

all minor differences in the different systems are governed and may be explained.

According to our apprehensions, there are two, and omitting minor points, but two schemes of thought in regard to the church, its nature, membership and modes of propagation and increase. One of these, we would denominate *Individualism*; the other, Organic Christianity. 1. First, there is the scheme of opinion and practice, which, without designing anything invidious, but as characterizing its great leading idea, may be termed, individualism. This theory denies that any one is, or can be, or ought to be considered a member of the church of Christ, but one who has personally exercised faith and repentance, as the fruit and evidence of regeneration. This, of course and of design, excludes from the membership of the church, all but adult and actually regenerated persons.

On the other hand, there is the scheme of opinion and practice, which, for the want of a better term, and also as expressing its leading idea, we would denominate *organic christianity*, in distinction from individualism. This holds as one of its vital ideas, that membership in the church of God, may exist, and the privileges and blessings pertaining to it, may be enjoyed, in the case of those who have not exercised, and, in fact, are not capable of exercising faith and repentance. In other words, that infants, in virtue of the faith of their parents, or in such a case, of one of their parents, are, and of right ought to be considered, members of the church, entitled to its privileges, till, by their own act, or refusal to act, they forfeit these privileges and voluntarily identify themselves with the world and God's enemies, and are cast out of the church. One of these schemes represents christianity, as in its nature and by the plan of its founder, possessing organic power, operating really, and in many instances, efficaciously, irrespective of the choice or agency of the individual. It represents the church as a nursery. Its appliances as eminently educational, and growth, its great law of progress.

The other, represents christianity as addressing itself only to and operating upon individuals, after they have arrived at the period of personal choice and voluntary agency. It represents the church characteristically, as an armory; its appliances, as

essentially aggressive and belligerent, and its law of progress, conquest.

With such antagonistic views of the nature of christianity, of the church, and of the right mode of its preservation and propagation, there must necessarily be diversity in regard to the point now before us, viz: the component elements of the church. Infants and children will, of course, be regarded in a very different light as one or the other of these views is adopted. Men of loose thinking and illogical habits, may confound or try to blend these two schemes, take a part of one and a part of the other, and out of the heterogeneous elements, endeavor to construct what they denominate a system. But it is impossible. Like the iron and clay of the toes of the great image, they will not cohere. To be symmetrical, the leading idea either of individualism or organic christianity, must run through the whole, and govern the separate parts of every system.

Having thus endeavored, honestly and impartially, to set forth these two great leading schemes of thought and practice, as they bear on this subject, and to state what we believe is the great point of divergence between them, the question of moment now, is, *Which of these is true?* Which correctly represents God's mind in the case, and ought consequently to govern the opinions and practice of his people?

Subsidiary to the proper settlement of this question, and though confessedly secondary, by no means, in our view, unimportant, let us ascertain the view, taken in the symbolical books of the church, on the point before us. For all practical purposes, we may take the standards of the Presbyterian church, as embodying the antecedent and contemporaneous sentiment of the church, in the apprehension of their framers, and without obtruding our personal preferences, may consider them as expressing the spirit of Protestant symbols. Old-fashioned Presbyterianism, as we apprehend and feel bound to expound and maintain it, goes with its full weight against the scheme of individualism, and can be explained, as a consistent and symmetrical system, as beyond all controversy it is, whether we allow it to be true or not, only on the idea of organic christianity, as we have endeavored to explain the term.



For example, in regard to the composition of the church, considered as universal or particular, the idea of the Westminster standards embraces all that we have denominated the organic character of christianity. Their language, concerning the universal church, is, "The universal church consists of all those persons, in every nation, *together with their children*, who make profession of the holy religion of Christ, and of submission to his laws." Again, in the same spirit, they represent a particular church thus: "A particular church consists of a number of professing christians, *with their offspring*, voluntarily associated together for divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the holy Scriptures, and submitting to a certain form of government." In these fundamental views of the nature of the church, it will be perceived that the church is represented as altogether different from a mere aggregation of individuals. The church is held forth as having precisely the same organic character, and embracing the same elements as the state does, whatever be its specific form of administration. A nation, be its government monarchical or republican, embraces in its elements the infant and unconscious offspring of its members, and by this means, its identity is preserved and its perpetuation and progress secured. These grow up in connexion with it, are entitled to its protection, enjoy its privileges, and without any other specific act, are considered as in its allegiance. When foreign elements, indeed, come to be incorporated with this body, by their own act of choice, a special form of allegiance and recognition is necessary. And very properly, for then citizenship and allegiance are transferred. But in the case of native born citizens, their citizenship stands in their connexion with their parents and is assumed and continued, till by some act of their own, it is forfeited and annulled. Precisely so, the symbols alluded to, represent the elements of the church. Children, the offspring of parents professing submission to Christ—the baptized portion of the congregation, are, *de facto*, members, entitled to its privileges, and can only be deprived of them by their own fault or the exercise of the church's prerogative of discipline.

