

avowed ground that personal faith, according to their view of the commission as given by St. Mark, is essential to the validity of the rite. And as it is admitted, on all hands, that infants are incapable of believing, it is maintained that their baptism is not valid. We shall have something to say in reply to this statement by-and-by ; but our only object at present is to endeavour to ascertain whether the apostles would be likely to interpret their commission in this restricted sense.

In what relation did the children of the native Jews, and the children of the proselytes from heathenism, stand to the Jewish church ? Circumcision was the initiatory rite of the Abrahamic covenant,—the door of entrance into the Jewish church ; just as baptism is now the mode of admission to the Christian church. Then was this rite administered only to adult Jews and proselytes, and denied to their infant children ? Circumcision was a symbolical rite : it had a moral signification very similar to that of baptism ; it signified, not the “ putting away of the filth of the flesh,” (it was that literally,) but the purification of the heart from the impurity of sin ; just as water in baptism is symbolical of spiritual purification. Now it would have been quite easy to say, “ Infants are incapable of understanding the moral meaning of circumcision ;” (which would have been true ; ) “ then why administer it to them ? What good can it do them ?” Of course, we do not mean to intimate that any Jew in those times could have been guilty of such absurd reasoning, in the very teeth of the Divine command, which required the infant children, both of Jews and proselytes, to be circumcised. But we *do* say that the reasoning, in regard to the qualification of the subjects, would have been just as valid against the circumcision of infants, as it