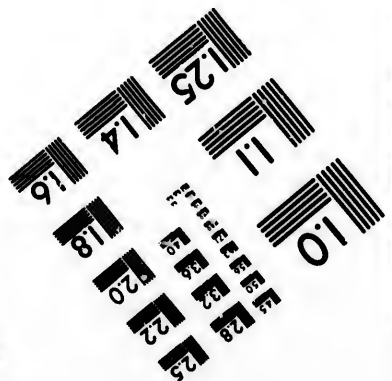
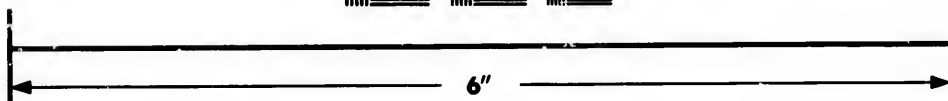
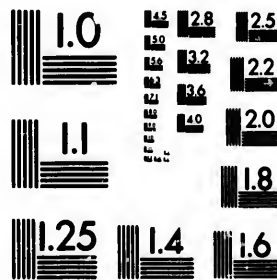


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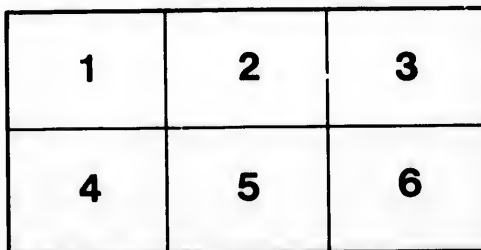
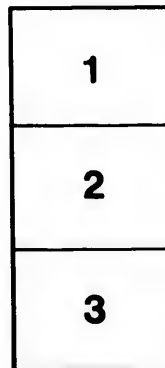
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BURIAL IN BAPTISM:

A COLLOQUY,

IN WHICH THE CLAIMS OF

RITUAL BAPTISM

IN

ROMANS VI. 3, 4, AND COLOSSIANS II. 12.

ARE EXAMINED

AND SHOWN TO BE VISIONARY.

By REV. T. L. WILKINSON.

TORONTO:
WILLIAM BRIGGS.

78 & 80 KING STREET EAST.

1882.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE writer has long been convinced that the great central buttress of the immersion theory, supposed to be found in Rom. vi. 3, 4, and Col. ii. 12, was a purely imaginary support, useful to the theory in question only because the passages were misunderstood and misinterpreted; and he has been equally sure that by a correct exegesis of the passages, the fallacy of the immersion interpretation could be made perfectly plain, though in none of the many books we have read on the subject have we found a satisfactory exposition of these texts. We have, therefore, attempted something of the kind ourselves, feeling that it was a duty we owed to the world and to God to do what we could to arrest error. We have put our thoughts in the form of a dialogue, the better to exhibit and illustrate the unsoundness of the immersion view. In putting replies into the mouth of a supposed immersionist, we have scrupulously avoided misrepresenting their teachings on these passages, and have by no means carried the exposure of those teachings as far as we might in justice have done. The replies, from beginning to end, are the best we could devise in support of the Baptist argument, and we flatter ourselves that they are, on the whole, as pertinent as almost any immersionist could have given. At all events, we are quite willing to let the most intelligent of that class have an opportunity of doing it better if they think they can.

The article was first published in the *Iconoclast*, a little monthly paper edited by the writer, and copies sent to the offices of every respectable Baptist paper published in the Province, so far as we could ascertain, but up to the present date we are not aware that any exception has been taken to our presentation of their case by any one of them. If we have succeeded as fully as we think we have in placing the interpretation of these beautiful passages on a sounder basis, and in rescuing them from an erroneous and perverted application, we have our reward; and we trust that other brethren, who also love the truth, will aid in its dissemination by introducing this tract to the notice of their people. We have put the article in this cheap and convenient form in order to facilitate its circulation. May the Divine blessing accompany it is the prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

ACTON, *March, 1882.*



BURIAL IN BAPTISM,

A COLLOQUY

Between a Pædo-Baptist and an Immersionist, as to whether the Burial with Christ in Baptism mentioned in Rom. vi. 3, 4, and Col. ii. 12, is Literal or Spiritual. In Two Conversations.

CONVERSATION I.