The same idea is involved in the teachings of these standards on the subject of baptism. Baptism is represented as "a sacra-

ment of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, for the solemn admission of the party baptized, into the visible church," and "not only those who actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized"—tantamount, according to the definition already given, to being solemnly admitted into the visible church.

So again, "Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers to the covenants of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him." This is designed to meet the case of adult admissions, analogous to the introduction of foreign elements into civil society; "but infants, descending from parents either both or only one of them professing faith in Christ and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant and are to be baptized." The unbelief of one party, as we shall see in another part of this subject, being sanctified and its exclusive influence counteracted, in God's constitution, by the faith of the other party.

The faith of parents, or of one parent, as the case may be, always enures to the benefit of the unconscious child, brings it into important relations, surrounds it with important associations, and is the ordinary channel along which decisive influences come to it, long before it is capable of performing any act, to which personal accountability attaches. On this plan, the question of preference is to be settled, not *by the child*, in the exercise of its free agency and individual choice, but *for the child*, by those who stand in organic relation to it. Children are not to be held, *in equilibrio*, as some preposterously contend, till they come to exercise the grand prerogative of personal choice, a thing, in the nature of the case, impossible and absurd, as well as undesirable, but so influenced, that the exercise of choice shall be right and in accordance with truth and safety from the beginning. The system now under consideration, knows nothing of that idea of religious vagrancy, (we know of no other name for it,) popular with infidels and worldlings, which is so jealous of the rights of private judgment and of undue influence, that a child, with all its admitted and hereditary tendencies in the wrong direction, must be left uninfluenced and uncommitted in its plastic period, lest its freedom of opinion and choice should be thereby compro-



mitted—a plan equally indicating folly on the part of parents, and imposing peril unspeakable on the child, “as if,” as one has strikingly said, “after producing the egg of immortality, the church, like the Nubian ostrich, should leave it in the sands, exposed to the tread of every passer by.” (Dr. Bushnell.)

These views, we think, distinctly convey the organic character of the church and the true law of its propagation and progress, as the existing sentiment of the framers of these symbols. While they make provision for the incorporation into the church of foreign elements of adult age, by the exercise of faith and repentance and voluntary profession of obedience to Christ and the laws of his kingdom, just as nations do, the great principle for securing the perpetuation and expansion of the church, is the incorporation into it, of those who belong to its families, and the extension of these nurseries of the church, by the influence of the christian over the unbelieving portion of the family structure, securing by the faith of one party, the whole of the offspring to the side of christianity, and the enjoyment of its privileges and influences. Whenever the gospel is brought into contact with heathenism, and its institutions are to be founded anew, it must have to do primarily with the adult population. This was the case when christianity overleaping the limitations of the Judaistic institute, was brought to bear upon the Gentile nations in the first centuries. And this will serve to explain much in the epistles of Paul, addressed to churches, formed out of Gentile material, which otherwise seem adverse to the views we are suggesting. But when the church is founded, and is to progress by the laws of its own vitality, and such we conceive is the state of things contemplated in the standards of the church, then the extraordinary and exceptional gives place to the ordinary and permanent methods of progress.

The views now given of the relations of children to the church, involve some exceedingly important and practical results, the consideration of which will show that proper speculative views on the point now under discussion, should be carefully formed. According to these views, for example, the children of believing parents, as members of the church, and within the pale of the covenant, should grow up as christians; not as outcasts and rebels.

The children of the church need not, as many seem to imagine, grow up in sin, to be converted, if at all, after they come to mature age; but may and ought to open on the world and its active duties, as spiritually renewed, loving and practising what is good from their earliest years—“springing up as among the grass,” which by living reproduction has been perpetuated from creation till now, and “as willows by the water courses,” putting forth in early spring-time, the evidences of vitalizing power within.

Christian education too, should conform to these views. They should be trained up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” On the ground of covenant relation, recognized by baptism, parents are privileged to realize the new relations of the Trinity to their children as well as themselves.

They may and ought to regard God as being to their children a reconciled Father, through the mediation of Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ, as an actual and all-sufficient Saviour, and the Holy Ghost as a sanctifier, not on the ground of any goodness existing in them, for there is none, but as the means of awakening goodness, of producing faith and gratitude, and consecration in their hearts. Parents are privileged to act on these truths, in educating their children, to make these representations to them as realities, as soon as they are capable of comprehending them. And still further, and more practically, they should aim to incorporate these ideas into their minds and hearts, by a process of training, beginning long before personal accountability commences—by the assimilative power of the eye and countenance and temper and spirit. By these means, children might be and should be expected, without any conscious period of unregeneracy, to be brought under their sanctifying power. In such a case, just as in the case of adults after regeneration, such children would still recognize in themselves the law of sin and death, derived from apostacy and inherited corruption. “The flesh would lust against the spirit.” “The law in the members” would still be in antagonism against “the law of the mind,” and sometimes one, and sometimes the other would overcome. But their earliest exercises would be of that mixed character of genuine christianity, which belong in every period, even the most advanced, to the truly regenerated, and the really, though at best, imperfectly sanctified. The new



principle would sometimes more, and sometimes less, powerfully assert its existence, by its appropriate effects, and at last grow up to supremacy, habitual and controlling. Seasons of torpor, sometimes apparently of death, just as in adults, would be manifest. Darkness, coldness and estrangement, and then life, and warmth and enjoyment would alternate, according to outward circumstances or inward influences, and as children have no hypocrisy, would be more evident in them than in adult christians; but the reality of grace, "the incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth forever," would be there, as truly as in those of adult conversion and mature experience.

