

*God's Truth
for
Man's Errors*

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Foreword by **Theodore Williams**

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Foreword

One of the signs of the end times will be the rising up of many false prophets and false christs who will perform signs and wonders (Matthew 24:24 and 2 Thessalonians 2:9). We find this happening today before our eyes. It looks as though the Pandora box is opened and the spirit of delusion has come flooding in. Even many choice believers have been drawn away by these delusive false teachings. Most of these teachings attack the nature of God and the person of Christ. This is true of the cult known as the "Jesus Only" group or "Oneness Pentecostalism" which attacks the Trinitarian faith. Recently there has been an increase in this teaching in many of our cities in India. Literature from the United States is used to spread these teachings, the chief architect of which is William Branham.

Many of our churches observe one Sunday in a year as Trinity Sunday. Even on this Sunday Biblical teaching on the Trinity is rarely given. So the only messages that many Christians hear about the Trinity come from those who do not believe in the Trinity. It is no wonder then that they are confused. At best, the doctrine of the Trinity is not easy to understand. However, it is a very important part of our Christian faith and is found throughout the Scriptures.

Mr. G.R. Crow has expounded the Scriptures in a lucid and forceful manner in this book setting forth the teaching of the Trinity. He has also drawn examples from church history to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity was believed from the early days in the church. It was not a later invention.

A person cannot be a true Christian unless he believes in the doctrine of the Trinity. If he does not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity his faith concerning the Person of Christ. His nature and His atoning work will all be wrong. That is why it is important that every Christian should know what the Bible teaches about the Trinity

and believe it. Mr. G.R. Crow has done great service to Christians and churches by setting forth the doctrine of the Trinity in a clear manner and answering the heresies that are taught against this Biblical truth.

As one who is very much involved in battling this error and the cult, I am greatly privileged and happy to introduce this book to Christians in India. I pray that this will turn them from error and bring freedom to those who are already enslaved by this cult.

Theodore Williams

WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT

A strange teaching is being heard in the land. Some who are called Christians are denying the Bible doctrine of the Trinity and teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only person in the Godhead. They also insist that all believers should be baptized using only the formula of words 'In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ', and that those baptized according to the words of the Lord Jesus In Matt. 28:19 must be rebaptized.

These people speak with great conviction and dogmatism. They use or, I should say, misuse many Scriptures in setting forth their false teachings. And they condemn as unbelievers those who will not accept their perversions of the truth, threatening them with eternal punishment.

This little book is composed mainly of two letters I wrote to one of the leaders of this group in India. For publication in book form I have slightly edited the letters, deleting a few sentences and adding paragraph headings. But for the most part the material is just as I wrote it to him. I have also deleted the name of the person to whom I wrote and the name of his colleague. Names are not at issue here but the truth of God.

The first few pages are taken up with the question of the meaning of Act 2:38, The group to which I refer completely misinterprets this verse, and their wrong interpretation is central to much of their false teaching. They try to build a great deal on a very small and shaky foundation of sand.

I have added a postscript at the end. It explains why I wrote only two letters, and it adds a few thoughts that have come to me since writing the letters.

Because of other issues raised by these false teachers I have dealt also, briefly, with the subjects of salvation in some of its various aspects, the baptism and fulness of the Holy Spirit, and signs and wonders.

The one to whom I wrote has called the doctrine of the Trinity 'a heresy straight from the pit of hell'. He has spoken

of the teaching that one may be baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues 'a lie of the devil'. I am quite sure that the doctrines denied by this man are truth given by God Himself, and clearly recorded in His Word.

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 Christ 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 was 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. Matthew'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 taking 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

1. 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, His 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 thinking 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 God'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 matters 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 unbaptized, 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, sinful 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, and 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 remission of sins, to say that baptism according to a particular formula is a must, is utterly opposed to the teaching 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 these 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 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 salvation 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 overemphasize 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 baptismal 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 connected 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 (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; (1 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 understand 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 incomprehensible 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 idolaters 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).

Deniers of the Trinity

2. At the beginning and middle of the third century A.D. there arose some men who denied the Trinity and taught that the Supreme Being was one person only, the same person being Father, Son, and Spirit, these terms merely expressing the different relationships or modes in which God revealed Himself. Praxeas taught this at Rome about 200 A.D.; Noetus of Smyrna taught it about 230 A.D.; Beryll taught it in Arabia about 250 A.D.; and Sabellius, a presbyter of Ptolemais, taught it about the same time (250 A.D.),

Sabellianism

This doctrine was sometimes called Sabellianism after Sabellius, but those who accepted it, or something similar to it, were also called Monarchians, Patripassians, or Unitarians. In their teaching concerning the words Father, Son, and Spirit the only point which believers as a whole could accept was the true deity of the Lord Jesus. But because Sabellianism could not explain the language of the Bible concerning the Father, the Son, and the Spirit it was not received by the people of God, and before long was universally discarded, being condemned by church fathers, churches, and (later) by councils. For example, Tertullian (born about 160 A.D.) said of Praxeas because he failed to distinguish between the Three in the Godhead that "He drove out prophecy and brought in heresy, expelled the Paraclete and crucified the Father." Tertullian defined the Godhead as being "One substance (that is essence) three persons."

In These Days

In these days the teaching of Sabellius, or something very like it, has lifted its head once more, and I am very sorry to see that you have received it and begun to teach it - a teaching that is contrary to Scripture and that was refuted and condemned by the church fathers many centuries ago.

Meaning of Trinity

3. We should understand what is meant by the word Trinity. In your open letter about your meeting with Theo Williams

you make some remarks that cause me to doubt your understanding of the subject. For Instance (I quote from you), "The 'doctrine' of the Trinity assumes that Jesus Christ is only a part of the Godhead, i.e. the second person, which is clearly unscriptural and a heresy completely against the Word of God which says in Col 2:9 'For in Him (Jesus Christ) the whole fulness of Deity (the Godhead) continues to dwell in bodily form—giving complete expression of the divine nature'".

But I assure you that no trinitarian who understands what he is talking about believes that any member of the Trinity is merely a part of the Godhead. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all fully and absolutely and eternally God. And all believers in the Trinity who understand and believe the Bible's teaching on Christ are quite sure that all the fulness of God dwells in Him and that He is the 'manifestation of the invisible God'. I assure you we delight in this truth of the full deity of the Lord Jesus. It is an essential foundation stone in our theology. So do not try to set the doctrine of the Trinity against the doctrine of the full deity of Christ. To be in the Trinity is to be fully, eternally God, and to have all the nature and attributes of Deity.

An Illustration

No human illustration of the Trinity is satisfactory and human language altogether is inadequate to set forth the mystery of God's being, but one illustration which suggests one aspect of that truth is this. A room has three dimensions — height, breadth, and length. But each is essential to the whole. Take away the height and you have no room at all; take away the breadth or the length and the result is the same. None of the three is a mere part of the room but without all three you have no room. And we should not think that because there are three dimensions in a room this makes three rooms. The three dimensions which can be identified as distinguished from one another, inseparably mingle to form the one room. We might say, in a sense, that a room is a trinity. The eternal God who is the believer's dwelling place is a Trinity. No member of the Trinity is a mere part of God. Indeed take way any of the Three and you have no God at

all. Deny the Son and you do not have the Father (1 John 2:22,23). Is not the reverse of that also true — deny the Father and you do not have the Son? And what is true of the Father and the Son is also true of the Holy Spirit. The Three which in a sense are distinct from one another are inseparably united as one God.

It is strange that some people insist on believing in an eternally lonely, one-dimensional God, when the glorious mystery of the Trinity is revealed in God's Word for their faith, admiration, and worship.

1 x 1 x 1 = 1

You state that God is "not three distinct separate personalities (for that is the definition of persons) that would make three Gods". But no trinitarian who understands what God has revealed in the Bible about Himself believes in three Gods. As others have pointed out, not every combination of three ones equals three; though $1+1+1+1=3$, $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. We believe in only one almighty eternal God, but that He is the Triune God. To us the unity of the God head is complete and perfect, but it is a trinity.

Possibility of Misunderstanding

One problem in understanding the doctrine of the Trinity may be in the use of the word 'persons'. In human terms the idea of a person is a unit separate from all other units called persons and inhabiting a separate body. This is absolutely not the case with the Trinity. The eternal Three of the Trinity are one unit, one God, each having all the qualities and attributes of God. And the Three do not inhabit separate bodies as humans do, but are Three in one being who is spirit.

Due to the limitations of human language we cannot find completely adequate terms to describe this Tri-unity. Trinitarians use the word 'persons' of the Three in the one Godhead because it seems to be the best word in English to use. I have suggested above the phrase "Three centers of consciousness" In the one God. No doubt this too is inadequate. But the inadequacies of human language should not cause us to reject a truth God has revealed. If you ask

me how it can be that there are three persons in the one Godhead, I answer I do not know how it can be, but adoringly, wonderingly receive God's revelation about it. I, who cannot understand the lowliest worm God has made, am willing to wait until I stand before God for a fuller understanding of His Triune Being.

