

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE ALLEGORY OF THE TWO OLIVE TREES.
Rom. xi.

The allegory of the olive trees has caused much discussion in the religious world, and many an earnest reader has anxiously wished for a satisfactory understanding of it.

We purpose to notice some views given on the olive trees and submit to the consideration of our readers the one which we consider its true meaning and hence less liable to objections. Some explain the good olive tree to mean the church of God from the days of Abraham to the end of time, arguing that the Jewish theocracy merged into, and was merely enlarged by, the church of Christ—that the Jewish church and the church of Christ are one and the same. And that the Jews and their children were members of the church but through unbelief were the branches cut off from the church; and that believing Gentiles were grafted in among the remaining faithful Jewish members.

Let us examine this interpretation of the good olive tree: I. By the law of *antithesis* one tree requires another opposite tree. If one olive tree stands for one church then two olive trees stands for two churches—the first a good church the other a wild church. But the wild church has no existence. The Gentiles were not cut out of a church when they were grafted into the good olive tree. Hence, the wild olive tree does not mean a church, neither can the good olive tree mean a church.

II. Are the church of Christ and the Jewish theocracy, or church, the same?

1. The Jewish church is never called the church of Christ, nor is the church of Christ called the Jewish church in the Bible, and their identity is rejected as unscriptural.

2. The Jewish church was in existence long before the birth of Christ, but Jesus says: On this rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matt xvi. 18. The church built so long before that time cannot be the one which Jesus said He would build after that time. No body of people was called *the church* till after Jesus' death or after He had built the church. To call any body of people the church of Christ before He had built His church is to speak against the Bible.

The Bible shows many points of difference between the two churches and treats largely on the errors of confounding the two. The teaching is not only opposed to the doctrines of Christ but it involves the most monstrous absurdity. The Jewish church, led by its divinely appointed officers, crucified Him who is the Head of His own church, so that if the churches are one it follows that the churches put its own Head to death. How different this absurdity from Bible facts? The Head of this church never dies. Death hath no more dominion over Him. He liveth and was dead and behold He is alive forevermore. Rev. i. 18. He had conquered death before He was Head of the church. It was after the gates of hades or death had come into direct conflict with *the Christ the Son of the living God* and did not prevail against "this rock," and after that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, had raised Him from the dead and had put all things under His feet that He gave Him to be Head over all things to the church. Ep. i. 17, 20, 22. It was after and not before these triumphs of Christ that He built believers on "this rock," and they were called the church and the Lord added to this church daily those that should be saved. Acts ii. 47.

The Bible says much on the difference between the Jewish church, and the church of Christ shows that one is fleshly and the other spiritual; calls one the *old* the other the *new*; calls one the *bondmaid* and her *children*, the other the *free woman and her children*; and declares that the bond woman and her children were cast out so as not to be heir with the children of the free woman. Gal. iv. "Why, then," it may be asked, "will so many contend for the identity of two institutions so entirely different?" It is the determination to uphold infant baptism as of Divine authority. Infant baptism is not once mentioned in the Bible in any way; it is not commanded nor recorded nor alluded to at all. But it has crept into the world and is held and practised by many, and the baptism of believers which Jesus has commanded in His last commission is thereby rejected and opposed. Those who hold infant baptism finding no mention of it in the Bible eagerly seize anything which has the appearance of circumstantial evidence in its favor and press it into the service. Thus they reason. Forasmuch as the Jews and their children had Abraham for their father and believing Gentiles are the children of Abraham so are their children. Abraham's children are all in the church of Christ, and were received before his death by *circumcision* and after his death by *baptism*. By this reasoning they can ignore everything that opposes them and easily assume everything that helps them to maintain infant baptism. The Jews were Abraham's children. So were their children by *flesh and blood*. If *flesh* related the fathers to Abraham so it must the children for they had the same flesh. The believing Gentiles are related to Abraham by *faith*, not by *flesh*. How are the infant children of these Gentiles related to Abraham? Not by *faith*, for they have none. Not by *flesh*, for they have not Abraham's flesh. We see how Jews and their children were related to Abraham—it was by *flesh*. And we can see how believing Gentiles were related to him by *faith*, but since the world began no one has shown, or can show, how Gentiles, old or young, can be related to Abraham until they are believers in Christ. So if the fallacy that Jews and their children, who are united to Abraham by *flesh*, are in the same church with believing Gentiles, who are related to him by *faith*, should pass as truth, the infant offspring of the latter cannot be admitted as there is no ligament, either of *flesh* or *faith*, to unite them to Abraham, and so infant church membership and baptism, so far as it rests on the argument of church identity, is hopelessly stranded.

