

ON BAPTISM.

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On Baptism, so far as Parents are concerned.

BAPTISM, besides being a symbol of the two fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, is also a memorial of a most important event in the history of Grace. It is at present assumed, that Baptism holds in the New Dispensation the same place which circumcision held in the old; that is, it is a token, a rite commemorative, of that covenant of promise which God made with Abraham.

That Covenant was not an act giving birth to a new nation merely, it was an act giving being and form to a new community founded on a great religious principle. The language in which it runs is as follows. "I will make of thee a great nation"—"I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee, in their generations"—"In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Now these promises that he should be the heir of the world, were not made to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Rom. 10: 13. He was selected to stand at the head of that dispensation, the characteristic of which is, that salvation is through the righteousness of faith. He was, himself, a specimen of the system, for he was justified by faith: "He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." Rom. 4: 3. Such was the true nature of the Abrahamic covenant.

The Memorial—the token, that God made such a covenant, was to the generations that followed, the rite of circumcision. "The token of my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant"—It shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. Gen. 17: 11. Accordingly, Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believed,—that righteousness might be imputed to them also. Rom. 4: 11.

The giving of this covenant may be regarded as the foundation of the whole system of grace: not indeed that it was the first act,—for that is to be found in the first promise,—but because of the greater clearness and distinctness with which the promise was then revealed; because, an actual separation of the church from the world was then effected, and because, special privileges were then given to them, it may be regarded as the commencement of that system which has been acted upon ever since. The leading feature of that system is that justification is by the righteousness of faith. That is the everlasting character of the dispensation of Grace.

The Church is one. The various forms under which the covenant of grace has been administered have not been a succession of experiments, each diverse from the one that preceded it, but gradual developments of the purpose formed in the divine mind from eternity. In these several dispensations there have been no essential alterations. The history of the