It will be seen further, from these representations, that there is no absolute necessity, in the case of infant members of the church who have been properly trained according to the normal acting of the christian church, and the general design of God in its organization, for the *conscious* experience, much less for the recognition of the precise period, of what is called conversion, or obtaining a new heart, as it is familiarly termed. Observe, we do not say, the *experience*, but the *conscious* experience. Believing parents are not to take it for granted, that their children when they grow up, will necessarily have undividedly wicked hearts, and put forth perpetually and only, overt acts of rebellion against God and ingratitude to the Saviour. They need not and ought not, as many are accustomed to do, put them on the mystifying search after evidences of "a new heart." The great object and true result of parental training, should be, to bring them into the exercise of new hearts, in view of the new and glorious relations of the Holy Trinity to our race, which the Scriptures plainly reveal, and which the ordinances of the church certify and seal as realities, to all that intelligently engage in them, admitting fully and freely, as they must, the fact of original sin and inherited depravity in their children, from their connexion with the first Adam, existing, as all admit, without their personal agency and choice; of course, parents are privileged to expect along with the faithful use of appointed means, regenerative and sanctifying power from the second Adam, the counterpart in this respect of the first, also without their conscious agency, and previous to the period of personal accountability.

The theory of christianity, embodied in these standards, takes for granted, this regenerative and sanctifying process, anterior to all conscious and accountable exercises, in the case of infants dying in infancy, and on that fact, rest the hopes of parents, that the "early lost" are the "early saved." This truth sheds a lovely light on their little graves. "Elect infants dying in infancy."

We believe all dying in infancy are elect—"are regenerated and saved through the Spirit, who worketh, when, where and how he pleaseth." They are fitted for heaven, without personally exercising faith and repentance, for the simple and sufficient reason, that they are incapable of exercising these otherwise indispensable graces. Here the fact of the efficacious influence of the Spirit, in implanting the principle of life, in the unconscious period, is plainly asserted, and on no other ground can an intelligible and satisfactory account be given, (in the case of infants dying in infancy) allowing them to be originally corrupt, and consequently disqualified, of the process of preparation for future glory. Is there a parent who ever lost an infant, that is willing to deny that regenerative power is exerted, and has been exerted on the part of the Spirit, and experienced on the part of the child, anterior to the period of personal accountability? When children grow up amidst the congenial influences of glory, the germ of a new life, derived from Christ, through the Holy Ghost, is developed in the lovely forms of perfected piety, in the skies, why may not and ought not, the influences of the family and the church, if rightly exerted, result to some extent, at least in the same way here? The theory of organic christianity demands that the law in regard to infant members dying in infancy, and those who grow up to adult years and the period of accountability in the church below, should be the same, and that the absence of these regenerative influences, resulting in actual christian affections, is the exception. Instead of expecting, as a matter of course, therefore, that children will grow up enemies of God, "aliens from the commonwealth and strangers to the covenants of promise," without love or gratitude to Christ, or influence of the Spirit, making indispensable a period of conviction and conversion conscious to the individual, and a passing over from the world to the church, as, of course, is necessary, in the case of



unregenerated adults, the fact of membership in the church, and a participation in the blessings of the covenant, and the guaranteed power of the spirit, operating previously to the period of free agency, and the quickening grace of the second Adam, which is as real and operative as the polluting efficacy of the first, all conspire to encourage parents that their children, if properly trained, may grow up, and will grow up, as christians, and that their first conscious acts and exercises will be those of new hearts, and their subsequent lives with the altered natures already noticed, will be in correspondence with these christian beginnings. When a different result takes place, as, alas! it often does, there has been either some wrong view of the relations of the child, some wrong influence from the parent, or a want of true faith in the covenant promise of God. It is not for want of sufficient grace treasured in Christ and designed usually to be communicated through proper parental training. In accordance with this view of the case, the Presbyterian Directory for worship declares, "children born within the pale of the visible church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the church, and are to be taught to read and repeat the catechism, the Apostle's creed and the Lord's prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ; and when they come to years of discretion, if they are free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's supper."

Such is the scheme of christianity, directly asserted, or everywhere assumed, in Presbyterian standards, with its special bearing on the point now under discussion—an interpretation, possibly, which seems new and unauthorized to some who have adopted these standards, which may convict some of gross practical departures from their professed formularies, and condemn some of the appliances heretofore deemed of paramount, if not exclusive importance, in building up and extending the kingdom of God and the church of Christ in our world. Be it so. It is with truth only, not its consequences, that we are concerned. If truth condemn us, let its condemning power excite us to rectification. If our past course has been founded in misconception, and un-

successful because fallacious, let us try to gain better speculative views, and thus be guided into better and more successful practice.