Deity and Glory of Christ

I repeat, trinitarians do not distort or deny the full-orbed deity, and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed they insist on it. All the Scriptures you quote to show the full deity of the Lord Jesus, I as a trinitarian glory in and insist on with all my being. And I will state it here and now — Jesus Christ, is God. So if your desire to ascribe full deity to the Lord Jesus has caused you to reject the doctrine of the Trinity, I can assure you that your thinking here is at fault. There is no reason whatever to abandon the truth of the Trinity to hold to the doctrine of the full deity of the Lord Jesus.

The Pre-incarnate Son

4. On page 7 of your open letter you say "Now the word Son is used in scripture only in reference to that created body now glorified in heaven". Easy perhaps to say, impossible to prove. In fact, you do not give any proof for the statement but simply dogmatically assert it. You also say that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only God there is, the one and only person in the Godhead. You do not prove this either. Simply stating things does not make them so. Let us now consider some of the Scriptures which refer to a time before the Son of God was born on earth. It seems to me there are some questions that arise from these Scriptures which are unanswerable by those who deny the Trinity.

John 1:1,2 - here we are taught both that the Word was God and that the Word was with God. The question is, who was the Word with before He became incarnate as Jesus Christ? If He Himself is the only person in the Godhead, as you state, why speak of Him as being with someone called God? In John 1:14 He is said to have come from the Father. If He was not the Son before He came why would the one He

came from here be called the Father? If the Lord Jesus is the only person in the Godhead how could it be said that He came from another?

John 3:16

John 3:16,17 teaches that God gave His Son and sent Him into the world. How could God send His Son into the world if the Son were not in existence before He came into the world? If words are to have their plain meaning Christ was God's Son before He came into the world and did not become the Son only when He came into the world.

Distinguished from the Father

Christ often spoke of His existence prior to His birth on earth, but He never said, never remotely suggested that He was the only person in the Godhead. What right, then, does any man have to say so? He insisted again and again that He was sent by another to do that other's work and fulfil His will. All His language about Himself and the Father and the Spirit indicate that in some sense He distinguished Himself from them.

One with the Father

Of course, He was very plainly conscious also of the oneness He had with them. He said in John 10:30 that He and His Father were one. This does not mean they were the same person, but that they had the same divine essence and nature, eternally united as one God. Two distinct persons in the marriage relationship are said to be one flesh (Eph. 5:31).

This does not mean that their individual persons can no longer be distinguished. Three persons who are one in spirit (as is the case with the Lord God) may also be distinguished from each other.

Jesus also said that anyone who saw Him saw the Father (John 14:5). Yes, indeed, He fully revealed the Father, and the Father's divine nature was perfectly displayed in Him. He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's being (Heb. 1:3). We sometimes say of any son who is much like his father that we can see his father in him, but obviously this does not mean that he and his father are the same person.

Distinct from the Father

While it is perfectly true that the Lord Jesus spoke of the oneness He had with the Father, He also spoke of being distinct from Him. We must take all that He said about Himself and the Father and not pick and choose those verses that seem to suit our theological position. And Jesus never said anything like this: "I am the Father". So why should any man say that He is? In fact, He said "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). (This means that the Father is greater than Christ in position, not in nature or qualities. This is the meaning of 1 Cor. 15:24-28 also. It does not strike me as a strange thing that in the Trinity, even as among families on earth, the word 'father' indicates a higher place than the word 'son', though father and son share the same nature.)

Many times the Lord Jesus spoke of His Father sending Him into the world -John 4:34; 5:23,36; 6:29,44; 8:16, etc. Since you teach that there is only one person in the Godhead — the Lord Jesus Himself— you would have to say that He sent Himself into the world. But this the Lord Jesus emphatically denies in John 8:42 - "I have not come on my own, but He sent me". (I should add that the form of the Greek word used in all places that speak of the Father sending the Son makes it abundantly clear that another person distinct from the Father was being sent.)

In John 13:3 He speaks of coming from God and returning to God. That is, on earth He had come from a person still in heaven called the Father and was about to return to that person.

Glory with the Father

In John 17:5 the Lord Jesus calls on His Father and says He had glory with Him before the world began. If Christ is the only person in the Godhead who is this person with whom He had glory before He came to earth? Do not the words "I had glory with you before the world began" show clearly a consciousness of an eternal distinction of Himself from the one He calls Father? And by calling Him Father in this context was He not plainly indicating that He was the Son before He came into the world? His meaning obviously is "I, as your

Son, had glory with you, my Father, before the world began". Why speak of having glory with someone if the person speaking had all that glory alone?

Mutual Love

Look at John 17:24- a beautiful and profound verse! If there is no distinction of persons in the one God head, if indeed there is only one person (as you say), who was there to do the loving, and to be the object of the love, before the foundation of the world? The truth is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit loved each other and were loved by each other, united not only in one essence and nature but in the bonds of mutual love from all eternity.

If it is the truth we are after surely this one chapter of John's Gospel (the 17th) should be enough to convince us of the distinction of divine persons in the one God. I beg you to get on your knees before God, pray for light, and carefully and believingly examine that chapter.

The Holy Spirit

5. The Lord Jesus also spoke of another distinct person in the Godhead called the Holy Spirit or the Comforter. He said that the Father would send Him in Christ's name, and that He (Christ) would send Him from the Father (John 14:26; 15:26). In these verses the doctrine of the Trinity is set before us. The Lord Jesus even says that if He did not go away the Holy Spirit would not come (John 16:7).

If the Lord Jesus Himself were the person of the Holy Spirit (as you teach), why speak of sending Him, and of the Spirit's absence (in some sense) from them as long as the Lord Jesus Himself was present with them ? And we must note that the Lord Jesus never said "I am the Holy Spirit", and none of the apostles said that Jesus was the Holy Spirit. So by what authority does any man say it?

A False Path

The Sabellians were on a false path and it is not surprising that believers in their day rejected their teaching. The speculation that there is only one person in the Godhead leaves too many Scriptures unexplained, is clearly opposed

to other Scriptures and so creates great confusion in interpreting the Bible's revelation of God.

Matthew 28:19

6. Another word about Matt. 28:19 — here is the final teaching of Jesus concerning the name of God. Name there, as in many places in the Bible, indicates nature. The Lord had already revealed the father and had spoken plainly of the Holy Spirit, and He Himself was before them. (By 'Son' Jesus obviously meant Himself - John 10:36.) Now He sums up in a phrase this aspect of His teaching on God and declares the final Name, the nature of the one supreme God. It is not surprising that the Lord used the singular for name rather than the plural, for there is only one God, not three, and He was surely pointing out again the absolute oneness in essence of the three persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are words which indicate persons, not mere titles (as some would assert) and not attributes as the Sabellians vainly imagined. It would be an absurd misuse of language to employ words like Father and Son to signify attributes. Do we ever say of a human father that his son is an attribute of himself? Or do we say of him and his son that these words are mere titles? No. The words father and son signify a deep fact of their being and of their relationship with each other.

Authority from the Father

As regards God the Father and the Son, you cannot get rid of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity even by wrongly saying these words are mere titles, for titles in the Bible surely point to some reality; and the reality revealed in the Bible is that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father, both distinct from Him and one with Him.

In Matt. 28:18-20 Jesus is speaking as the omnipresent God, for He says that He will be with all His disciples as they go into all the world even to the end of the age, and only God is capable of that. Yet He says that His authority "has been given" to Him. How can this be if He is the only person in the Godhead? The truth is, He is speaking as the Son of

God, and He is not referring to His "glorified body now in heaven" but as one who is able to be in all places at the same time. But He acknowledges that His authority has come from His Father.

The Lord Jesus' Own Teaching

So the teaching of the Trinity was not an invention by a Church or Church Council. It is the teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Disciples Should Understand

According to John 17:8, the disciples of the Lord Jesus understood that: He came forth from God and that God sent Him. Should not disciples now understand this? In that profound and blessed chapter when the Lord Jesus as Son prayed to the Father it was one divine person communing with another divine person in the one Godhead. There was someone distinct from Himself from whom He came, who was still there while He was on earth as God incarnate, and to whom He was returning.

I say that true disciples know this. If a person does not know it, the reason must be that he has not received enough light on the subject, or else is unwilling to accept the Lord's clear teaching. A knowledge of the Father and Son is something that must be given by the Lord Jesus Himself (Matt. 11:27). Those who have this knowledge will not go after the teaching of a man like Sabellius or like Praxeas who taught that Christ could not be God unless He was the Father. It is far more in line with New Testament revelation to say Christ could not be God unless He is the Son.

