

FIRST LETTER

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Dear.....,

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have very carefully gone through the tracts you gave me. It is possible that you have been expecting some comments from me about them. I have been much occupied with other matters, but at last have been able to take sufficient time to put some thoughts on paper. First I will take up the subject of baptism and then the subject of the Trinity.

1. It Is a fact that In the book of Acts we have great emphasis on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I for one am delighted that it is so. The name Jesus speaks of eternal salvation. It Is a name of power and wonderful significance, a name above all names ever given. But we must well understand what is meant by the phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ". If we do not we may fall into serious error.

The Name of Jesus

Acts 4:30 reveals something of what the apostles meant by the name of Jesus - the same apostle who in Acts 2:38 spoke of baptism In the name of Jesus Chris: here prays to the Father in heaven and asks that He would grant signs and wonders in the name of His "holy child Jesus" (KJV-some versions have the words "holy servant Jesus" here. The Greek can mean either. The same word is Used of David in 4:25. In Rom. 15:8 the Lord Jesus is called a minister or servant.).

So the name Jesus in Acts means the name of that one who was the Son (or Servant) of God. See also Acts 3:13. In this context observe that the book of Acts begins with

the Lord Jesus speaking of His Father (1:4,7). As the Son of God, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the will of God, and (Peter says in Acts 2:36) God made Him "both Lord and Christ". So in Peter's Pentecostal sermon the name of Jesus means the name of Him who was appointed to His high offices by another, even God the Father. These Scriptures must be taken into consideration if we want to understand the real meaning of the name of the Lord Jesus.

Speculations are not Proof

It is true that we read in Acts of baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, and that the words of the Lord Jesus in Matt. 28:19 are not found there. But the inferences you draw from this are not necessarily valid. We can all speculate about the reasons the apostles sometimes instructed people to be baptized in the name of Jesus, but we should not think that our speculations have the weight of divine revelation.

Actually, we are nowhere given in Acts the exact words pronounced as baptism was being administered; that is, we have no direct quotation of words spoken as the ceremony was in progress. For all we know the apostles may have said something like this - "We baptize you in the name of the Father, and of His Son Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit". We cannot say definitely that they did speak such words, but also we cannot say definitely that they did not. Certainly that formula of words would be in harmony with both the words of the Lord Jesus in Matt. 28:19 and with the instruction of Peter to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, one meaning, surely, of being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus was to be baptized according to His authority, and where is His authority about baptism more clearly expressed than in Matt. 28:18,19?

But I know that Matthew's Gospel was not written down yet in those earliest days of Christianity. So the exact words of Matt. 28:19 may not have been in the minds of the apostles when baptizing then, or, for that matter, even until much later when Matthew wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and brought those words to remembrance for the whole church.

Early Emphasis

We should note another fact - in the slight majority of cases

in the book of Acts that speak of baptism the form of name in which baptism occurred is not mentioned (Acts 8:36-38; 9:18; 16:15,33; 18:8; 22:16). You may say it was given in the name of Jesus only. Someone else may say it v/as in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. But the truth is we do not know the exact words that were spoken at the giving of baptism on those occasions.

In any case, I can see that it was very fitting in those early days of gospel preaching among the Jews. Jewish proselytes and those under Jewish influence (such as Cornelius and those in Acts 19:1) for the apostles to emphasize the name of the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. He was the stumbling block to the Jews and the One they had to change their minds about in order to come into the truth. The Jews who knew the Old Testament were familiar with the idea of the Father and of the Spirit. The person they refused to acknowledge, but had to acknowledge if they were to be saved, was the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. So the apostles naturally emphasized His name. But surely in the minds of the apostles, as we can judge from verses like Acts 2:36; 3:13; 4:30, and from their letters, the emphasis on the Lord Jesus was not intended to exclude the thought of the Father or the Spirit.

You will notice the opening words of this letter of mine - by greeting you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I had no intention whatever of excluding the Father and the Spirit, not did I wish to suggest that I do not believe in the Trinity. When I speak of Jesus they are linked with Him in my mind. So it was, I have no doubt, with the apostles in Acts.

