

And when we see any one wavering we are wont to say, This is not a Jew, but acts one. But when he assumes the sentiment of one who hath been baptized and circumcised, then he hath really is, and is called a Jew. Thus we, fulfilling our profession, are Jews in name, but in reality something else.

This practice then of the Jews—*proselyte baptism*—was synonymous to the heathen *phrygia*, and in every way that it furnished this still is plain with an object of comparison. Now Epistetus lived to be very old: he is placed by Dr. Lardner, A. D. 130, by Le Clerc, A. D. 134. He could not have been thirty years of age when he wrote this; and he might obtain his information thirty or forty years earlier, which brings it up to the time of the Apostles. Those who could think that the Jews could institute *proselyte baptism* at the very moment when the Christians were practising *baptism* as an initiatory rite, are not to be envied for the correctness of their judgment. The rite certainly dates much earlier, probably many ages. I see no reason for disputing the assertion of Martynides, notwithstanding Dr. Gill's rash and fallacious language on the subject." (*Facts and Evidence on the Subject of Baptism*.)

This baptism of proselytes, as Lightfoot has fully shown, was a baptism of families, and comprehended their infant children; and the rite was a symbol of their being washed from the pollution of idolatry. Very different indeed in the extent of its import and office was Christian baptism to the Jewish baptisms; nevertheless, this shows that the Jews were familiar with the rite as it extended to children in cases of conversions from idolatry; and, as far at least as the converts from paganism to Christianity were concerned, they could not but understand Christian baptism to extend to the infant children of Gentile proselytes, unless there had been, what we nowhere else find in the discourses of Christ and the writings of the Apostles, an express exception of them. In like manner, their own practice of infant circumcision must have misled them; for if they were taught that baptism was the initiatory seal of Christian covenant, and had taken the place of circumcision, which St. Paul had informed them was "a seal of the righteousness which is by faith," how should they have understood that their children were no longer to be taken into covenant with God, as under their own former religion, unless they had been told that this exclusion of children from all covenant relation to God was one of those *peculiarities* of the Christian dispensation in which it differed from the religion of the patriarchs and Moses? This was a great change, a change which must have made a great impression upon a serious and affectionate Jewish parent, who could now no longer covenant with God for his children, or place his children in a special covenant relation to the Lord of the whole earth; a change indeed so great,—a placing of the children of Christian parents in so inferior, and so to speak, *outcast* a condition, in comparison of the children of believing Jews, while the Abrahamic covenant remained in force,—that not only, in order to prevent mistake, did it require an express enunciation, but in the nature of the thing it

must have given rise to so many objections, or at least inquiries, that explanations of the reason of this peculiarity might naturally be expected to occur in the writings of the Apostles, and especially in those of St. Paul. On the contrary, the very phraseology of these inspired men, when touching the subject of the children of believers only incidentally, was calculated to continue the ancient practice, in opposition to what we are told is the true doctrine of the Gospel upon this point. For instance, how could the Jews have understood the words of Peter at the pentecost but as calling both upon them and their children to be baptized? "Repent and be baptized, for the promise is unto you and unto your children." For that both are included may be proved, says a sensible writer, by considering,

1. The resemblance between this promise and that in Gen. xvii. 7: "To be a God unto thee, and unto thy seed after thee." The resemblance between these two lies in two things: (1.) Each stands connected with an ordinance by which persons were to be admitted into church-fellowship: the one by circumcision the other by baptism. (2.) Both agree in phraseology; the one is, 'to thee and thy seed;' the other is, 'to you and your children.' Now, every one knows that the word *seed* means children; and that *children* means *seed*; and that they are precisely the same. From these two strongly resembling features, viz., their connection with a similar ordinance, and the sameness of the phraseology, I infer that the subjects expressed in each are the very same. And as it is certain that parents and infants were intended by the one; it must be equally certain that both are intended by the other.

2. The sense in which the speaker must have understood the sentence in question: "The promise is to you, and to your children." In order to know this, we must consider who the speaker was, and from what source he received his religious knowledge. The Apostle was a Jew. He knew that he himself had been admitted in infancy, and that it was the ordinary practice of the church to admit infants to membership. And he likewise knew that in this they acted on the authority of that place where God promises to Abraham, "to be a God unto him, and unto his seed." Now, if the Apostle knew all this, in what sense could he understand the term children, as distinguished from their parents? I have said that children and seed mean the same thing. And as the Apostle well knew that the term *seed* intended infants, though not mere infants only, and that infants were circumcised and received into the church as being the seed, what else could he understand by the term children when he talked with their parents? Those who will blame the apostle to mean by the term children 'adult posterity' only, have this facility attending them, that they understand the term differently from all other men; and they attribute to the Apostle a sense of the word which to him must have been the most forced and unfamiliar.

3. In what sense his hearers must have understood him when he said, "The promise is to you, and to your children."

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