Presbyterians ought to be in no doubt in regard to the relation of children to the church. On the faith of one or both parents, they are in the church, entitled to its privileges, and may ordinarily be expected to be savingly influenced by its institutions. Parents should act on the presumption furnished by these relations. They should present God to their children, as already reconciled, for the sake of Christ, and by means of this truth in the hands of the Holy Ghost, effect the state of actual, subjective reconciledness to him, confidence in him, and love to him, on the part of their children, which this new and glorious relation is designed and adapted to develop. The first, and sweetest, and most influential lesson they are privileged to teach them, is embodied in the phrase, "Our Father." So they should fix the first affections of their children on the Lord Jesus Christ, not as willing at some distant day, to be their Saviour and Redeemer, or in consequence of goodness or the possession of a new heart, or any previous exercise of grace; but, as being actually their Redeemer, who loved them and died for them, who loves them now, and by this love, in its manifestations on the cross and its present pulsations on the throne, designing to evoke reciprocal love to him, amongst the earliest exercises of the infant heart. So they should present the Holy Spirit, also, not as exerting a mysterious and talismanic, but a soul-felt, agency—a real, living, enlightening sanctifying power.

The children of the church, thus trained, when admitted to the discriminating privileges of the church, especially the Lord's supper, would regard it, not as an act of translation from the world and a state of rebellion, but as a grateful recognition, on their part, personally, of relations existing before, and whose influence by God's arrangement and blessing, they have felt in their hearts. It ought to be solemnly and constantly asserted, whatever practical difficulties may attend it, that membership in the church, must be forfeited or annulled by the party himself, or it exists, with all its responsibilities, and that the discipline of the church has its legitimate sphere of operation on baptized



members, as well as others. In a settled state of the church, we ought to regard the families that belong to it, or may be added to it, as its nurseries and grand sources of supply, and means of extension, instead of trusting to periodical accessions from those confirmed in unregeneracy and sin. In the perpetuation and expansion of the church, we should primarily regard the law of progress which God has established, while, of course, we should stand ready to engage earnestly and believingly in those more strictly aggressive movements, which it has always pleased him to employ to repair the wastes of the church's faithlessness, and sometimes, indeed, entirely to transfer the seat of the church's existence.

Assuming, however, that these are the views of the symbols, and that they correctly represent the sense of the Scriptures, according to the honest apprehensions of their framers, this will not be sufficient for some. They may say, this is Presbyterianism or churchianity; but is it christianity? With some of the members, and alas! even officers of the church, it is of comparatively small moment, that a doctrine is set forth in the formularies they have embraced and profess as their creed. It is not enough, for example, that the combined wisdom of the Westminster assembly, or of the most learned and pious of uninspired men, ever convened since the time of the Apostles, has been expressed in regard to any point. Their individual judgment or preconceived opinion, or cherished theory, or previous practice, outweighs all this. There are men, too, whose minds are so constructed, or prejudices so confirmed, that whatever is old and established, is to them *prima facie*, suspicious and erroneous, and on the contrary, whatever is new, especially the result of their own independent thinking, is valuable and correct. This is one of the incidental evils, growing out of one of the confessedly great blessings and privileges, of the age, and one of the sad exemplifications too, of the tendencies to extremes to which the human mind has been prone, in all past times, and in none more than our own. It is not enough to find out what our fathers thought, what has been the common faith of the church in past ages, the embodied result and embalmed testimony of the past piety of God's people, every man, though with almost infinitely

smaller advantages, must find out for himself the truth in the case.

In what remains of our article, therefore, we shall attempt to show that what we have denominated organic christianity, as contradistinguished from individualism, and of course, the relation of children to the church, inseparable from that idea of the genius of christianity, is the doctrine of the Scriptures, as really as of the symbols; in other words, that the framers of these formularies, in this respect, have truly, as well as honestly, given the sense of the Scriptures.

This part of the discussion will necessarily lead us back to the first organization of the church of God. And here, we presume, that none will question the fact, that the Old Testament church, as organized in the family of Abraham, and based on the covenant of circumcision, possessed this organic character. This feature is involved, we think, in the very nature of the organization and the terms of the covenant. The infant offspring of members, were included in the organization of the Old Testament church, and in the purview of the Abrahamic covenant. The plan of transmission and perpetuation, under the old Dispensation, too, was unquestionably, hereditary, as a general rule, allowing, in exceptional cases, of the incorporation of adult and foreign elements. The tenor of the covenant with Abraham, on which the church was then organized, is thus expressed: "I will establish," says God, "my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Here is a plain distinction between the individual and the organic character of the covenant. "Between me and thee," and "unto thee," is individual. But what is "thy seed after thee, in their generations," but organic? "As soon as a new individual was generated from this seed, he was within the covenant, and God was his God," as really as the God of Abraham, and he had a right to the seals of the covenant, as a public ratification of his relation to God and his people, unless he chose to renounce them and the privileges thereto appended, "selling his birthright for a mess of pottage." Obviously, his right to church membership was a birthright, guaranteed by covenant. He was sealed with its seal in infancy, surrounded with its influ-



ences, and committed to its formative power, from his earliest being, and forfeited them only by his own act of voluntary self-exclusion, or by the process of excision in certain contingencies made and provided.