Fitting Emphasis

The apostles did well to emphasize the name of God's holy Son Jesus Christ in their instruction about baptism. And when the gospel spread throughout the world in accordance with the words of the Lord Jesus in Matt. 23:19, and was preached among nations ignorant of God as the Father or as the Spirit or as the Son, it was fitting that the Holy Spirit should so

lead that emphasis would be given to the one God as Father, Son, and Spirit, and that baptism should be given as stated in Matt. 28:19. And this is exactly what happened very early in church history. Matt-hew's gospel was published, believers in all nations became acquainted with the command of Jesus In 28:19 and very naturally and scripturally obeyed it.

One Command on Baptism

One good reason for this was that in the whole of the New Testament Matt. 28:19 is the only instruction and command given either by the Lord or His apostles to the churches indicating a name or a formula of words (if it may be called that) to be used at baptism among the nations of the world. (Peter's words in Acts 2:38 were not an instruction to church leaders or to anyone else regarding what should be said at a baptismal ceremony; it was an exhortation to the Jews to receive their Messiah and acknowledge this publicly.)

We will search in vain the letters of Paul and the other apostles (which are given to teach us doctrine) for any instruction to the churches or to church leaders to baptize in the name of the Lord Jesus only. If the matter is as Important as you insist, then this omission is amazing.

As for Acts 2:38 my view of that verse is as follows: baptism in the name of Jesus Christ meant for those Jews Caking it a breaking of their ties with apostate Judaism and an entering into fellowship and oneness with Jesus and His people. They were to be baptized in the name of Jesus because they had to acknowledge publicly that He was the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. Baptism in the name of Jesus meant baptism according to His nature as Son of God, according to His office as the Messiah, according to His work as Saviour and Redeemer.

Praying in Jesus' Name

The Lord Jesus once said, "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father" (John 14:13). We can learn two truths from this that should help us in our understanding of Acts 2:38. First, the phrase 'in my name' does not mean tacking on at the end of a

prayer the words "I ask in Jesus' name", for many things that are asked using that formula of words Jesus does not do at all. The phrase surely means to ask according to His nature, His will and authority. Second, Jesus said that He would answer prayer made in His name "that the Son may bring glory to the Father". Prayer in the name of Jesus does not exclude the thought of the Father. Far from it - Jesus' purpose in answering prayer is that the Father might be honored. How can you imagine that the case is different when we come to the matter of baptism in His name? For my part I am quite sure that it did not mean the mere pronouncing of certain words as baptism was being given. It meant to be baptized according to the nature, authority, and word of the Lord Jesus. And it was given that the Father might be glorified. [For the sake of clarity I have somewhat changed this paragraph from the original letter.]

Meaning of Acts 2:38

I believe that Acts 2:38 means this - "Change your mind about who Jesus is. turn from your wicked rejection of Him as the Messiah of Israel and Son of God. In accordance with His nature, office, and authority be baptized as an open declaration of your faith in Him, and as a sign of the release which He gives from the guilt and punishment of sin. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit whom the Lord Jesus gives to those who trust Him".

Remission of Sins

"Baptized for the remission of sins" does not mean to be baptized in order to obtain remission of sins. I will give further evidence for this statement in due course; it is enough here to compare Acts 2:38 with Matthew 3:11, where John said "I baptize you in water for repentance" ('for' in Greek is the same word as in Acts 2:38). This cannot mean that the people submitted to baptism in order to obtain repentance, for they repented before they received baptism (Matt. 3:6). Accepting baptism at John's hands was simply a sign of their repentance. If John had not thought that they had repented he would not have baptized them. So it is with Acts 2:38.

Those who accepted baptism that day received the remission of sins by repenting and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ before they were baptized. Submitting to baptism simply signified this.

Baptism of Apostles

In connection with baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus one more thing should be noted: as far as the Scriptures record, the apostles themselves had not been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Yet they received the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit because they had received the Lord Jesus as Messiah and trusted Him as Lord and Saviour.

No Mantra

2. The apostles well knew that forms of words or formulas spoken at ceremonies have no mystical value. Whether we say "I baptize you in the name of the Lord Jesus", or "I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", it will not affect the inner spiritual condition of those taking baptism. Some Hindus believe that a mantra can convey some magical power, but Christians are not to view any baptismal formula of words as Hindus do their mantras.