Question. Without desiring to be inquisitive, my friend, I would like the privilege of asking you a few questions on a subject of considerable interest to the Church of God.

Answer. With pleasure, sir, I will answer any questions I can, if by so doing I can contribute either to the profit or enjoyment of others.

Q. Please accept my thanks for your kindness, and be good enough to inform me if it be true that you interpret the language of the Apostle Paul in Rom. 6. 3-5, where he speaks of the believer's baptism, etc., to apply to the outward rite.

A. Certainly, that is what I believe.

Q. And on what principle do you so understand it?

A. On the principle that the outward rite, in its physical aspects, symbolizes the spiritual conditions for which it stands, and which it is designed to represent.

Q. And are the physical aspects of ritual baptism designed to represent death, burial, resurrection, planting, and crucifixion, as described in this chapter, vs. 2-6?

A. I don't hold that they represent either death or crucifixion, but I do hold that they represent burial, resurrection, and planting.

Q. And on what principle do you reject the death and crucifixion from the domain of this rite, while retaining the burial, resurrection and planting ?

A. On the principle that the apostle does not introduce the subject of baptism until he is done speaking of the "death to sin," mentioned in v. 2, and he does not introduce the "crucifixion," v. 6, until he is done speaking of baptism.

Q. And will you inform me how we become "dead to sin ?"

A. Why, I suppose it is by being "crucified with Christ," as described in v. 6.

Q. And is there no connection between the crucifixion and death, on the one hand, and the burial and resurrection on the other?

A. Oh, certainly. They are the successive steps in the process described by the apostle, even as the links in a chain.

Q. Yet you think he has described these successive steps by two different styles of language, do you ?

A. Well, so it seems to me.

Q. And by what name do you designate that style of language wherein we are said to be "dead to sin," and "crucified with Christ ?"

A. I would call it figurative language.

Q. Having no reference to literal death, or crucifixion ?

A. Only in figure.

Q. And when you say that the language refers to these things "only in figure," do you mean that there is any reference to the outward form, or physical aspects of death and crucifixion.

A. Of course not. The apostle simply refers to that death which results from our spiritual crucifixion with Christ, as a condition bearing some important analogy to the state of a person who has been put to death on a cross ; and this is what I mean by the language being figurative.

Q. And in what way do you distinguish between this language of figure and that pertaining to baptism, burial, resurrection, and planting, vs. 3-5.

A. As I have already intimated, I understand the latter to be the language of symbol, having reference to a visible rite, the physical aspects of which resemble those of burial, resurrection, and planting.

Q. And is this what you call a symbol ?

A. I have always heard it spoken of as such.

Q. Well, we will refer to that again. But in the meantime may I ask, Did it ever occur to you that there is any danger of ordinary minds being confused, or misled by such a reckless, and indiscriminate mixture of different styles of language?

A. No, it never occurred to me that there was any such danger.

Q. And why do you think they *are* different styles of language?

A. Because there is nothing in baptism to represent death and crucifixion, but this is not the case in regard to burial, resurrection, and planting.

Q. Then you interpret the language of the apostle to agree with your theory, instead of constructing your theory to agree with the language of the apostle.

A. Oh! I cannot see that I do that.

Q. Well, you will surely admit that it would be more consistent to interpret the language employed in describing the successive steps of the same process, all on the same principle, than to introduce two principles, so that as soon as the one disagrees with your interpretation you can fall back on the other?

A. Well, as for that, it never occurred to me that there was any inconsistency about it, though since you mention it, it does seem somewhat anomalous, and I promise you that I will think it over.

Q. And will you be so kind as to explain a little more fully how the physical aspects of baptism resemble burial and resurrection?

A. The immersion of a person in water resembles the putting of him in the grave, and his removal from the water resembles his resurrection from the grave.

Q. And what does the water represent, according to that notion?

A. Well, I,—I,—I had not thought of that, but I suppose it must represent the grave in which the person is buried.

Q. But the apostle in v. 4, says that we are buried into death, and in v. 3 into Christ's death. Would not the water then, on this principle correspond to and represent death?

A. Well, I suppose it would.

Q. And can it represent death and a grave, both at the same time?

A. Well, I should think it must.

Q. And are there any features of similarity between the physical aspects of death and the grave.

A. Well, I suppose so, though I hardly see how we can tell.

Q. And if the putting of the candidate into the water is a symbol of burial, what does the candidate himself represent ?

A. I was never asked that question before, but I suppose as it is a burial scene that is being represented, that the candidate must represent a corpse.

