

INFANT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

By REV. JOHN CAMERON, OF BRIDGEWATER.

We have the pleasure of beginning in this issue a series of lectures upon this important subject. These lectures have already been published in a small pamphlet. Feeling the importance of Scriptural views on the subject, we have asked the author's permission to reprint them for the benefit of our readers. Mr. Cameron has long been known as one of the most clear headed men in our Synod, and his treatment of this subject is terse and masterly. We quote his own introduction—

The following Chapters on "Infant Church Membership," &c., are published, not in a controversial spirit, but with a view of instructing my own congregation on two important truths. First—that the infants of believers are members of Christ's Church. Second—that the indiscriminate administration of baptism, is at variance with Scripture, and opposed to the recognized symbols of the Presbyterian Church. Professed principles and practice should agree.

I do not profess to advance any new views; but to express in a condensed form some of the opinions held and published by others.

Two considerations have led me to do this. The greater number of those works, which treat of this subject, are large and expensive. Few persons will be induced to purchase them. Again such works are often written in a controversial style, and with such laboured and profound arguments, that plain uneducated persons cannot comprehend them. I have endeavoured to remove these obstacles by producing a "cheap book," and written so plainly as to be easily understood.

My desire is to disseminate more fully and clearly the truth.

JOHN CAMERON.

Bridgewater, April 4th, 1832.

GENESIS, XVII. 7.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

I. RELATION OF CHILDREN TO PARENTS.

The relationship which exists between parents and children is perhaps the most sacred and indissoluble on earth. Children not only inherit the possessions of their parents, but generally, their constitution and propensities. If parents are in affluent circumstances, many are the advantages enjoyed by the children. If they are reckless spendthrifts they will certainly entail upon them poverty and misery. They inherit also in a large degree the same diseases which afflict those from whom they directly, but mysteriously, derive their existence. Bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh; they are objects of the strongest affection; and the solicitude of parents is often directed to their children, when they cease to be anxious about themselves.

The closeness of this relationship is not only recognised by the laws of civil society, but by the laws of God. Our children are so closely identified with ourselves, as to be considered the rightful recipients of our blessings and advantages. We read that among the ancients, when punishment was inflicted upon the father, it was almost invariably inflicted at the same time upon all his household. "And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and his sons, and his daughters, &c. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. JOSHUA VII. 24. In the administration of God we see the same principle operating, not only as promulgated in the second commandment, but displayed in daily occurrence. 'The iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children of the third and fourth generation.' Deut. v. 9.

Why the destinies of parents and children are so interwoven with each other, it is not easy to determine; but the fact is apparent to all, and with that only am I now concerned—viz: that under the administration of God, a man's children are singularly identified with himself; in so much, that when our first parents fell, they involved all their descendants in the consequences of their guilt. "In Adam all die." I Cor. xv. 22 By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Rom. v. 19. And whenever God has made a covenant with his faithful servants, the blessings contained in that covenant are perpetuated to their posterity.

A remarkable instance of the truth of this latter remark is to be found in the words of God to Abraham; viz: the good to be enjoyed by the children on account