Disobedience

3. One would think that for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in these days, with Matthew's Gospel in their hands, HI; one command about baptism should be enough. We should expect them to yield glad and full obedience to it. Thinking you will simply follow what you think the apostles did in the time of the Acts, does not give you the right to disobey the very plain command of the Lord Jesus in Matt. 28:19. Disobedience is disobedience regardless of the think-ing behind it. And disobedience to the words of the Lord Jesus can never be wise or spiritual. Those who love Him will surely want to please Him by doing what He said. It is a big mistake to give more weight to the exhortation of Peter to the Jews on the day of Pentecost than to obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus for all nations.

Remission and Forgiveness

4. I do not agree with the teaching that the act of baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus (or, for that matter, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit) releases men from their sins. This is what you write in your 'open letter': "Remission means release from our sins, which although forgiven us when we believed, exert influence on our lives having access through our old carnal nature which must be put to death on the cross by an act of faith, i.e. baptism".

You thus make a distinction between remission and forgiveness. But the Greek of the New Testament does not distinguish between these two. In the KJV the very same Greek noun is translated remission and forgiveness. The word (aphesis) is used in the Greek N.T. 17 times (Matt. 26:28; Mark 1:4; 3:29; Luke 1:77; 3:3; 4:18,19; 24:27; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:22; 10:18). In the KJV the word is translated remission nine times, forgiveness six times, and liberty and deliverance once each.

The same Greek verb (aphieemi) is translated both remit and forgive in the KJV. (It is also translated 'leave', 'let', 'forsook', 'left', 'yielded up', 'sent away', etc.) As for the verb, the New Testament speaks of both God and men forgiving (remitting). See Matt. 6:12; 18:21,27-35; Luke 11:4; John 20:23; 1 John 1:9 - where in Greek the same verb is used in every reference. The root meaning of this verb is 'to send away from', and so it came to mean 'put away', 'release from', 'forgive', 'cancel', 'remit'. To remit or forgive a debt is to cancel it; to release from prison is to forgive the offense and set free from the punishment.

For God to forgive or remit sins means to remove the burden of them from the sinner, to cancel the obligation of the sinner to suffer for them in hell, to release from their guilt, to 'send them away' from the sinner as far as the east is from the west (as we have in Ps. 103:12), to put them forever out of His sight (Is. 38:17; Micah 7:19).

This is Peter's meaning in Acts 2:38. He is not talking about sanctification or the believer's victory over sin or release from the power of his carnal nature or any similar thing. He is speaking of a basic blessing a person receives when he trusts

in Jesus Christ - forgiveness of sins, release from the guilt and punishment of them.

The Way of Remission

Because the same Greek noun (aphesis) is translated both remission and forgiveness in the KJV we should not think of them as being different things in the teaching of the New Testament. And what is the teaching of the New Testament regarding remission (aphesis)?

- (a) It is by the blood of Christ (Matt 26:28; Heb 9:22-26).
- (b) It is by God's free grace (Acts 5:31; Eph. 1:7,8).
- (c) It is linked with redemption so that he who has the one also has the other (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).
- (d) It is to be preached in Christ's name - that is by His authority and according to His nature, office, and work, and obtainable only through Him (Luke 24:27).
- (e) It is to be offered on the basis of repentance (Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31).
- (f) It is received by faith (Acts 10:43; 13:38,39; 26:18).
- (g) It is linked with justification, so that he who has the one also has the other (Acts 13:38,39). We can say that forgiveness or remission is the reverse side of justification. The one releases from the guilt and punishment of sin, the other means to declare the believer righteous before God. Justification is everywhere in the New Testament declared to be by faith alone (Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:22,24-26,28,30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:8,24). So justification and remission (which is linked with it) are by faith plus nothing. The result of this to the believer is all the blessings of the gospel of Christ and eternal salvation (Rom. 5:1-11). The person who is justified has remission, redemption, indeed has Christ Himself and everything in Him that pertains to salvation (Rom. 8:29,30; 1 Cor 1:30,31).