This was the genius of the church, and the original plan of transmission chosen and ordained by God. If we apprehend it aright, this was also designed to be perpetual. Such, as all must allow, continued to be the principle of perpetuation and transmission, through all the ages of the old Dispensation, from the time of Abraham to the coming of Christ. The organic character of the church, the fact that infants composed a part of its membership, that they were to be trained up as heirs of the covenant and entitled to its visible privileges, and could only be severed from its connexion by the process of excision, are so plainly exhibited in the Old Testament, that those who acknowledge the existence and organization of a church of God at all, anterior to the coming of Christ, cannot possibly deny that these were its peculiarities.

Let it not be said that this is aside from our purpose, and may all be granted, without any decisive influence on the question. It is of no small moment, to have these preliminaries rightly settled. For if this was the original organization of the church, if this organic feature was incorporated into it, at the beginning, the presumption is, unless specifically changed, these features were designed to continue. "The gifts and callings of God, are without repentance," or capricious changes of plan. What his wisdom selected and ordained, in view of the whole case and its contingencies at first, his wisdom may be supposed for the same sufficient reasons, to make perpetual.

The question then, is, did these peculiarities of God's covenant and church organization cease at the introduction of christianity? At that "epochal period," when the meeting and interaction of ages occurred, was a new church, on new principles, and with new modes of propagation and perpetuation inaugurated; or is the christian church a continuation only, with a new form of ordinances and wider range of influence, of that organized in the family of Abraham—based on the same covenant, distinguished by the same peculiarities, and designed to be per-

petuated among men, and extending finally to all nations, by the same great means? Did the one original church, in passing from its Jewish to its Christian phase, from its preparatory to its permanent stage of being, put off its confessedly organic character, to assume the new feature of individualism; and were children, after being component elements of the church, by God's express direction and in virtue of an ordinance established by himself, from the beginning to that epoch, then formally excluded and placed out of covenant with God, and without the pale of his church, and a new plan of perpetuation and expansion established? These are important questions, bearing directly on the point before us. And, "what saith the Scriptures?" "How readest thou?" Just at this crisis, we hear the Master's own voice, saying: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven!" In this feature, the new dispensation is to be as responsive to parental affection and inclusive of infantile membership, as the old. "The God of Abraham," yearns yet with undiminished tenderness towards the lambs of the fold, and designs not that they should be excluded from his covenant blessings and provisions.

Again, at the memorable era of the Pentecost, the anniversary of the giving of the law, and designed by God as the period of the introduction of the better dispensation of the gospel, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, we would naturally look for confirmation or repeal of pre-existing privileges and peculiarities: does anything significant of confirmation or nullification occur at this transition period? Let it be borne in mind, that all the first materials of church organization at the day of Pentecost, were Jews—men brought up under the view of the Abrahamic covenant, already expounded, with hearts naturally solicitous in regard to the relations of their children, heretofore invariably associated with them in church privileges, and ready therefore to embrace with thankfulness, whatever it pleased the Holy Ghost, by the Apostles, to communicate on a point so near to their tenderest affections and dearest earthly interests. Now, what does Peter, speaking "as he was moved by the Holy Ghost," present in these circumstances to these Jews, as a ground or motive of baptism, or personal identification with christianity. "Repent and be



baptized every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the promise," the promise made ages before, unto Abraham, and designed to embrace all his seed, "the promise is unto you and your children, and all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The gospel dispensation, in other words, is a ratification and confirmation, not a repeal or repudiation of existing privileges. In their circumstances, and to their state of heart, the words of the Apostle could have no less significance than this, and go utterly against the idea of the introduction of the individualistic theory at that time.

Further, the basis of the Apostle Paul's argument with the Galatian christians, is the hypothesis of one, original, perpetual church, organized in the family and covenant of Abraham. His object is to show that Gentiles, though not circumcised, are legitimate members of this church, and entitled to all its privileges. In doing this, he traces back the origin of the blessings now enjoyed by christians, to the promise made to Abraham. He contends that it was a part of the original plan of God, in organizing the church in the family of Abraham, "that the blessing of Abraham should come on the Gentiles by faith." "For they that be of faith, are blessed with believing Abraham," have the same blessing he enjoyed. "The Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith," or foreshadowing or preintimating God's plan of justifying the nations or Gentiles through faith, after the coming of Christ, "preached before the gospel," or announced the glorious tidings "to Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blest." The Apostle shows clearly that the episodic or interimistic dispensation, instituted at Sinai, did not touch at all the original covenant, but was designed to be subsidiary to it, till the fullness of time, when it was to have its full scope and influence. "The covenant confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred years after, could not disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." The Law, or Sinaitic dispensation, was introduced to keep up the succession of God's people, "till the seed should come to where the promise was made." It "was a schoolmaster to bring" the church to Christ, or the christian period—"a temporary constitution superadded to give effect to some of the provisions of the