Q. But you observe that in this baptism we are said to be "baptized into Christ," which, according to Paul, 2 Cor. 5. 17 makes us "new creatures." Now, is this consistent with the burial scene which you say is enacted in baptism ?

A. Why, as for that, I had not given the subject much thought.

Q. Again let me ask then, When we are symbolically put into Christ in baptism, by being plunged into water, what does the water represent ?

A. Oh, I suppose it would represent Christ.

Q. Then it must represent Christ, and death, and the grave, all at the same time ?

A. Well, really, it never so struck me, and I can hardly think it was so intended.

Q. Did you ever hear of water being used as a symbol of Christ ?

A. I don't know that I ever did, unless it be in this instance, though it is frequently used as a symbol of the Spirit.

Q. And do you think it is so used in this instance ?

A. Well, I should think it must be, as it is generally so employed in baptism.

Q. And why do you think water is used to symbolize the Spirit ?

A. I presume it is because the Spirit purifies and quickens, and water possesses similar properties.

Q. Then it is not because of any "physical aspects" of resemblance ?

A. Oh, no, the resemblance in this case, is between the *properties* of the two, the Spirit having no physical form.

Q. And do you not think that your present definition of a symbol is much more correct than your previous one ?

A. Well, to tell you the truth, I had never examined the matter closely.

Q. In the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, what relation do the bread and wine sustain to Christ's body and blood ?

A. Oh, they are symbols, undoubtedly.

Q. But are they intended to represent the physical form in either case ?

A. No, I should think not, but the properties.

Q. Then why do you make the physical features of baptism to symbolize the physical features of burial, etc. ?

A. I shall require to give the matter some further consideration before venturing a reply.

Q. Very well, then, we will return to a point from whence we recently departed. You say that water symbolizes the Spirit because of its cleansing properties. Is baptism, then, both a cleansing and a burial ?

A. I shall need to ponder that question also.

Q. Well, I understood you to say just now that the water in baptism represented the death into which the candidate is said to be buried ?

A. Yes. I believe I did say so.

Q. Well, is it a customary thing for the inspired writers to employ water as the symbol of death ?

A. Not very, I should say, though it seems to be done here.

Q. And you say it also represents a grave ?

A. Why, as to that, I cannot see how it can be otherwise.

Q. Then the same element,—water, in the same ordinance, and at the same time, according to your theory, stands for Christ, for death, for a grave, and for the Spirit ?

A. Oh, I did not intend to accept such conclusions, as they do not seem consistent. I fear you have been practising some sort of logical legerdemain upon me, to catch me thus.

Q. Oh, I think not. I prefer to think that the legerdemain was practiced upon you at the time you first imbibed this erroneous notion, and I have simply been trying to undeceive you. Moreover, I cannot allow the present conversation to close without propounding one or two more questions. In what way do the physical aspects of baptism symbolize "planting ?"

A. Oh ! that is very simple. You are aware that when seed is

planted in the earth it is covered up with the earth. So when a believer is baptized he is covered up with the water.

Q. And does the water in this case correspond to and symbolize the earth?

A. Why, sir, to tell you the truth I never thought of carrying the symbolism beyond the mere act of covering, nor did I ever hear it pushed to such extremes before.

Q. That is no proof, however, that it is not perfectly legitimate to do so. Nor can I see how you are to avoid the conclusion that, if, in baptism, the covering of the body in water represents the covering of seed in the earth, the water must represent the earth, and the believer the seed, otherwise where do you find the analogy?

A. I admit that your position looks somewhat plausible, only I had never heard it applied in that way.

Q. Well, then, according to your theory, we have the following elements introduced into this ordinance:—The water represents Christ, his death, his grave, the divine Spirit, and the earth, while the person being baptized represents a candidate for baptism, a corpse, and seed-corn. Do you believe that such confusion of ideas could have emanated from God?

A. I prefer not to sit in judgment on what God has written.

Q. But if you find what God has written to be absurd according to one principle of interpretation, and perfectly consistent according to another, would you hesitate about sitting in judgment upon the two modes of interpretation?

