the pleasing associations which he can command. He apparently seeks, first of all, to gain the natural sympathies of his female readers in favor of his design, and to lead captive the heart of the mother, ere he addresses her understanding. Throughout the book, therefore, there is blended much that is charming in sentiment, with much that is weak in argument; much of conception, that is true to nature and fact, with much that pertains only to the realms of imagination.