All this is in perfect agreement with the teaching of Christ and His apostles that faith In Him brings eternal life and salvation (John 1 :12,13; 3:15,16; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9,10; Heb. 10:38-11 :40; I Pet. 1:9; 2:6).

Baptism only a Picture

Water baptism has no power to accomplish any of the above. Salvation from start to finish Is through faith (Rom. 1:17; Eph 2:8-10). Baptism is a picture, a symbol of the believer's participation In the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It is a step of submission in faith and love to the expressed wishes of the Lord Jesus, and by it the believer identifies himself with Him and His people. To make it mean more than this seems to me to be falling into the heresy of the Roman Catholic Church which teaches that its sacraments are means of conveying God's grace. Jesus Christ alone is the channel of Cod's grace, not any ordinance, sacrament, or ceremony. New life and release from sin begin when we are linked with Him. The Holy Spirit links us with Him when we repent and believe.

In the above quotation from your open letter you have these words: "our old carnal nature which must be put to death on the cross by an act of faith, i.e. baptism". However, in the New Testament we are never told that baptism puts our old carnal nature to death. I do not think such a thing is even remotely suggested. If such a marvel were accomplished by the act of water baptism how is It that the apostle Paul did not know it when he was writing on this subject in his letters? He certainly struggled very painfully with his own carnal nature after he believed in Christ and was baptized (Rom. 7:14-25), and never hinted that baptism was the way out. The Christians to whom he wrote also had considerable trouble with their carnal natures, judging from the language of the letters to the Corinthians and Galatians in particular. And again Paul did not suggest that baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus accomplished what you say It does.

The Apostle Paul's Teaching

Paul's teaching on sanctification, victory over sin, and release from sin's bondage is altogether different from what yours seems to be (but, then, It Is hard to know what you teach on these matter because your words are not very clear). The apostle Paul, I believe, taught the following. The believer is united to the Lord Jesus through faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. So God reckons that Jesus in His

death on the cross and in His resurrection was the believer's substitute, his representative. What happened to Jesus is counted by God as though It happened to the believer, so that when Jesus was crucified the believer was crucified, for the believer was then, in God's eyes, in Christ. When Jesus died the believer died, and when Jesus rose from the dead, and when He ascended into heaven so, in Him, did the believer (Rom 6:5-7; 7:4; Gal 2:20; 6:14; Eph 2:6; Col 3:1-3).

So even the newest, as yet un baptized, believer Is counted by God as crucified, dead, raised again, and seated In Christ in heaven, because Christ was In his place going through these experiences for him.

Counting

God counts these things as true. The believer should do the same thing (Rom 6:11). When the believer truly reckons that he is dead and raised with Christ, he has a proper foundation for a holy and fruitful life (Rom 6:11-14; 7:4-6; Col 3:1-11).

A person who has begun his life in Christ by faith must continue by faith (Col 2:6,7), and learn to walk in the Spirit (Rom 8:2, 4-6,9,14; Gal 5:16-18). Such a life and walk are not accomplished by any ceremony- no ceremony of baptism can put to death the carnal, sin-ful nature in anyone; they are not the work of a moment; such a life and walk demand a continual reckoning of oneself as dead and alive again in Christ, a daily yielding of the body to God, a constant vigilance and fight against sin, the flesh, 3rd the devil. It is a terrible mistake to attribute to water baptism those things which baptism can only signify - death and resurrection life in Christ.

Paul and Baptism

5. The fact is Paul, the greatest theologian and teacher among the apostles, had little to say about water baptism. In his great explanation of the gospel in Romans chapters 1-4, and in Galatians, and in his brief summary of the gospel in 1 Cor 15:1-5, and in other places where he is speaking of the heart of the gospel, water baptism has no place at all. His whole emphasis is on the grace of God in the death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ and on faith through which God's grace is received.