covenant with Abraham and expired by its own limitations." During this preparatory period, it is acknowledged that circumcision was the method of perpetuation, and was of force till Christ came. But the Apostle contends that in the covenant itself, on which the church organization was based, it is provided, that after Christ's coming, the exercise of faith should constitute an individual a part of the seed to whom the promise was originally made, and who have a right to all its blessings. "We are all the children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ." "If we be Christ's then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." The existing church of God, according to the plan at its organization, was to have a great expansion at the coming of Christ. "The abolition of those restrictions, which were suited to a preparatory state, fitted her for universality," and now "all nations" were to be embraced without destroying her unity or original character. In virtue of this provision, Gentiles, without being circumcised, were, by the exercise of faith, incorporated into the church. Thus they form a part of the seed, with whom "in their generations, an everlasting covenant" is made, and by whom the existence of the church is to be perpetuated on the original principles of its first organization. Every one who in adult age, from among the Gentiles, by the personal exercise of faith in Jesus Christ, becomes an integral part of the church of God, brings with him into that church, and has incorporated with himself, into its membership, and entitled with him to its privileges, all his infant family, just as the Jews, whose children all along from the beginning, had an inalienable birthright in the church, in virtue of the relation of their parents—a privilege which, as we have seen, was ratified to them on the day of Pentecost, when they entered the christian church by baptism. Whatever privileges of a personal or relative character belonged of right to the members of the church of God, from the beginning, became the right of every one, who from the heathen, by exercising faith in Christ, was incorporated into the church. Among the rest, the right of having his children included in the covenant—a right which had existed unquestioned, in all antecedent ages, which the Jews always took for granted, and which the Gentiles



did not forego, because of the peculiarity of the mode of their admission, by personal profession of faith in adult age.

It will be perceived from what we have now adduced, that the Apostle's reasoning in behalf of the Gentiles, is based on the assumption of the unity of the church—the fact of its being founded on the covenant made with Abraham—of its having in its original structure a provision to meet this very case;—that the peculiar Judaistic institute was strictly interimistic, dating after the covenant four hundred years, and designed to cease as a provisional scheme, at the coming of the Messiah; whilst the true, original and perpetual organization of the church, on the basis of the covenant of promise, was to continue throughout all generations of the true seed of Abraham, and embrace every one who should exercise faith in Jesus Christ, with their children.

Allowing this to be a fair view of the Apostle's object and argument of the principles it involves, let us see what light is thrown upon it and our general subject, by his famous figurative representation of "the olive tree," in his Epistle to the Romans. He speaks of the church as "an olive tree"—of the Jews, as its "natural branches, broken off by unbelief"—that is, severed from connexion with the church. The Gentiles he represents as belonging to "an olive tree" also, but "wild by nature," and "grafted in, contrary to nature, into the good olive tree, and with them, partakers of its root and fatness." These original branches, "the natural branches" now broken off, "if they abide not still in unbelief," he says, "shall again be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." "Grafted into" what? "Their own olive tree"—the same church which exists still, though the members are changed. "The lopping off of diseased branches, destroys not the tree itself." What other possible interpretation will this allow, than this, that there was one, and one only, organized church, without any change in its essential features, into which the Gentiles were incorporated through faith, which is perpetuated according to the law existing at its organization, through all its changing dispensations, and into which, at some future period, the Jews are again to be introduced. In other words, christianity is a prolongation and expansion of a previously existing organization, but not a new church, except in its mode

of dispensation, and a change in the form of its ordinances. Let us, also, recur for the same purpose, to a difficulty which would be of frequent occurrence in the primitive period of christianity, and which the Apostle specifically meets in his Epistle to the Corinthians. We mean the case where one of the united head of a family was a christian, while the other remained a pagan. The question would, here, naturally be suggested, in what light are the children of such parents to be viewed? In answering this question, the Apostle brings forward this interesting principle, exceedingly pertinent to our subject, viz: that the faith or piety of either husband or wife, as the case might be, even in the absence of christian principle or profession in the other party, secured the privileges of the church to their offspring. "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband." The faith of one party, prevents the injurious and otherwise exclusive influence of the other, so far as church privileges or the relation of their children to the church, are concerned. "Else were your children unclean," separated from the church, cast out into the common field of the world, without the pale of the covenant; "but now," in virtue of the faith of only one party, "are they holy," not in the sense of personal piety, but invested with the peculiar privileges and blessings pertaining to membership in the church of Christ; "holy," just as all the Jewish people were holy, separated unto God, visibly united to him and his church. To make "unclean," here mean illegitimate, as some contend, or personally unholy, is utterly indefensible on any correct principles of interpretation. The term "holy," expresses the state of a person or thing separated to the service of God, and "unclean," the state of a person or thing, not so separated, or which is "common." "Holy," therefore, in the Apostle's mind and time, would convey precisely what "a member of the church" does in ours, and could not otherwise have been understood by primitive christians. The position of the Apostle is that so far as the connexion of the children with the church is concerned, if one parent exercised faith and thus was constituted a part of "Abraham's seed and an heir according to promise," the faith of one party sanctified the other party, and brought the children into the



same relation to the church, that the children of the Jews held in the old dispensation. The rite by which this relation in the christian church is recognized, is different, but the relation itself is the same. The rite is baptism; the relation, membership in the church. Baptism perpetuates the original, and, as we apprehend, immutable, organic character of the church, and indicates the great law of its perpetuation and progress in all dispensations, to be the same. Except on the assumption of the unity of the church, and the continuance of its organic character, and the admission of infants to its membership, we cannot see how this difficulty would ever have occurred, or that the Apostle has satisfactorily disposed of it, in the passage now considered.