The Language of Scripture

7. You write in your open letter that "There is only one God and His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ". But the apostle Paul put the matter like this - "For us there is but one God, the Father.....and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 8:6). In this place Paul had a good opportunity to use language such as yours but he did not—not here or in any place in any of his letters. Nor did any of the other apostles. Why, then, do you want to use language that they were not inspired to

use, language which is misleading? They all believed that the Lord Jesus was true God, but this did not lead them to deny or ignore the other persons in the Godhead.

If we follow the Lord Jesus Himself we should use, not your statement, but one like this - "There is one God and His name is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit". Why should you reject Bible terminology for something else which is inadequate to set forth all that God is?

The Trinity in the Epistles

8. The distinction of the three persons in the one God is kept up everywhere in the letters of the apostles (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:3; Heb 1:1-3; 13:20,21; Jam 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1-3; 1 John 1:3; Jude 1,25). They never write anything like this - "Grace to you and peace from God our Father who is the Lord Jesus Christ". This would be according to your views, but it would not be according to the revelation the apostles had received of the nature of God. Paul took pains in I Cor 8:6 to distinguish the Father from the Lord Jesus. And in 2 Cor 13:14 he brings in the Holy Spirit in a benediction from the Triune God loved by all believers in God's Word. He there (as also in the salutations above) presents the Three as existing all at the same time and as being together the source of blessing.

Galatians

In Gal. 4:4 Paul uses language similar to that of the Lord Jesus - "When the time had fully come God sent His Son". I repeat, if the Son were not in some sense distinct from Himself, and in existence before He came into the world, how could it be said either that God sent Him, or that He sent His Son?

Philippians

Phil. 2:5-11 makes the distinction quite clear between one who laid aside the glory of divine existence in heaven and one who did not. The one who did not (the Father) then exalted the one who did (the Son) to the highest place in the universe.

Hebrews

In Hebrews 1:6-12 the Father speaks to the Son, calls Him God and Lord and yet says to Him "Therefore God, your God, has anointed you."

John's Letters

John in his first letter refers to the eternal distinction between one called the Father and one called the Word and the Son (I John 1:1-3; 2:22-24; 4:9,14; 15:5-9). And how clearly John makes the distinction in 2 John 3! "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son". What words could he have chosen to make it clearer?

You (it seems to me) like to pick out references that show the oneness of the Father and the Son (thank God for all such references!), but you ignore those that distinguish them from each other. We must deal fairly with the Word of God.

Trinity in Old Testament

9. I have not referred to the Old Testament, but the fact of more than one divine person in the one Godhead is there too, though the full blaze of this revelation, as we might expect, is found in the New Testament. In the Old Testament there are Scriptures which point to a plurality of person in God and that suggest the Trinity. With the clear revelation of this truth in the New Testament, believers can look back to the Old and see it there also. Many New Testament truths are only in seed form in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is to be explained in the light of the New.

Genesis 1:26

I believe that Gen. 1:26 is one example of this — "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'.

In your 'open letter', discussing this verse, you try to do away with the most likely meaning of the words 'let us', and 'our image'. You say that God was addressing the angels when He used these words. But is it likely that the mighty Creator of the universe would address mere creatures in that way when about to begin a work of creation? And we should notice carefully the verse that follows - "So God

created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him" - not, mind you, "in the image of angels" or "in the image of God and angels". Is it ever said in the Bible that man was created in the image of angels? Or that angels participated with God in the creation of man? We should be very careful about teaching things the Bible is silent about. [For the sake of clarity I have somewhat changed the above paragraph from what it was in the original letter].

I believe the more scriptural answer to the question as to whom God was speaking in Gen. 1:26 is this -He (the Father) was speaking to the other persons in the one Godhead.

The Word 'Elohim'

Your remarks on the word Elohim, which is the Hebrew plural form of God are also unsatisfactory and beside the point. And your attempt to explain the plural pronoun the Lord Jesus used in John 14:23 is completely unconvincing. Jesus' language there obviously indicates that two persons in the Trinity together will act in a certain way.

As for the word Elohim, I do not say it reveals the doctrine of the Trinity. But in the light of the New Testament I think it may suggest it. It is a choice of word by the Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible writers that certainly fits the later revelation of the one God as a Triune Being. And there were two singular forms for God (El and Eloah) which the Spirit could have chosen to use everywhere in the Old Testament, which He did use in some few places. In the Old Testament the Spirit teaches repeatedly that there is only one God, and condemns the idea that there is a plurality of gods. Yet He inspired the writers to use the plural form of God when there was no necessity to do so from the point of view of the Hebrew language. Surely this is significant.

You state dogmatically that the word 'Elohim' indicates plurality of attributes and not of persons. But this does not make good sense. For the singular form of God would indicate a plurality of attributes just as well as the plural form. Any living being has a plurality of attributes whether that being is called by a singular or plural form of name. So there is no

conceivable reason why the plural should be chosen for God merely to indicate a plurality of attributes.

The Angel of Jehovah

On page 9 of your open letter you assert that it is absurd to ascribe deity to the one in Old Testament called 'The angel of Jehovah'. However, this is an 'absurdity' we find clearly revealed in the Old Testament itself. There are innumerable angels but only one specifically referred to as the angel of Jehovah or the angel of God. The Hebrew word for angel means messenger and we can translate very accurately "The Messenger of Jehovah". This Messenger speaks as if He were God Himself; and He has divine attributes. This is very clear from the following references : Gen. 16:7-14; 31:11-13; 48:15,16; Ex. 3:2-6; Judges 2:1-3; 6:12-23; 13:18. In Judges 13:18 the word 'wonderful' is from the same Hebrew root as the word in Is. 9:6 where the Son of God is named 'Wonderful'. This Messenger of Jehovah is also identified as Jehovah Himself by the language of Judges 2:1-3 and 6:12,14,16,21-23. There is no reason whatever to doubt that these appearances of the divine Messenger were pre-incarnate appearances of the Son of God.

Psalm 2:12

If we had time to consider them we could look at other verses in the Old Testament which suggest a distinction of persons in the one Godhead, and which indicate the existence of the Son with the Father before Christ was born on earth. For example, have you considered Psalm 2:12? There the rulers of the earth are urged to "kiss the Son" - that is, to submit to Him, be reconciled to Him. I know very well that this psalm has prophetic significance, but the writer is also addressing the people of his own day. And how could they kiss the Son if the Son did not then exist?

A Harmful Tract

10. This letter has already far exceeded the limits I had originally planned for it, and I cannot now spend the time to take up each sentence of your open letter which reveals what I consider some mistake or other. But before closing I

feel I must say something about the tract written by your friend and colleague which you gave me. To be frank, I consider it to be totally lacking in scholarship and sound scriptural thought. It is lacking also in that humility and love we hope to find in those who are called Christian leaders.

Sweeping Condemnation

He begins on the title page by indicating his convictions that Protestants are not true believers, and that he and those he calls 'true believers' are closer in theology in one respect (belief in only one person in the Godhead) to Jews who rejected and crucified Christ than to Protestant Christians many of whom laid down their lives for Christ in the time of the Reformation. This surely seems strange. If he is not saying this what is he saying? If he does not mean this why should he leave the impression that he does? And if he does mean this, we must ask who has given him the right to make such a sweeping condemnation of God's servants?

Is Baptism a Must?

On the third page of his tract he misuses other Scriptures which I have already spoken of above. On the same page he says very emphatically that baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is a MUST. But Jesus Christ Himself never said so. Who gave your friend the authority to teach something as a must which the Lord Jesus never taught? Did not the Lord Jesus know what was and what was not a must for remission of sins? Making any kind of baptism a MUST is contrary to the way of trust in Himself that Jesus repeatedly taught.

I do not believe Peter in Acts 2:38 taught that baptism is necessary for the remission of sins, for that would be opposed to a great many Scriptures. If we compare Scripture with Scripture "be baptized for the remission of sins" cannot mean "be baptized in order to get remission of sins"; it would mean "accept baptism which signifies the remission of sins". Comparing Acts 2:38 with Matt. 3:11 supports this, as I showed on page 8. The remission of sins can be had immediately by anyone who repents, asks God for it and trusts in the Lord Jesus.

Christian Baptism

Your friend states emphatically that the only Christian baptism is the one he says is in the name of the Lord Jesus alone. Did the Lord Jesus, then, in His one command about baptism, give instruction for a baptism not Christian? Is this not an utter absurdity?

Also on page 3 of his tract your friend asserts in so many words that baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus alone links us with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Since the Lord Jesus did not tell us to be baptized in the name of Jesus only are we to assume that He did not know this? Or that He did not want us to be linked with His death and resurrection?