In the whole of Romans Paul uses the words baptism or baptized in only one place (6:3,4), and there perhaps, as some think, he is speaking of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit; for it is the Spirit's baptism that brings us into Christ (I Cor. 12:12,13). If we translate the Greek words in Rom. 6:3,4 instead of transliterating them (which does not strike me as unreasonable), the words baptism and baptized will not appear at all; we would have something like this -"Do you not know that all of us who have been brought Into (submerged, plunged, Immersed In) Christ Jesus have been brought Into (submerged, plunged, immersed in) His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through (this) immersion Into death". If it be assumed that water baptism must be meant in Rom. 6:3,4, then we could well say that It stands there for faith, is a symbol of believing Into Christ, an act that expresses faith and has Its significance in what it stands for, and not in what It Is In itself.

Symbolical Language

'Baptized into His death' is obviously metaphorical language. The literal act of baptism will signify that by faith we are joined with Christ in His death and resurrection. Metaphorical language, as you know, is not uncommon in the New Testament, and It Is possible to fall into great error of interpretation and doctrine if we ignore this fact.

A good example of this is the teaching of Jesus In John 6:53-57 (compare Matt. 26:26-28). Those words, If taken literally, could drive us into the heresy of the Roman Catholic Church which teaches that at Mass the bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Christ. In John 6:63 Jesus warned against taking metaphorical language literally-"It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." The same warning would apply to the use of the word baptism wherever it may be used metaphorically.

The Essence of Galatians

In that great defense of the Gospel, the letter to the Galatians, Paul mentions baptism just once (3:27).

The meaning there is the same as In Rom, 6:3, To make baptism essential to salvation or to the remis-sion of sins, to say that baptism according to a parti-cular formula is a must, is utterly opposed to the tea-ching of Galatians. One grand theme of that letter (as well as Paul's letter to the Romans) is just this: salvation from start to finish is through faith alone-remission of sins, justification, the new birth, life now In the Spirit, eternal life with God in heaven-all is by God's grace through faith plus nothing.

We had better learn this lesson well. According to the very essence of the letter to the Galatians, to make any rule, any law, any ordinance, any sacrament-anything of any kind-essential to any part of salvation is to pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal 1:6-9). As for the context in which the word baptism is used, observe that immediately before his mention of baptism (whatever kind may be meant) in 3:27, Paul says they were all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. To be children of God means to be complete in Christ, to have salvation and eternal life. In all the matters which Paul discusses in Galatians faith is everything, and anything else that man can do Is nothing.

We must understand the use of the word baptism in Col 2:12 in the same way as Rom. 6:4 and Gal. 3:27.

Paul's Main Work

Paul knew what the heart of the gospel is and that water baptism is not at the heart. So he made his position on water baptism clear in 1 Cor 1:13-18. His main business was not ceremonies but the preaching of the cross. He knew of no power in baptism to work a spiritual miracle in anyone's heart and life. If he had known of such would he have spoken as he did In those verses? He knew that the gospel of Christ, and nothing else, was the power of God to the salva-tion of men.

Surely it Is significant that he never instructed any church leader to give baptism, even in places where he is giving instructions to church leaders or about church leaders, as in the letters to Timothy and Titus. If he had been as convinced as you seem to be about the necessity of baptism in the

name of Jesus only he missed many marvelous opportunities to declare it. The truth is, the one and only place in the whole New Testament where any disciple or church leader is given a specific command to baptize others is in Matt. 28:19. And would you turn away from the words of that one command?.

I say that the writings of the apostles do not have the big emphasis on water baptism that we see In the teaching of some people in these days. They were well aware of the significant contrast the Lord Jesus made between water and the Spirit in Act 1:5, The Spirit can do and does do what water can never do. It is the Spirit who quickens and joins believers to Christ, and gives victory over sin and Satan, and equips believers to bear fruit in Christ's service. It is not right to attribute any of the glorious work of the Holy Spirit to a ceremony performed by men.

A Wrong Emphasis

What alarms me about your teaching on baptism is not simply that you say people should be baptized In the name of the Lord Jesus, but the fact you make so much of it, as if you had discovered some marvelous spiritual secret that could make people holy and fruitful. And what is this secret? Turning from the command of the Lord Jesus in Matt 28:19 to over-emphasize the greatly misunderstood words of Peter to the Jews in Acts 2:38.

