

the same. True, the seal of the covenant has been changed, but the blessings symbolized, and signified by the seal, *always remained the same*. Circumcision under the Jewish dispensation was the "seal of the righteousness of faith;" Rom. iv. 2. Baptism is the seal under the Christian dispensation. Like Circumcision it is an act of consecration to God—a visible sign that believers shall be justified by faith. Now, as *signs*, both Circumcision and Baptism signify the very same thing—the necessity of spiritual cleansing in order to acceptance by God. Again, as *seals* they are alike. They bind God, as one party to the covenant, to bestow all promised blessings; and man the other party, and recipient of the blessings, to perform all duty. As the covenant has ever been the same, so the seals involving the same obligations, have ever been the same, though changed as to the mode of applying them. As then children received the seal under the old dispensation they have a right to receive it under the new—"I will be a God to thy seed."

3. The identity of the Church, under both dispensations is clearly proved by the Apostle Paul in the 11th Chapter of his epistle to the Romans. There he represents the Church under the figure of a tree, from which certain branches were broken off. By these branches he evidently means the Jews, who were separated from the Church because of their unbelief. Other scions, or believing Gentiles, were grafted on. The Gentiles were in danger of becoming proud, and boastful, on account of their privileges. The Apostle cautions them not to exult over the fallen Jew in these words, "Boast not against the branches but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root but the root thee," Rom. xi. 18—"Your source of blessing is the ancient stock." It is clear from these words, that Paul regarded the Church as one, and that the Christian dispensation is only a prolongation of the Jewish one.

4. The identity of the Church is seen still farther in the fact, that the Jews are to be reconciled to God, and are to be put in possession of the blessings of the covenant which God made with their ancestor Abraham. When this event takes place, they are to be gathered, not into a *new Church*, having an organization different from what it has at present; but into the same Church from which they were excluded. The olive tree remains the same, and the branches which were broken off, will be grafted on again; not, you will observe into *another*, but into their

*own* olive tree. It is clear then that the Jewish and Christian branches of the Church have both the same tree; and if the same tree, then the same root—the same covenant, securing the same blessings to the Jews and Gentiles. We have two Testaments, but only one Bible; and two dispensations, but only one Church.

It is indeed true, that certain changes were made by Christ and his Apostles under him. These were necessary, as the head of the Church designed to extend the blessings of salvation to the whole world. Among these changes, the Sabbath was changed from the *seventh*, to the *first* day of the week. The Aaronic priesthood was superseded by the Christian ministry. Certain ceremonial distinctions between clean and unclean were abolished. But none of these changes in the least touched the *identity* of the Church.

Now, whilst there were these, and other changes effected under Divine direction; it is worthy of notice, that no modification, either expressed, or implied was ever made by Christ or his Apostles in regard to the privileges and duties of parents as entitled, and required, to seal to their children the blessings of the covenant as members of the Church. From all this it follows; that, as children were by Divine command included with their parents in the Church under the *first* dispensation; so they are in the same sense to be included in the *second*.

To this view it has been objected, that "as baptism is the only initiatory rite of the Christian Church; and as belief is essential to baptism, it is essential to Church membership;—and as children cannot believe, they cannot be members of Christ's Church." To this objection I return the following answers:—

1. I deny the correctness of the premises from which the conclusion is drawn—"that in the case of infants, whose parents are by profession, members of the visible Church, 'belief is essential to baptism,' or to 'Church membership.'" In regard to such infants, they are *born* in the Church, and receive the seal of Baptism, *because of their membership*. Did the Jewish child require to believe before he was circumcised? No. Was it circumcision that gave him church membership? No. There is a great difference between baptism as administered to those who are born in the Church, and the baptism of proselytes or adults coming from the world into the Church. Wherever the Scriptures speak of faith as an essential qualification of baptism, it is always in reference to the latter. They never speak