Linked with the Lord Jesus

The truth is, we are linked with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus when we by faith receive Him as our Lord and Saviour and Redeemer (Rom. 3:22-25; 4:22-5:2; 10:8-11, etc). At that time the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the true church which is Christ's body (1 Cor 12:12,13). This is signified by water baptism—by baptism as commanded by the Lord Jesus in Matt. 28:19. Surely no less than any other baptism that can be named. Baptism in the name of the Trinity signifies that the believer is linked with the Lord Jesus who died and rose again, with the Father who sent Him to do this, and with the Holy Spirit who gives resurrection life to believers and makes it real in their lives.

I as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour, depending on Him alone for salvation, have been baptized according to Christ's own instructions in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Am I not linked up with Christ's death and resurrection and fulness? To deny it is not merely to deny my experience; it is to deny the teaching of the Word of God. It is my faith in Him! it is the work of the Spirit of God that links me with Christ and makes me complete in Him, and not some formula of words spoken at a baptismal ceremony.

A Magical Formula?

Can you really believe any word formula can produce some magical, mystical, powerful effect? Can't you see the

absurdity of it? It strikes me that your friend is only trying to throw dust in the reader's eyes and draw disciples after himself. Or perhaps he has links with some group in some other place and is simply giving out the teaching of that group. Only God can tell all the motives people may have for saying and writing absurd things or believing them.

Confusing the Issue

The last words of page 3 and the beginning words of page 4 of his tract give another example of dust throwing. No believer in the Trinity who is enlightened as to the Biblical revelation on the subject believes there are three Gods. We believe it is blasphemy and a terrible heresy to say that the Son is a different God than the Father or the Father a different God than the Son. And all true believers know that if we are linked with any of the Three in the Trinity we are linked with all Three, and that the purpose of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus was to bring us to the Father (Rom. 5:1; Eph 2:6,7,18; Col. 1:21-23; I Pet. 3:18).

The rest of his page 4 about twelve terrible mistakes is all meaningless. Believers who are familiar with the Bible know very well that Christ preached the Gospel, died and rose again to make it valid, and entrusted it to the apostles who themselves preached it powerfully by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. They know too that the heart of the gospel is not a formula of words spoken at baptism, and that it is faith that links them by God's grace to the Lord Jesus. They also know that anything that Peter and the other apostles may have said while they were actually giving baptism to believing Jews cannot be put above the clear command of the Lord Jesus for all nations.

Christ's Blood

It is Christ's blood that takes away sin, and releases from sin's dominion, and cleanses the sinner from all unrighteousness. It is a perversion of the truth to attribute to water what the blood of Christ alone accomplishes.

And can your friend (or anyone like him) believe in his heart that those great men of faith mentioned above, and multitudes of other believers who have experienced salvation

in Christ, and the apostles themselves, did not have the remission of sins, because they were not baptized according to his formula (in the name of Jesus only)? If he admits that they did have the remission of sins then should he not be consistent and admit also his views on baptism are wrong, and consign them to the place they belong — the waste basket?

Misuse of Scripture

Your friend tries also to bring forth for his support Acts 8:36,38; 16:15,33; 18:8; Jam. 1:22 and 2:7—all of which a regular trinitarian Baptist could also use if he thought they had anything to do with the point under consideration. He misuses Eph. 4:5 also, by writing immediately after: "One name - one baptism". Eph. 4:5 actually says "One Lord, one baptism", and the verse following continues, "one God and Father" which he rather conveniently ignores, since these verses together clearly distinguish between the Lord Jesus and God the Father.

Encyclopedias

On page 6 of his tract your friend uses (or misuses) a sentence he indicates is found in the New International Encyclopedia about the doctrine of the Trinity—"The doctrine is not found in its fully developed form in the Scriptures". Does he think that this sentence denies that the doctrine is in the Scriptures? Actually it admits that it is in the Scriptures, only not in 'its fully developed form'. In any case, in these matters we should not make the mistake of running to some secular encyclopedia or other. For the truth of God we must stick to the Bible itself. And in the Bible the doctrine of the Trinity is revealed in exactly the form God chose for His revelation. [For the sake of clarity I have somewhat changed the above paragraph from what it was in the original letter.]

Your friend writes also (evidently quoting the same secular encyclopedia), "At the time of the Reformation the Protestant Church took over the doctrine of the Trinity without serious examination". This is to make too little of the massive scholarship of some of the reformers and their desire to keep

out of their teaching all they could that originated with the apostate Roman Catholic Church. John Calvin, for example, has a section on the Trinity in his Institutes of the Christian Religion in which he shows great familiarity with the subject of the Trinity and with the writings of the early church fathers, and he refutes the false teachings of both Arias and Sabellius.

Authoritative Teaching

Your friend states his belief that the first authoritative statement of belief in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost was made in the earliest general council of churches held in Nicea in 325. But this, too, is misleading. Because the doctrine of the Trinity was set forth by Christ Himself, the apostles in their letters expressed their belief in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Are not their words authoritative? [I would like to add to the original paragraph this fact: the bishop of Rome did not even attend the council of Nicea, and the Roman church had nothing to do with the formulation of doctrine that took place there.]

A Horrible Lie

On page 6 your friend quotes with approval the blatant lie written (apparently) by one H. Brown (U.S.A.) —namely, “if you go ahead and accept the trinity baptism into three separate persons, then you automatically are identified with the Roman Catholic Church and her harlot daughters. Your end—HELL FIRE”. Horrible! Horrible! Because he does not like this doctrine, he describes it in misleading language (trinitarians do not believe in three Gods or in three separate persons but in three perfectly united persons in the one Godhead); then he falsely attributes it to the Roman Church; and than condemns to hell all who hold it.

Great thinking this! Reformers who broke with the church of Rome, saints and martyrs who were persecuted by the church of Rome are by Brown and your friend identified with the church of Rome and then consigned to hell. And what do Brown and your friend consider the error of those believers to be that makes them worthy of hell? They obeyed the command of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ given in Matt. 28:29! It is hard to imagine a greater perversion of the

truth, and greater arrogance than this. Saints through whom God has worked mightily in the earth, through whom much glory has come to God, much good to men, much fruitfulness of the Spirit, are consigned by your friend and Brown to the lake of fire! Terrible! What kind of mind does this reveal these men to have?

No Excuse

Possibly your friend has had sad experiences with both the Roman Catholic Church and with some Protestant churches and organizations. He may well have seen in them much hypocrisy, dishonesty, and heresy. But there is no excuse for some of the statements in his tract.

It is true that the reformers and their followers were not perfect men (just like the rest of us). They made what I consider some mistakes. But those who believed in the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and Lord were saved in spite of their mistakes, even as we will be saved in spite of our mistakes if we have faith as they did. This violent language of condemnation on those who repented and received the Lord Jesus and served Him heartily, is not remotely Christian.

Rome is Apostate

It is true that the Church of Rome is an apostate organization, as I tried to show in my commentary on The Revelation, and in my book 'Storm Over Israel'. But not every doctrine the Church of Rome professes to hold is automatically false simply because they profess to hold it. They profess officially to believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible, the incarnation, virgin birth, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus. Does that make these truths into lies? Should we reject them because the Roman Catholic Church professes to believe them? I will not, nor will I reject the precious truth of the Trinity because Rome professes to hold it.

Any so-called Christian church or organization that is apostate is sickening to an earnest believer who fervently loves the Lord Jesus. But the remedy for the situation is not to throw away precious divine truth ourselves. This would only make the total picture even worse.

Abusive Language

On the last page of his tract your friend resumes his abusive and slanderous language against the blessed truth of the Trinity. This precious truth so clearly revealed by the Lord Jesus Himself and universally held by true believers long before the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.), long before the church of Rome usurped authority over much of Christendom, is, according to him, "undoubtedly out of the pit", and "straight out of the dogmas of the Roman whore." By such language as he uses in that tract he may frighten and persuade those who do not know the Bible or church history, but he will not affect the belief of those who do.

Jesus in All Scripture

He concludes by trying to set in opposition the Trinity with the fact that Jesus is revealed in every book of the Bible, and shows his belief that baptism according to the command of Christ is meaningless. Is he so ignorant that he does not know that trinitarians can see Jesus in every book of the Bible, or is he merely being dishonest? We do see Jesus everywhere in the Bible, and greatly rejoice to see Him there.

Is your friend merely trying to be cute when he says "The formula of Matt. 28:19 will make you WET, but Acts 2:38 will bring forth FRUIT!", or does he there reveal a hatred of Jesus' words in Matt 28:19? However that may be, obviously he is no fit spiritual leader or teacher, and anyone who follows him is going on a false pith. One can only pray that God will grant him repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and that he will come to his senses and escape the trap of the devil (2 Tim 2:25,26).