I am not speaking against the Immersion of believers in the water of baptism. As an adult I have been so baptized and I believe that it is the picture of baptism given in the New Testament. What I am trying to do here is to put water baptism In a proper perspective. I'm convinced it is a serious error to put too much weight on water baptism, and the teaching of baptis-mal regeneration I completely reject. Certainly Paul did not teach it either in Titus 3:5 or in any other place. In Titus 3:5 regeneration itself is the washing. I do not think that water baptism is remotely con-nected with the passage. Baptism can be only a little picture of the Spirit's work referred to there. Like Paul we should emphasize the most important matters and put lesser things in their proper place in our theological thinking. Otherwise our system

of theology will be unbalanced and dangerous both to ourselves and to others.

Infant Baptism

6. As regards infant baptism, I agree that it is not taught in the New Testament, and personally I do not believe in it or practise it. The fact remains, however, that some of the greatest evangelists, preachers, missionaries, and martyrs for Christ practised infant baptism and never received any other kind of baptism.

Many of them were, I am sure, more fruitful, more holy in their lives, more self-denying and Christ like in the Lord's service than you or I (at least I will speak for myself). How can this be if your views on baptism are correct? I am not defending the practise or doctrine of infant baptism. I'm only pointing out another factor to try to show that the sort of baptism you insist on surely does not have the same significance in God's eyes that it has in yours. Personally, I consider myself a pygmy in spiritual attainments compared with some men of God who have practised infant baptism, and I do not feel inclined to condemn them because of their rejection of the position I hold on the subject-men whose shoes I am hardly worthy to carry.

Baptism and Circumcision

7. Your view seems to be that baptism in the New Testament corresponds to circumcision in the Old. If you want to equate baptism with circumcision then follow the essence of what Paul writes in Rom. 2:25,29; 4:9-11; and Gal. 6:12-14, and say "God forbid that I should boast in modes or formulas of baptism or anything else except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Neither a rule of baptism nor no rule of baptism means anything-the one essential is a new creation". Paul in Gal. 6:14-16 does not say that circumcision is nothing because baptism has taken its place (as some may think he means there), but because the cross and the new life which comes through the cross are everything and all ceremonies are as nothing compared to them.

The cross is the important thing, and the inner life given by God's Spirit is the important thing, not some outer ceremony or any formula of words spoken at the giving of it. In the Bible Abraham is held up as the great illustration of God's way of faith. And it is clear to all who read their Bibles that he was called, by God, became obedient to God, had fellowship with Him as a child of God, and was in covenant relationship with God long before he received circumcision. Circumcision was a mere seal on all that v (Rom. 4:11), You who wish to equate circumcision with baptism should incorporate this truth also into your views of baptism.

Rebaptism

8. On the last page of your tract you urge people who have been baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit to be rebaptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! In other words, in the name of Christ you are telling them that the baptism they took according to Christ's own clear Instructions Is not valid! Thus you set your words above the word of the Lord Jesus in whose name you profess to speak.

You then use the example of Paul In Acts 19 who rebaptized certain persons at Ephesus! It requires no great scholarship to see that you are misusing that passage of Scripture. Those persons at Ephesus had never been baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, but according to the baptism of John the Baptist, which is another matter. "< When they understood and believed in Christ they were rebaptized-the only case of rebaptism in the New Testament. To make this a basis of teaching that Christians who have been baptized according to the instructions of Christ Himself should now be rebaptized according to your instructions is not expounding the Word of God; it is perverting it.

Actually there is no command or instruction in the entire New Testament to any church or church leader to rebaptize anyone. So why are you giving one? To me this sounds as if you are trying to add to the Word of God.

Gift of the Holy Spirit

9. I assure you that I have received the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to believers and mentioned in Acts 2:38 and other places, though I have been baptized only in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. So have multiplied millions of other believers. Are you not aware, for example, of the great power of the Spirit revealed in the lives and ministries of people like Charles G. Finney, Charles H. Spurgeon, George Whitefield, John Wesley, and others like them-all trinitarians and none having received any water baptism except in the name given in Matt. 28:19?