Another view of the good olive tree makes Abraham to be the trunk and the Jews the branches, which were united to him naturally by a ligament of *flesh* and some of them cut off through unbelief.

The fact of *antithesis* confronts this as it does the first view we have considered. If the good olive tree stands for a man and that man the father of the Jews, then the wild olive tree must stand for a man and that man the father of the Gentiles; but such a man is not to be found. The Gentiles were not cut off from any particular man in order to be grafted into the good olive tree. So this view fails at this point.

Again, the Jews, through unbelief, were not cut off from Abraham as regards the *flesh*. They had and still have the *flesh* of Abraham in their remotest dispersion. The Gentiles are not grafted into Abraham in a national or *fleshly* point of view. Gentiles and Jews have the same *flesh* they over had, irrespective of the cutting off of the one and the grafting in of the other. So the trunk of the olive tree cannot be Abraham.

We have been so far considering the negative side of this subject, showing the views of the good olive tree which we cannot regard as correct, but have not yet reached what we deem the true and satisfactory understanding of the matter. It was the intention to do so before finishing this article,

but limited space admonishes us to stop and leave room for other matter in THE CHRISTIAN. We purpose, the Lord willing, to finish the subject in the next number—which will give the readers a month to think over the two olive trees before they read our conclusions. In the meantime it will be well to study carefully Paul's argument in this great letter to the saints in the city of Rome, which begins at the 16th verse of the first chapter and closes with this the eleventh chapter.

Original Contributions.

CREED REVISION AND "THE FOLLOWERS OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL."

In a recent number of *The Church Union*, writing of the revision of the Confession of Faith, I suggested the propriety of doing away with the so-called Standards. From my point of view, they have caused and perpetuated divisions among those who love the Lord. This also I venture to think and to say they will continue to do. For this reason my voice was and is in favour of their abolition.

The Herald and Presbyter, of Cincinnati, a first-class Presbyterian paper, rises to a point of order. I am reminded, as I see in *The Church Union* of December 15th, by the *Herald and Presbyter*, that I have no voice in the matter of revision or abolition, neither for, nor against. I am told that I belong to a sect whose only creed is, that it is not a sect and has no creed. I am informed that the question of revising the Confession will be voted on by people who have accepted it, and who believe it to contain the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures. *The Herald and Presbyter* says, also, that if the question of revising or abolishing the creed were left to the "followers of Alexander Campbell," they would abolish it, as would also the Unitarians and Universalists. Besides this I am told that for many years these parties have laboured to abolish the Standards, and will continue to do so, whether the Confession of Faith is revised or not, but that there will be neither abolition nor revision to suit the theology of Unitarians, Universalists and the "followers of Alexander Campbell."

Now the fact is I like the Presbyterians. The Presbyterian denomination is a great and useful Christian body. For the people and the ministry of that Church I have the highest respect. My feelings towards these brethren are of the kindest character possible. I love them because of their likeness to Christ. I am in sympathy with them in the current discussion concerning the revision of their doctrinal Standards. I wish them well. I pray that the blessing of the head of the Body may rest upon them in this critical time. I confess that it may have been a bit of impertinence on my part to say, in *The Church Union*, anything at all on the subject of creed revision; but feeling as I do, it was but natural that I should express myself as I did.

It is true that I have no legal right to vote on the subject of revision or abolition, but I have a voice, and this I will use in favour of what I honestly believe to be for the good of the church universal, and by the help of the Lord I will do so in a spirit of Christian love.

It affords me no ordinary degree of pleasure to say that I am fully identified with the people currently known as Disciples of Christ. We have a creed, and of our creed we are not ashamed. It needs no revision. Ours is the creed of Christianity. It consists of a single proposition. This proposition relates to, and sets forth the nature and offices of our blessed Lord. The creed of the people with whom I am immediately associated reads thus: "I believe in my heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and the Saviour of men." Jesus' test of orthodoxy was: "What