Various other particular passages of the Epistles, convey the same idea of the unity of the church and the perpetuation of its organic feature, after the introduction of the new dispensation and the Gentile element. In his Epistle to the Ephesians, for example, Paul speaks of the Gentiles as being formerly "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise;" but in virtue of faith in Christ, incorporated into the church, "built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets," who were Jews, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone," in whom these different parts of the one structure were united together. "In whom all the building," the Jewish part existing previously, and the part now added from Gentile material, "fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together, for an habitation of God, through the Spirit;" of course, when these new elements were brought into the previously existing church, in the absence of any specific repealing enactment, emanating from the supreme authority in the church, they would come into possession of all the privileges previously and *ab initio* existing. Had there been any such organic change as would have excluded children from privileges accorded to them, in every previous age, consequent upon the introduction of the Gentiles, a far fiercer controversy than that about circumcision, would have been recorded in the "Acts of the Apostles." But we have not the slightest intimation, in any part of the recorded history of the early period of christianity, of such an idea or agitation; nor,

indeed, does the question of the relation of children to the church, occur at all, except as growing out of the difficulty, considered just now, during the canon of Scripture, nor, in fact, till a very late period of christianity. Individualism, was an idea utterly unknown and incomprehensible, by the Apostles and primitive christians, and the authors of the New Testament, who were all Jews.

It is, in this connexion and in view of this existing state of opinion, that the unquestioned fact of household baptisms, by the Apostles, assumes its true significancy. The households of the jailor, and of Lydia, and of Stephanus, baptized by Paul, came into the christian church in the regular and ordinary way, and were only specimens, incidentally recorded, we suppose, of what took place everywhere, when the word of God took effect on the adult population of heathenism at the head of families. Believers and their offspring became incorporated with the church, as soon as they renounced idolatry and identified themselves with christianity. And as the Apostles "went everywhere, preaching the kingdom of God," they "made disciples of all nations," as they were commanded, in families, by "baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." The church, through her ministry, "turning away from the Jews," when "they rejected the counsel of God against their own souls," though always, and in every place, giving them the first offer, "turned to the Gentiles." Thus they transmitted in a different line, the same glorious succession, a perpetuated, covenanted, organization. Organized christianity, notwithstanding all changes in nations, and the confusion of earth, exists on this principle to our day; and blessed be his name, we believe it will exist till the winding up of the whole scheme, purposed in the beginning. For "God's purpose shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations." "His ways are past finding out, and his judgments are unsearchable;" but his covenant is sure and faithful forever. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever."

We maintain these views of organic christianity, and of the relation of children to the church, growing out of this idea then, not only as believers in the symbols of the church, but as believ-



ers in the Bible—taught there to recognize the church as one in all ages, notwithstanding the change of dispensations and ordinances. As warranted by the original covenant and church organization, which is still operative, we hold it our privilege to consider our children as with ourselves, members of God's church, constituting, organically, a part of that body, of which Christ is the head, and to which the precious promises and privileges of the original and unrevoked covenant belong, by God's own plan and purpose. On the Scriptural basis we have elucidated, we conceive it our privilege, also, not as a fiction or falsehood, but as a blessed fact, to teach them to say with us, "Our Father," at the family altar, and try to have them feel all the blessed efficacy of this appellation on their hearts. It is our privilege to train them up to regard their Father in Heaven, for the sake of their Elder Brother and Redeemer, as actually holding towards them a relation as real and tender as that of their earthly parents; and exercising towards them, on the ground, not of goodness or excellence in them, but of the Saviour's interposition, feelings and affections, far more kind and compassionate than ever throbbed in the bosom of an earthly parent. It is our privilege, to bring up our children to exercise towards that glorious being, "the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth," from the very beginning, the feeling of adoption, so that their first conscious exercises should be of reciprocated affection towards Jesus Christ, as a Person of ineffable loveliness and compassion. It is our privilege, along with the education influences, not only of direct instruction, but of our own spirit and temper and the whole manifested purpose of life, of our own hopes and joys and prospects, growing out of our own individual faith, to expect the efficacious and regenerative grace of the Holy Ghost, as really to make them christians in the church below, as that grace has fitted those taken from us in infancy, for the church above. Our children need not ever experience the feelings of unmitigated "enmity against God," except as we do ourselves, in our depraved nature, and must expect to do, till our dying day, though as a subjugated principle, rising and rebelling against, and sometimes conquering "the law of our minds," by which usually "we serve God." They need not occupy, at any conscious period of their being,

the position of rebels against God, "aliens and strangers," necessitating a transfer of relations, and a terrible revolution in their souls in adult age. Being in the church and in covenant with God, having the seal of God upon them, if, at mature age, they prefer the world, and choose it as a portion, as many do, they must do so by a deliberate act of renunciation. They must give up God their Father in heaven, and go out of the church, and relinquish the privileges and blessings of the new covenant, as citizens of a nation renounce allegiance to one government and go over to another.