Ensnared by Heresy

Friend, I write to you beseeching you to turn to the truth God has revealed in His Word. You are ensnared by heresy concerning some extremely important matters. And you threaten eternal fire on those who would mock and ridicule what you have written. Are you like the pope of Rome speaking ex cathedra from his official throne, and pronouncing

anathemas on all who reject what he vainly imagines are his infallible conclusions?

The doctrine concerning God which you hold (Sabellianism) cannot be established from the Scriptures. Your views on baptism also are not according to the Bible. Any attempt to prove them must ignore too many plain declarations of the Word of God. Those who hold your position on these matters may threaten their opponents with hell and damnation, but this does not prove their position. And believers, after the smoke has settled, and after a close examination of these subjects in the light of the Bible, will see just who are the "deniers of the Word" and who are not. I beg you in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to turn from the false path you are following and come back to the teaching of Scripture held throughout all these many centuries by believing Christians everywhere. That God may enable you to do so is my fervent prayer for you.

Sincerely in Christ

SECOND LETTER

Dear.....

Thanks for your letter of the 6th of September. It helped me to know more about what you believe and about you. I wish you had made an earnest attempt to face the points I raised in my letter to you. But you wrote "I do not even wish to go into the Godhead with you". You ignored the serious questions I raised about your false teaching on this subject, made a feeble attempt to defend your position on baptism, and resorted to a personal attack on me—though you know nothing about me.

Vain Speculations

In the very few points I raised which you tried to answer you make further mistakes. On the first page of your letter you say that the apostles "always instructed people to only be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ". But none of us were there to hear everything the apostles said. I pointed out in my letter that in the slight majority of the cases in the book of Acts that speak of baptism no name of God is mentioned (8:36-38; 9:18; 16:15,33; 18:8; 22:16). You can see this for yourself, so why this sheer speculation that they "always instructed people to only be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ"? Why do you pretend to know something you cannot possibly know?

Still on the first page you say I speculate about the formula spoken at baptism, and you evidently assume that you do not. But since no words that were spoken at the actual moments when baptism was being administered have been recorded for us, you must speculate as much as I, even if you won't admit it. In any case, I showed in my letter what baptism in Christ's name meant, and it did not mean what you think it meant.

No Contradiction

On that same page you say you believe there is no contradiction between Matt. 28:19 and Acts 2:38. Then it is obvious that those who have been baptized according to Matt. 28:19 have fulfilled Acts 2:38, and to demand that they be rebaptized according to Acts 2:38 is an absurdity. Why don't you try to be consistent? You say I should obey the Word of God. In this matter of baptism thirty seven years ago I obeyed the Word of God declared by the Lord Jesus Himself in Matt. 28:19; are not these baptismal instructions of the Lord Jesus enough for me to obey?

A Test of Obedience

You exhort others to obey the Word of God; why don't you obey it yourself? Here is a real test of your willingness to obey — The Lord Jesus in Matt. 28:19 commanded His disciples to baptize others in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and to teach others to do so. Since you profess to be one of Christ's disciples will you obey this plain command of His? Yes, or no? If you answer yes, I will praise God for that, for it will show that you are moving in the right direction. If you answer no, how can you continue to speak to others about obedience when you are disobedient yourself? If your answer is 'no' you show that you intend to be obedient only to those scriptures that seem to suit your position and to be disobedient to the rest.

Lack of Understanding

On page 2 you say there is no verse of Scripture to substantiate the statements I make about Acts 2:38. How is it that you fail to understand what I have written in the first few pages of my first letter? I have given many verses which put Acts 2:38 in its context, in scriptural perspective, and I make its meaning clear by explaining some of its individual words, and by comparing scripture with scripture.

On page 2 you say that the Lord Jesus baptized the apostles in His own name, and give John 3:22 and 26 as proof. But John 4:2 says that Jesus did not give baptism. Why are you

making statements contrary to the Word of God? Also there is nothing in John 3:22,26 about the name in which those disciples gave baptism. Why do you speculate and then call your speculations the teaching of the Word of God ?

Proof of the Truth?

On page 2 you try to argue that what you call fruitful lives are proof of the truth of your doctrine. Can't you see how dangerous this insistence is, and how it can be used against you? All sorts of heretics and deniers of God's Word through the centuries have managed to draw many disciples after themselves, and could point to what they considered much fruit from their ministry. They could use the same argument as you. On the other hand, throughout church history some Christians who believed in the Trinity and thought that in the matter of baptism Matt. 28:19 was quite sufficient have been marvelously fruitful. And this is as true now as ever. Are you willing to admit that their fruitfulness proves their doctrines? It seems you are unable to reason logically.

Tongues

On page 2 you write that "the seal of the new testament of the Lord's blood is the baptism with the Holy Spirit". On page 3 you state that this baptism "is always accompanied by glossolalia or tongues". Do you not see where this teaching leads? If the baptism with the Holy Spirit is the seal of the new covenant and if it is always accompanied by tongues, this means that those who do not speak in tongues do not have the seal of the new covenant. If they do not have the seal how do they have any place in the new covenant? If they have no place in the new covenant then they are lost forever. In other words, logically following your teaching as given above, all who do not speak in tongues are lost forever. Could any teaching be more utterly false?

By the way, where in the Bible does it say that the baptism of the Holy Spirit accompanied by tongues is the seal of the New Testament? Why do you insist on inventing doctrines or receiving someone else's doctrines and passing them off as the teaching of the Word of God? Every believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13,14; Rom. 8:9), and baptized

by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13), but not every believer speaks in tongues (I Cor 12:30).

Denial of God's Word

On page 2, last paragraph, you accuse me of denying the Word of God. Point out one single verse of the Word of God that I deny. I will immediately repent of it. I love the Word of God above all else. It is you who deny the word of God.

You deny Matt. 28:19 by suggesting it is not valid, not sufficient, and demanding that people who have obeyed it should be rebaptized. By making Acts 2:38 essential to the remission of sins you deny the sufficiency of faith in the blood of Christ for that. By over emphasizing a ceremony you deny the teaching of Christ and His apostles on faith in Christ alone as the way of receiving God's grace. You deny the plain teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the Godhead. You deny that a person can be filled with the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues —a clear denial of the Word of God as well as a denial of the experience of multitudes of God's children. (Have you no understanding of such verses as Romans 12:3-8 and I Cor 12:7-11,29-31?)

A Dangerous Doctrine

You insist on a doctrine (tongues as the evidence of the Spirit's baptism) that has done untold harm to innumerable people, that gets them to seek for signs when they should simply trust God and receive from Him by faith what He promises, as all the saints of the Bible did. By your emphasis on this you open people up to the possibility of the influence of evil spirits. Have you not heard of some who received what they thought was the baptism with the Spirit and spoke in tongues who later had demons cast out of them by godly pastors?

What Should We Seek?

Get a concordance and see - there is not a single verse in the Bible that instructs people in this church age to seek for the baptism of the Holy Spirit or for the gift of tongues. I Cor 12:31 tells us to desire the greater gifts; tongues is at the bottom of the list Paul gives just above there. Yet some

preachers make what they call the baptism with the Spirit accompanied by tongues the heart of their message. Why do they (why do you) stir up people to do something the Bible does not command? Are there not enough plain commands In the Bible? Why try to add to them?

We are told to be continually filled with the Spirit whom we received when we trusted in Christ (Eph. 5:18). When the gospel is believed and Christ is received people receive the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to receive Christ into the heart without receiving the Spirit at the same time, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. Believers need not wait for the Holy Spirit to come from heaven or to do something to them from without. He is already in them. They need to recognize Him, yield to Him, obey Him, be filled with Him, be ruled completely by Him. This life-changing experience is what Christians need. This is what will make any individual or church alive and fruitful and God-glorifying. They do not need the wildfire that some preachers are trying to introduce into the churches.

Fulness of the Spirit

On page 24 of my letter I have given scriptures to support the sweet truth that God's Spirit is received by faith in Christ. We are also filled with the Holy Spirit by faith, and tongues have nothing whatever to do with it. Any sign or gift or manifestation God may wish to give (or to withhold) is in His hands alone. Why do you call this blessed scriptural truth "a lie of the devil?" Believers may certainly be mightily filled with the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues. To call this Biblical doctrine "a lie of the devil" is a very serious thing indeed. I warn you to be extremely careful in your language about the Holy Spirit and His work (Matt. 12:32).

Regardless of what you may think of this, or of me, though I have never spoken in tongues, I know for a certainty that God filled me with the Holy Spirit and called me to preach Christ's gospel, and I have done so in a great many places and seen many people respond to the Word of God. It is vain for you to deny what I know from the Bible and from my own experience.

