

INFANT BAPTISM.

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No. 1.

ARGUMENT FROM THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT AND ITS APPOINTED SEAL.

Much of the discussion and many of the errors which have distracted the peace of the Church in the present day have resulted from the practical oversight of a truth of vast importance, and the foundation of right conceptions in many departments of theology,—we mean the identity of the Church under various dispensations. If we carefully consider the elements of the divine dealings with the Church, whether under the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, or the Christian dispensation, we shall discover certain fundamental principles, which constitute the basis of all these dealings. Upon these our Law-giver, King and Judge, has ever acted, and they are as unchangeable as His own divine nature, and ever adapted to the necessities of man, which in all ages are the same, in his relation to God. If this be admitted, it must be allowed that religion, whether objectively considered, as a system of revealed truths, or subjectively, as the truth experienced in the heart, was essentially the same under the Abrahamic as it is under the Christian dispensation. But while religion, taking that word in its restricted sense, is the same in every age of the Church, there are many circumstantials connected with it, which may vary, according to the peculiarities of each dispensation. As the creatures of sense, we receive our knowledge through the medium of sensible objects or signs. Hence the Divine Author of our holy religion has provided ordinances, varying according to the specialities of each mode of administering the covenant, by which truths in which we are deeply interested are set before us in a clear and impressive manner. Bearing these facts in mind, we may learn to distinguish between what is essential and what circumstantial in each dispensation. As to what is essential, we observe, that that which forms the only basis of God's dealings with the sinful sons of men—that to which the very existence of a Church upon earth is to be traced—that through which exclusively pardon and acceptance are dispensed to men, is the *covenant*—the covenant of redemption viewed as an eternal compact between the Father and the Son for effecting the salvation of an innumerable company of our ruined race—the covenant of grace as to the effectual application of its glorious provisions to those chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world. That the covenant made with Abraham, and that upon which the New Testament Church is founded, are the same, is clear from what is said in Scripture as to the identity of the Church in these two ages. In Rom. xi. the Apostle says, “If the root be holy, so also are the branches,” &c. The root here evidently refers to the Church as existing before the Mosaic dispensation, or more properly to the Abrahamic Church, the *natural* branches of which were the Hebrew people. But these natural branches were broken off, and the wild olive, that is, the Church gathered from the Gentile nations, was grafted in, and made to partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree,—the Church founded in the days of Abraham. Hence unquestionably the Christian and the Mosaic Churches are spoken of as branches of the same tree, or as parts of that Church which was built upon the covenant made with Abraham. But we have assumed, what all orthodox Christians will admit, that there can or could be no Church erected in our world, save upon the basis of the covenant of grace. If, then, the Christian Church is a part of the Church of God, and if the Abrahamic Church was a part of the Church of God, both must have the same covenant, the covenant of grace, as their basis; and consequently the covenant made with Abraham was the covenant of grace.