A. Well, no, I suppose not, in that case. But I am not yet convinced that this is a case in point.

Q. I do not expect to make you see the consistency of my mode of interpretation, until I have shown you the inconsistency of your own. For this purpose I will refer to but one more question at present, and then leave the further prosecution of the subject for a future conversation, which I hope you will grant me.

A. Certainly, with pleasure, after I have given your present questions some fuller consideration.

Q. Thanks. Well, the question is this: If planting means covering up, how does it come to be applied to the resurrection in verse 5? For you will observe that the apostle says, "If we have been planted to-

gether (covered up) in the likeness of his death, we shall be also (planted together, or covered up) in the likeness of his resurrection."

A. Well, I confess that that always did puzzle me a little, but I find that the revisers have removed the difficulty by rendering the verse, "If we have become united to him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection."

Q. Well this new rendering will render another question or two imperative. You understand "the likeness of the resurrection" to be the removal from the water as from a grave, I believe?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. And will you tell me how the putting into the water can be "in the likeness of his death," which was not by drowning but by crucifixion, and to which fact the apostle alludes in the very next verse, "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him," etc.?

A. As I only recently noticed the change made by the revisers I will need to consider this question until our next conversation.

CONVERSATION II.

Question. Well, my friend, I presume you have been thinking over the questions propounded in our last conversation on the subject of "Burial in Baptism."

Answer. Yes, I have been thinking some about the matter, and reading some, too, but I fail to find anything in any book I have read about the water in baptism representing Christ, and death, and a grave, and the earth, and about the candidate representing a corpse, and seed corn, etc., and I have come to the conclusion that you have been trying to *force* an interpretation upon these words that Baptists never intended should be put upon them.

Q. But is there anything unfair in drawing conclusions from a man's premises providing such conclusions are plainly deducible from them?

A. Undoubtedly not. But I am not convinced that your conclusions are plainly deducible from Baptist premises in this case.

Q. Are you not aware that the conclusions were mostly drawn by yourself in answer to my questions?

A. That I do not deny, but my admissions were inadvertent, and without due consideration.

Q. Very well, then, we will look at the matter again, and see if we can discover wherein your admissions were defective. Did you not state in our last conversation that the immersion of a person in water resembled his burial with Christ, and that his removal from the water resembled his resurrection with him?

A. I certainly did, and from that position no Baptist wishes to recede.

Q. Well, I inferred that as only *dead* people were buried, the candidate must, for the time being, represent a corpse. Now, will you tell me how you can have a burial without a corpse?

A. You misapprehend the matter altogether. It is the body of sin that is buried, and not the candidate.

Q. Then the body of sin is the corpse, and the candidate must represent the body of sin. In what way does that improve your case?

A. You can interpret it as you please. I simply claim that we never intended any such construction to be put upon our interpretation, and I cannot be responsible for it.

Q. Well, suppose we allow that the candidate represents the body of sin and not a corpse, is it unfair to infer that the element in which it is buried corresponds to a grave?

A. I don't care to be pressed with such questions. The subject as you present it is entirely new to me, and I prefer not to be annoyed with it.

Q. I regret such a decision, since you so kindly granted me this interview, promising to answer any questions I wished to propound. I should be glad to go over the entire ground previously traversed and satisfy you that I forced no unfair admissions, or conclusions from you. But as you do not seem to relish such a journey I shall be happy to hear from you on some new points. I suppose you have noticed the phraseology in Col. 2. 12, where the same form of words is used by this same apostle, to describe the same process as in Rom. 6: 3, 4?

A. O, certainly I have.

Q. And do you interpret both on the same principle?

A. Unquestionably I do.

Q. Well, you have no doubt observed that in v. 11 we are said to be

"circumcised with the circumcision made without hands," etc. Now, allow me to inquire in what way this process is symbolized by any Christian ordinance?

A. Why, I never heard of such a thing. Nobody pretends that circumcision is symbolized by any Christian ordinance. Besides it is quite clear that it is spiritual circumcision that is spoken of, for it is effected "without hands," and involves the "putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh."

Q. But circumcision was a literal rite under the old dispensation. Would you inform me, therefore, what style of language the apostle uses when he speaks of a spiritual process under the name of a visible rite?

A. The language is undoubtedly figurative.

Q. And what style of language is employed in v. 13 where the apostle speaks of "the uncircumcision of the flesh," and the being "quickened together with Christ," etc.?