The Reformers

On page 3 you admit that the Protestant reformers were men of God. How is it that you admit this? According to your doctrine they did not have the baptism of the Holy Spirit (there is no record of any of them ever speaking in tongues). So they were without what you call the seal of the New Testament. They were without what you call obedience to Acts 2:38 and so, according to your teaching, without remission of sins; and they taught that the way to the fulness of the Holy Spirit is by faith and that no particular gift of the Spirit such as tongues is evidence of it (which you call a lie). And they had a firm belief in the Trinity that caused them to reject the heresy of Sabellius. How is it then that you call them men of God? Please explain. If they were men of God cannot believers today be men of God who hold their position on these matters? If so, why does your friend in his tract (evidently with your approval, since you give it out) speak as if they were not men of God, and threaten them with hell if they do not follow your instructions?

Grandmother's Faith

On page 3 you say that I cannot enter heaven with grandma's faith, if I reject God's revelation for me (by which you evidently mean that I cannot enter heaven by believing as she did). In regard to saving faith, and true doctrine, God's revelation for me and for you and for everyone else is in the Bible alone, and there will never be any addition to it. The faith that saves has been the same in every age. Don't you understand this? The kind of faith of so distant a figure as Abraham is quite sufficient to save us (Rom. 4:12,16). All we need to do is to believe God's promises and trust God as he did. As for a grand-mother's faith, the apostle Paul did not sneer at it. Read 2 Tim. 1:5. The more you write the more it becomes obvious that you do not understand some very basic things of the Word of God, and that you are in an extremely dangerous theological muddle, I am very much afraid for you lest you fulfil the final words of 2 Peter 3:16.

Pillar of Fire!

On page 3 you speak of seeing the pillar of fire in your crusades and call it the "divine vindication when the true

gospel is preached"! Did not Christ preach the true gospel? Nothing is said of any pillar of fire in His case. Did not the apostles preach the true gospel? Again nothing about a pillar of fire in their ministry. Did not the reformers preach the true gospel? Again, no pillar of fire then.

Did not Wesley, Whitefield, Finney, Spurgeon, and a host of other faithful men of God in india and other countries, preach the true gospel? There was no pillar of fire with them either. If you think a pillar of fire is needed as evidence of the true gospel, this is evidence that you do not understand the true gospel. Where in the New Testament is there any word about a pillar of fire being evidence that the true gospel is being preached?

Deceiving Wonders

Your emphasis on outward signs and wonders is very alarming, very dangerous. Some of the things you emphasize appeal to the carnal nature but true faith does not need them. Don't you understand that Satan can give outward signs and wonders and so deceive people (including you). See Matt 24:24; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 13:13-15. [I want to add that I am convinced that one way in which Satan confirms men in their false teaching is by showing them what they think are signs from God.]

On page 3 you slanderously state that I deny the Lord Jesus Christ is God Almighty. In my letter (pages 29,31) I state very emphatically my belief that He is God Almighty. Why do you say I deny it? Is this a Christian way of dealing with an opponent in a dispute?

Praise for a Heretic

On the last page of your letter you write that you are aware of what is called Sabellianism, and say "praise God for that man; whatever else he stood for, he had the truth of the Godhead." Why do you praise God for a man condemned as a heretic by church fathers, and Protestant reformers, and proved to be one by the Word of God? Why don't you praise God for some of his opponents who were far greater men than he?

Personal Attacks

On the last page of your letter you again attack me personally. Can you really imagine that personal attacks on me will do away with the scriptural truths I have presented in my letter to you? In the name of Christ I beg you to be like the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11), and face sincerely and courageously the points I have raised there and search the Scriptures as to whether they be true. In this letter to me you did not answer a single point. If you cannot answer the points I made, humbly admit it and do not try to evade that fact by bringing a slanderous accusation against me. Do not act like some pope who gets his 'revelations' and condemns doctrines and people without giving evidence against them either from their lives or from the Scriptures.

Revelations and Impressions

I am of the opinion that the presumptuous belief that you (and others of your persuasion) are getting special revelations from God may be the source of much of the false teaching you hold. Impressions we get may be, it is true, from God. But they may be from other sources - our own imaginations, or our fallen natures, or from some demon or other, or from Satan himself (Jer 17:9; 14:14; I Kings 22:19-24).

Are you not willing to arrive at the truth by the diligent study of the Word of God? Why are you afraid of scholarship and learning which are used for the purpose of finding out exactly what the Word of God says? Scholarship and learning do not get in the way of obedience when there is an obedient heart. [For the sake of clarity I have somewhat changed the three paragraphs above from what they were in the original letter.]

If you wish to continue correspondence with me it will have to be on the basis of a desire to find out just what the teaching of the Bible is on the matters which have been raised. If you fall back on 'revelations' and accusations I have nothing more to say to you.

Sincerely in Christ,

G.R. Crow.

POSTSCRIPT

In his reply to my second letter the person I was corresponding with repeated his accusations against me so I broke off the correspondence, as I said I would. I did not stop writing to him because I was personally offended, but because it was evident that he was not willing to continue the debate on the one basis of what the Scriptures have to teach, which is the only important issue involved in this correspondence. Also it was becoming plain to me that he was not receptive to the teachings of the Word of God that are opposed to his false views, and that any further attempts to present them to him would be wasted effort. Twice I tried to reason with him and warn him about his false teaching, and twice is enough. Titus 3:10 says, "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him." I want it understood that I have nothing against this man personally. I have prayed for him and I urge you to pray for him that God will give him a knowledge of the truth. But I have a great deal against his false teachings, and I am concerned for those who might come under their influence. This is the only reason I have had this book published.

If our correspondence had continued here are some things I might have written to him.

Name Singular, Persons Plural

He and his group make much of the fact that in Matt 28:19 the word 'name' is singular. And using this with Acts 2:38 they say this one name is Jesus. In other words they claim Matt. 28:19 means this: in the name of Jesus the Father, and of Jesus the Son, and of Jesus the Holy Spirit. But the fact that 'name' is singular there does not at all mean that only one person is meant by it. An illustration may help to make this clearer. We might speak of the name of a firm, say, Brown, Jones, and Smith, or Shastry, Sinha and Sharma. The word 'name' would be singular but three individual persons would be included in it. The meaning would be the same if we wrote 'in the name of Shastry, and in the name of

Sinha, and in the name of Sharma'. But the first way of writing it brings out more clearly the unity of the three persons in the one firm. We might speak also of some official announcement being issued in the name (singular) of the government of India which would include a very large number of people indeed. If one firm or one government or one united group of any kind is meant we would never put the word 'name' in the plural no matter how many persons were included; we would never say 'in the name' of Shastri, Sinha, and Sharma'. This is a simple use of language which anyone should know.

These deniers of the Trinity like to point to Is. 9:6 which says that Christ's name will be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." When dealing with Matt. 28:19 they ask, "Is Father a name? Is Son a name?". In Is. 9:6 those five words are called a name. If we argued as they do we could ask, is Counsellor a name? Is Wonderful a name? etc. Or we could ask about Rev. 19:16, is King a name? Is Lord a name? But we will not argue so. As I have already pointed out, in the Bible the word 'name' sometimes signifies nature. The five words given in Is 9:6 are a name that reveals the Son's nature. And Matt. 23:19 gives a name that sets forth God's nature as a Triune Being.

Everlasting Father

These men think the words 'Everlasting Father' in Is. 9:6 prove that Christ is the Father and should not be distinguished from the Father as another person. However, as we have already seen on pages 33 - 43, Christ Himself very definitely distinguished Himself from the Father.

What, then, of Is. 9:6? It is my opinion that the KJV translation 'Everlasting Father' could be misleading to someone not clear in their thinking about the Trinity. The Hebrew term is Abi-ad and a more literal translation would be 'father of eternity', and the meaning of it is that the Son described in this verse is the possessor of eternity, that is, He is eternal. The best translation would take into account the Hebrew idiom here and translate 'the Eternal One', or, perhaps, 'the Possessor of eternity'.

Father of Eternity

The Hebrew language sometimes uses the word 'father' in ways that might seem strange to one who knows only English. Robert M. Bowman, Jr., in an article entitled 'Oneness Pentecostalism and the Trinity', points out that there are several proper names in the Old Testament which use the Hebrew word 'ab' (father) as part of the name. When linked with another word 'ab' sometimes becomes 'abi'. This use of the word for father is in accordance with the Hebrew idiom where a person who is said to possess a thing is called the father of it. He refers to these names: Abi-Albon (2 Sam 23:31, the name means 'father of strength', that is, one who is strong); Abi-Asaph (Ex 6:24. It means 'father of gathering', that is, one who gathers); Abi-gail (1 Chron 2:16. This is a woman's name meaning 'father of exultation', that is, one who exults. If the word 'father' can be so used in a woman's name obviously it is not to be taken literally). Other examples could be given – Abi-shai (2 Sam 2:18. The name means 'father of a gift'); Abi-shalom (or Absalom - I Kings 15:2,10. The name means 'father of peace'), etc.