Remember too that Cornelius and those with him received the gift of the Holy Spirit before they were baptized (Acts 10:44-48), and that the apostles themselves experienced the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost without being baptized at all (as far as it is recorded in the Bible), except that some of them were disciples of John the Baptist and may have been baptized with John's baptism (John 1:35-42). And I must say that they (and the ministers of Christ mentioned above, and a great host of others not mentioned, in all parts of the world) knew as much about the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and about the remission of sins, as anyone ever baptized in the name of Jesus Christ only.

Spirit Received by Faith

The Holy Spirit is received- through faith in Christ and not by baptism or any other thing that man can do (Gal. 3:2,14; John 20:22; Luke 11:13; (John 5:14, 15; Rom. 5:1,5; Eph. 1:13).

False Statement

10. Your statement on page 11 of your open letter that for the first 300 years of Christianity the early church baptized only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is not true.

Early Church Fathers

Justin Martyr (about 110-165 A.D.), who laid down his life for the Lord Jesus, speaking of baptism wrote "In the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit they then receive

the washing with water." He was evidently speaking of a common practise.

A writing called the Didache from the early second century gives instruction from which we can gather the general practise of the churches in Syria (where, I believe, the document originated). Here is the clear Instruction: "Now as regards baptism, baptize **as** follows. Having recited all that has gone before [the exhortation on the way of life and the way of death] baptize them In running water into 'the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'".

Hippolytus ministered between 198 and 236 A.D., was a follower of Irenaeus, and very vigorously opposed the attempts of certain bishops of Rome to exalt themselves over Christendom. The writing called the 'Apostolic Tradition' is usually ascribed to Hippolytus. At least it comes from about his time. It contains a baptismal liturgy. Applicants for baptism were asked three questions, as follows:

"Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty? "Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God...? "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit...?"

As affirmative answers were given the applicant was baptized three times.

Ignatius (30-107 A.D.), writing very early in this age of the church, said "For those things which the prophets announced, saying, Until He come for whom It is reserved, and He shall be the hope of the Gentiles, have been fulfilled in the Gospel - Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

I fear your knowledge of early church history Is Inadequate, to say the least. You should be more cautious in making statements about it. After the publication of Matthew's Gospel, which gives Christ's clear instructions about baptism for the nations of the world, it did not take believers 300 years to begin to be obedient to Him.

The Trinity

Now I want to turn to a matter which I consider far more important than the subject of baptism. You have denied the doctrine of the Trinity and you and your colleague have

made some very strong attacks on those who teach it. After many years of careful study of the Bible, receiving it as the Word of God, and desiring above everything else to understand its teachings, I am fully convinced that the Bible sets forth the following doctrine.

There is one God who exists as three centers of consciousness or three persons. Each can say when speaking to the others "I" and "You", thus distinguishing Himself from the others. At the same time each has the most complete oneness in essence and nature with the others, so that there are not three Gods, but one only. I do not say it is possible for us now to fully understand this (we are still in the flesh, see as in a dark glass, and can use only human language and thought to try to grasp divine mysteries) But I am sure God has revealed this doctrine in His Word.

As I wrote in my book *The Guru*, "The idea of three Gods is an absurdity Jesus does not teach. But He did reveal that in this one God there are three centres of consciousness, three persons, who from all eternity are united in one divine essence and nature. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God. Yet there are not three Gods but one only..."

"The Father could send the Son into the world, the Son could pray to the Father, and the Holy Spirit could come from the Father and Son, because they are three in one and one in three.

Mysterious Truth

"Of course, this is a profound mystery. But let no one deny this truth because It is mysterious. God is above our poor power of description and understanding. Can a teacup hold the whole ocean? No more can our puny minds hold all the mystery of God. There are wonders in God about which we know nothing. It is our wisdom to humbly receive from Him the revelation He has given of Himself through His Son whom He has sent into the world.

"All life is mysterious. Even the most simple forms of life are beyond the full understanding of the most brilliant scientists. The higher the form of life, the more complex it is. A monkey is more complex than a worm, and a man deeper

and harder to under-stand than a monkey. God is eternal, infinite, spiritual life, and the most complex and mysterious of all life.

"So it is not surprising that we can't understand the whole truth of the Three in One. Truly we should recognize that its very mysteriousness and difficulty, instead of being an argument against it, may be an argument for it."

