

Hence the visible Church of God, which for ages had been confined to a single nation, instead of being dissolved, was opened for the reception of the believing Gentiles, without any respect to any national distinctions. St. Paul, in the eleventh chapter of Romans, compares the believing portion of the Jewish Church—the true sons of Abraham—to a “good olive tree.” By the breaking off of some of its natural branches he represents the rejection of the unbelieving Jews; and by the grafting in of others from the wild olive-tree, the reception of the believing Gentiles. In all this it is taken for granted by the apostle that the “good olive tree”—the true Abrahamic church—is still standing. He, therefore, adds, that if the broken-off branches—the unbelieving Jews—“abide not still in unbelief,” they shall be united again *to their own olive tree*. Thus the unity of the Church under the former and the present dispensation is fully established. Indeed, the covenant which God made with Abraham was an epitome of the gospel. Hence the Apostle says, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the *Gospel unto Abraham*, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” Gal. iii. 8.

(4.) *Baptism has taken the place of circumcision, and is to the present dispensation, what circumcision was to the Jewish.*—That baptism has precisely the same federal and initiatory character as circumcision, and that it was instituted for the same ends, and in its place, we have abundant proof in Col. ii. 10—12: “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by *the circumcision of Christ*, buried with him in *baptism*.” Here, the apostle not only shows that baptism is the initiatory rite of the new dispensation, when he says, “in whom also ye are circumcised,” but, also, that it has the same office under the Christian, that circumcision had under the Jewish dispensation; for he expressly calls it “the circumcision of Christ,”—a hebraism, meaning *Christian circumcision*. That baptism has the same office and importance as circumcision anciently had, will satisfactorily appear from Gal. iii. 27—29: “For as many of you as have been baptized *into Christ*, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s”—by thus being *baptized* and by *putting on Christ*—“then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

The argument is decisive. It was by circumcision, believingly received, that strangers or heathens, as well as Jews, became the spiritual “seed