

serve all things whatsoever I have commanded you:" in that rite also we undergo a mystical death unto sin, a mystical separation from the world, which St. Paul calls being "buried with Christ in or by baptism;" and a mystical resurrection to newness of life, through Christ's resurrection from the dead. Thus in circumcision, an obligation of faith in the promises made to Abraham, and an obligation to holiness of life, and to the observance of the divine laws, was contracted; and Moses, therefore, in a passage above quoted, argues from that peculiar visible relation of the Israelites to God, produced by outward circumcision, to the duty of circumcising the heart: "The Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people; circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart," Deut. x. 15.

If then we bring all these considerations under one view, we shall find it sufficiently established that baptism is the sign and seal of the covenant of grace under its perfected dispensation;—that it is the grand initiatory act by which we enter into this covenant in order to claim all its spiritual blessings, and to take upon ourselves all its obligations;—that it was appointed by Jesus Christ in a manner which plainly put it in the place of circumcision;—that it is now the means by which men become Abraham's spiritual children, and heirs with him of the promise, which was the office of circumcision, until "the seed," the Messiah, should come;—and that baptism is therefore expressly called by St. Paul, "the circumcision of Christ," or Christian circumcision, in a sense which can only import that baptism has now taken the place of the Abrahamic rite.

The only objection of any plausibility which has been urged by Antipedobaptist writers against the substitution of baptism for circumcision, is thus stated by Mr. Booth: "If baptism succeeded in the place of circumcision, how came it that both of them were in full force at the same time, that is, from the commencement of John's ministry to the death of Christ? For one thing to come in the room of another, and the latter to hold its place, is an odd kind of succession. Admitting the succession pretended, how came it that Paul circumcised Timothy, after he had been baptized?" That circumcision was practised along with baptism from John the Baptist's ministry to the death of Christ may be very readily granted, without affecting the question; for baptism could not be made the sign and seal of the perfected covenant of grace, until that covenant was both perfected and fully explained, and proposed for acceptance, which did not take place until after "the blood of the everlasting covenant" was shed, and our Lord had opened its full import to the apostles, who were to publish it "to all nations" after his resurrection. Accordingly we find that baptism was formally made the rite of initiation into this covenant for the first time when our Lord gave commission to his disciples to "go and reach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,"—"he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

John's baptism was upon profession of repentance, and faith in the speedy appearance of Him who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire; and our Lord's baptism by his disciples was administered to those Jews that believed on him, as the Messiah, all of whom, like the apostles, waited for a fuller development of his character and offices. For, since the new covenant was not then fully perfected, it could not be proposed in any other way than to prepare them that believed in Christ by its partial but increasing manifestation in the discourses of our Lord, for the full declaration both of its benefits and obligations; which declaration was not made until after his resurrection. Whatever the nature and intent of that baptism which our Lord by his disciples administered might be, (a point on which we have no information,) like that of John it looked to something yet to come, and was not certainly that baptism in the name "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," which was afterward instituted as the standing initiatory rite into the Christian Church. As for the circumcision of Timothy, and the practice of that rite among many of the Hebrew believers, it has already been accounted for. If indeed the Baptist writers could show that the apostles sanctioned the practice of circumcision as a seal of the old covenant, either as it was Abrahamic or Mosaic, or both, then there would be some force in the argument that one could not succeed the other, if both were continued under inspired authority. But we have the most decided testimony of the Apostle Paul against any such use of circumcision; and he makes it, when practised in that view, a total abnegation of Christ and the new covenant. It follows, then, that when circumcision was continued by any *connivance* of the apostles,—and certainly they did no more than *connive* at it,—it was practised upon some grounds which did not regard it as the seal of any covenant, from national custom or prejudice, a feeling to which the Apostle Paul himself yielded in the case of Timothy. He circumcised him, but not from any conviction of necessity, since he uniformly declared circumcision to have vanished away with that dispensation of the covenant of which it was the seal through the bringing in of a better hope.

We may here add, that an early father, Justin Martyr, takes the same view of the substitution of circumcision by Christian baptism: "We, Gentiles," Justin observes, "have not received that circumcision according to the flesh, but that which is spiritual—and moreover, for indeed we were sinners, we have received this in baptism, through God's mercy, and it is enjoined on all to receive it in like manner."

II. The nature of baptism having been thus explained, we may proceed to consider its subjects.

That believers are the proper subjects of baptism, as they were of circumcision, is beyond dispute. As it would have been a monstrous perversion of circumcision to have administered it to any person, being of adult age, who did not believe in the true and living God, and in the expected "seed of Abraham," in

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