

church, both believing parents and their children, as circumcision admitted both. The same church remains; for "the olive tree" is not destroyed; the natural branches only are broken off, and the Gentiles grafted in, and "partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree," that is, of all the spiritual blessings heretofore enjoyed by the Jews, in consequence of their relation to God as his church. But among these spiritual privileges and blessings was the right of placing their children in covenant with God; the membership of the Jews comprehended both children and adults; and the grafting in of the Gentiles, so as to partake of the same "root and fatness," will therefore include a right to put their children also into the covenant, so that they as well as adults may become members of Christ's church, have God to be "their God," and be acknowledged by him, in the special sense of the terms of the covenant, to be his "people."

But we have our Lord's direct testimony on this point, and that in two remarkable passages, Luke ix. 47, 48: "And Jesus took a child and set him by him, and he said unto them, whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me; for he that is least among you, all the same shall be great." We grant that this is an instance of teaching by parabolic action. The intention of Christ was to impress the necessity of humility and teachableness upon his disciples, and to afford a promise to those who should receive them in his name of that special grace which was implied, in receiving himself. But, then, was there not a correspondence of circumstances between the child taken by Jesus in his arms, and the disciple compared to this child, there would be no force, no propriety in the action, and the same truth might have been as forcibly stated without any action of this kind at all. Let then these correspondences be remarked in order to estimate the amount of their meaning. The humility and docility of the true disciple corresponded with the same dispositions in a young child; and the "receiving a disciple in the name" of Christ corresponds with the receiving of a child in the name of Christ, which can only mean the receiving of each with kindness, on account of a *religious relation* between each and Christ, which religious relation can only be well interpreted of a *church relation*. This is further confirmed by the next point of correspondence, the *identity* of Christ both with the disciple and the child. "Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me;" but such an identity of Christ with his disciples stands wholly upon their relation to him as members of his mystical "body, the church." It is in this respect only that they are "one with him;" and there can be no identity of Christ with "little children" but by virtue of the same relation, that is, as they are *members* of his mystical body, the church; of which *membership* baptism is now, as membership was then, the initiatory rite. That was the relation in which the very child he then took up in his arms stood to him by virtue of its *circumcision*; it was a member of the old Testamen-

church; but, as he is speaking of the disciples as the future teachers of his perfected covenant, and their reception in his name under that character, he manifestly glances at the church relationship of children to him to be established by the baptism to be instituted in his perfect dispensation.

This is, however, expressed still more explicitly in Mark x. 14: "But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God:—and he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Here the children spoken of are "little children," of so tender an age that our Lord "took them up in his arms." The purpose for which they were brought, was not, as some of the Baptist writers would suggest, that Christ should heal them of diseases; for though St. Mark says, "They brought young children to Christ that he might touch them," this he explained by St. Matthew, who says, "that he should put his hands upon them and pray;" and even in the statement of St. Mark x. 16, it is not said that our Lord healed them, but, "put his hands upon them, and blessed them;" which clearly enough shows that this was the purpose for which they were brought by their parents to Christ. Nor is there any evidence that it was the practice among the Jews for common unofficial persons to put their hands upon the heads of those for whom they prayed. The parents here appear to have been among those who believed Christ to be a Prophet, "*that Prophet*," or the Messiah; and on that occasion earnestly desired his prayers for their children, and his official blessing upon them. That official blessing,—the blessing which he was authorized and empowered to bestow by virtue of his Messiahship,—he was so ready, we might say so anxious, to bestow upon them, that he was "*much displeased*" with his disciples who "rebuked them that brought them," and gave a command which was to be in force in all future time, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," in order to receive my official blessing; "for of such is the kingdom of God." The first evasive criticism of the Baptist writers is, that the phrase "of such," means of such like, that is of adults being of a childlike disposition; a criticism which takes away all meaning from the words of our Lord. For what kind of reason was it to offer for permitting children to come to Christ to receive his blessing, that persons, not children, but who were of a childlike disposition, were the subjects of the kingdom of God? The absurdity of this is its own refutation, since the reason for children being permitted to come must be found in themselves, and not in others. The second attempt to evade the argument from this passage, is to understand "the kingdom of God," or "kingdom of heaven," as St. Matthew has it, exclusively of the heavenly state. We gladly admit, in opposition to the Calvinistic Baptist, that all children dying before actual sin committed are admitted into heaven through the merits of Christ; but for this very reason it follows that infants are proper subjects to be introduced into the church on

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