

It is common to talk of all that existed before the coming of Christ as being carnal, and of the gospel dispensation as being alone spiritual. Such language is correct if the contrast be between the ceremonial institutions of Moses, and the christian dispensation ; but is incorrect, if it be between the covenant made with Abraham and the new economy for these cannot be properly contrasted. A thing cannot be contrasted with itself. The one is the beginning, the other is the completing of the same system, and the one, so far as it goes, is as truly spiritual as the other.

What has now been stated will solve the question; what infants are to be baptized?—"The infants of such as are members of the visible church." The promise made to Abraham was to himself and his seed. Believers are the children of Abraham, and therefore the promise is to them and to their seed. It has already been stated that baptism is a church ordinance, and therefore a parent must be in the church, by making a public profession of his faith, and by conforming to the institutions of Christ, before his children can be the subjects of this scriptural ordinance. If then, the parent is not himself and for himself a believer in God's promise, he cannot take hold of the covenant for himself and; still less for his offspring. For such a person to offer his child for baptism is to perform, not an act of faith whereby he glorifies God, but an act of superstition or impiety in which there is no believing worship.

When, therefore, a christian parent, acting in knowledge and faith, devotes his child to God in baptism, he lays hold on the covenant in which God promises to be a God to him and his seed ; he believes God's word; and claims an interest for himself and his child in those blessings which it promises. If he do not this, he does nothing.

But parents are still farther concerned in the baptism of their children, in as much as a new relationship is formed between them by this ordinance. Antecedent to baptism the parent and child are connected by that universal law which binds all creatures to their parents ; a relationship which he shares with the beasts of the field, and which will account for almost all the manifestations of feeling which he makes towards his offspring. But the case is altogether different when he has placed his child, by a solemn act of God's appointing, under the covenant of promise. The child has now been given to God, and the parent is the guide and the guardian of one declared to belong to the family of God.

Out of this relationship may be deduced the duty of a Christian parent to his baptized children. He must regard them as devoted to God ; he must make them acquainted with the character and the will of their heavenly Father ; he must often talk to them of Him, and talk of Him in such a way as may be best fitted to induce them to love Him and obey Him ; he must accustom them to do those things which are pleasing to God ; he must use all his influence and all his authority to prevent their acquiring sinful habits, and he must, as having a deeply responsible