A great student of the Hebrew language, J .A. Alexander, in his commentary on Isaiah writes that the Hebrew word in Is. 9:6 (Abi-ad) "either signifies a father (or possessor) of eternity, i.e an eternal being -or an author and bestower of eternal life."

Two Witnesses Needed

Mr. Bowman in the above mentioned article has also pointed out a significant truth in John's Gospel. There are two passages in John where Jesus states that He and the Father were two individual witnesses to His ministry – John 5:31,32; 8:16-18. Jesus said "there is another who bears witness concerning me" (5:32). The Greek word translated another is 'allos', and it is further proof that Jesus is not the Father. The word 'allos' is used to mean someone other than the person who is speaking.

In John 8:16-18 the Lord Jesus says that two witnesses, not just one, are necessary to establish a point (compare

Deut 17:6), and that these two witnesses are Himself and His Father. The one I was corresponding with insists that God the Father and Jesus are the same person and there is only one person in the Godhead. According to that view who are the two witnesses that Jesus insisted were necessary? Who could the 'other' person that He called the Father and who witnessed to Him if He Himself was the Father?

The Greek word 'allos' is used also in John 14:16. There Jesus spoke of 'another Comforter', the Holy Spirit. Jesus would not have used this Greek word if He and the Spirit were the same person.

Water Baptism

On the subject of baptism I would like to add another word. Let us suppose for a moment for the sake of argument that the vast majority of true believers for 2000 years have been wrong in following Matt. 28:19 in the matter of baptism. Let us suppose that baptism should be given in the name of the Lord Jesus only. What, then? Does it follow that Jesus is the only person in the Godhead, that there is no Trinity? Not at all (see pages 33-49). Does It follow that remission of sins comes by baptism? Not at all (see pages 11 - 22). Does it follow that baptism is a must for salvation? Not at all (pages 18-22). Does it follow that the Holy Spirit is received by baptism? Not at all (see page 23 with Acts 10:44-47). Do not let anyone mislead you. Even if you are persuaded that baptism should be in the name of the Lord Jesus only you should not accept the false teaching that goes along with it in our day. That false teaching would tear the heart out of the New Testament revelation of the nature of God and His Gospel.

Without Baptism

Without any mention of baptism the paralyzed man received the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:1-5). Without mention of baptism the sinful woman received salvation (Luke 7:44-50). Without mention of baptism the tax collector received justification (Luke 18:13,14). Without mention of baptism the believing thief entered paradise (Luke 23:40-43). And without baptism Cornelius and those who were with him received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-47).

One Thing Needed

Let us all clearly understand these matters. For remission of sins, salvation, justification, and eternal life one thing only is required - a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. See these Scriptures Luke 7:50; John 1:12,13; 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; Acts 15:9; Rom. 1:17; 3:22-25; 4:11; 5:1; 10:8-12; Gal. 2:20; 3:9,26; Eph. 3:17.

Repentance

A living faith (contrasted with mere mental assent to the gospel) will not come without repentance. Therefore God commands men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). There is no doubt that many try to enter the kingdom of God without repentance. These attempts are useless. Such people will remain without true faith and spiritual life. Men cannot continue on in their sins, say they believe the gospel, be baptized and join some church, and so at last enter heaven.

But what of baptism? Believers should be baptized only after they have repented, trusted in Christ, and so received remission of sins, salvation, and eternal life. If anyone thinks to obtain any of these by being baptized that person is making a terrible mistake.

Do not put your trust in men, even those you consider very spiritual men. Do not trust in any ceremony or in anything any man can do to you. Do not trust in what seems to be a display of God's power. For salvation put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. This will bring you into a personal relationship with Him which will last forever.

Signs and Wonders

The person I was corresponding with puts emphasis on signs and wonders in our day (page 68). He writes, "As regards signs and wonders which you seem to decry. Remember this that it is a divine vindication of the preaching of the gospel of truth"; and, "Let us also look at Heb. 2:4 which plainly states that God bore witness -showed His approval of it (Amp.) by signs and wonders...etc."

No Further Proof Needed

I have no doubt whatever that God worked miracles, signs, and wonders at the hands of the original apostles, and that

such things were a divine vindication of the gospel. God did in that way bear witness to His gospel and demonstrated that it was indeed the truth of God. But this is done now once and for all. The gospel is vindicated, proved, and recorded for our instruction in the New Testament which is the final revelation of God. It needs no further vindication or proof. And we need no further revelation of God's truth. The Scriptures are completed and the true gospel made eternally clear.

Now when people preach what they call the true gospel we do not need any signs and wonders to show us whether it is indeed the true gospel. We need only understand God's revelation in the New Testament and compare it with that. If they do not preach according to the New Testament the truth is not with them and the signs and wonders they profess to show are false and deceiving. We must understand that some who pride themselves on being able to do wonders are not necessarily the children of God and that even false prophets backed by Satan himself can display signs and wonders. See Deut 13:1-3; Matt 7:21-23; 24:24; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 13:13-15.

Miracles Today

I do not at all deny that God still works miracles today. It know very well He does in any Christian circle when it pleases Him. But such miracles are not to vindicate the gospel, and they do not prove that the people who experience them are necessarily sound in doctrine.

As regards the ministry of the man with whom I was corresponding, and his group, there is so much error there, so much that is contrary to the New Testament, that I am quite sure that if any signs and wonders appear among them they are not given by God to vindicate their preaching.

We are doubtless all aware that the Roman Catholic Church has its 'signs, miracles, and wonders'. For example, many thousands of people crowd to the shrine of Lourdes in France to experience or see a miracle. And there are similar shrines in many places in the world. And many miracles have been reported. But do they prove that the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are correct? Both Trinitarian and Unitarian

Pentecostals may point to their miracles and wonders. If such things are a proof of doctrine then which doctrine is proved trinitarianism or unitarianism? Even the strangest cults and non-Christian religions speak of their miracles and wonders, but this does not at all prove that they stand for God's truth.

What should we learn from all this? One thing at least - we should be very 'careful about signs, miracles, and wonders'. If we make too much of them we can easily be led astray. Also we would do well to remember the words of the Lord Jesus - "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign" (Matt. 12:39 and repeated in Matt. 16:4).

The Only Safeguard

I urge the readers of this to pray to God for light, and search the Bible and not be taken in by false teaching and outward displays. One reason false teachers are able to draw disciples after themselves is that there is so much ignorance of the Bible among Christians. The only safeguard against falling into harmful error is to know God's Word and to love it and put it into practise.

Confused Thinking

Another example of the muddled thinking of this man and his group is this: he says if we don't respond to the truth he thinks God is emphasizing in these modern days then our acceptance of the truth God revealed in other days will do us no good. He means that If we don't accept his views on water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and renounce the doctrine of the Trinity, our faith in Christ for justification, forgiveness, and eternal life will come to nothing. This is the reason he threatens with eternal punishment those who will not accept his teaching. This is why he wrote that we cannot get into heaven with the same faith that our grandmothers had (page 67). He admits that believers in the days of the Reformation were saved, but insists that the faith they had will not do for us today. He speaks of "the 7 church ages as revealed to Bro. Branham", and says we must move on from what God may have emphasized in former ages of the church. It seems to me that in his teaching

often he is passing on something he has read in the books of others. How well he has digested it himself I cannot pretend to say. But one thing is certain - we have all the revelation we need in the Word of God and wo should stick to that.

Private Revelations

Some people (and I'm very much afraid that the man to whom I wrote and other leaders in his cult are among them) pride themselves on receiving what they think are private revelations of truth from God. Eventhough these so-called revelations are often completely unscriptural they set them above the teachings of the Bible itself. All this tends to make them proud, incredibly dogmatic, and intolerant of any kind of opposition to their teachings. When any of God's servants tries to point out their errors they accuse them of being unbelievers. This is not because those who would correct them do not believe the Bible, but because they do not believe the so-called revelations these men claim to have received.

The Guru Mentality

As others have pointed out, these men like to think that they are prophets or great spiritual guides or gurus, with a monopoly on the truth, and that people need to learn the true way of salvation from them alone. By their words and ways one thing comes through clearly - a thing they are probably not in the least aware of. This is that the hidden motive of much that they do is ego, the carnal, self-centered nature in man.

Beware of all such men. The tendency of their ministry will be to turn you from the truth of the Bible, for the real authority for their teaching is not the Bible but the so-called revelations they think they or other leaders of their cult have received.