The view we have thus given of the relation of children to the church, is equally removed from "baptismal regeneration," as held by some churches, on the one hand, and the bald individualism, which we as unfeignedly reprobate, on the other, presenting, as we apprehend it, the right and safe medium. It does not say, that children have new hearts, because they are baptized or will necessarily become christians and be saved, whether parents are faithful or not. But it does affirm, that in the exercise of faith in God's covenant and the faithful use of means, the Holy Spirit may be expected to give to our children, the germ of a new life, and that God's promises afford a blessed presumption, which we ought to cherish, on which we may act, and by which we may be animated, that they will grow up christians, and remember no definite time or set of conscious exercises, when and by which they became children of God. While it repudiates the idea that grace is governed by ordinary generation, it does hold that piety is preserved and was designed by God to be perpetuated, ordinarily, in the line of family succession. As the faith of Timothy, "dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and then in his mother Eunice, and last of all in him also," though "his father was a Greek." And as the piety of President Edwards, can be traced up, in the ascending series, to a faithful preacher, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and in the descending series, has been transmitted to about seventy of the existing ministry of America, besides other posterity, eminent for piety in other walks of life, almost innumerable, and as, moreover, according to statistics, which utterly refute the slander, that the children of ministers, are usually the worst, at least one-fifth of the existing Presbyte-



rian and Congregational ministry of the United States, are descendants of "the tribe of Levi."

Such is christianity, as originally embosomed in the Abrahamic covenant—the christianity to which the Jewish institute served as a pedagogue or preparatory system—the christianity expounded by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who regarded Abraham as the "the Father" alike of "the circumcision," or the Jewish branch, and of "the uncircumcision," or Gentile portion, "if they walked in the steps of that faith which Abraham had being yet uncircumcised"—who preached "Christ as the minister of circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the Fathers," and also of uncircumcision, "that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy."

From the beginning, through all its phases and dispensations, the church is one; organic in its character, embracing among its members, the infant children of believers, from whom eminently its growth is to be expected. It is a part of the plan of God to bring the law of family increase directly into the church, and make it also a law of spiritual increase, or in the words of Baxter, himself an exemplification of his profound remark, "Education, rightly conducted, is an ordinary way for the conveyance of God's grace, and ought no more to be set in opposition to the Spirit, than the preaching of the word."

Were these views as clearly apprehended and fully carried out as they might and ought to be, the great law of the church's progress and perpetuation, would be verified to the comfort of parents and to the illustration of divine faithfulness, to an extent seldom now, if ever witnessed. The reproach cast upon the church of God, of inefficacy and inferiority to other schemes of man's devising, would be wiped away, and the wisdom of God, in its original organization and immutable peculiarities, exhibited. Families would be the nurseries of the church. Faithful parental instruction, would secure the first buddings of the *plants of grace*, and pastors would only have to develop them by appropriate cultivation to "trees of righteousness," "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." At the proper age, the infant members, recognizing their relations, would gratefully and intelligently

assume the responsibilities involved in their early consecration by their parents, and thus from age to age, by a constant reproduction and increasing expansion, from this the primary source, in addition to all the aggressions made on the empire of Satan, and sin, and the votaries of the world, the church of God, would, as it was designed, go on, widening and deepening, till "the knowledge of the Lord would cover the earth as the waters do the sea." Piety, too, beginning early in life, would assume progressively lovelier and more influential forms of manifestation from generation to generation, so that "the child would die an hundred years old;" "the dew of youth," the strength of manhood, and the ripeness of age, would all be given to God and his cause. In virtue of this simple element alone, of internal vitality, independently of accretion from without, expanding by organic growth, not external conquest, the church of God, according to the tenor of the covenant, might soon fill the world. "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of their enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." "For thus saith the Lord, this is my covenant with them, my spirit which is upon thee and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, henceforth and forever." In accordance with these covenant promises, "the mustard seed" grows till it "becomes a tree." "The leaven" spreads "till all is leavened." "The stone cut out without hands," becomes "a great mountain and fills the whole earth." "The handfull of corn on the tops of the mountains," multiplying by its law of reproduction, increases, till "its fruit shakes like Lebanon," and "they of the city," the church of God on earth, "flourish like grass of the earth," perpetuated and multiplied, from age to age, till it covers "the field which is the world," once filled with briers and thorns, "with its fresh and lovely verdure, and earth becomes again the Paradise it was at first, and which, the Son of God, became incarnate and shed his blood, to reproduce.

PITTSBURG, Pa.

D. H. R.