

4. Baptism is a "seal" of the Covenant as well as a sign. God covenanted to be Abraham's God, and circumcision was given him as the seal of this covenant, Rom. iv: 11. And baptism that has come in its place is the seal now. Circumcision was the seal of a covenant transaction between God and the believer, a seal of the righteousness of faith. It had the same significance to Isaac—who was circumcised by God's command—that God would grant all the blessings of the Covenant if he had the same faith as his father.

So baptism, which is the circumcision of Christ, is the seal of the same covenant, and in the case of adults who believe in Christ it seals the faith which they actually have. And when it is administered to infants it has the same significance to them that circumcision had to Israel, viz: that if they follow the faith of their fathers, God will grant them all the blessings of the Covenant.

A covenant implies a contract between two parties who can understand the terms of it, and who are capable of intelligent action. Therefore in the baptism of an infant, the seal of the Covenant is not between God and the infant, but between God and the parents with respect to the infant.

II. WHO ARE TO BE BAPTISED.

The normal idea of baptism is the baptism of an adult on a personal profession of faith, then the baptism is a sign and seal of a faith already existing.

The baptisms mentioned in the New Testament are chiefly the baptism of men and women brought up in Judaism or heathenism, who have embraced the Gospel, confessed their faith in Christ, and are received into the church through his ordinance. On this point all Christendom are agreed. It was then as it is with our missionaries now, the first and chief baptisms were adults on a profession of faith, and were we to form our primary idea of baptism from such cases as these, we would have as clear conceptions of the one Sacrament as we have of the other.

III. THE REPRESENTATIVE PRINCIPLE.

We hold that not only "believers" but also the "children" of the believers are to be baptised (Ques. 95) because of a "representative principle" that runs through all all life. We see it in society, where the children have the same social standing with their parents; we see it in Providence, the moral, the intellectual, and the bodily constitution of the parents given to the child without any act on its part. In every day life others must provide food, clothing, shelter, else the child would perish, and for its "religious" welfare it is equally dependent.

In religion, as in secular matters, the father acts for the child, engages for the child, and binds the child! Circumcision had its full primary meaning from the circumcision of an

adult who had become a proselyte to the faith; but circumcision was administered to an infant on the principle of representation with which we are all familiar, in which the child is held to be one with the parent, and bound by its act.

This divine constitution places the child—in the church as in every-day life—entirely at the disposal of its parents. It is passive in their hands to be moulded by them at their will. With what power and responsibility this clothes the parents! Every covenant God has made with mankind has included the child along with the parents. In all His dealings with men it has been "You and your seed: You and your children," e.g. (The Covenant of works made with Adam. (Shorter Catechism, quest. 16); or the covenant of "protection" made with Noah. Gen. ix: 9-17. "You and your seed after you;" or the Covenant of "grace" in all its forms, through a Redeemer, made with Abraham as the father of the faithful. Gen. xii: 1-3; xvii: 1-14.

We see the same representative principle in the repetition of this covenant with Israel through Moses, Deut. xxix: 10-13. And in the opening sermon of the New Testament dispensation Peter declares the same connection, and that the same condition was to continue—"The promise is to you and to your children," etc. Acts ii: 28. So we find that whenever parents were baptised their children were baptised with them and brought within the scope of the promise.

In his all wise and merciful arrangements God has made the standing of the child, while yet an infant, to depend on the standing of the parent. The sin of the parent "carries away" his child from God, depriving it of its privileges, while the faith of the parent "brings the child near" to God.

Baptism, like circumcision, when attached to infants, proves that they are within the covenant and subjects of its promises, heirs of the kingdom by birth-right, and our prayers and expectations are that they will grow into their Christian life and character as they grow into their manhood and womanhood.

IV. BAPTISM OF INFANTS.

Children of believers are to be baptised. This is given (Catechism, Ques. 95) as an addition to the normal type of baptism, and as the church spreads and becomes rooted, adult baptism will become less frequent, and the baptism of infants tend more and more to be universal, as work among the heathen and work in a Christian community will show.

Baptism cannot have the same meaning in the case of an infant as it has in that of an adult. In the case of the latter it is a sign and seal of faith already existing, but in the former it is their recognition and reception into the visible church, giving them a right and title to all its privileges. This may not bestow saving blessings, but it puts them in-