Baptism of the Spirit

In my second letter to him I said that there was not a single Scripture that tells Christians "to seek for the baptism of the Spirit or for the gift of tongues". In attempting to answer that he wrote "Yes, there are many verses where we are commanded to seek the baptism or infilling or outpouring-

John 7:37-39 is one case. Luke 11:9-13 is another. Acts 19:2 is another - implied or supposed?" This is a sample of the way he argues. He says there are 'many verses where we are commanded to seek the baptism' but does not give even one. Where are these many verses? I did not say that Christians are not told in the New Testament to be filled with the Spirit. Indeed they are, as I pointed out (Eph. 5:18). I said nothing about the 'outpouring of the Spirit', I spoke only of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and tongues. And what I said is surely true. John 7:37-39, Luke 11:9-13, and Acts 19:2 speak of the giving of the Holy Spirit to those who believe but there is no command in any of those verses, and the words 'baptism of the Spirit' are not in any of them.

Baptism and Fullness

I am not simply playing with words. I am expressing my conviction that there is a difference in Scripture between the baptism of the Spirit and the fullness of the Spirit. They may happen at the same moment in time (as at Pentecost), but they are not exactly the same thing, and they can and should be discussed separately. I believe that all true believers have already been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the living Church, the body of Christ (I Cor 12:12,13). But not all true believers are filled with the Holy Spirit, and they need to be.

Waiting for Pentecost

But, someone will say, were not the early disciples believers when they waited for the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 1? - how was their case any different from ours today? Of course they were believers, but their case differs from ours in that they were looking forward to Pentecost and we look back to it. They looked forward to the Spirit's baptism because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given in that way (John 7:39). Now that the Spirit has been given, and the Church has been baptized by the Spirit, believers now need no longer wait or look forward to that event. As soon as they trust in Christ they are made members of the body of Christ, and are baptized by the Spirit into the Church. What they need to do now is to be filled with the Spirit.

Samaritan Believers

But, someone may ask, how about the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8:12-17 - they believed but did not receive the Spirit until the apostles came and laid hands on them. True, and notice also that they had not received the Holy Spirit even though they had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. It seems clear that there were factors involved in the case of the Samaritans not involved in the case of believers now. Peter and John were used by God to reveal the complete acceptance of these Samaritan believers into the kingdom of God. They as the original disciples of the Lord Jesus and His apostles to the Church were the only ones who could do this. Later on God used Peter to open the kingdom to the Gentries (Cornelius and those with him). This was part of his special ministry and did not need to be repeated.

No Need for the Apostles Now

Also we should keep in mind that the giving of the Spirit through the ministry of the apostles was a part of God's witness that they were indeed the bearers of God's Word. Now the authority of the apostles has long been established, the gospel completely revealed and written down for everyone in all ages. Even if Peter and the other apostles were still living we would not need them to come and lay hands on us to enable us to receive either the baptism or the fulness of the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God with all its privileges has been opened to all people - Jews, Samaritans, and other nations. The apostles exercised their authority, founded the New Testament Church, and gave us God's Word for the Church. Now we non-Jewish believers have full access to God even as they had (Rom. 5:1,2).

The apostles had their work. Some of it only they could do, and it does not need to be done again. They completely finished it. Now our work is to receive what they taught, and preach and teach it to others. We do not have the same authority in all things that the original apostles had. They alone were God's chosen instruments to lay the foundation for the Church and to give it infallible, completely authoritative instruction. And God worked with them in special ways to

demonstrate this to everyone. There is a sense in which the book of Acts is transitional. It records events that took place while the original apostles were still living and before the completion of the New Testament. We can learn many wonderful spiritual lessons from it, but we should be careful about interpreting its historical events and basing our doctrines on our interpretations. For doctrine we should look to the clear teaching of the Lord Jesus and His apostles.

Receiving the Spirit

Now Peter and all the original apostles have completed their task, and have passed off the scene. And there are now no authoritative apostles - none in Rome, none anywhere, and no need of any. Now all true believers in Christ receive the Holy Spirit when they believe (Eph. 1:13). Just as the apostles and those with them received the baptism of the Spirit directly from God without human intermediaries, so do we now. And whenever the Gospel is preached and sinners truly repent and believe in Christ the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit goes on, He takes these repenting, believing individuals and baptizes them into the Church which is Christ's body.

Right Doctrine Not Enough

If we have trusted Christ as our Lord and Saviour we have the Holy Spirit. But we are told in God's Word to be constantly filled with the Spirit - this is the meaning of Eph. 5:18. Let us not think for one moment that it is enough to have right doctrine. There are individuals (and whole churches, for that matter) who have their doctrine more or less right but who are sadly lacking in spiritual life. It is not enough to give assent to a good doctrinal statement and to have the Word of God in our heads. It must become part of our lives. We could hold correct views on baptism and the Trinity, and still be lost forever if we do not know God personally and have a living experience of Him.

The Fulness of the Spirit

In bringing this book to a close perhaps I could not do better than to give some thoughts on how to be filled with

the Holy Spirit. If any of us is confused by terminology, by the words 'baptism' or 'fulness', let us lay that aside for a while and think of how we can have the Holy Spirit working in our lives as He wants to do. Even if I am wrong in the way I distinguish these two terms one thing is absolutely certain - if we have the fulness of God's Spirit we have the baptism of the Spirit. How could anyone who knows the Scriptures ever even dream of thinking that those who have the fulness of the Spirit do not have the baptism of the Spirit? How could anyone ever imagine that we need something more than to be "filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:19), which is what the complete filling of the Holy Spirit means? Yet I, who have often been filled with the Holy Spirit, have had people tell me that I needed what they call the baptism of the Spirit because I haven't spoken in tongues! This strikes me as a strange and harmful perversion of the plain teaching of the Scriptures. So let me conclude with some comments on how we can experience the fulness of God's Spirit.

Cleansing from Sin

1. If we wish to be filled with God's Spirit we must repent of all sin that may be in our lives. If we are doing something we know is wrong and will not turn from it we cannot expect God to hear us (Ps. 66:18). We must call our sins by their right names and deal thoroughly with them. For those who truly confess their sins God gives this wonderful promise - "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Using this promise we should make sure that we have renounced all sin and that all our sins are forgiven.

Full Surrender

2. If we wish to be filled with God's Spirit we must fully give ourselves to Him (Rom. 6:13,19; 12:1,2). The fulness of the Spirit means God's full possession of us. It means the complete authority of the Spirit over us. It means we must be willing to obey Him in everything. He will be the master, we the servants. He will use us, not we Him. If we do not give ourselves completely to Him we show that

we are not serious about being filled with Him. We show we are not really thirsty enough for this kind of life.

Trust

3. If we wish to be filled with God's Spirit we must trust God for this. We will get what we trust God for (Mark 11:24). We can truly trust Him only for what He promises, for what He reveals He wants us to have. He commands us to be filled with the Spirit so we know it is His will for us. Therefore we should go to Him with perfect confidence that He will fill us (I John 5:14,15). If we go to our heavenly Father in dependence on what He has revealed He will give us what we ask. He is not one to give a snake when we ask for a fish or a scorpion when we ask for an egg (Luke 11:10-13). Let us keep in mind the promise of the Lord Jesus "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37,38). For the fulness of the Spirit we need not go to any man and our trust should not be in any man. We should experience what Jesus promised when we trust Him for it. I am not speaking of trying to convince ourselves we have something when we do not. I am speaking of a living faith in God that God will do as He has said.

Evidences of the Fulness

What will be the evidences that we are filled with the Holy Spirit? How can we as individuals know that we are filled?

For one thing, we will have confidence that God has filled us and is filling us. If we truly trust God for this we will know that we have trusted and that God has heard our prayer. John wrote that if we make requests to God in faith and according to His will we "know that we have what we asked of Him." This assurance will be based on the promises of God in His Word and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The Christian life is a life of faith in God and His word. Outward displays that may delight the carnal nature can contribute nothing to this walk of faith.

Then if we are filled with God's Spirit there will be other evidences, such as these: happy fellowship with other

believers, singing and thanksgiving in the heart, reverence for Christ, and humility – things mentioned immediately after the command to be filled with the Spirit in Eph. 5:19-21. There will be the developing fruit of the Spirit revealed in Gal. 5:22,23; enlightenment of the Spirit to understand more and more of the truth of God; strength to follow after holiness; a growing knowledge of God; a deep love for Christ and for His people; a living, growing faith that works by love; power to fight the good fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with it a growing knowledge of the weakness and sinfulness of our fallen nature; a determination to live for God rather than for self; a heart for God's work and a willingness, nay, an eagerness to give of one's financial resources for it; a concern for the welfare of fellow believers and for the salvation of the lost; strength to stand for righteousness, justice, honesty, and truth (so much needed in our times); boldness to witness to others; and fruit from our lives and witness that will remain forever.

In short, with the continual filling of the Spirit we will be fully able to enjoy the privileges of the Christian life and fulfil its responsibilities. In other words, we will be able to become the kind of Christians God wants us to be, and to serve Him as He wants us to serve Him.