A. Why, I presume it is figurative also.

Q. Yet you think that in v. 12, when we are said to be "buried with him in baptism," and "risen with him in baptism," the apostle is speaking of literal, or ritual baptism, and that the allusion is to the putting of a person into water and removing him from the water, and this you defined in our last conversation as the language of symbol. Now, will you please inform me why you think the apostle employs the language of figure in v. 11, and in v. 13, but wedges in a literal process between?

A. I cannot be supposed to know why he does so, but it is sufficient for me to know that he *has* done so.

Q. How do you know that he *has* done so? Is there not such a thing as spiritual baptism of which this may be an instance?

A. I suppose there is, but I have never heard this spoken of as spiritual baptism. Besides the allusion to the *mode* of baptism is so plain as to settle the matter in the minds of all reasonable people.

Q. Is it not possible that you first made up your mind, without investigation, that the burial meant immersion, and then inferred that immersion meant burial, and so have inadvertently fallen into the practice of reasoning in a circle?

A. I don't think I have.

Q. Well, you remember that in the passage in Romans we are said to be "baptized into Christ." Would you inform me, from the word of God, how this is said to be done ?

A. I don't know that the Bible tells us how it is done, if it is not done by being symbolically immersed in water.

Q. Does not the apostle say in 1 Cor. 12.13, t'at "By one spirit we are all baptized into one body," etc.?

A. Certainly he does, but the body there referred to is evidently the Church, and not Christ himself.

Q. And pray, what is the Church ?

A. Why, of course, the apostle says it is Christ's body, but I never supposed it was the Church that was meant when we were said to be baptized into Christ

Q. Did you suppose it was the personal Christ who literally ascended in the clouds of heaven to the right hand of God ?

A. No, I cannot say that I did ; but I supposed it was in some spiritual sense that the text was to be understood.

Q. And in what sense is the Church Christ's body ?

A. It is called his "mystical body."

Q. And what do you understand by the word "mystical ?"

A. Webster defines it. 1. "Remote from human comprehension ; governed by incomprehensible or mysterious laws ; obscure. 2. Importing, or implying mysticism ; involving some secret meaning ; allegorical ; emblematical," etc.

Q. And may not this include the idea of a spiritual body ?

A. Well, I suppose it might, though I had never so regarded it.

Q. And would it be reasonable to suppose that believers were to be baptized into Christ's visible body by an invisible agency, and into his invisible, or spiritual body by being plunged into a visible element ?

A. I confess I had never closely reasoned the matter out. I have been in the habit of viewing the subject just as it has always been explained to me by my spiritual counsellors.

Q. Well, I do not wish to press you at present on points you have not carefully considered, lest you should be induced to make some more "inadvertent admissions." But a few more very weighty questions are pressing themselves upon my mind which I would like, with your permission, to propound.

A. Certainly, sir, with pleasure.

Q. Would you then inform me what relation there is between the "circumcision of Christ," mentioned in v. 11, and the "uncircumcision of the flesh" mentioned v. 13?

A. Why, I presume they are the very reverse of each other. Circumcision is the opposite of uncircumcision, of course.

Q. And what difference is there between being "quicken'd together with Christ," v. 13, and "risen with him through the faith of the operation of God," v. 12?

A. Why, as for that, I presume there can be no difference except in the phraseology. To rise with Christ must be tantamount to being quicken'd with him.

Q. Yet you inform'd me recently that the being "quicken'd," in v. 13, was a spiritual process, described in figurative language. Can you assign any reason why the same thing in v. 12 is not a spiritual process, described in figurative language?

A. Well, no, except that the resurrection in v. 12 is ascribed to baptism. It is said that we are "buried with him in baptism *wherein* also we are risen with him."

Q. But, on the supposition that a spiritual baptism is meant would you say there was any difficulty in accepting the figurative theory?

A. No, I do not think I would.

Q. And do you see no difficulty in trying to adapt the language of the apostle to your mode of interpretation, when you have to skip from the language of figure to the language of symbol, and then back again to the language of figure, both here and in Romans?

A. I confess I never noticed the difficulty until since you called my attention to it.

Q. And would that, or any other difficulty present itself to your mind if you adopted the theory that it was spiritual, and not ritual baptism of which the apostle speaks in these two places?

