

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

CIRCUMCISION.

Again, in 1st Cor., vii., 19, after Paul had directed every man to remain in the same state he was in when he embraced Christianity, he adds: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing but the keeping of the commandments of God." Now, I submit that what is here affirmed of circumcision cannot be affirmed of any religious institution, whether it belong to a true, a typical, or a false religion. For example: Any institution or rite in the Jewish religion that is abolished is *something* to be abandoned. Anything in that religion that is to be perpetuated is *something* to be retained. Every rite or command in the pagan religion that is wrong is *something* to be given up. Every institution or rite in the Christian religion is *something* to be firmly held in its proper place. But here Paul declares that circumcision, so far as religion is concerned, is nothing, and also that its opposite is nothing. That circumcision and uncircumcision are matters of no account whatever. See also Gal. v., 6.—"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Also, chap. vi., 15:—"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." What is here predicted of circumcision cannot be predicted of any religious institution, therefore circumcision is not a religious institution.

But is this predicate true of a national institution? It is. So far as religion is concerned one national institution or its opposite is a matter of no consequence. For example: Being an Englishman or an American is of no account in Christianity. Being a British subject is nothing, and being an American citizen is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God. For in Christ Jesus neither being a British subject availeth anything, nor an American citizen, but a new creature. Thus Paul would say to such as thought that a national peculiarity would interfere with their religion or their acceptance with God, "Is any called to God under the British government let him not (on that account) relinquish that government. Is any called under the American government let him not (on that account) give up that government. British is nothing, and American is nothing," &c., &c. In the matter of religion and justification before God there is neither Jew nor Greek bond nor free, British or American, but all are one in Christ Jesus.

Believing Jews to this day circumcise their male children. In so doing they break no command of God, but in this they obey the apostle's injunction—"Is any man called in circumcision let him not become uncircumcised." This national mark is still perpetuated, and the nation still kept separate

from other nations. God's intentions and promises are still carried out: "I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make a full end of thee."—Jer. xlvi., 18. Moses gave the Jews their religious institutions, but this national institution was given hundreds of years before the birth of Moses, even at the commencement of the nation, and so long as God intends to keep that nation separate from other nations, it will be perpetuated.

But as objections are offered to this view of the subject, it is right to hear them

Objection 1st Circumcision is called the seal of the righteousness which Abraham had before he was circumcised. From this it is argued that it was intended to be a seal to others that they were righteous, or a sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Hence it is held to be a religious institution.

Now, it is granted that circumcision was to Abraham a seal of his previous righteousness, but it is denied that it was intended to be the same to others. All male children born in Abraham's house—his own children and the children of his servants were to be circumcised at eight days old. The same was true of those bought with his money. Every male child was to be circumcised at eight days old. Those who will argue that circumcision was intended to be a seal to all those of the righteousness which they had before they were circumcised, will please excuse us if we decline entering into a controversy on the subject. Abraham "received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised."—Rom. iv., 11. His offspring and slaves did not receive the sign of circumcision as Abraham did, therefore this objection of its being a national institution vanishes.

Objection 2d. Paul says, in Gal. v., 3:—"I testify to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law." From this it is argued that circumcision is a religious rite, because it binds every one that receives it to keep the ceremonies of the Jewish law.

Now, in ascertaining the apostle's meaning in this passage, we must understand his terms. He uses the term *law* in different senses in these letters. It sometimes stands for the historical books of the Old Testament, and sometimes for the ceremonial law of the Jews. Again, it represents that universal law that binds intelligent creatures to love God with all the heart, and mind and soul, and their neighbor as themselves. Which of these laws does Paul mean when he testifies that the circumcised man is a debtor to do it? Does he mean the ceremonial law of the Jews? I cannot admit it, for the following reasons: Paul writes to believing Gentiles, and assures them that they cannot be circumcised without rejecting Christ. Rejecting Christ does not bind any man to keep the Jewish ceremonies. It is not true that the man who turns away from Jesus is bound to offer the blood of bulls and of goats, &c.; but it is true that for such there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary.—Heb. x., 26—27. Again, when Paul wrote these things the ceremonial law of the Jews was abolished, and no man under any circumstances could be a debtor to keep it.

I have no doubt that Paul here refers to that law which binds all men to love God supremely, and their neighbor as themselves. These two commandments, like pillars of eternal justice, are represented by our Saviour of holding up all the law and the prophets. This law has been broken by all men—Jew and Gentile—and all by nature and practice are under its curse. Paul could say of himself, and all Christians, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."—Gal. iii., 13.

Here were Gentiles whom Christ had freed from the curse of the law. While they trusted in him, and obeyed his voice, the law would not condemn them. They stood justified by his grace. But if they renounced Jesus, they would fall from his grace, and he would profit them nothing. They would have to assume all responsibilities of that violated law. Paul assured these Galatians that this would be their history if they were circumcised. They would fall from grace and be debtors to obey all the law of God, or feel its dreadful curse. Circumcision was a national rite belonging to the family of Abraham, and if Gentiles who were not of his family used it religiously, as a ground of acceptance with God, they would renounce Christ and be debtors to the law that condemns all transgressors.

THE "CHRISTIAN VISITOR."

The readers of the above-named paper (Baptist), published in this city, will remember that a little more than a year ago there appeared in its columns for three or four issues, a discussion of certain questions between Messrs. J. F. Kempton and H. Murray. As to the origin, the advisability of continuing the controversy, or even the advantages gained by either of the writers, we have nothing to say.

We were somewhat surprised in noticing that Mr. Kempton, though commencing the discussion in the paper, finally had an article to which no reply ever appeared. Upon enquiry we were informed that one had been written and sent, but for some reason, not made known until drawn out by an article in the *Disciple* about five or six months afterwards, it had been thrown at one side.

During this controversy, strange as it may seem, an editorial appeared, not attacking simply the assertions made by Mr. Murray, but charging the whole brotherhood with doctrines that are false and entirely foreign to us as a people; and thrusting upon us a name which, though we highly esteem for the association it recalls, we could not wear without violating our consciences, without departing from the unmistakable principles of God's Word, and yea, more, we could not wear this or any other human name and be loyal to our Redeemer.

At first we felt like writing an article in reply to the editorial, and so made known our intentions to some of our friends. But we were informed that it would be useless, as in all probability no notice would be taken of *anything* we might write. Under the impression that no chance would be given us in this direction for the removal of the misrepresentations thus placed before the public, and having at the time no suitable paper of our own, we called at the *Visitor* office with the hope that after a friendly conversation upon the position we hold as a people a better feeling would be engendered, not by attempting to *explain* or to *uphold* as true the doctrines attributed to us in the editorials, but to give an *emphatic denial* that such doctrines are taught by us.

The conversation lasted about an hour, and we parted, as we thought, with a better understanding of each other, and apparently with the best of feelings. But soon after this another article, and then another, even more bitter than the former ones, appeared, restating the very things which we had denied as being taught by our brethren. In one or more of these editorials appeared such expressions as these: Any one who essays to write about this body will find it a difficult matter, because they have so persistently refused to declare what they do believe; that if the Baptist people really understood what we taught there would be no desire to become one with us. Now let it be remembered that Mr. Murray's object in writing was to let the people know what we understand the Bible to teach; that the purpose of our visit to the above named office was to explain and make known our teachings; that the Editor of this paper wrote twice, asking that the columns of the *Christian Visitor* be thrown open for a friendly discussion of the difference between us, and not even a reply of *any kind* was returned to either of his letters. Now in the light of