The doctrine of the Trinity is not a truth set forth for our full understanding at present, but for our faith and acceptance. One need not be a theologian to see this doctrine In the Bible. The ordinary enlightened believer can see it there. There may not indeed be enough about it in the Bible to satisfy the speculations of the human mind, but the evidence for it Is quite sufficient for faith.

1. The charge that the doctrine of the Trinity is the work of the Church of Rome Is false and utterly without foundation. As far as we can tell from the writings that have come down to us from the first centuries of this church age, the doctrine of the Trinity was accepted by believers everywhere.

Theophilus and Tertullian

The first recorded use of the Greek word for Trinity (Trias) that we have comes from the writings of Theophilus of Antioch who wrote about 140-155 A.D. The Latin word for Trinity (Trinitas) was used by Tertullian (born about 160 A.D.) But these two teachers were not inventing the doctrine by coining these words; they were merely using convenient terms to express what had long been believed by Christians everywhere. The teaching of the Trinity is found in seed form In the writings of other early believers. That is, they recognized that Father, Son, and Spirit are distinguished from one another in the Bible, yet are at the same time one God.

Mathetes

The letter of Mathetes to Diognetus (about 130 A.D.) speaks of God, the Creator, and the "holy and incom-prehensible Word" who is a person and who was sent by God "as a king sends his son".

The very early author of a letter on the martyrdom of Polycarp (who was probably taught by the apostle John)

wrote "Brethren, we wish you all happiness, while you walk according to the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ, with whom be glory to God the Father, and the Holy Spirit".

Ignatius

Ignatius (30-107 A.D.) writing to the Ephesians spoke of their coming together "in common and individually through grace, In one faith of God the Father, and of

Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son....., being under the guidance of the Comforter".

This same Ignatius, who lived throughout the time of all the apostles' ministry and was very familiar with their teaching, wrote (as we saw above) "For those things which the prophets announced, saying. Until He come for whom it is reserved, and, He shall be the hope of the Gentiles, have been fulfilled in the gospel-Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit".

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (about 110-165 A.D.), who laid down his life for the Lord Jesus Christ, also used trinitarian language. While writing about the charge of ido-laters that Christians were atheists because they rejected the gods of the nations, he said "Hence we are called atheists. And we confess that we are atheists, so far as gods of this sort are concerned, but not with respect to the most true God, the Father of righteousness and temperance and purity and the other virtues, who is free from all impurity. But both Him, and the Son (who came forth from Him and taught these things...) and the prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore".

In his first Apology (he was a learned man and staunch defender of the faith) Justin Martyr has a section on Old Testament prophecy and three of his headings are 'Utterances of the Father, 'Utterances of the Son', and 'Direct predictions by the Spirit'. He sets forth the view that long before Christ was born each member of the Trinity gave prophecies recorded In the Old Testament. Speaking of the bread and cup of the Lord's table he wrote that the leader of the brethren "taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father

of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus (120-202 A.D.) was a student of Polycarp who was probably a student of the apostle John. He was a defender of the faith against heresies. Though he did not use the word 'Trinity' (the word probably had not yet been coined), he set forth the doctrine in these words: "The church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God and the advents, and the birth from a virgin and the resurrection from the dead and the ascension into heaven of the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus our Lord”.

None of these church fathers use language that would indicate a belief (like yours) that there is only one person in the Godhead. They speak of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as if they were distinct persons in the one Godhead and all in existence at one and the same time - in other words, they use a form of speech that indicates belief in the Trinity.

Long Before Roman Catholicism

All these men wrote long before the formation of what is now called the Roman Catholic Church, before the bishop of Rome had usurped preeminence over much of Christendom. So the accusation that the doctrine of the Trinity originated with the Roman Catholic Church is a fiction. The Trinity was taught and believed in by Christians everywhere during the earliest years of the spread of the gospel throughout the earth. Though it is not easy to pinpoint the exact time at which the Roman bishops finally established their supremacy over western Christendom (they never did manage to subject eastern Christendom to their will), it did not happen before the 4th century A.D., and probably not before sometime in the 5th century. (The most likely date is A.D. 440 - 461 when Leo the Great was bishop of Rome).