A. No, except that I cannot see how we are buried and raised with him in spiritual baptism.

Q. Is there any greater difficulty in seeing how we can be buried and raised up by a spiritual process, than to see how we can be crucified and die by a spiritual process?

A. Why I cannot say that there is, in point of fact.

Q. And is it any harder to perceive the one without a visible representation than the other?

A. No, I suppose not.

Q. And what would you designate a visible representation of a crucifixion?

A. I presume it would be called a scenic, or dramatic representation.

Q. And is it any less scenic, or dramatic to visibly represent a burial and resurrection?

A. Well, I suppose not, but it never so occurred to me until you called my attention to it in our last conversation.

Q. And do you think Christ ever intended to institute a Christian ordinance on the principle of a drama?

A. Really, your questions are difficult, and I must give them further thought, though it does at present seem improbable.

Q. Well, I will not pursue that point any further, but allow me to ask again, What is the difference between the "being dead in sins, and the uncircumcision of the flesh," and the "being quickened together with Christ," in v. 13?

A. Why, I should say they were the opposite of each other. The former describes our state by nature, and the latter our state by grace.

Q. Again, you said a short time since that spiritual circumcision was the opposite of uncircumcision, and now you say that "being quickened" is the opposite of uncircumcision. Will you tell me then what is the difference between spiritual circumcision and "being quickened?"

A. O, of course, as they are both the opposite of uncircumcision they must both be the same thing.

Q. You also admitted that the "quickened" in v. 13, and the "risen" in v. 12 were the same. Will you, therefore, tell me in what respect the being "risen" in v. 12, and the being circumcised in v. 11, differ from each other?

A. Well, I presume that on the principle that "things that are equal to the same thing are equal to one another," the resurrection and the circumcision must be the same also.

Q. Once more. As the circumcision in v. 11, you say, is the same as the resurrection in v. 12, and the latter is ascribed to baptism, what is the difference between circumcision and baptism? In other words: As

in baptism we are said to be "risen with Christ," and this is the opposite of "being dead in sin and the uncircumcision of the flesh;" and circumcision is also the opposite of "being dead in sin and the uncircumcision of the flesh," what difference is there between baptism and circumcision?

A. Really, I cannot answer your question, though I have always supposed that there was a wide and essential difference between them.

Q. If, however, you admit the principle that like causes produce like effects, and you find two effects the same, what would you say of the causes?

A. I suppose I should have to admit that they were the same also.

REMARKS.

Dear Reader,—We have thus, by a careful process of questioning, endeavored to illustrate the absurdity of interpreting the language in Rom. 6: 3, 4, and Col. 2: 12, as applying to ritual baptism. You may depend that there is nothing of the kind intended. We have also shown the absurdity of understanding the words "buried," and "risen," etc., as having any reference to the *mode* of baptism, or the visible act of putting a candidate into and removing him from the water. Such an interpretation could only have been adopted, and can only be maintained, by a very superficial and careless examination of the passages in question, and a gross violation of the well-understood rules of interpretation. Whatever may be the true mode of baptism, certainly there is no clue nor reference to it here, and all the arrogant claims and assertions that have been based upon these passages must be swept aside as the "baseless fabric of a vision."

We have, also, very clearly identified circumcision and baptism in Col. 2: 11, 12, as one and the same thing. Whatever diversity there may be in the outward forms of the two ordinances, in their spiritual import and effects they are assuredly the same.

We have thus completely demolished the great central prop of the immersion theory, and exhibited the essential oneness of the seal of the Abrahamic covenant under the two dispensations, and consequently, the oneness of the covenant. And if the covenant be the

same, then are those who are entitled to its benefits the same, viz.: Abraham's seed. But, "If ye be Christ's *then* are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (or covenant.)" Little children are Christ's, therefore they are Abraham's seed, therefore heirs, and therefore entitled to the divine seal or pledge of the covenant blessing. The blessing of Abraham, of which circumcision was the seal, was justification, or righteousness. And Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." Hence "the promise is unto you (Jews) and to your children, (Isaac, at eight days old, and all the rest of them) and to all that are afar off (Gentiles.)" And if the infant children of Jews were included in the promise, by what rule are we to exclude the infant children of Gentiles, unless divinely authorized to do so?

But these very condensed remarks we must leave the reader to elaborate at his pleasure.



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